

MORE SOUTH EAST ASIA VETERANS 1959 TO 1974 QUALIFY FOR A MEDAL

Frequently Asked Questions

Are there changes to medallic recognition for service in South East Asia?

- Yes. In 2021 the New Zealand Government has decided to extend eligibility for the New Zealand Operational Service Medal (NZOSM) to approximately 4,500 military veterans who served in South East Asia from 1 February 1959 to 31 January 1974 who have not previously received a medal for that service.
- They are Royal New Zealand Navy and Royal New Zealand Air Force personnel who served across the entire period, and about 1,000 Army personnel who served in South East Asia from 1967 to 1974 but did not serve in Vietnam or have previous service in the Malayan Emergency, on the Thai-Malay border or in Indonesian Confrontation.
- **Military veterans.** An eligible New Zealand Armed Forces veteran needs to have been **posted or been attached** for seven or more days with the Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR), the Australia New Zealand United Kingdom Force (ANZUK) and associated units during these dates.
- Associated units include 40 Squadron, RNZAF whose aircrew and supernumerary crew flew frequent sorties between New Zealand and South East Asia in direct support of FESR and ANZUK.
- New Zealand Armed Forces personnel who undertook **official visits** to FESR or ANZUK will qualify for the medal if they have accumulated 30 days of official visit service. The 30 days can also be accumulated from service in different operational theatres.
- There are no other changes to medallic entitlements.
- **Civilians.** There are no changes to medallic entitlements for New Zealand civilians who worked in South East Asia on official New Zealand government tasks. The only New Zealand civilians who qualify for medallic recognition are those who served in Vietnam between 1962 and 1975, the four Ministry of Transport civilians seconded to the Thai-NZ Feeder Road project from 1968 to 1971 and some New Zealand Police seconded to local police forces in Malaya during the Malayan Emergency of 1948 to 1960.

How do I apply?

- Please download and complete the 'NZOSM for South East Asia veterans application form', which is on the New Zealand Defence Force Personnel Archives and Medals website – <https://www.nzdf.mil.nz/nzdf/medal-and-service-records>

Is there any cost to receive the medal?

- No. The medal will be provided to all personnel who qualify on the same basis as any other original medal issue. A full size and miniature medal plus ribbon will be provided in a presentation case.

What will be engraved on the rim of the full size medal?

- Service number, rank (as at the date of qualification), initials, surname and Corps or Service (as at the date of qualification) will be engraved as is done on all medals. Note there may be differences in rank (and other details) if there are other medals issued – they will show the rank as at the date of qualification as well. Miniature medals and clasps are not engraved.

Do I get a campaign medal as well as the New Zealand Operational Service Medal?

- No. This operational service does not meet the criteria to justify a New Zealand General Service Medal 1992 (Non-warlike) or a stand-alone campaign medal being issued.
- The recent review by the New Zealand Defence Force has shown there is a need for a wider approach to medallic recognition for South East Asia than has been the practice in the past. This is a unique period in New Zealand's military history which combined: forward deployment and deterrence; operational readiness as part of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) plans for responding to the threat of communist expansion into South East Asia; an ongoing communist terrorist insurgency in Malaysia; the Cold War; a fraught relationship with Indonesia which resulted in conflict; and war in Vietnam. Together, these factors justify the award of medallic recognition, but are not sufficient in themselves to justify a campaign medal being awarded.

Why is there no campaign medal for service at Butterworth, Malaysia? This was more dangerous than other service with the Australia New Zealand United Kingdom Force (ANZUK).

- Only five of the 14 New Zealand Army deployments to Butterworth would meet the 30 day qualifying period required for the award of a New Zealand General Service Medal for 'non-warlike' service at Butterworth. This includes two deployments of more than 30 days under the guise of exercises. Awarding a campaign medal to less than half of those who served in Butterworth would be inequitable, especially when the longest deployment to Butterworth was only 37 days.
- In addition, the activities undertaken by some of the deployments, including training for the battalion shooting team and minor construction and maintenance tasks by

the battalion pioneer platoon over the New Year leave period at Butterworth, are not consistent with those associated with the award of a campaign medal.

- The NZDF reassessment concluded that threat levels during the three to five week long 1st Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment (1RNZIR) company deployments to protect the Butterworth Air Base near Penang in northern Malaysia between 1971 and 1973 were higher than had been previously thought. Declassified material has shown that the deployment was clearly for operational reasons, rather than for the stated training purposes. Intelligence assessments and operational visits identified a clear threat to the Base and the Australian Mirage fighters stationed there that required an additional layer of protection through the deployment of a rifle company initially from Singapore (shared between Australia and New Zealand) and subsequently directly from Australia. The New Zealand government has decided in 2021 that the 1RNZIR deployments to Butterworth Air Base between 1971 and 1973 be considered operational service, but that a campaign medal will not be awarded for this service.

Do I get a clasp on my New Zealand Operational Service Medal to show that I served in South East Asia?

- No. The New Zealand Operational Service Medal is never issued with clasps.
- Requests to issue a clasp for service in South East Asia, as well as other locations, have been received and considered. It has been decided that no clasps will be issued. To issue clasps for some theatres of operations, but not others, would be unfair to tens of thousands of other recipients of the New Zealand Operational Service Medal. The alternative of issuing clasps to everyone would be either impractical (with more than 90 operational missions already recognised through the award of the medal), or relatively meaningless since the descriptive geographical areas would have to be so broad (e.g. South Pacific, Africa, Middle East, South East Asia, North Asia, Europe).

I served on HMNZS Taranaki in South East Asia in 1973. Do I qualify for the New Zealand Operational Service Medal?

- Yes, service on HMNZS Taranaki from 30 March to 11 July 1973 in South East Asia with the Australia New Zealand United Kingdom Force (ANZUK) now qualifies for the New Zealand Operational Service Medal.
- A list of the Royal New Zealand Navy Ship deployments which now qualify for the New Zealand Operational Service Medal is at the end of these FAQs.
- If you have already been issued the New Zealand Operational Service Medal for other operational service you will not receive another medal or a clasp. This medal is only issued once, and no clasps are issued for this medal.

I served in Borneo in 1965 and already have medals, including one with ribbon of black and white stripes. Do I get another medal?

- No. The medal with a ribbon of black and white stripes is the New Zealand Operational Service Medal. This medal is only issued once.

I served in Singapore from 1977 to 1979 in the New Zealand Army and went on military exercises in Malaysia. I do not have any medals for operational service. Do I now qualify for a medal?

- No. New Zealand Force South East Asia (NZFORSEA), which was established on 1 February 1974, did not have an operational role nor were personnel exposed to operational threats apart from in fleeting circumstances. This means that this service does not meet the threshold to qualify for medallic recognition. New Zealand Force South East Asia was based in Singapore until its withdrawal to New Zealand in 1989.

How do I apply if my family member served but is now deceased or unable to apply themselves?

- You need to complete the 'NZOSM for South East Asia veterans application form' which is downloadable from the NZDF Personnel Archives and Medals website <https://www.nzdf.mil.nz/nzdf/medal-and-service-records> and is also available through your local RSA Club.

What is the New Zealand Operational Service Medal?

- The New Zealand Operational Service Medal was instituted in 2002. It is awarded for operational service since the end of the Second World War, including for current missions. About 30,000 medals have already been issued to veterans of conflicts such as the Korean War, Vietnam War, Timor-Leste and Afghanistan. Another 15,000 veterans are also eligible but have not yet applied for the medal. The medal can still be claimed by veterans and the next-of-kin of deceased veterans.

Was there an earlier review of medallic recognition for service in South East Asia?

- Yes. In 2011 the independent Medallic Review Joint Working Group (MRJWG) was tasked by the then Minister of Defence, Hon Dr Wayne Mapp, QSO to review the medallic grievances relating to service in South East Asia. The MRJWG reported in late 2013 and recommended that there should be no additional medallic recognition. The Hon Dr Jonathan Coleman, the then Minister of Defence agreed with the MRJWG's recommendations.

Why did the 2013 review not support any changes to medallic recognition?

- The 2013 review reached the conclusion that none of the unrecognised service met the New Zealand Government's principles for the medallic recognition of operational service. This was due to there being no evidence that the deployed New Zealand Armed Forces personnel were at significant risk from enemy military forces or insurgents. The levels of risk to individuals were considered to be minimal, and little different to the risk associated with other peacetime military activities in New Zealand and Australia.

Why has the 2014 decision been reviewed and changed?

- In 2016 and 2017 veterans groups and the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association (RNZRSA) provided previously unseen compelling historic documentary evidence from Malaysia and Australia that was not considered in the previous review that resulted in the decision in 2014 to not extend medallic eligibility. The then Chief of Defence Force agreed in late 2017 to the NZDF undertaking a reassessment of the previous review's recommendations.
- The 2021 reassessment was based on the Cabinet approved New Zealand medallic principles and used the New Zealand Defence Force operational threat matrix as a guide to determining operational threat levels. The reassessment found that the previous review group did not have access to some potentially critical information, the presence of which may have resulted in a different conclusion. This information included documents from Malaysia and Australia about the risk to Commonwealth military forces in South East Asia. The reassessment also identified that there is a need for a wider approach to medallic recognition for South East Asia than has been the practice in the past.
- The result of this reassessment has been the extension of eligibility for the New Zealand Operational Service Medal to about 4,500 veterans who served in South East Asia from 1 February 1959 to 31 January 1974 who have not previously received a medal for that service.

Can I read the 2021 New Zealand Defence Force reassessment report?

- Yes. It is available on the New Zealand Defence Force website - <https://www.nzdf.mil.nz/nzdf/medal-and-service-records/medal-applications>

Can I read the previous report from 2013?

- Yes. It is available on the New Zealand Defence Force website - <https://www.nzdf.mil.nz/nzdf/medal-and-service-records/medal-applications>

Who was already eligible for medals for service in South East Asia? Before the 2021 changes?

- About 11,500 New Zealand Armed Forces veterans served in South East Asia between February 1959 and May 1975. About 6,000 of these veterans qualify for one or more of the nine British or New Zealand campaign medals for specific theatre conflicts (Malayan Emergency, Thai-Malay border counter-insurgency patrols, Indonesian Confrontation, Vietnam). Approximately another 1,000 personnel were already eligible for the New Zealand Operational Service Medal only, as the Government had already recognised the period of service in Singapore between 1 February 1959 and 31 July 1960 as qualifying service or the individual completed between 7 and 29 days toward one of the campaign medals which required 30 days service. The British General Service Medal had been closed off for Singapore on 31 January 1959.

What medals did they receive?

- A list of the nine British or New Zealand campaign medals and two foreign campaign medals are in Annex A (p.46) of the 2021 New Zealand Defence Force reassessment report. This report is available on the New Zealand Defence Force website - <https://www.nzdf.mil.nz/nzdf/medal-and-service-records/medal-applications>

I qualify for the New Zealand Operational Service Medal under the extension of eligibility. Do I now also qualify for more support under the Veterans Support Act 2014?

- The award of medals does not afford eligibility under the Veterans' Support Act 2014 or the Burial and Cremation Act 1964. Coverage under the Veterans' Support Act 2014 is determined by a veteran having qualifying service specified under that Act. All service before 1 April 1974 is covered. From 1 April 1974 onwards cover is available to veterans with qualifying operational service. Eligibility for burial in a services cemetery under the Burial and Cremation Act 1964 is based on specific service declared under that Act. For more information see the Veterans Affairs website - www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz

Which RNZN Ship deployments now qualify for the New Zealand Operational Service Medal?

- The following 24 RNZN Ship deployments to South East Asia now qualify for the New Zealand Operational Service Medal for the first time because of the extension of eligibility announced in 2021:
 - HMNZS Royalist 22 February 1961 to 12 July 1961
 - HMNZS Pukaki 9 July 1961 to 23 May 1962
 - HMNZS Otago 26 November 1961 to 7 December 1961
 - HMNZS Otago 23 February 1962 to 26 March 1962
 - HMNZS Taranaki 18 May 1962 to 12 March 1963
 - HMNZS Royalist 14 March 1963 to 26 June 1963
 - HMNZS Otago 5 June 1963 to 25 November 1963
 - HMNZS Royalist 19 May 1964 to 17 July 1964
 - HMNZS Blackpool 8 November 1966 to 21 April 1967
 - HMNZS Taranaki 21 April 1967 to 24 November 1967
 - HMNZS Waikato 6 December 1967 to 2 May 1968
 - HMNZS Otago 10 June 1968 to 24 November 1968
 - HMNZS Blackpool 13 January 1969 to 11 June 1969
 - HMNZS Otago 10 June 1969 to 23 September 1969
 - HMNZS Waikato 11 December 1969 to 15 February 1970
 - HMNZS Taranaki 20 February 1970 to 10 August 1970
 - HMNZS Otago 15 August 1970 to 20 December 1970
 - HMNZS Otago 18 March 1971 to 19 November 1971
 - HMNZS Waikato 11 December 1971 to 31 March 1972

- HMNZS Taranaki 3 May 1972 to 9 September 1972
- HMNZS Waikato 4 September 1972 to 4 January 1973
- HMNZS Otago 29 January 1973 to 3 April 1973
- HMNZS Taranaki 30 March 1973 to 11 July 1973
- HMNZS Otago 29 November 1973 to 30 January 1974

Which RNZN Ship deployments in South East Asia were already eligible for the New Zealand Operational Service Medal before the latest announcement?

- The following 19 RNZN Ship deployments in South East Asia were already eligible for the New Zealand Operational Service Medal through policy decisions in the early 2000s:
 - HMNZS Pukaki 1 November 1953 to 28 September 1954
 - HMNZS Kaniere November 1954 to March 1955
 - HMNZS Black Prince 7 June 1955 to early July 1955
 - HMNZS Pukaki August 1955 to July 1956
 - HMNZS Kaniere 1 April 1956 to 8 May 1957
 - HMNZS Royalist 31 August 1957 to 18 June 1958
 - HMNZS Rotoiti 22 May 1958 to 11 March 1959
 - HMNZS Royalist February 1959 to June 1959
 - HMNZS Pukaki 6 June 1959 to 15 March 1960
 - HMNZS Rotoiti 17 April 1960 to 15 February 1961
 - HMNZS Taranaki 15 December 1963 to 20 August 1964
 - HMNZS Otago 15 October 1964 to 10 May 1965
 - HMNZS Royalist 20 May 1965 to 29 October 1965
 - HMNZS Santon 10 April 1965 to 25 November 1965
 - HMNZS Hickleton 12 April 1965 to 27 November 1965
 - HMNZS Taranaki 3 November 1965 to 23 April 1966
 - HMNZS Santon 26 November 1965 to 20 May 1966
 - HMNZS Hickleton 28 November 1965 to 30 July 1966
 - HMNZS Otago 29 April 1966 to 2 September 1966

Which RNZN Ship deployments in other parts of the world were already eligible for the New Zealand Operational Service Medal before the latest announcement?

- A full list of RNZN Ship deployments eligible for the New Zealand Operational Service Medal is on the New Zealand Defence Force Personnel Archives and Medals website - <https://www.nzdf.mil.nz/nzdf/medal-and-service-records/medal-applications>. The service recognised ranges from the occupation of Japan in the 1940s to counter-terrorism and counter-piracy patrols in the Indian Ocean and Middle East from 2002 to 2015.