



**Óglaigh
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Coveney told fresh Jadotville awards could spark 'angst'

A DRAFT document on the award of extra medals to veterans of the famous siege at Jadotville warned it could 'reignite' a lot of pain and angst amongst survivors of the 1961 battle.

The report - which was prepared for Defence Minister [Simon Coveney](#) - warned that the department was coming under considerable pressure to award additional medals to a select number of men from 'A' Company.

However, it cautioned that there was no legal basis to support the award and that there was no evidence on the original deliberations from the 1960s about the award of medals.

The draft submission also warned that it could have a knock-on effect, particularly for soldiers who were 'nominated but overlooked' for awards in the intervening years.

It also said it could cause further 'pain and angst' among the veterans of the siege - in which Irish UN-serving troops fought off separatist forces in the Congo - all of whom had been presented with An Bonn Jadotville (The Jadotville medal) in 2017.

A copy of the submission - released under FOI - said: 'Also to note correspondence received by this Department stating that it is widely felt between the surviving members that any further award of additional medals would devalue the award of An Bonn Jadotville.'

The record said that a response should be drafted to say that it was not possible to award further medals and that this should issue to future queries. That submission from last September was scrapped, however, with a new memo prepared for Mr Coveney, giving him three options on what to do.

The new document said unequivocal evidence on who 'should' have been awarded a distinguished service medal was often inconsistent or absent.

The briefing also said that claims that there was bias or prejudice in the findings of medals boards from the 1960s simply could not be substantiated.

'There is no documentary evidence to support such a claim,' said the submission.

The revised briefing said between the award of the medal in 2017 and the summer of last year, there had been more than 200 representations received. Another 19 had followed in the second half of last year. 'It is reasonable to anticipate that additional representations may be submitted to the Department,' it said.

It offered Mr Coveney three options on how to approach the ongoing campaign for medals for the Jadotville veterans, including a do-nothing approach.

The minister was told, however, that all three choices presented 'significant challenges'.

It said he could take a 'political decision' on the way forward, taking account of the impact on other soldiers who were nominated, but not recommended for medals in the meantime.

Mr Coveney was recommended a third approach to provide - as an 'exceptional measure' - for another retrospective investigation of the events. He was also told to seek advice from the [Defence Forces](#) on the broader implications for the 'integrity' of the medal system.

The briefing said the views of the chief of staff of the [Defence Forces](#) on 'the feasibility of reversing decisions made by his predecessors given the passage of time and [military](#) advice in relation to the absence of records' should be sought as well.

The department subsequently announced the formation of an independent review group to consider the entire case and any new evidence that might be available.

Declan Power - the author of *Siege At Jadotville* - said it was regrettable that there was a gap in documents relating to awards for 'A' Company.

However, he said Commandant Pat Quinlan, who led the troops, had left extensive written notes detailing what happened.

Mr Power said: 'It is time now to accept the written evidence left from Comdt Quinlan's notes and letters, the verbal testimony of his surviving men and act on his recommendations.

'This is a unique matter in Defences Forces history and deserves a unique resolution, not something mealy-mouthed and cloaked in the values of the era of an [Ireland](#) we have left behind.'

A statement from the Department of Defence said the minister had accepted the proposal from the chief of staff for the creation of the review group.

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'Unique matter in **Defence Forces** history' 'Any further medals would devalue award' Caption: movie: Jamie Dornan in The Siege Of Jadotville