

MoD Medals Review – the PJM The (Foreign Medals) Five Year Rule Myth

Introduction

There are numerous examples of medals being issued after five years that can be worn by British citizens: UNOMIG, awarded after *seven* years; UNSCOM, awarded after *eight* years; UNOCHA, awarded after *eight* years; UN SSM Op Cheshire, awarded after *five* years; GSM 1962 "Dhofar", awarded after *six* years; GSM 1962 "Air Operations Iraq", awarded after *six* years.

Then there are the following classic examples of medals receiving Unrestricted Approval more than 5 years after the event:

Suez Canal Zone

A classic example of this supposed rule being used and abused by the MoD, FCO and HD Committee is the Suez Canal Zone medal. Various parties lobbied for this award that was justly deserved but was judged to be so politically incorrect as to be withheld for 50-odd years.

But the justice of the case could not be denied forever by the Government Departments and eventually they found a way out of their dilemma by declaring that they could disregard the 50 year delay because there was no evidence that the medal had been considered by any previous HD Committee or by the Chiefs of Staff at the time of Suez. It took enormous pressure from lobby groups to get the relevant Government Department to admit this – and there were questions about the openness of some in the MoD. There were even suggestions that papers supporting the view that there was no record that a medal had been considered at the time, were not declared when they were actually readily available. When the papers 'emerged', the HD Committee was able to revisit its original decision.

Of course, the Suez Medal is a British Campaign Medal and is therefore not similar to the PJM, a Foreign Award where the question as to whether a medal was considered at the time is not relevant. *But it is yet another example of how the HD Committee can only react to the information provided by Government Departments and if the information provided is not comprehensive and correct, how an embarrassing situation can result (which is what has happened to the PJM).*

United Nations Special Service Medal with bar UNOCHA (Humanitarian Aid)

The service to which this medal relates ended in 1990 but the medal was not authorised until 1997, seven years after the end date.

And here are the two most stunning examples of the absence of a five year rule or, if it formally exists, the breaking of it:

The Russian "40th Anniversary of the end of the Great Patriotic War Medal"

The Russians offered this medal in 1985 to all those employed in Russia or on the re-supply convoys. Often referred to as the Arctic Convoys, it should be noted that the award is not limited to those on the Arctic Convoys - others are also eligible.

The FCO initially rejected this medal (Anthony Wedgwood Benn said this was because we were supplying the Soviets - and that was seen by the FCO as being politically incorrect). But ten years after the medal had been rejected, it was accepted by the Queen (unrestricted - so it could be worn) "in view of the changed position of and progress made by the Russians", i.e. on purely political grounds.

Thus the unrestricted acceptance was approved 50 years after the event.

The application and interpretation of so-called rules in this ad hoc manner is neither reasonable nor logical. And, in any event, if a Russian medal can be awarded in this fashion, then why reject a request from a Commonwealth ally, particularly one that is predominantly Islamic, and moderate, and is supportive in today's war on terror.

The Malta "GC 50th Anniversary of the end of the War Medal"

On the basis that the assertion that a 5-year 'rule' exists, this request should have been rejected. It was not. No reason was given for this unrestricted recommendation (the medal was approved by the Queen for unrestricted wear) that flies in the face of a 5-year rule as well as being a clear case of double medalling (together with the Africa Star). It is only conjecture, but many think it was another political decision at the behest of the FCO (and perhaps others) in the year that the Queen made a formal visit to Malta.