Foreign Awards

Foreign governments and certain international organisations recognised by the Australian Government confer honours or awards on Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel. These may be issued in recognition for gallantry in operations, bravery in civil actions or for meritorious or outstanding service. Awards recognising operational service may also be made.

Guidelines concerning the acceptance and wearing of foreign honours and awards by Australians

The Australian Government reserves the right not to recommend the granting of permission for the formal acceptance of any foreign award which it judges to be contrary to Australian policy or interests.

- Permission for the formal acceptance and wearing of foreign awards, where an appropriate offer is made, can be given by the Governor-General, on the advice of the Prime Minister or the Minister with portfolio responsibility for the Australian honours system.
- Offers of foreign awards may only be considered when an offer is made from a country with which Australia maintains diplomatic relations; or by an official agency of the United Nations; or by other international organisations recognised diplomatically by Australia.
- Awards presented to Australian citizens without prior warning may be accepted to avoid giving offence. However, arrangements should be made as soon as possible for a formal approach.
- There is no objection to foreign awards presented without official permission being worn on the right breast (restricted wear) at private functions or at special services of commemoration or at ceremonies held in connection with that country.


Rule of equivalency

Each foreign honour or award given to an ADF member will be subjected to an equivalence test against honours and awards within the Australian Honours System. The assessment of equivalence is based on the quality of the service or achievement for which the foreign honour or award is made.
Multiple foreign awards for a single operation

Foreign awards offered for an operation in which ADF personnel are involved will be considered for acceptance and wearing, but only if offered to Australia through formal diplomatic process, and if made to the entire Australian element. After an award is accepted, any subsequent foreign award offered for the same operation will not be formally accepted for wear by ADF personnel, however, members receiving other awards may retain them as a memento of the service.

Third country deployments

ADF personnel deployed on operations whilst on a third country deployment (TCD) with a foreign defence force may be offered a foreign campaign or operational service award by the host nation for this service. In 1992 the Queen indicated her view that it is appropriate that Australian citizens should be recognised exclusively by the Australian Honours System. This means that Australians serving with foreign forces will, wherever possible, be recognised by an Australian award. A member who receives, or is eligible to receive, an Australian campaign or operational service award will not be given approval to also wear a foreign award for service on a TCD within the same operational area.

Foreign badges, commendations, unit citation emblems and other uniform embellishments

ADF personnel may accept badges, commendations, unit citation emblems or other uniform embellishments conferred upon them for service with a foreign defence force or organisation. Application to wear such insignia is to be made to the member’s parent Service headquarters for consideration.

Please note that it is not appropriate for an individual, group, or government, to approach a foreign government in order to receive an offer of a foreign award.

For further information call 1800 DEFENCE (1800 333 362) or visit www.defence.gov.au/Medals/