

## THE HISTORY OF NATO MEDALS

In July 1992 for the first time in history of the North Atlantic Alliance, NATO Forces were engaged in operations. At this time, NATO Airborne Early Warning and Maritime Patrol Aircraft were employed in and over the Adriatic Sea to monitor and enforce the United Nations mandated arms embargo against the Former Yugoslavia, and sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

In 1994, the Military Committee at Chief of Staffs level proposed the institution of The NATO Medal with the first awards for NATO military and civilian personnel who were active in operations relating to the Former Yugoslavia. The North Atlantic Council agreed to this proposal on the 20 December 1994 and The NATO Medal was established with the ribbon design and clasp as shown here.



With Partners to the Alliance offering to participate in the ongoing operation and to work alongside NATO troops, on 15 May 1996 the North Atlantic Council approved a change in the regulations to permit Non-NATO Forces to be eligible for the NATO Medal.



In October 1998 the Alliance faced a new operation in Former Yugoslavia, this time in Kosovo. Council agreed that a new NATO Medal and ribbon should be created with a clasp entitled "Kosovo".

By 1999, increasing numbers of NATO personnel had spent more than one tour on NATO operations; thus, the General Regulations for the award of these Medals were changed to recognise multiple tours in the same operational area. Arabic numerals were attached to the Service Ribbons to indicate the number of times a person had been involved as per the selection criteria in the operation.



(ribbon with Arabic number in the same colour as the Medal denoting a second tour)

In June 2001, to recognise the personnel taking part in Alliance operations related to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Council agreed to the design of a new ribbon for the NATO Medal for FYROM.



<sup>1</sup> Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

A number of factors led to a complete review of NATO Medals Policy in 2002, not least NATO's first Article 5 operations in 2001. The revised policy, approved to take effect from the beginning of 2003, recognised the need to differentiate between Article 5 and non-Article 5 operations whilst maintaining consistency in the policy and general regulations for the awards.

Two Article 5 medals were established in relation to NATO Operations, which were initiated following the attack on the United States on 11 September 2001.



The EAGLE ASSIST medal (left) was established for NATO's operations in the airspace of North America whilst the ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR medal (right) covered NATO's anti-terrorist operations in the Mediterranean to demonstrate the Alliance's resolve against terrorism. Whilst Operation EAGLE ASSIST was completed in May 2002, Operation ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR (OAE) continues to the present day.



The separate Non-Article 5 NATO medals awarded for personnel participating in the differing NATO-led operations in the Balkans were amalgamated into one generic "Non-Article 5" NATO medal with effect from 1 January 2003. Also, the use of Arabic numerals to indicate multiple tours was discontinued.



The same review of medal policy in 2002 introduced the NATO Meritorious Service Medal from 2003 to recognise both operational and non-operational exceptional or remarkable service to NATO for nominated military and civilian personnel. Approximately 150 such medals are awarded each year.

In December 2003, the North Atlantic Council approved the ribbon design with a clasp entitled "ISAF" for the award of the Non-Article 5 medal relating to NATO operations in Afghanistan. This ribbon design has since been adopted as the standard Non-Article 5 NATO medal ribbon for all non-Article 5 operations for which a NATO medal has been approved by Council. The clasp for each medal differentiates between the operations undertaken as does the bar on the tunic ribbon which was added with the introduction of

the non-Article 5 medal for the NATO Training Mission in Iraq which was approved by Council in March 2005.



In December 2005, Council approved the non-Article 5 medal for NATO logistical support to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and in November 2006, a non-Article 5 medal was approved for NATO support to Pakistan earthquake relief operations during the period 8 October 2005 to 1 February 2006. The eligibility period for the award of the AMIS medal ended on 31 December 2007.

As a result of a further review of NATO Medals Policy undertaken during 2009-2010, Council approved a number of refinements from 01 Jan 2011, including the introduction of tunic ribbon clasps for the Article 5 OAE medal as well as for the Non-Article 5 ISAF and Balkans medals. The clasps for the Article 5 OAE medal and the Non-Article 5 Balkans medal were re-named ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR and BALKANS, thus identifying them with specific operations, and the ribbon design for the Balkans medal was brought in line with that used for other current Non-Article 5 medals. An improved technical specification for the design of all medal clasps was introduced to make them clearer to read and an improved technical specification was introduced for the NATO MSM medal and medal ribbon to improve its look and quality. Finally, an Arabic numeral multi-tour/multi-award indicator, as shown on the ISAF medal below, was re-introduced.

The six NATO medals which are currently authorised by the North Atlantic Council are as follows:



