

How is a Medal Instituted?

British Medals Policy

The procedures which lead to the institution of a British award have been followed for many years, with only minor changes. In the case of campaign service or an emergency situation, the process starts if the Commander in Chief considers that a medal for service in that theatre, or under particularly rigorous circumstances, justifies a medal. His recommendation is passed to senior military officers who, if they are in agreement, submit the case for a medal to the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS). If CDS approves the proposal, the Defence Services Secretary submits the case to the Committee on the Grant of Honours Decorations and Medals, (known generally as the HD Committee), through the Ceremonial Officer of the Cabinet Office. The HD Committee, consisting of senior officials from several Whitehall Ministries, consider the case and, if it agrees it has merit, submits it to The Sovereign for approval.

The HD Committee

The HD Committee evolved from a pre-war organisation, the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals in Time of War. The Committee is chaired by the Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Home Civil Service. The other senior officials are:

Private Secretary to The Sovereign
Appointments Secretary to the Prime Minister
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence
Defence Services Secretary
Permanent Secretary Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Permanent Secretary, Home Office
Secretary of the Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood
Ceremonial Officer of the Cabinet Office (Secretary)

There is no direct Ministerial involvement with the Committee as it reports directly to The Sovereign. However, PPS/Prime Minister is responsible for reporting to the Prime Minister matters discussed by the Committee. Similarly, PS/The Sovereign represents the Royal Household and in this way The Sovereign can be advised of progress throughout all stages of the Committee's deliberations over medal proposals. The Sovereign maintains a keen interest in the work of the Committee.

Qualifying Periods

Qualifying periods for each award or medal are determined by consideration of the rigours of the campaign. This is not standardised. In some circumstances, the qualifying period agreed has been as short as one day's service, whereas other medals or clasps require 90 days' continuous service. At least one campaign medal (the General Service Medal 1918-1962 with clasp Cyprus) required 120 days service to qualify. The case for each medal is considered on its own merits.

Retrospective Awards

Since the end of World War II, the HD Committee has maintained a policy that it will not consider the belated institution of awards and medals for service given many years earlier. The reason for this policy is that the present HD Committee cannot put itself in the place of the Committee which made the original decision and which would have been able to take account of the views of the Government and of other interested parties at the time of the decision. The HD Committee has made it clear on a number of occasions, (most recently in February 2002), in response to requests for the institution of belated awards that it will not reconsider this policy. They will not reconsider cases that took place more than five years ago. If an exception were to be made for one case, then it would be almost impossible to refuse to re-consider every other claim for retrospective institution of an award or medal. The HD Committee does not feel obligated to acknowledge so-called precedents dating back to the 19th Century, when Queen Victoria instituted awards for service in the Napoleonic War, over thirty years later.

This is attributed to:

http://www.veteransagency.mod.uk/medals_folder/medals_medal_instituted.htm