



SECRETARY OF STATE

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17 June 2004

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Mr Sawyers
Mr Buck
Hd IPU
Honours Sec.

RECOGNISING NON-MILITARY SERVICE IN IRAQ

The Ad Hoc Ministerial Group on Iraq has been considering how to give due recognition to those personnel who have served the United Kingdom in Iraq beyond those who are currently eligible to receive the military Iraq Campaign Medal.

There has been some discussion about extending the military Iraq Campaign Medal to cover those deserving non-military personnel who have worked in Iraq. While this might appear attractive at face value, it does not sit comfortably with the longstanding practice of awarding Campaign Medals. These Medals have been awarded for over 200 years and are an integral part of the Armed Forces' culture. They are only awarded to those who meet strict criteria which recognise only those who are exposed to particular risks and rigour. Extending the military campaign medal for Iraq would require us to open up medals awarded in earlier campaigns potentially to thousands of civilians – or their descendants. I am certain we would receive representations from Police

The Rt Hon Tony Blair MP
Prime Minister

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officers and others for retrospective medals for the Balkans, Sierra Leone, Northern Ireland and Suez - to mention just a few.

I can see the arguments for recognising the work that civilians have done in Iraq, which I have seen for myself earlier this week in and around Basrah. But I am very firmly of the opinion, as are the Chiefs of Staffs, that the Iraq Campaign Medal should remain solely for those personnel who participated, and continue to participate, in Operation TELIC under the operational command of the military Joint Commander. This group is very clearly defined, and indeed includes some civilians, but once the scope is extended, there will always be pressure to include yet another group or organisation. If employees of Other Government Departments, or Home Department Police Forces, are to be included, for example, what about NGO staff or contractors supporting them; and if those contractors, why not others who are arguably exposed to even greater risks - and have taken casualties - engaged in rebuilding the infrastructure of the country, or protecting those who do? I do not wish to imply that personnel from the Police, the Prison Service, Customs and Excise and other Governmental and non-Governmental organizations do not deserve some form of recognition. Far from it. But I do not believe that extending the availability of the military campaign medal is the answer.

What are the alternatives? Agreement has already been reached in principle for a Humanitarian Service Medal that would appear entirely appropriate for the Police on this occasion. Incidentally, I note that Jack Straw mentioned the inclusion of Policemen working in Jordan; a Serviceman deployed in Jordan at present would not qualify for the Iraq Campaign Medal. The Humanitarian Service Medal would be eminently suitable for those who have contributed in many other countries - including those where the military are not involved and hence there is no campaign medal.

However you decide to proceed, there are the very real practical considerations of qualification periods and the identification of entitled individuals. All of our experience is that these are highly contentious issues and none of which should fall to the Ministry of Defence to manage or resolve.

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In conclusion, I have no difficulty with marking the contribution made by civilians abroad, but I cannot support using military campaign medals for this purpose.

It seems to me that all this calls into question whether the existing arrangements which have served us well in the past are still appropriate to the fast moving situations in which we are increasingly likely to find ourselves in the future. If that is the case, rather than rushing into doing something which we have not properly thought through, I wonder if we should commission from HD an urgent review of the ways in which we might provide such wider recognition. Indeed, this might be extended to consider whether something along the lines of the regular operational awards for the armed services might not be replicated for others who are involved in support of humanitarian operations outside the major conflicts for which special lists have traditionally been drawn up and the Birthday and New Year Honours lists cannot adequately provide.

I am copying this letter to Jack Straw, David Blunkett, Patricia Hewitt, Hilary Benn and Sir Andrew Turnbull.

Yours sincerely



GEOFFREY HOON

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