

MIDDLE EAST PEACEKEEPING SERVICE UPGRADE WELCOMED

Media Release by:

The Australian Peacekeeper & Peacemaker Veterans' Association (APPVA), National Executive, Melbourne, Victoria,

Friday, 14th May 2010.

Subject: MIDDLE EAST PEACEKEEPING SERVICE UPGRADE WELCOMED.

The National President of the Australian Peacekeeper & Peacemaker Veterans' Association (APPVA), Mr David Penson, CSM, welcomed the Rudd Government's decision to reclassify service to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO), Australian Army United Nations Military Observers (UNMO), also known as OPERATION PALLADIN, who were involved in the Lebanese-Israeli war of July to August 2006, from non-warlike service to warlike Service.

Mr Penson stated: "We are very pleased with this outcome to have the four Australian Army Officers who have been identified to have their service upgraded to warlike. This makes a logical and correct decision of the dangers that were incurred by these Australian UN Military Observers who were performing their duties during the bloody and violent 2006 War."

Mr Penson also commented: "We are deeply concerned over the approach made by the Department of Veterans' Affairs to attempt to block this reclassification based on a technical matter. It is quite clear that these veterans were exposed to the horrors of war and were indeed potential targets of small arms, rocket, artillery and smart bomb attacks from the Israelis and the Lebanese forces. This shameful position not to appropriately recognise the dangers of war that Peacekeepers face, is an indictment of uncaring Government Bureaucrats."

Former Major Mattina Jewell was badly injured on duty in Lebanon, has been an active advocate in this case, as has the APPVA. Ms Jewell narrowly missed certain death after completing her rotation of duty from a United Nations Observation Post on the Lebanese and Israeli International Borderline, when her team site members were all killed by an Israeli Defence Force Bunker Buster bomb.

"We will be expecting that the full recognition of medals are made to Ms Jewell and her fellow Australian Army Officers, in terms of the Australian Service Medal Clasp "MIDDLE EAST" and the additional recognition for the 2006 Lebanese-Israeli War with the Australian Active Service Medal Clasp "MIDDLE EAST". The award of both medals will be the appropriate recognition for these Peacekeeper's service in non-warlike and warlike service collectively, during their tour of duty." Mr Penson said.

Meanwhile, the Australian Peacekeeper & Peacemaker Veterans' Association (APPVA), who lodged a large submission in support of the retrospective recognition of service for Australian UN Military Observers who served in a number of Arab-Israeli wars continue to await positive resolution. Of note is the Lebanese and Israeli War in Beirut in 1984, where several Australian UN Military Observers were trapped and held under siege by that conflict, along with a number of other conflicts within the troubled region.

The Australian Peacekeeper & Peacemaker Veterans' Association is a Young Veteran Ex-Service Organisation that focuses on issues from Peacekeeping Operations from 1947 to the present; War Service since 1989 to the present; Humanitarian Operations; Australian Defence Force and Australian Federal Police International Deployment Group members and veterans.

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