



Airborne Engineers Association Scotland



www.airbornesappersscotland.co.uk

Chairman – Douglas Archibald

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General Service Medal 1962 with Clasp South Arabia

In 1965 members of 300 Parachute Squadron 131 Parachute Engineer Regiment deployed to Aden and Radfan. WO2 (SSM) John Lonergan was killed and Captain maclachlainn and Sergeant Earl were seriously wounded during an attack by dissidents on their camp in Radfan. The men of 131 readily volunteered to serve in this theatre, however, they have never been recognised for their service by receiving their GSM, General Service Medal 62 with Clasp South Arabia.

Over the past three years letters have been written to the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Defence in pursuance of the General Service Medal (GSM). The bottom line is that the Government is not interested in awarding the GSM to the Officers and Men of 300 Parachute Field Squadron, Royal Engineers who served in Aden and Radfan in 1965 as they fell short of the qualifying criteria. How on earth could they have fallen short when one man gave his life and two were seriously wounded. How much more were they expected to give. According to the MoD awarding the medal to 300 Para Sqn RE would devalue it.

On 16 September 2016 an e-mail from the MoD Medal Office confirmed that WO2 John Lonergan is entitled to the GSM with Clasp South Arabia and Captain maclachlainn and Sgt Earl are also entitled to the medal. Special Army Orders of 25 July 1966 refers. Why did the MoD take so long to confirm this.

On 21 September 2016, a letter was sent to Theresa May, asking her to waive the 30 day in theatre criteria, however, the letter was forwarded to the MoD.

A letter dated 6 December 2016 was received from the Defence People Secretariat and is similar to those received in the past, the gist of

which is former officers and men of 300 Para Sqn are not entitled to medallic recognition.

Letter dated 24 January from Major General RMB Nitsch CBE says that former members of 300 Parachute Squadron Royal Engineers cannot be awarded the GSM nor would it be appropriate to use a campaign medal to recognise the actions of 300 Squadron when the rules apply equally to them as to Regular soldiers. It has always been the policy for campaign awards that qualifying service may be reduced for those who are killed or have their service in theatre terminated prematurely by wounding or other related injury, or having been captured or detained. It was for that reason that WO2 Lonergan and those who were injured received the GSM62 even though they had not completed the full qualifying period.

As of 1 February 2018 none of 300 Para Sqn RE has received the GSM62 with Clasp South Arabia.

This is the latest from 10 Downing Street

I am writing on behalf of the Prime Minister to thank you for your email of 2 April. I am sorry that you did not receive a full response to your letter of 16 December.

I am aware that you have written to this Office and the Ministry of Defence on a number of occasions, regarding qualification for the General Service Medal 1962 with South Arabia Clasp.

The Ministry of Defence wrote to you on 6 December to explain that they were unable to add anything further to their previous correspondence and to confirm that the Government has no plans to revisit or revise the criteria for the awarding of the decoration. I have attached a copy of their letter for your information.

The Prime Minister's Office is unable to add anything further to the information provided by the MOD. However, we would like to reiterate the Government's deep appreciation of the service given by you and your colleagues in 300 Parachute Field Squadron Royal Engineers.