

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES ON THE AWARD OF MEDALS FOR SERVICE IN VIETNAM

13 October 2014. Mr John Deazley, President NZ Vietnam Veterans Assn Inc

Please feel free to circulate this email and supplementary notes so the RNZRSA NEC and your Ex Vietnam Veterans Executive understand this matter as clearly as possible. It is messy as the initial award 'ground rules' were changed as a result of the Vietnam Vets MOU and the political decisions made at the time. First (and in my view) most important – the Vietnam Medal will ONLY be awarded to uniformed personnel posted to a unit on operations in Vietnam. This did include the NZ Red Cross staff posted to 2 Fd Hospital in Vung Tau and (retrospectively in 2001) to RNZAF air crew personnel of 40 and 41 Sqn who flew into Vietnam.

“The Vietnam Medal was instituted in 1968 to recognise New Zealanders who served in the Vietnam War. It was awarded for qualifying periods of 1 day on land, 1 operational sortie by air, 28 days at sea off the coast or 30 days cumulative visits, between 29 May 1964 and 27 January 1973 (the latter date was the date of the signing of the Paris Accords). New Zealand and Australia jointly developed and instituted the Vietnam Medal. However, there is a separate Royal Warrant for each country. Australian military personnel and some Australian civilians were awarded the Vietnam Medal by the Australian government.”

Extract from the Royal Warrant – The Vietnam Medal.

The Medal shall be awarded to those members of Our New Zealand Armed Forces who, on or after 29 May 1964, have rendered service in operations in Vietnam in accordance with the conditions specified hereinafter.

- Accredited members of approved New Zealand philanthropic organisations attached to the Forces in Vietnam in an official capacity for full-time duty in uniform shall also be eligible for the Medal.
- Eligibility shall not be affected by the grant of any other award for service in Vietnam.
- The conditions of award of the Medal shall be common to members of the three Services and shall be:
 - i. Service of twenty-eight days, continuous or aggregated, in ships or craft employed in operations on inland waters or off the coast of Vietnam;
 - ii. Service of one day or more on the posted strength of a unit or formation on land in Vietnam;
 - iii. One operational sortie over Vietnam or Vietnamese waters by aircrew on the posted strength of a unit allocated for direct support of operations in Vietnam; or
 - iv. Service of thirty days, continuous or aggregated, for official visits, inspections or other occurrences of a temporary nature on duty in Vietnam, or in ships or craft engaged in operations off the Vietnamese coast.

Note: In practice, the Vietnam medal was only issued to those who served on the ground in Vietnam in uniform. After the Australians without prior reference to the NZ Government cancelled their Royal Warrant in 1973, the NZ version of this award could not be awarded to those RNZAF crew flying in support of the NZ Embassy staff, the NZ Embassy staff, a number of philanthropic missions still on the ground after the troops had all come home, and the NZ Civilian Surgical team in Qui Nhon. As a result of the NZDF's review of medallic grievances initiated in 2000 at the request of the RNZRSA and Vietnam Veterans, the following medallic changes were approved:

Vietnam Medal. Eligibility extended by New Zealand in 2001 to include members of No.40 or No.41 Squadrons who flew one or more operational sorties over South Vietnam or Vietnamese waters in support of operations between 29 May 1964 and 28 January 1973.

New Zealand General Service Medal 1992 with clasp "Vietnam". Instituted in 2002 to recognise a variety of service by both military personnel and civilians, who served in Vietnam between 1 Dec 1962 and 1 May 1975, but who cannot be awarded the [Vietnam Medal](#). This NZGSM is awarded to

crews of RNZAF aircraft who flew into South Vietnam between 29 Jan 1973 and 29 Apr 1975. In addition, the medal is awarded for 30 days' service between 1 Dec 1962 and 1 May 1975 by members of civilian medical teams (the New Zealand Surgical Team), the New Zealand Red Cross Welfare Teams, New Zealand Save the Children Fund personnel, personnel of some other New Zealand philanthropic organisations who served in Vietnam, and personnel who served at the New Zealand Embassy in Saigon. Between 2002 and 2007 this medal was issued to over 90 New Zealanders.

Update 1 October 2007: The [NZGSM with clasp "Vietnam"](#) will also be awarded to those who served in Vietnam between 1 Dec 1962 and 27 Jan 1973, and who have been awarded of the [Vietnam Medal](#). Acting Prime Minister Jim Anderton told the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association's annual meeting in Wellington on 1 Oct 2007 that the Government has agreed to extend the eligibility for the [NZGSM with clasp "Vietnam"](#) to those veterans who are currently eligible for the [Vietnam Medal](#). New regulations for the [NZGSM with clasp "Vietnam"](#) are being prepared and they will give effect to the decision shortly.

Update 29 February 2008: Applications for the [NZGSM with clasp "Vietnam"](#) are now being accepted. Application forms can be downloaded from the [medal application forms page](#) of this website. Source: NZDF Medals website, Medals Initiatives 1992 to 2013 page - <http://medals.nzdf.mil.nz/info/medals-initiative.html>

It is also worth noting that most of the civilian recipients of the NZGSM with clasp Vietnam served in Vietnam during the period 1964-1972, at the same time as NZ military personnel. The decision was made that the medal had to be a 'War-Like' medal as the operational risk present – especially post 1973 up to the fall of Saigon was at the same or greater level as that when 1ATF was based in Nui Dat. We cannot issue a non-warlike medal to cover an operational area where the threat assessment is still at high levels. This was done after debate at Cabinet level and the Minister of Defence at the time announced the award of the NZGSM 1992 (Warlike) with clasp Vietnam would be made for those personnel who met the following entitlement criteria:

Regulations – NZGSM 1992 Vietnam

1. Title: These regulations are the New Zealand General Service Medal (Vietnam) Regulations 2008.
2. **Commencement** These regulations come into force on the day after the date of their notification in the Gazette.
3. **Vietnam**; The award of the New Zealand General Service Medal in silver with the Clasp "VIETNAM" in silver is approved. The Medal and the Clasp are awarded subject to the Royal Warrant and to regulations 5 and 6.
4. **Operational area**. In these regulations, operational area means the political boundaries and territorial waters of Vietnam.

Eligibility

A person is eligible for the award of the Medal and the Clasp, subject to regulation 6, if, between 1 December 1962 and 1 May 1975, he or she was---

- a. a member of the Royal New Zealand Navy or New Zealand Army or Royal New Zealand Air Force; or
- b. a civilian person who was a member of a New Zealand contribution or New Zealand supported or sanctioned contribution in the operational area.

Qualification

An eligible person qualifies for the award of the Medal and the Clasp if he or she:

- served for 1 day or more as a member of a unit or sub-unit engaged in operations in the operational area; or
- carried out 1 sortie as a member of a military or naval air crew or as a supernumerary aircrew or crew member, in support of operations in the operational area; or
- operated with the New Zealand Army, Royal New Zealand Air Force, Royal New Zealand Navy, or allied armed forces or worked on New Zealand Government official tasks for 30 days, continuous or aggregated, in the operational area; or

- rendered humanitarian service for a philanthropic organisation supported or sanctioned by the New Zealand Government for 30 days or more, continuous or aggregated, in the operational area; or
- served for 30 days or more, continuous or aggregated, as an accredited New Zealand war correspondent in the operational area; or
- had his or her period of service in the operational area terminated before the completion of the qualifying time required by paragraphs (c) to (e) due to death or evacuation owing to wounds or other disability caused by that service; or
- did not complete the qualifying time required by paragraphs (c) to (e), but was given a royal honour for gallantry or bravery in the operational area; or
- had his or her period of service in the operational area terminated before completing the qualifying time required by paragraphs (c) to (e) due to the withdrawal of the New Zealand armed forces referred to in regulation 5(a) from the operational area at the request of the New Zealand Government and the award has been approved by the Chief of Defence Force; or
- had his or her period of service in the operational area terminated before completing the qualifying time required by paragraphs (c) to (e) for service reasons (not personal or compassionate) and the award has been approved by the Chief of Defence Force; or
- any other service not inconsistent with these regulations that the Minister of Defence, on the advice of the Chief of Defence Force, may determine.

The primary beneficiaries of this new medal were:

- a. Those RNZAF (and any other military) personnel who deployed in support of New Zealand Government operations in Vietnam from 1 December 1962 up to and including 1 May 1975.
- b. Those RNZAF personnel who flew missions into Vietnam between 29 Jan 1973 and 29 Apr 1975 (after the Vietnam medal ceased to be awarded).
- c. Those New Zealand citizens who deployed in support of New Zealand Government operations in Vietnam from 1 December 1962 up to and including 1 May 1975. This group included War Correspondents, Nursing staff in a wide range of philanthropic projects, all of the Civilian Surgical Team in Qui Nhon, and others. Note that all had to complete a minimum of 30 days in country – the same measure as applied to all visitors.

THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE CAMPAIGN MEDAL

The South Vietnamese Government also granted this medal to all Allied Troops who deployed to Vietnam: Note this cannot be issued to civilians of any ally and requires a minimum of six months (180 days) service in country – early withdrawal by the NZ Govt does not provide entitlement.

THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE CAMPAIGN MEDAL REGULATIONS (Edited)

General

1. The Vietnamese Campaign Medal is awarded by the Republic of Vietnam to members of the Armed Forces of nations assisting the Government of Vietnam in their fight against armed aggression.

Permission to Accept and Wear the Medal

2. Her Majesty the Queen has given approval for entitled NZ Army Personnel to accept the medal, together with unrestricted permission for it to be worn.

Description of the Medal, Clasp and Ribbon

3. The medal is a gilt and enamelled 12-pointed star, comprising a 6-point rayed star in gilt with a white enamelled 6-pointed star, edged in gilt, superimposed thereon. In the centre bearing a map of a gilt circlet having a green enamelled centre bearing a map of North and South Vietnam in gilt. Superimposed over the centre of the map is a cluster of flames in red enamel.

4. A date clasp in the form of a silver scroll bearing the date "1960-" is worn on the ribbon of the medal. When ribbons only are worn with undress uniform a small clasp bearing the date "60-" is worn on the medal ribbon. The clasp is to be fixed to the ribbon by pinning or sewing, as appropriate, so that it is fixed centrally on the ribbon with the straight sides of the scroll parallel to the vertical stripes of the ribbon.

5. The ribbon is one and three eighths inches in width, green in colour with three vertical white stripes.

Award of the Medal

6. The award of the medal is governed by the Joint General Staff RVNAF directive of 1 September 1965.

7. The qualifying period for award of the medal is 6 months service on the strength of a unit or formation in Vietnam. The full term will only be waived where personnel are captured, wounded in action or killed on active service.

8. HQ NZ Army Force FAR EAST will submit quarterly returns in duplicate to Army HQ showing number, rank, initials, surname and corps of personnel qualified for the award of the medal, in accordance with the submissions made to Joint General Staff, RVNAF.

Issue of the Medal

9. The medal will be issued to duly qualified officers and soldiers on the authority of Army HQ.

10. DAG Army HQ and Commander NZ Army Force FAR EAST may approve "provisional" wearing of the ribbon pending issue of the medal.

Method of Wearing

11. The medal will be worn after all British awards and after any foreign orders and decorations and will be worn with other foreign medals in order of date of award to individuals concerned.

(248/6/24/PS3)

For the Army Board

- (Signed) Acting Deputy Secretary of Defence (Army)

Happy to field any queries on these awards from Vietnam veterans and their families,

Jack Hayes (4 Troop NZSAS - Oct 70 to Feb 71)

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