Constituents may contact Members of Parliament with a number of questions about military medals. These may include individuals who have served in the Armed Forces and are seeking advice as to how to claim a medal they believe they are entitled to; constituents who support a campaign for a particular medal to be constituted; individuals who may be next of kin of former members of the Armed Forces and are seeking information on medals; and constituents who wish to understand the difference between official and commemorative medals. This note summarises resources available that can be used to respond to these requests.
Contents
1 How medals are awarded 2
  1.1 Official and commemorative medals 2
2 List of Medals 3
  2.1 The Military Medals Review 3
3 Applying for medals 4
  3.1 Replacement medals 4
4 Requesting Service Records 5

1 How medals are awarded

The process by which a British medal is instituted has been in place for many years. In the case of a campaign medal, the Commander-in-Chief of a particular campaign may make a recommendation for an award if they consider that service in that theatre, or under particularly rigorous circumstances, justifies the institution of a medal. That recommendation is passed to senior military officers who, if they are in agreement, submit the case to the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS). If CDS approves the proposal the Secretary of State for Defence submits the case to the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals, which is often referred to as the HD committee, through the Ceremonial Officer at the Cabinet Office. Following agreement by the HD committee, the case is then submitted to The Sovereign for approval. This process can take up to two years.

Full details on how medals are awarded can be found in Library note Medal Campaigns, SN02880.

1.1 Official and commemorative medals

Official medals are those authorised by the Queen, or her predecessors. Only these medals are allowed to be worn on a service uniform.

Commemorative medals are those which have been produced by organisations or private medal companies to commemorate particular branches of service or areas of operations. These are not official medals and are not issued by the Ministry of Defence Medal Office. They may be purchased from the medal company that produces them or from a medal dealer.

The Royal British Legion has information about medals and commemorative medals on its medal website and also a FAQ section.
2 List of Medals

The Ministry of Defence Medal Office is responsible for issuing medals authorised by Her Majesty to British service personnel and veterans. It provides a full list of medals from the Crimean War to the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts. Descriptions and criteria are available on the MOD website: Medals: campaigns, descriptions and eligibility.

2.1 The Military Medals Review

The Government asked Sir John Holmes to review the rules, principles and processes for medallary recognition of military campaigns in 2012.

The review was prompted by several long-running campaigns by veterans groups and individuals seeking redress for perceived injustices in medallary recognition. Some argued for medallary recognition of past campaigns; others were seeking an extension to the qualifying criteria for an existing campaign medal; while some would like broader recognition of service, for example by a National Defence Medal.

Sir John published his findings in July 2012 in the Military Medals Review. He made a number of recommendations, which are summarised in Library note Medal Campaigns, SN02880.

The Prime Minister also asked Sir John to lead a second stage of work, based on his initial recommendations. The aim was to draw a definitive line under a number of, often controversial, medal campaigns. In December 2012 the Government announced that, as a result of Sir John’s findings:

- Eligible veterans of the Arctic Convoys in the Second World War are to be awarded an Arctic Star.
- Eligible aircrews of Bomber Command are to be awarded a Bomber Command clasp to the 1939-45 Star.

Details on the eligibility criteria and the process of application for the Arctic Star and the Bomber Command Clasp are available in Library note Arctic Star and Bomber Command clasp: eligibility and how to apply, SN06564, 26 February 2013.

In June 2013 the Government also confirmed that eligible British veterans of the Arctic Convoys would be allowed to accept and wear the Russian Ushakov Medal. Details on the Ushakov Medal are available in Library note The Ushakov Medal, SN06670, 21 June 2013.

Further work on other medal campaigns remained ongoing. However, on 29 July 2014 the Government announced the conclusion of that second stage of work (HL Deb 29 July 2014, c147-8WS). Those campaigns which will now see medallary recognition are as follows:

- The qualifying period for the South Atlantic Medal, without rosette, will be extended from 12 July to 21 October 1982.
- Those who served in Cyprus between 1955 and 1959 will qualify for the General Service Medal (GSM) 1918-1962, with the clasp ‘Cyprus’ if they served for 90 days or more. This is a reduction in the length of qualifying service in order to bring it into line with the period of service required for the Kenya anti-terrorism campaign.
- Those personnel who served in Cyprus between 21 December 1963 and 26 March 1964 will be awarded the GSM with clasp ‘Cyprus 1963-64’.

- The GSM 1918-62 with clasp ‘Berlin Airlift’ will be awarded to all aircrew, either RAF or civilian, with at least one day’s service in the Berlin Airlift operation.

However, medallic recognition for service in Korea after the ceasefire in 1953, Aden (1960-64), Malta (1940-43), Cyprus in 1974 and for service on HMS Concord in 1949 was not approved. An extension to the qualifying criteria for the GSM in the Suez Canal Zone was also not approved.

The case for a National Defence Medal was also reviewed, although it was felt that a “strong enough case could not be made at this time, but that... this issue might be usefully reconsidered in the future”.

Background to all of these decisions is available in a series of papers deposited in the House of Commons Library (DEP 2014-1168). The MOD is expected to issue guidance shortly on how claims can be submitted for the new awards that have been instituted.

No other historic claims for medallic recognition will now be reviewed, unless “significant new evidence is produced that suggests an injustice has been done”.

### 3 Applying for medals

The Ministry of Defence Medal Office issues medals authorised by Her Majesty to British service personnel and veterans for presentation to the recipients. The Medal Office provides full details on how to apply for medals, including the relevant forms and contact details.

Serving personnel should always apply for medals through their Royal Navy, Royal Marines, British Army or Royal Air Force units and consult their admin staff with any medals queries.

Applications and eligibility for the Ushakov medal lies with the Russian authorities and veterans should contact the Russian embassy in London.

The Veterans UK website also provides information on medals and other emblems. It is a branch of the Ministry of Defence and is aimed at providing information for former members of the Armed Forces. It has a useful FAQ section on medals. The Royal British Legion also has a useful FAQ section on medals on its website.

#### 3.1 Replacement medals

The Ministry of Defence medal office provides information for those seeking to replace a medal: Replacement medals

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1. HL Deb 29 July 2014, c147-8WS
4 Requesting Service Records

Constituents may contact a Member of Parliament seeking advice on how to access Service records. This may be their own Service record, the record of a member of family (alive or deceased) or if they have a general interest in an individual.

The Ministry of Defence provides detailed guidance and the relevant forms on its website: Requests for personal data and service records

The Veterans UK website also provides a FAQ on requesting service records.

The National Archives also contains advice for those seeking records of a campaign or service medal awarded to someone who fought with the British armed services prior to the Second World War: British military campaign and service medals