

[REDACTED]

COMPLAINT IN RESPECT OF CABINET OFFICE STAFF

[REDACTED]

1. Introduction to the Complaint

1.1 This complaint is made in accordance with the Cabinet Office complaints procedure and is in two parts. Part one of the complaint is against [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It is in respect of his alleged failings to appropriately oversee the Cabinet Office responsibilities of the independent military medal review, and in particular the processing of the proposed UK National Defence Medal (NDM). Part two of the complaint is against [REDACTED] in respect of their alleged provision of misinformation, within correspondence, about the veracity of the military medal review process.

1.2 In dealing with this complaint it is considered appropriate to take into account why there is a campaign for the proposed NDM. Since the ending of the Second World War, there have been numerous attempts by organisations representing former service personnel to achieve medallic recognition by Her Majesty The Queen for their service. As each year has passed, the activities of the medal campaign groups have lessened due to old age, frailty, illness or in many cases death. Consequently in 2007 the NDM campaign was launched by representatives of these organisations coming together to make one concerted effort to achieve medallic recognition in their life time, through a generic medal should their own medallic claims fail, which has so far been the case.¹

2. Complaint - Part One

2.1 During the period August 2013 to February 2015 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] is alleged to have:

2.1.1 Failed to provide sufficient guidance to the newly formed Advisory Military Sub Committee (AMSC) of the HDC as to its expected responsibilities in relation to the independent military medal review.

¹ Submission for the Institution of the UK NDM, UKNDM/504/05/12 Scriven & Morland 3 May 2012

[REDACTED]

2.1.2 Failed to ensure due process of the AMSC at its meeting in December 2012 and on 29th August 2013, by ensuring its members had conducted their deliberations of the medal submissions on their merits in a careful, thorough and fully considered manner.

2.1.3 Failed to validate fully the recommendations prepared by the AMSC, pursuant of its meeting on 29th August 2013, which were submitted to the HDC to facilitate its informed judgement and decision making process on the military medal review.

2.1.4 Failed to ensure the HDC was in a position, through the evidence based recommendations provided by Sir John Holmes and the AMSC, to make informed and justifiable decisions as to whether or not to support the various military medal submissions and in particular the institution of the proposed NDM.

2.1.5 Failed to provide the necessary openness and transparency in accordance with government policy, the Prime Minister's direction on the issue of transparency, and the significant public interest involved in the military medal review.

3. Background Information in Respect of the Complaint at Part One

3.1 The Prime Minister's rationale for initiating an independent military medal review in May 2012, under the Cabinet Office, was that the previous medal review by the MoD² in 2010/11 produced unsound findings through a distinct lack of objectivity and transparency. This discredited MoD medal review had perplexed the Prime Minister by its inability to communicate with veterans and address the claims for medallic recognition from military medal campaign groups.

3.2 The HDC in concert with the MoD had been involved in preparing a written ministerial statement for a public announcement on the findings of the MoD military medal review³ in May 2011;⁴ two months before the consultations with medal campaign groups had been completed. This naturally caused concern to many veterans. As already stated the MoD review was discredited and aborted. It is considered [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] which had briefly been involved in the previous shambolic MoD medal review, would be aware of the Prime Minister's continued desire in this new independent medal review, to draw a definitive line under issues that in some cases had been controversial and outstanding for many years.

² The person leading the 2010 MoD military medal review, by virtue of his appointment, was also a member of the HDC. 'UKNDM Campaign Comments - The MoD Medal Review' UKNDM503/11 p16 - Scriven and Morland 24 June 2011

³ This MoD review had turned down all submissions from the various medal campaign groups. This included the Arctic Convoy medal and the Bomber Command clasp; these were quickly endorsed by the new independent review.

⁴ FOI request to the Cabinet Office in July 2011 obtained this information in a released copy of a Cabinet Office Honours and Appointment Secretariat memo 03 May 2011 15:16 HD7934v3



4. The Advisory Military Sub Committee (AMSC)

4.1 In trying to maintain the independence of the medal review Sir John recommended in his July 2012 stage one report, that a sub committee of the HDC should be established, consisting of five outside members as well as appropriate officials.⁵ It would look specifically at military issues and in part remedy the perceived disadvantages of the HDC, which rarely met in practice and conducted its business largely through correspondence or email without substantial discussion⁶. Late in 2012 the new AMSC, a sub committee of the HDC, was formed. It was located within the MoD with a membership that was comprised of all MoD personnel other than one independent member.

4.2 It is not unreasonable, due to [REDACTED] experience and appointments within the Cabinet Office, to have expected him in 2012 to realise that the composition of the new sub committee of the HDC did not sit well with Sir John Holmes's recommendations. It also posed a dilemma for the continued independence of the medal review, as he was aware of the earlier problems with the discredited MoD review. At the very least, [REDACTED] would have been expected to analyse the workings of this newly formed sub committee. This is especially so as although the AMSC recommendations are not binding on the HDC they are a significant factor and intended to carry weight on the committee's considerations.⁷ In [REDACTED] [REDACTED] correspondence, which forms part of the complaint at part two, he maintained the deliberations of the AMSC dealt with the medal cases on their merits and in a careful and thorough manner. However, the content of the AMSC's 'partial name redacted' minutes of its meeting on 29th August 2013⁸ refute [REDACTED] assertions, which in turn has implications for the reliability of decisions arrived at by the HDC .

5. Advisory Military Sub Committee (AMSC) Minutes

5.1 The 'partial name redacted' minutes of the AMSC⁹ meeting on 29th August 2013 identified a significant number of deficiencies, which question the veracity and

⁵ Recommendation Four, Sir John Holmes Military Medal Review Report dated July 2012: "A new sub committee should be created to look specifically at military issues. As well as appropriate officials, up to five outside members should be appointed to the sub committee, which should be broken down as follows: three experienced and credible figures not active in front line politics and representing a broad spectrum of views, an independent military expert and a representative from the Armed Forces Covenant Reference Group."

⁶ Section 4 para 5 Sir John Holmes Report

⁷ Halligan v The Information Commissioner and Ministry of Defence First Tier Tribunal General Regulatory Chamber EA2015/0291 dated 30 August 2016

⁸ The partial name redacted minutes of the second meeting of the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals – Advisory Military Sub-Committee- Thursday 29 August 2013 – MoD Main Building.

⁹ Copy attached at Appendix One to Annex A

[REDACTED]

independence of the medal review once the AMSC became involved and also query the objectivity of the AMSC's deliberations:

- 5.1.1 First, the only independent member of the Committee was not present at the meeting; at least one of those members present had been actively involved in the previous discredited MoD military medal review and a further two members were also members of the HDC¹⁰.
- 5.1.2 Second, the submission by Sir John Holmes in respect of the NDM to the AMSC, on 29th August 2013, had not been seen by or discussed with the Chairman of the NDM campaign. It is therefore not known if there were any differences from Sir John Holmes's findings about the proposed NDM, which he made in his interim report of July 2012.¹¹
- 5.1.3 Third, the minutes of the meeting exhibited many of the same mistaken and unfounded beliefs, which had dogged the previous discredited and aborted MoD military medal review a few years earlier; in some places 'word for word'.
- 5.1.4 Fourth, the minutes of the AMSC meeting portrays a lack of awareness by its members of the NDM campaign's 40 page evidence based submission.¹² Consequently, the minutes depict an absence of scrutiny and discussion surrounding the institution of the NDM. Instead, the minutes¹³ show members reliant on their personal, unsubstantiated views about the medal.

¹⁰ Membership of the HDC – The Committee is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, the other seven members are: Private Secretary to the Queen; Permanent Secretary Prime Minister's Office; Permanent Secretary MoD; Defence Services Secretary (MoD); Permanent Secretary FCO; Permanent Secretary Home Office; Secretary of the Central Chancery of the Orders of knighthood. The Head of Honours and Appointments Secretariat of the Cabinet Office is the Secretary.

¹¹ The Stage Two of the independent military medal review from August 2012 onwards has been marred by its lack of transparency. This is at variance with Stage One of the review, which Sir John carried out between May to July 2012. Stage One was open, transparent, involved Sir John speaking to representatives of all the various medal campaign groups; discussing his findings on the specific parts of his interim report with the relevant representatives of the medal groups. Stage Two lacked transparency and openness; few if any medal representatives were consulted during this stage and certainly there was no discussion with the Chairman of the NDM. The date of any interim reports in this stage or Sir John's final report in whatever form it took was not promulgated. Medal campaign groups only learnt of their 'fate' by a ministerial statement in the House of Lords on 29 July 2014 (the House of Commons had risen for the Summer recess).

¹² Submission for the Institution of the United Kingdom National Defence Medal – dated 3 May 2012 Scriven & Morland.

¹³ AMSC meeting On 29 August 2013 partial name redacted minutes.

[REDACTED]

5.1.5 Fifth, the minutes of the AMSC meeting displayed a lack of awareness by its members of the four categories of medals available to British service personnel. The proposed NDM would sit comfortably with medals awarded in recognition of Service and would not break with any tradition or devalue campaign medals.¹⁴ This point was explained at the AMSC meeting by Sir John Holmes and recorded in the minutes that the NDM was in a different category to a campaign medal and should be treated as such. However, this distinction appears to have been ignored during the deliberations in the HDC meeting and its subsequent findings. It is a possibility that the majority of the HDC members were unaware of the different categories of medal. In addition, despite the evidence in the NDM submission and Sir John's assurance that the NDM was in a different category to campaign medals, both [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (see part two) continued to make misrepresentations about this in their correspondence.

5.1.6 An earlier FOI request on the 20th August 2014¹⁵ by [REDACTED] caused further unease as to the integrity of the military medal review process. It established the AMSC meeting had lasted no more than two hours. Such a limited time frame raises questions as to the committee's ability to carry out careful and thorough deliberations (as claimed by [REDACTED]) on the merits of 21 different medal submissions.

6. A Lack of Due Process within the AMSC

6.1 The minutes of the AMSC meeting record a decision to 'sweep up' the National Service medal submission and the British Cold War medal submission, in with the NDM. There has been no explanation provided to [REDACTED], the official spokesman of the National Service Association, who submitted their medallic submission or to [REDACTED] the Campaign Director of the British Cold War medal campaign, as to why the merits of their submissions were not individually deliberated on or considered worthy of medallic recognition in their own right. [REDACTED] has sought this detail through an FOI request, which is now the subject of a General Regulatory Chamber (GRC) First Tier Tribunal (FTT). A date for judgement has not yet been determined. See Annex A.

6.2 The NDM submission describes clearly that the NDM campaign was launched by representatives of medal campaign groups such as the Nuclear Test Veterans Association; the British Cold War veterans; Korea Post Armistice veterans; the Sub Mariners Association and the National Service Association, coming together to make one last concerted effort to

¹⁴ A MoD document, JSP761, identifies over thirty medals that have been awarded in recognition of Service over the past 65 years and have shown that such medals do not devalue medals awarded for gallantry or campaign medals.

¹⁵ Reply from MoD FOI2014/04477 dated 27 August 2014 refers

[REDACTED]

achieve medallic recognition in their life time through a generic medal, should their own claims fail. As the AMSC made a decision in their meeting to 'sweep up' the submission for a National Service medal and the submission for a British Cold War medal into the proposed NDM submission, it is not unreasonable to expect to see this being pursued within the minutes of this AMSC meeting or at a subsequent meeting¹⁶. It was exactly for such an eventuality¹⁷ i.e. 'no medallic recognition in our life time' that these organisations came together and why the NDM campaign was first launched in 2007 by veterans such as [REDACTED] a former National Service Royal Marine Commando Lieutenant.

6.3 No discussion has been recorded in the AMSC minutes about the National Service and British Cold War medal submissions being 'swept up' into the NDM deliberations; it can only be assumed therefore that they were just swept away as was the NDM. Instead, the AMSC members appeared more content to focus on the non-retrospective harmonisation of a Long Service and Good Conduct (LS&GC) medal for the current Regular Army and Reservists. A medal, the former Prime Minister David Cameron, had specifically directed should not be included in the medal review.¹⁸ This permeated through to the HDC and into the ministerial 'Options Paper' statement in the House of Lords on 29th July 2014¹⁹ as the preferred option with a decision made by the HDC in respect of the NDM that:

"The Committee on the grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals is not persuaded that a strong enough case can be made at this time, but has advised that this issue might usefully be reconsidered in the future."

6.4 The AMSC minutes show clearly that no informed or objective discussion surrounding the NDM took place within their meeting. This made it impossible for the HDC to have been provided with a comprehensive analysis of the case for the NDM. The validity of this judgement by the HDC is therefore questioned, as is the substance of the documents placed before its members by [REDACTED].

7. Honours, Decorations and Medals Committee (HDC)

7.1 The membership of the HDC is comprised of some of the most senior civil servants. Sir John Holmes included in his medal review report, that as they are very busy people, decisions were often made by email and the committee seldom met. So far it has not been possible to ascertain, of the eight HDC members,²⁰ who attended which of the three HDC

¹⁶ An FOI request identified there were no subsequent AMSC meetings to the one on the 29th August 2013.

¹⁷ There is unlikely to be another military medal review for a generation.

¹⁸ Military Medal Review – Terms of Reference Assumptions 30 April 2012.

¹⁹ The House of Commons had risen for their summer recess the day before.

²⁰ The committee is chaired by the Head of the Home Civil Service. The other seven members are: the Principal Private Secretary to The Queen; the Principal Private Secretary Prime Minister; the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence;

[REDACTED]

committee meetings, if any, in 2014/15 that dealt with the military medal review. As can be seen from footnote 20, two of the HDC members are from the MoD, they are also members of the AMSC whose deliberations have already been analysed in this complaint and found wanting.

7.2 Since 2014 the Cabinet Office (presumably the Honours and Appointments Secretariat) have been steadfast in refusing to provide any information surrounding the HDC meetings, which made the decisions on the military medal review. The actual attendance at these meetings may become an important factor, further impinging on the validity of the decisions made once the minutes of the HDC meetings are obtained. The lack of transparency is expanded on below together with the dearth of information in the public domain highlighted separately under the General Regulatory Chamber First Tier Tribunal Judgements. Both the lack of transparency and dearth of information form part of this complaint against [REDACTED].

8. Lack of Transparency of the Military Medal Review

8.1 [REDACTED] continued assertion the medal process had been transparent, especially in respect of the NDM is not accepted. Evidence obtained shows there was no transparency of the second stage of Sir John's review, from August 2012 to December 2013. As already mentioned, the report Sir John presented to the AMSC was not seen or discussed with any of the leaders of the various medal campaign groups to allow them the courtesy of submitting their comments alongside his findings for discussion by the AMSC.

8.2 Representatives of the various medal campaign groups had no idea what Sir John presented in his report to the AMSC; what recommendations the AMSC made to the HDC or how the HDC came to their conclusions. If there were differences from the stage one interim report, the medal campaign groups were unaware of them or how they had come about.²¹ The independent military medal review process had not drawn a 'line in the sand' on outstanding medallic claims as the Prime Minister had wished. Indeed, there was an increased sense of disbelief and despondency among the medal campaign groups. The process of review by the AMSC, the HDC and overseen by the Honours and Appointments Secretariat of the Cabinet Office had suffered from the same lack of objectivity, fairness, openness and transparency that had beset the MoD medal review before it.

Defence Services Secretary, Ministry of Defence; the Permanent Secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; the Permanent Secretary of the Home Office; and Secretary of the Central Chancery of the Orders of knighthood. [REDACTED]

²¹ Representatives of the various military medal submissions heard the decisions of the independent military medal review process through a ministerial statement in the House of Lords on 29 July 2014 with no opportunity to question changes that had taken place from Sir John's assessment in Stage One with the now promulgated Stage Two.

[REDACTED]

8.3 It was evident in a letter received by Colonel Scriven from the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM), Nick Clegg MP, dated 24th February 2015, that both the DPM and the Prime Minister were unaware that information concerning the NDM had been withheld from the HDC. The DPM *inter alia* in his letter stated:

“I agree with you that the HD Committee should do more to achieve transparency and accountability so that veterans can understand fully the decisions taken.”

The DPM had therefore written to the Committee, presumably the Honours and Appointments Secretariat, requesting they clarify what documents had been considered in relation to their decision about the introduction of the NDM. No record of a reply has been seen²².

8.4 Issues raised in this complaint of a lack of transparency surrounding the HDC deliberations of the military medals review were clearly supported by the DPM. In doing so it further questioned [REDACTED] assertion of transparency.²³ A copy of the DPM’s letter is attached at Appendix 21 to Annex B.

9. General Regulatory Chamber First Tier Tribunal Judgements

9.1 Despite the government policy in respect of transparency; despite the former Prime Minister’s direction on transparency of the independent military medal review; despite the significant public interest involved as a result of the seven million eligible recipients of the NDM; and despite the very extensive recommendations on transparency of deliberations on the review findings by Sir John Holmes; the Honours and Appointments Secretariat ignored them all.

9.2 During the past three years there has been the most extraordinary battle between the representatives of the military medal campaign groups trying to obtain information about what documents were studied by the AMSC and the justification for the recommendations they made to the HDC. Perhaps the most important FOI requests, which the Cabinet Office have so far refused, is the release of details surrounding the reasoning of the HDC as to why particular medal submissions were not worthy of recommendation to Her Majesty The Queen,

²² A General Election took place on 5 May 2015, it is therefore doubtful that the Deputy Prime Minister received a response to his request for information from the Honours and Appointments Secretariat as to what documents had been considered by the HDC in relation to the NDM.

²³ Sir John Holmes’s independent military medal review Interim report, dated July 2012, raised the issue of transparency, in which he wrote, “The process is largely invisible and inaccessible to those outside the system, which has substantially added to the frustration of veterans and other campaigners, unable to penetrate beyond bland official statements that a particular decision has been taken.”

[REDACTED]

at the end of what has been termed the most extensive medal review and probably the last for a generation.

9.3 It is assumed as the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was responsible for the inordinate amount of time and taxpayers' money that has been expended over the last three years in the fight to obstruct information, deemed to be of public interest, being released into the public domain. The question initially was why, until eventually after two years of legal debate between [REDACTED], the MoD, the Cabinet Office, the Information Commissioner's office and the GRC FTT, the release of the AMSC's 'partial name redacted' minutes was achieved. These minutes and their revelations have already been reviewed in this complaint. They show clearly how unsound and lacking in substance the AMSC recommendations were, which had been placed before some of the most senior civil servants in the land, to make judgements on medallic recognition of the Nation's veterans, spanning seven decades of keeping the UK and its interests safe and secure.

9.4 Four different medal campaign groups have pursued FOI requests in an effort to achieve visibility of what they consider is now a discredited 'independent' military medal review process. Each has progressed to GRC FTT and despite judgements being made in favour of the medal campaign groups for documents to be released into the public domain, government solicitors on behalf of the Cabinet Office continue to appeal against such rulings. Details of each of these requests, showing the length of time each has taken to obtain information about what is considered should have automatically been in the public domain, and their individual progress are at Annex A together with details of two recent FOI requests in respect of both the AMSC and the HDC.

10. Complaint - Part Two

10.1 The complaint in part two relates to the period from March 2014 to January 2017. During this time, [REDACTED] appear to have disseminated spurious information in respect of the independent military medal review process and in particular about the NDM. Their correspondence has involved letters and emails to Members of Parliament; representatives of the various medal campaigns groups, Chairman of the UK NDM campaign; other interested persons; and it is believed the Deputy Prime Minister. These statements are also considered to have contributed to a Minister misleading Parliament in a debate²⁴ on the NDM and in the Government taking a position to oppose a private members bill on the institution of the NDM²⁵.

²⁴ Debate obtained by Kirsten Oswald MP on the institution of the NDM – Westminster Hall dated 12 April 2016

²⁵ Private Members Bill by Stephen Gilbert MP second reading scheduled on 27 February 2015 but in the event this bill was not reached.

11. Background Information in Respect of the Complaint at Part Two

11.1 The alleged actions detailed below, by both [REDACTED], are considered to have worked against the former Prime Minister David Cameron achieving his promise to veterans to 'draw a line in the sand' in respect of the claims by medal campaign groups. Both MoD and Cabinet Office documents refute the assertions by [REDACTED] in their correspondence, that medal claims were being processed by the AMSC and the HDC carefully, thoroughly and with transparency.

12. Misleading and Inaccurate Correspondence

12.1 It is difficult to reconcile the questionable statements shown below, which were contained in correspondence from [REDACTED], with the irregularities and shortfalls of the independent medal review, together with the anomalies of the AMSC process depicted in its 'partial name redacted' minutes, and the fact the HDC meeting minutes have yet to be released.

12.2 The actions by [REDACTED], through their correspondence, are considered to have contributed to this second government sponsored military medal review in five years being discredited. This has impacted on many parts of the veteran community who feel let down and disillusioned at the disrespectful way in which they have been dealt with in this matter. Especially as while this lengthy process of medallic recognition has been on going, a number of medal campaign activists have died.

12.3 Examples of the statements which are extracts from the letters and emails attached at Annex B and form part of this complaint are shown below:

- *"The Honours and Appointments Secretariat have responsibility for the review of military medals led by Sir John Holmes."*
- *"I would like to reassure you that the Government will give full consideration to whatever recommendations are made by Sir John."*
- *"I can only repeat what Richard Tilbrook said as Sir John noted in his report of July 2012 – the National Defence Medal is an issue of broad national significance which would require a broad political and public consensus and consideration by government as a whole....."*
- *"There are three stages to the Review of Military Medals – the independent review led by Sir John Holmes which presented recommendations; the Advisory Military Sub Committee which looked at those recommendations; and HD Committee where a significant number of representatives from a variety of disciplines examined each case and was genuinely independent. In this process Jon Thompson had one vote, the same as all other members of the Sub Committee and HD Committee."²⁶*

²⁶ Jon Thompson was the Permanent Secretary MOD responsible for its budget, the Chairman of the AMSC and a member of the HDC.



- *“I can assure you that the HD Committee carefully and fully considered the merits of the matter but decided that a strong enough case could not be made at this time for a National Defence Medal.”*
- *“This decision was based on a full consideration of the merits of the case and went beyond financial considerations.”*
- *“I can assure you that the matter was considered at length and it was only after full and careful discussion that the Committee on the Grants of Honours, Decorations and Medals Committee, taking advice of the Advisory Military Sub-Committee, concluded a strong enough case could not be made at this time for a National Defence Medal.*
- *“It was always the intention to publish the outcome by the summer recess and I can assure you that the timing was not deliberate but simply the report was not ready before the published date of 29 July”*
- *“I hope you will recognise that all the decisions in the Medal Review were based on a thorough and full deliberation”.*
- *“I want to reassure you I am holding nothing back. The government is genuinely committed to transparency on this issue.”*
- *“I completely understand that you and many veterans are unhappy not to proceed with a National Defence Medal. But that decision was taken following the most complete and far reaching review of military medals for a generation, undertaken by independent reviewers.”*
- *“British campaign medals are not awarded as a record of service”. “I have to tell you there are no plans for further work on the issue.”*
- *Mr Lovelace questioned the Government’s policy to oppose Stephen Gilbert’s Private Member’s Bill on the National Defence Medal which was due to have a second reading on 27 February. In the event, second reading of the Bill was not reached, but it is usual practice for the Government to seek an agreed position ahead of a second reading.”*
- *“The Committee has not been persuaded that there is a case for an NDM at this time, noting that this would be against the tradition of British medallic policy and, in particular, against the custom whereby medals are generally awarded to those who have participated in campaigns which have involved considerable risk and rigour.”*
- *“This matter has received very thorough attention by the Committee for the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals (HDCommittee, the Committee responsible for advising The Queen on matters of honours and medals policy). Indeed at its last meeting in February (2015), the HD Committee had before it Colonel Scriven’s recent correspondence but whilst the Committee noted the points made by Colonel Scriven, members remained unpersuaded of the case for an NDM at this time.”*
- *“You will appreciate that the review was carried out by an independent team and the arguments examined exhaustively.”*
- *“There are no plans for further work on the issue. Nor can I offer you a timescale when it might be sensible to return to it.”*

- [REDACTED]
- *“The Prime Minister²⁷ has asked me to reply. You ask that the submission for the National Defence Medal is reviewed in an open and transparent way. However, Sir John Holmes published his recommendations and supporting documents as recently as 2014. HD Committee also looked at the matter in February 2015, but remained unpersuaded that a medal should be introduced. I do not think the arguments have changed since then.”*

13. Misleading Members of Parliament in respect of the institution of the NDM

13.1 Misinformation surrounding the institution of the NDM continues to be made by the Honours and Appointments Secretariat, a disturbing situation for veterans. On 12th April 2016, a debate in Westminster Hall on the NDM, moved by Kirsten Oswald MP (East Renfrewshire) (SNP), took place. The Minister for Civil Society, Roy Wilson MP, represented the Government, he had been badly briefed and misled all those MPs present as he stated,

“The review estimated the cost of the medal at £475 million and although it went far beyond the narrow consideration of cost, there would be implications for other activities and choices if the Ministry of Defence had to take that burden.”

13.2 This misleading brief materialised again two weeks later on the 25 April 2016. Jason McCartney, Conservative MP, Colne Valley, asked the then Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office, Matthew Hancock MP, in a parliamentary written question:

“What is the estimated cost of introducing a National Defence medal; and what plans his Department has to reconsider the award of a National Defence Medal?”

The Minister replied, *“An independent review undertaken by Sir John Holmes estimated the costs of producing a National Defence Medal to be £475million. This was based on an approximate figure of 7 million recipients..... and a take up rate of 100%. There are no current plans to reconsider the award of the National Defence Medal.”*

13.3 At the time [REDACTED] was aware of the Cabinet Office ‘Options Paper’ findings on the NDM. It identified there was a less than 60% take up rate in Australia for their defence medal, less than 50% take up in New Zealand, and that there would be *“reduced take up offsets”* in costs for the proposed UK NDM.

13.4 [REDACTED] was also aware that a former Armed Forces Minister, Sir Nick Harvey MP²⁸, had written to Colonel Scriven²⁹ stating the costs in the medal review ‘Options Paper’

²⁷ Theresa May MP

²⁸ Armed Forces Minister 2012 to 2014

²⁹ Letter from Nick Harvey MP to Colonel Scriven dated 27 November 2014

[REDACTED]

were exaggerated and he estimated £100 million for production and distribution. In a statement to the Sunday Telegraph on 2nd August 2014,³⁰ Sir Nick Harvey when asked about the costs contained within the Cabinet Office report for the NDM, said,

“... grossly over estimated, a more realistic cost of awarding the medal was between £70 million and £80 million. £300 million is absolutely nonsense.”³¹

13.5 [REDACTED] was also aware of the significantly lower costs of the ‘research verified’ estimate of only £20 million, spread over five to seven years, for 2 million medal applicants that the NDM Chairman had prepared.³² Despite these significantly lower costs, no attempt appears to have been made by [REDACTED] to make Ministers aware of alternative costings for the institution of the proposed NDM.

14. Conclusions

14.1 There has been a degradation of the independence of the military medal review led by Sir John Holmes and an absence of due diligence in the process overall. As the Head of the Honours and Appointments Secretariat and Secretary to the HDC, of which the AMSC is a sub committee, much of this responsibility is assessed to sit with [REDACTED] on behalf of the Cabinet Office; the department charged with the ultimate responsibility of this review by the former Prime Minister, David Cameron.

14.2 In assessing what transpired in the AMSC and taking into account the membership of the HDC, which represents the country’s most senior civil servants; [REDACTED] should have taken immediate and effective remedial action to address the shortcomings in the deliberations and recommendations of the AMSC to the HDC. He did not do so; choosing instead to allow the members of the HDC to make decisions from inaccurate information and recommendations from the AMSC, which lacked substance. Consequently it is considered that [REDACTED] actions have been responsible for contributing to significant injustice to medal campaign groups, especially in respect of the proposed institution of the NDM, due to the unsound decisions made by the HDC. Regardless of how embarrassing it may prove, these decisions should now be revisited.

14.3 [REDACTED] embarked on what can only be described in the circumstances, as a litany of inaccurate and misleading statements in their correspondence

³⁰ Four days after Baroness Stowell the Lord Privy Seal made public in the House of Lords on 29 July 2014, the HDC decision on the institution of the NDM.

³¹ £300 million was the MoD estimate in their medal review in 2011 which MoD had been working with until July 2014 when they increased it to £475 million

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

over three years, to MPs and representatives of the various medal campaign groups and others. This has caused distress to veterans and has been responsible for adding to the injustice which now surrounds this discredited military medal review.

15. Action requested

15.1 I wish the following action to be taken as a result of this complaint:

15.1.1 A written apology by [REDACTED] on behalf of the Cabinet Office.

15.1.2 The Minister responsible for the Cabinet Office to recommend to the Prime Minister that as a result of the shortfalls identified in this military medal review, it be reopened.

15.1.3 The military medal review is reopened and all medal submissions, which were subject to the Sir John Holmes's independent military medal review and have so far not been approved, are carefully and thoroughly revisited, with decisions made on their evidenced based merits, by the relevant committees, in an open and transparent manner. That an evidence based justification is placed in the public domain, as to why each individual proposed medal, has either been recommended to Her Majesty The Queen or rejected.

Terry Scriven

Colonel (Retd) Terry Scriven
Chairman
UK National Defence Medal Campaign

14th February 2017

Distribution:

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The Rt Hon Ben Gummer MP
The Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office

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Prime Minister

[REDACTED]

The Cabinet Office