

Foreign Decorations - Rules

These rules were submitted to the Commons Library by the British Foreign Secretary in answer to a question in Parliament.

These are the rules that were reviewed by the HD Committee on the 31st January - and they carried out that review at the Foreign Secretary's request and in relation to the Pingat Jasa Malaysia.

The question and the answer are set out below:

Dr. Julian Lewis : To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the criteria are for allowing (a) current and (b) former service personnel to (i) accept and (ii) wear medals offered by foreign governments in respect of past campaigns. [30618]

Mr. Straw [*holding answer 21 November 2005*]: The criteria for considering whether foreign awards and decorations may be accepted and worn are contained in the Rules Governing the Accepting and Wearing of Foreign Orders, Decorations and Medals by Citizens of the United Kingdom and Her Overseas Territories. I set out as follows the Rules and will place copies in the Library of the House. In addition, the Committee on the Grant of Honours, Decorations and Medals is currently considering a paper from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office relating to a review of the rules.

Rules governing the acceptance and wearing of Foreign Orders, Decorations and Medals by citizens of the United Kingdom and her overseas territories.

These rules set out the circumstances under which a citizen of the United Kingdom or her overseas territories ("UK citizen") may be granted The Sovereign's permission to accept and wear an Order, Decoration or Medal ("foreign award") conferred by a Head of State or Government of a foreign country. Head of Government of a Commonwealth country of which The Sovereign is not Head of State and certain international organisations (collectively referred to as "foreign state").

Principles

1. No UK citizen (1) may accept and wear a foreign award without the Sovereign's permission. Such permission must be sought as soon as there is an indication that an award may be offered.
2. The granting of permission for a UK citizen to accept an award offered by a foreign state will only be considered if the award recognises specified services rendered to the interests of that foreign state.
3. Permission will not be given for UK citizens to accept a foreign award if they have received, or are expected to receive, a UK award for the same services.
4. Acceptance of a foreign award does not mean that the UK will make a reciprocal offer directly or indirectly associated with the UK recipient.

Permission

5. Permission to wear a foreign award, if granted, will be either:

unrestricted—allowing the award to be worn on any occasion, or

restricted—allowing the award to be worn only on particular occasions associated with the foreign state that conferred it.

6. The grant of permission, whether unrestricted or restricted, will be conveyed by letter to the UK citizen concerned from the Sovereign's Private Secretary.

Application

7. A foreign state wishing to confer an award on a UK citizen is expected to ascertain—through its Diplomatic Representative at The Court of St. James's—whether permission to accept an award would be likely to be given. Such requests for clearance will only be entertained in respect of awards given by Heads of State or Governments recognised as such by the Sovereign.

8. Requests made by certain international organisations (e.g. the United Nations and NATO) in respect of service in operations under their auspices should be made to the Defence Services Secretary in the Ministry of Defence.

9. Requests made in respect of services rendered more than five years previously, or in connection with events in the distant past (e.g. commemorative awards), will not be entertained.

10. Requests for clearance meeting the requirement of these regulations will be submitted to The Sovereign for consideration by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—who will be under no obligation to make such a submission if the application has not been made as indicated in paragraphs 7 and 8 above.

11. Requests for clearance in the case of foreign awards conferred by private societies or institutions will not be granted.

Guidelines

12. Each request will be treated on a case by case basis. The fact that a similar application has been approved in the past should not be taken as implying that permission will be granted.

13. The grant of unrestricted permission will be considered in the case of foreign awards conferred for services:

related to the saving or attempting to save life (2) ;

Appendix 3. “Foreign Decorations - the Rules as submitted to the Commons by
the Foreign Secretary on 21st November 2005”
to PJM Submission dated 26 March 2006

by any member of the UK Armed Forces or other UK official on exchange, attachment or loan to a foreign state who is involved in a military operation or an emergency (3) on behalf of that country, state or organisation;

by any member of the UK Armed Forces serving in a UK Unit within a bi-lateral force under the command of the other country who renders especial service to the country's forces in a military operation or emergency; or

in military operations under the auspices of an international organisation (e.g. the United Nations).

14. The grant of restricted permission will be considered in the case of foreign awards conferred:

on the occasion of and in connection with a State or official visit by a Head of State or Government of a foreign or Commonwealth country;

in connection with a State visit by the Sovereign; or

to members of Special Missions when The Sovereign is represented at a coronation, wedding or funeral or other similar occasion: or on any Diplomatic Representative when specially accredited to represent The Sovereign on such occasions.

15. Other than in circumstances described in paragraphs 13 and 14 above, permission, unrestricted or restricted, will not be granted to (5) :

Crown servants generally,

in particular, to Heads or other members of HM Diplomatic or Consular establishments abroad when leaving their posts—whether on transfer or on final retirement; and

senior officials, military and civilian, visiting foreign states.

16. No permission is needed for the acceptance of any foreign award if it is designed not to be worn.

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Notes:

1 This includes British subjects and British-protected persons (BPPs). BPPs may accept awards conferred by their Rulers.

2 Including medals issued by life saving societies and institutions (but these must be worn on the right breast).

3 It will be for the UK to decide if the operations or emergency is of the standard to fall within this criterion.

4 This does not apply to his or her staff.

5 This guidance normally applies equally to the spouses or partners of Crown servants.

[end]