

# Are You Missing Any Medals?

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**By Cpl Kyle Scott (Ret'd)**

For the past six years, I have been devoting much of my spare time to creating awareness of the Canadian Honours system among the serving and retired forces community. Specifically, those honours to which ex-soldiers, sailors and aviators may be entitled. This mission eventually led to creating a Facebook group to try and reach a wider audience. The name of the group is Canadian Veterans owed or missing medals.

A little back story on why I care so much about this topic. I am the fourth generation of my family to serve in the Canadian Military. As a child, I was infatuated with the Canadian Forces and knew from Day 1 that I wanted to be a soldier like the men who came before me. When I was 11 years old, I wrote a letter to my grandfather. He was a veteran of the Second World War who went on to retire as a CWO and RSM of 7 Canadian Forces Supply Depot (7 CFSD) in Edmonton after 34 years of service. Being a young naïve kid, I thought I would ask him if there



PPCLI veteran Michael Nyberg receives the CPSM for three tours in Bosnia and Croatia

was a medal he didn't like as much or didn't wear, that I could have to hang on my wall next to his photo. It seemed like a logical request at the time. Thankfully, this was in the pre-internet days of letters and the postal system, because what followed was the first of a few good jackings in my life.

He replied to me, that medals are not something to be taken lightly, they are the culmination of a soldier's hard work and often blood sweat and tears. They often represent the best and worst memories from one's career. They should always be respected, and if you would like a medal, then join the Canadian Forces and earn your own. Again, I was 11 years old.

I never forgot that message. When the day finally came for me to sign up, I did so, choosing to be a Combat Engineer as I believed it would be the best opportunity for me to do my own tours overseas like the men in my family who came before me.

My career was a short one, only seven and a half years, all with 1 Combat Engineer Regiment from 2001-2008 as a section member and LAV Gunner. I deployed on OP Grizzly in 2003, OP Athena Roto 2 in 2004, OP Valour in 2005, and OP Archer Roto 1 in 2006. My service was cut

much shorter than I had hoped due to the physical injuries I had incurred and the onset of PTSD after my second tour in Afghanistan. For the longest time, I felt that I had failed by being medically released. Failed my friends in the unit, failed the army, and most of all let my family down. It took me a while to come to terms with the road I travelled.



Sylvia and Dennis Davydiuk with their NATO SSM medals. The couple met and married while serving in Germany.

Soon after I was released, I returned home to Whitecourt, Alberta where I was born and raised. I had no idea what I was doing or where I was going. Fortunately, I landed a good job straight away and have been there ever since. I am now working as a journeyman Gas Fitter for ATCO here in Whitecourt. I joined the Royal Canadian Legion almost as soon as I came home. I had many reasons for joining the Legion, but mostly I was looking to bond with other veterans who had been through similar experiences. Over the years at the Legion, I have met a few fantastic veterans who served in many crazy peacekeeping deployments through the 70s, 80s, and 90s.

They were great to me. I decided to get more involved and worked my way up to being president of my local branch, with the ultimate goal of becoming the local Service Officer so that I could work directly with veterans in need. After my term as president, I did just that and have been here ever since.

Working with veterans and their families north of Edmonton is unique. In rural communities, many of the veterans that live here sort of escaped the city life long ago. Many found jobs and just carried on living in peace and quiet. Not that many get involved in Veteran groups, which is sad, but I respect it too. I began a campaign of reaching out through social media, booths set up in the community, and attending other social events in town trying to find out who was a veteran and if they were aware of everything they were entitled to.

My primary goal was ensuring they all had any disability benefits through VAC to which they were entitled. As time went on and many successes were had, I began to realize there were a great number of veterans who had no idea they were entitled to honours and awards that were created long after they were released. For most, it was the Special Service Medal with NATO or ALERT bars, the second most common is the Canadian Peacekeeping Service Medal. These medals were created long after they had completed their tours. My Grandfather received both in retirement.

It began with assisting a veteran who had served in the Golan Heights in the early 1980s with a disability claim, he was successful in that, but he also had no idea he was entitled to the CPSM, so I did the application and in those days the medal arrived in 3 weeks. We ended up presenting it to him on Remembrance Day in front of hundreds of people which was truly special. It also lit a fire in me to find out how many others were missing medals in my area.

I started by posting in various social media groups which gained a few hundred applications. Then I created the page which has led to hundreds more. Word of mouth now brings me a good half a dozen requests a week. Currently, I have assisted approximately 785 veterans and their families.



NATO SSM with a 1884 Nijmegen March photo in the background.

This doesn't just pertain to those who are living, a huge number of requests are made by children of veterans, whose loved one has passed away. Posthumous awards are allowed for any medal in the system.

There are many rules which most are unaware of, the first rule being, if you deployed on a UN or NATO mission and did not receive your award within the first year of returning home, it can no longer be awarded. This is because both organizations put a time limit on awarding their medals. It was not Canada's rule. They can still receive their CPSM if they haven't received it, just not the UN or NATO medal. There is an exception to the rule.

You can receive a very little-known award called the Special Service Medal with PEACE bar if you were medically evacuated from theatre due to illness or injury and you have documented proof of this. You can't receive the UN or NATO medal, but this is better than nothing at all. Since I started this mission, I have had it awarded half a dozen times, three of which were to Sappers who served in Kuwait, and Croatia but were evacuated.

The Canadian Peacekeeping service Medal only requires 30 days of accumulated service. This means you can deploy several times to acquire that time. It will only be awarded for recognized peacekeeping missions, however. This means that Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and postings in and out of Germany do not count.

The most common is the Special Service Medal with NATO Bar, for recognized NATO deployments. It has a vast set of qualifying missions, typically for service in Northwest Europe from 1952- to the present time. If you served there before 2004, you are required to have 180

days (six months) accumulated service. Anyone with post-2004 duty only requires 45 days accumulated service.

A common posting for Sappers in years gone by was up to CFS ALERT, and again you require 180 days of accumulated for the ALERT Bar on the Special Service Medal.

Some might think this is a unique problem for the generations who served before 9/11, but you are wrong. Since the War on Terror, the medal recognition for deployments to Southwest Asia and supporting destinations, has been anything but clear. The qualifying time has changed several times, and the medal itself depends on what tour, and when you deployed as well as under which mission. If that wasn't bad enough, they dropped the ISAF bar for the General Campaign Star to make way for rotation bars in 2009 to recognize multiple deployments. Prior to that date, there was no way of recognizing someone who had multiple tours. In the UN/NATO days we had numerals on the ribbon to denote multiple deployments. They didn't go with that but instead created the rotation bars.

## Rotation Bars

Before 2014, the medal is earned on completion of 30 days of service. After 2014, you are required to have 14 days of accumulated service.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Rotation Bar earned at 210 days in theatre
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Rotation Bar at 390 days
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Rotation Bar at 570 days
- 4<sup>th</sup> Rotation Bar at 750 days
- On your 5<sup>th</sup> Bar you remove the previous 4 bars and put up a single bar with five maple leaves on it.
- The pattern repeats if for some crazy reason you completed enough for six bars or more.

## Chief Unit Commendations

In addition to rotation bars, Commander in Chief Unit Commendations have been awarded to units for seven deployments, dating back to Croatia and Bosnia in 1992. If you served in these missions, you need to apply to the Governor General's Office with proof of deployment in your MPRR or UER. It's a strict process and unfortunately not entirely smooth. Refer to the Governor General's list to see if you qualify; <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/medals/medals-chart-index/commander-in-chief-unit-commendation.html>

## Lost Medals

Many folks have lost their medals over the years. Fire, theft, floods, bad breakups, etc. You can have your medals replaced, but they may require you to pay replacement costs. Each medal has a different value.

- For historical claims, most folks are unaware that they stopped issuing replacement medals for the First World War in 2009. If your loved ones are missing, you either need to track them down or download their service file at Library and Archives Canada and see which they were awarded, then purchase replicas from a medal mounting business.
- For the Second World War and Korea, you need to be a direct next of kin, meaning no cousins, nieces or nephews can apply for replacements. These applications need to go to Veterans Affairs Canada Honours and Awards [vac.honoursandawards-decorationsetcitations.acc@canada.ca](mailto:vac.honoursandawards-decorationsetcitations.acc@canada.ca)
- For peacekeeping and post-war medals, you need to apply to the Directorate of Honours and Recognition at DND, and the same rules apply for next of kin. Alternatively I would be happy to complete your application for you as I have for so many others. Just reach out to the email below. [medals-medailles@forces.gc.ca](mailto:medals-medailles@forces.gc.ca) 1-877-741-8332
- Anyone who has lost a Commemorative medal such as Jubilee medals or Anniversary medals, needs to contact the Governor General's Office for replacements. 1-800-465-6890

## My Goal

My goal is to reach as many retired Sappers as possible who believe they may be owed medals or might need their lost or stolen medals replaced. If they would like clarity or assistance with this please contact me at : [sapperkyle.scott@gmail.com](mailto:sapperkyle.scott@gmail.com). I would be honoured to assist anyone who wishes for help.

## About the Author



Kyle Scott was born and grew up in Whitecourt AB. After nearly eight years serving as a Combat Engineer in 1 Combat Engineer Regiment, including two tours in Afghanistan, Kyle returned to his hometown where he now works as a journeyman gas fitter. Kyle is married to Koren and they have two sons, Declan 4, and Niall 1.

In addition to receiving a Military Personnel Command Commendation and a CME Commendation for his work, Kyle

received the Royal Canadian Legion's newly created Dominion President Citation Award pictured here in 2021.