

DECLASSIFIED
RESTRICTED

Reference: 395/001//2005

From:

Date: 15 December 2005

cc

PS/ Mr Benn
PS/PUS
Mr Stagg
Mr Patey, Baghdad
Mr Asquith
Mr De Chassiron
Mr Williams, Press Office

PS/Dr Howells
PS

IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION SERVICE MEDAL (IRSM)

ISSUE

1. Should representatives of NGOs, and other volunteers, be eligible for the IRSM?

TIMING

2. The contract with the Royal Mint for the production of the IRSM expires on 6 March 2006. To ensure that all papers can be agreed by the Cabinet Office Honours and Decorations Committee (HD) and formal approval obtained from The Queen in time to allow for a production run by that date, a decision needs to be taken by ministers before the Christmas/New Year break.

PREFERRED OPTIONS

3. Since the award of an ISRM could be seen to compromise the independence of NGO personnel/aid workers and have a negative impact on their security, I recommend that they should not be considered eligible for the award. HMA Baghdad and DfID officials will encourage NGOs and aid organisations working in Iraq to consider submitting nominations for consideration on the 6 monthly Honours Lists. HMA

DECLASSIFIED
RESTRICTED

Baghdad, DfID, Protocol Division and Press Office agree. I also recommend that locally engaged staff, employed since the re-opening of the British Embassy in Baghdad, should receive a certificate of commendation.

BACKGROUND & ARGUMENT

4. It was originally envisaged that the medal, unprecedented in recent times, would be awarded to those civilians directly employed by HMG, who did not qualify for the Iraq Campaign medal. But, on 30 June 2004, in a statement to Parliament, the Prime Minister announced that:

“We should pay tribute too, to the many British Public Servants, Policemen and women and volunteers...who played a critical role in helping the Iraqi people rebuild their lives under difficult and stressful conditions. Her Majesty The Queen has graciously agreed that their extraordinary contribution should be recognised with the award of a special civilian medal”.

It is believed that the word ‘volunteers’ was inserted by No 10 officials or the Prime Minister himself.

5. submission of 18 January 2005 (flag A), recommended that “the medal would be awarded to *all those who have served in Iraq*, both during and after the period of the Coalition Provisional Authority, including not only officials but also consultants, police *and those contracted directly by HMG*” (my italics). It did not address the issue of whether ‘volunteers’ should be regarded as personnel working for NGOs/Aid Agencies. A memorandum was subsequently produced by the FCO (flag B) and submitted to the Ceremonial Secretariat of the Cabinet Office, indicating that the following personnel would be eligible for the award:

- All civilian Public Servants and those that hold the office of Constable not qualifying for the Iraq (Campaign) Medal, appointed by HMG to serve in Iraq with, or in support of, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), British Office Baghdad (BOB) or British Embassy (including their Regional Offices).
- Civilian Public Servants deployed by HMG to work alongside coalition/multinational forces in Iraq, and who do not qualify for the Iraq (Campaign) Medal.
- Members of the Armed Forces, working with or seconded to HMG Departments, and who do not qualify for the Iraq (Campaign) Medal.

- Contractors and their employees directly employed by HMG on a full time basis to work for, or in support of the CPA, BOB or British Embassy (including their Regional Offices), or to work alongside coalition/multinational forces in Iraq for HMG, and not qualifying for the Iraq (Campaign) Medal.
- Consultants and their employees directly employed by HMG on a full time basis to work for, or in support of the CPA, BOB or British Embassy (including their Regional Offices), or to work alongside coalition/multinational forces in Iraq for HMG, and not qualifying for the Iraq (Campaign) Medal.
- Any Foreign and Commonwealth nationals who qualify under the above provisions.

Locally employed civilians were not considered eligible for the medal (but see paragraph 9 below).

6. The Secretariat, while recommending several changes to the qualifying period for the award (flag C) (which have proved acceptable to all departments within the FCO and DfID) did not comment upon the eligibility criteria. However, given that the Prime Minister referred to volunteers in his statement to Parliament, both Secretariat and MOD officials have raised questions separately about the lack of any reference (as to being included or excluded) to NGOs and aid/charity workers in the FCO memorandum.
7. FCO and DfID officials met on 5 December, under the chairmanship of Iraq Directorate, to address this problem and it was agreed that there were three options:
 - i) **The FCO continues to apply the line that eligible personnel will be restricted to those contracted to HMG.** But this carries the risk that the media will see the award as recognition of government servants and civilian security contractors, some of whom have been well rewarded for their work financially, while excluding true volunteers, such as aid workers.
 - ii) **NGO/aid workers should be regarded as eligible for the IRSM.** But, since DfID do not keep a register of such workers, it will be extremely difficult to assess how many, and to verify, who will be eligible for the award. (Rather than contracting a team of individuals, grantee organisations, which include CARE, the UN etc., receive a grant from DfID, so obtaining accurate records of those individuals recruited for work in Iraq, would be extremely difficult.) It would also be tricky to draw up a list of 'eligible' NGOs. Would, for example, they be restricted to British organisations? In addition there are some in Iraq who would see the award of the medal as confirmation that aid

RESTRICTED
DECLASSIFIED

workers are indeed 'spies' for HMG. (Both Margaret Hassan and the peace activist, Norman Kember, who was kidnapped in November have been accused of such activity.) Consequently, the long-term integrity of NGOs and aid workers could be compromised.

- iii) **The current eligibility criteria is applied to the IRSM but HMA Baghdad and DfID officials will encourage NGO/Aid Agencies working in Iraq, to consider submitting nominations for consideration on the 6 monthly Honours Lists.**

8. After discussion it was agreed that option (iii) offered the best solution. It is consistent with our current advice to NGOs not to visit Iraq and should be acceptable to those NGO/Aid Agencies and 'grantee' organisations, with whom DfID have been working in Iraq.

Locally Engaged Staff

9. Because MOD do not consider locally engaged to be eligible for 'campaign' medals those employed by the embassy and DfID in Iraq are not eligible for the IRSM. But, given that locally engaged staff are subject to the same (and in some cases more) difficult working conditions, it is felt that their efforts should be recognised in some way. It is therefore recommended that each locally engaged member of staff, who has been employed at the British Embassy in Baghdad, Basra & Kirkuk since the embassy re-opened in 2003, should receive a certificate commending his/her efforts towards the reconstruction of Iraq. (It will be extremely difficult to collate accurate records for those employed by the CPA, prior to the opening of the embassy in Baghdad and the office in Basra.) These could be presented by HMA or by visiting ministers/senior officials.

PARLIAMENTARY AND MEDIA

10. When the list of those eligible for the award is published, it is probable that elements within the media and some parliamentarians may ask why representatives from NGOs/Aid Agencies have not been recognised. If so, Press Office recommend deployment of the following lines:

"The award is in recognition of civilians, who have been directly employed by HMG and who have played a critical role in helping the Iraqi people to rebuild their lives under difficult and stressful conditions. Those undertaking the reconstruction and transition work are volunteers and receive only the most basic training to help them contend with the exceptionally difficult and dangerous circumstances in which they have to live and work."

DECLASSIFIED
RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED
DECLASSIFIED

If asked;

The excellent work undertaken by NGO personnel and aid workers is recognised through the Honours Lists.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

10. The cost of 3000 medals is £58,800.00. With insurgent activity continuing in Iraq it is far from certain how many people will eventually qualify for the award. It would be prudent to commit a further £20,000 for the next two years. The cost of the certificate for locally engaged staff will be around £1500.00 but since most of them are likely to remain in HMG's employment for sometime, the future demand for such certificates should be low and can be met through Iraq Directorate's departmental budget.

Iraq Directorate

DECLASSIFIED
RESTRICTED