



Ministry
of Defence

Ministry of Defence
Defence Business Services Secretariat
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Ref: FOI2018/09244

Email: DBSRES-Secretariat@mod.gov.uk

[REDACTED]

2 August 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

You submitted a FOI Request on 4 July 2018 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) requesting the following information:

"I request, under the Freedom of Information Act, the number of replacement GSM medals actually handed out by your department covering National Service soldiers during the above mentioned period."

The dates were elsewhere in the email and refer to the conflict in Cyprus between Spring 1958 and Autumn 1959.

We wrote to you on the 11 July 2018 as we required clarification to determine whether we held any information within the scope of your request:

"Please could you clarify whether you mean "...the number of replacement GSMs issued during the period Spring 1958 to Autumn 1959" or "of the GSMs issued for National Service during the period Spring 1958 to Autumn 1959, how many have been replaced?" Could you also define what you mean by the terms "Spring" and "Autumn" in regard to this conflict? For medallic entitlement purposes, the conflict is adjudged to have taken place between 01 April 1955 to 18 April 1959."

You responded to this on 11 July 2018:

"I confirm that I mean the conflict (theatre of war) for someone who has never actually done military service, during the period I served my time - Spring 1958 to autumn 1959, and trust this is within the metallic entitlement which took place between 1 st April 1955 and 18 th April 1959. I know because I was there. So here goes again with the request that you kindly provide numbers of the replacement GSMs issued to National Servicemen (not regulars) during the above dates, which we hopefully agree, are within the conflict dates..."

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

We are interpreting the dates as being from the 20 March 1958 to 21 December 1959 which is in line with the National Physical Laboratory interpretation of the dates of the beginning of spring and the end of autumn.

A search for information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence and I can confirm that some of the information is held. However, I have to advise you that we would not be able to answer your question without exceeding the appropriate cost limit.

Section 12 of the Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for central government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it.

The Command Paper for the General Service Medal 1918 with Clasp Cyprus was first published in June 1957, the end date of the medal earning period being established in a later paper in 1959, meaning that there were possibly medals issued and replaced during the period of 20 March 1958 and 21 December 1959.

There are no centralised electronic records for these dates but we do hold Army medal cards for these awards. These cards are filed alphabetically, not by year or medal type. In addition a cross check with a full-service record would be required to ascertain whether an individual was serving their National Service at the time as this is not recorded on the card. To search through each drawer of medal cards to identify replacement medals would entail looking at circa 312,000 medal cards. Allowing 60 seconds to check and record the medal type from each card would exceed the amount of effort and cost limit.

Under Section 16 of the FOIA (Advice or Assistance), we should make you aware that we do not hold information on the RAF or RN prior to 1995 when the Ministry of Defence Medal Office replaced the Single Service Medal Offices.

The MOD may be able to provide some information in scope of your request if you reduce or refine your request to bring the cost of compliance under the limit. If you were to restrict your request to the number of replacement GSMs (where the original medal was issued for National Service during the period spring 1958 to autumn 1959), but which were re-issued since 1995 (when combined data from all three services is available). Please contact me if you would like to refine your request or require advice on doing so.

It is worth reiterating that the rules on the issue of replacement medals are extremely strict, and must be met before replacements can be authorised. Contemporary proof of loss must be provided, in the form of either a police report or insurance claim made at the time of the loss. These strict criteria were introduced to prevent an abuse of the replacement medal process, and thus devaluing the award in the eyes of those who receive them in recognition of their service to the nation.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.

DBS Secretariat Team

