

## **STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION**

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The Opposition consider that the MOD should urgently resolve the bureaucratic obstacles which prevent soldiers from the Royal Gibraltar Regiment from serving in Afghanistan. This follows a report in the "Daily Express" this week which says that any soldiers from the Regiment who are wounded would not be covered by the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme "because they are not British-born".

It is not clear from the report exactly when this problem with the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme was discovered, given that soldiers from the Regiment have been deployed to Afghanistan and other conflict zones all over the world for many years. In this context it is insulting to be told that our soldiers are not covered "because they are not British-born" when both Gibraltar and its people are British and have been since 1704.

The MOD are quoted as saying that the primary role of the Regiment is to defend Gibraltar. While this is indeed the case, the MOD comment ignores the fact that officers and soldiers from the Regiment have a distinguished record of service outside their country and they have always done Gibraltar proud. It is important to note that those who choose to serve in conflict zones do so by choice as volunteers. This says much for the bravery of our soldiers who have proved to be excellent ambassadors for Gibraltar abroad.

It will be recalled that only last week a soldier from the Regiment was commended for bravery in Iraq and that senior officers have recently been honoured with high commendations and medals by both the United Kingdom and United States.

The MOD is quoted in the report as saying that they are looking to resolve the matter. Given that it is now six months since the Regiment was barred from Afghanistan for this reason, it is about time that the Ministry of Defence moved from looking into the matter to actually resolving the issue.

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