



10 December 2020

Ms. Anne Maria Walsh
Corporate Services
Kilkenny County Council
County Hall
John Street
Kilkenny
R95 A39T

Re: Response to Jadotville correspondence

Dear Ms Walsh,

I refer to your recent correspondence regarding Jadotville.

The siege of Jadotville was a prominent event that occurred during Ireland's peacekeeping mission in the Congo in September 1961 where "A" Company, 35th Infantry Battalion, came under attack. From the 13th to the 17th September the men of "A" Company endured almost continuous attack. At the end of the Siege, the men were taken into captivity until finally released on the 25th October 1961.

In 1962 and 1965 a properly constituted medals board considered the issue of award of medals including nominations that had been submitted in respect of a number of the men of "A" Company. This Medals Board did not award any medals whose citation mentioned Jadotville. This decision was subsequently reviewed by the Medals Board and it was indicated that the issued raised had received due consideration and that they were not prepared to alter their findings.

In 2004 a broader examination of the events at Jadotville was conducted by military officers. This Board recommended that the events of Jadotville and the contribution of the 35th Battalion be given recognition. The outcome of this broader examination of the events at Jadotville has led to a number of initiatives that honour the collective actions and bravery of the men of "A" Company at Jadotville and recognise the very significant contribution of "A" Company and of the 35th Battalion, as a whole, to the UN Peace Support Mission in the Congo.

Recognition of their contribution over the years include:

- A presentation of scrolls to "A" Company in 2006.
- Portraits of Lt Col McNamee (35th Battalion Commander) and Comdt Quinlan (Company Commander "A" Company) were commissioned in 2006.
- In July of 2010 the 50th anniversary of the first deployment to the Congo was commemorated in a highly publicised and well attended event in Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnel.

- A nominal roll of "A" Company, printed in copper, was affixed to the monument in Costume Barracks and was unveiled as part of the 50th Anniversary of the Jadotville affair in September 2011.
- In September 2016, on the occasion of the 55th anniversary of the Siege of Jadotville, a Unit Citation to honour the collective actions and bravery of the men of "A" Company was issued. This was the first time a Unit Citation was awarded within the Defence Forces.
- In 2017, at the request of the then Minister with responsibility for Defence, a further review of archival records relating to the Siege at Jadotville was undertaken by the Military Authorities but this did not uncover any additional information not already known. Given the increase in knowledge and understanding of the unique and exceptional circumstances surrounding the Siege at Jadotville, the then Taoiseach and the then Minister with responsibility for Defence decided that the most appropriate decision would be to collectively honour the actions of "A" Company at Jadotville. The Government committed, as an exceptional step, to award a medal known as "An Bonn Jadotville" or "The Jadotville Medal" to each member of "A" Company, 35th Infantry Battalion and the family representatives of deceased members.

This specially commissioned medal gives full and due recognition in honour of the courageous actions of the men of "A" Company, 35th Infantry Battalion, during the siege at Jadotville. The words inscribed on the medal are "Cosaint Chalma" (Valiant Defence) and "Misneach" (Courage). These words were carefully chosen in order to pay tribute to the courageous actions of the men of "A" Company.

Coupled with the Unit Citation that issued in 2016, no other collective award of this nature has been made to date and the uniqueness of such awards should not be understated.

Notwithstanding the actions that have been undertaken to date, I recently asked the Chief of Staff for his views on the matter, in the context of the award of medals, and the possible implications for the integrity of the award of medals system. I have accepted the Chief of Staff's proposal to establish an independent group of external experts to consider the entire case and evidence, including new evidence, if any, available. This independent review group will report its findings and recommendations to the Chief of Staff. The Chief of Staff will then make recommendations as appropriate to myself by the end of March 2021.

Yours sincerely



Simon Coveney TD
Minister for Defence and
Minister for Foreign Affairs