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The Australian Veteran & Defence
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Tuesday, 18 June 2002

The Hon. Danna Vale, MP,
Minister for Veterans' Affairs &
Minister Assisting the Minister of Defence,
Parliament House,
CANBERRA, ACT, 2600

RE: Your letters dated 23 & 26 from Mr Eacham Curry Assistant Advisor

**Subject: REQUEST FOR STATUS OF THE AWARDING OF THE MERITORIOUS
UNIT CITATION TO THE FORCE COMMUNICATIONS UNIT OF THE UNITED
NATIONS TRANSITIONAL AUTHORITY IN CAMBODIA (1991-1993)**

Dear Minister:

We write this letter to you as a matter of concern toward the awarding of the Meritorious Unit Citation (MUC), to the Force Communications Unit (FCU), of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The FCU served in Cambodia from October 1991 – November 1993 and received many International and United Nations accolades, including from the former Force Commander, His Excellency, the Governor of West Australia, Lieutenant General J.M. Sanderson AC.

You may be aware of previous correspondence to your office by our association, highlighting the initial submission to the former Land Commander (Major General Murray Blake) in August 1993 for the recommendation of the MUC for the FCU UNTAC. As you would be aware, the nomination was declined, due to the awarding of the Australian Service Medal (For Non-Warlike Operations), although the ADF Contingent to UNTAC was allotted Operational Service. This situation changed in March 1999, when the ADF Contingent's status was appropriately recognised by the Howard Government as "War-Like" and the medal award of the Australian Active Service Medal (AASM) was gazetted by the Governor General. The AASM change was very welcomed by the 1,150 personnel who served in Cambodia. The change to the War-Like declaration is also considered by our association as a reciprocal and appropriate awarding of the MUC to the FCU UNTAC.

For some time now (since March 1999), this association has lobbied to have the award of the MUC awarded to the FCU UNTAC. Our submission to your Office was receipted as received on 20 September 2001. Our Research Officer, Mr Gavin Lee, was the point of contact for this submission. A number of telephone calls and written correspondence from the

Office of the Chief of the Army, Mr Ben Hayes (Defence Advisor DVA), and the Defence Legal Office suggested that the award was forthcoming. This is highlighted by Mr Brad Fallan's statement that the outcome of the MUC award to the FCU UNTAC would be known in early 2002. We are also in receipt of informal written approval from the Chief of Defence Force (CDF), Admiral Chris Barrie actually approving the award on 25 October 2001, and a fax from the Office of the Chief of the Army advising that the award is forthcoming and that the CDF had approved the award (Fax - Army HQ dated 19 December 2001). The award was also previously considered by the CDF as far back as April 2000, in reciprocation of the change of the War-Like status to the UNTAC Operation.

In addition to the above, Mr Gavin Lee has been attempting for a subsequent seven weeks in trying to contact Mr Ben Hayes about the case and trying to ascertain the current status of the submission of the award, in which Mr Lee's messages appear to have been ignored

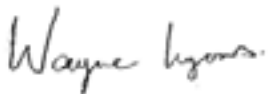
You would well appreciate our veterans' **extreme disappointment** in not seeing the listing of the MUC being awarded to the FCU UNTAC for the Queen's Birthday Honours List. We have advised our members that this may have been due to a late submission by the Department of Defence, which may have failed to meet the required deadline to the Secretariat of the Australian Honours and Awards Committee in Government House in Canberra. We are hoping that we are correct in this assumption.

We are therefore requesting from you a current status of the award to this case. As you can well appreciate, the appropriate recognition for the MUC to the FCU UNTAC has now dragged into nine years since the initial nomination in August 1993. The Letters sent on your behalf on 23 and 26 April 2002 appear to be non-committal, although we appreciate your reply, it did not give an exact status of this case.

Please do not hesitate in contacting my Point of Contact for this case, Mr Paul Copeland, (03) 5261 7332, should you or your advisors have any further questions in relation to this request.

We look forward to seeing a positive outcome to the award of the MUC and to receiving a reply from you.

Yours Sincerely,



W. Lyons
National President

For Information:

Senator Mark Bishop, Opposition Spokesman for Veterans' Affairs
Brigadier John Deighton, AM, MC – CEO RSL Victorian Branch.