

Ireland



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Miss Edmonson
I fear the truth is that when he made
his comment, Mr Prior was unaware that the
press in N. Ireland already got the BSM
via the N. Ireland clasp.
NBPM + NFA. 19 July 1982

*AWJ
19 vii*

Dear Clive

You asked me to clarify some of Mr Prior's remarks which he made to the Press in the gallery at Westminster on Wednesday 14 July.

Mr Prior's intention, firstly, was to express his own pleasure, not only at the success achieved jointly by the armed forces in the Falklands, but also at the generous recognition which has been given to their achievements by the British public - recognition which has been crystallised by the Government's announcement that a South Atlantic Medal is to be struck. Without wishing to detract in any way from the credit which the British forces deserve for their conduct throughout the Falkland's campaign, he also wished to remind the British public, through the Press, of the continuing debt of gratitude which we owe to our armed forces for their less spectacular but nonetheless heroic service in Northern Ireland over the past 13 years.

As his comments were made in the wake of the announcement of the striking of the South Atlantic Medal, he was asked whether he would wish to see similar recognition being given to those members of the armed forces who had served, and in some cases given their lives, in Northern Ireland. Mr Prior made it clear that this was not a matter for him, but that, speaking personally, he would like to see the recognition which the armed forces richly deserved for their service in Northern Ireland take some tangible form. In retrospect it would have helped to put this remark into perspective if it had been made clear that members of the armed forces who have served the 30 days in Northern Ireland receive the General Services Medal with the 'Northern Ireland' clasp, and that they are also eligible for the whole range of gallantry and distinguished service awards while serving in the Province. However, this remark was peripheral to Mr Prior's main point which was that it would be a comfort and support not only to our armed forces serving in Northern Ireland but also to their families to know that their service in the cause of freedom and the sacrifice of those who had died in that cause has been and will be recognised and appreciated by the British public in the same wholehearted and generous manner which they have recently displayed.



None of this in any way affects the forthcoming announcement on medals for the RUC and UDR.

Yours sincerely

W. Stephens

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