



THE ASSOCIATION OF ANAESTHETISTS
of Great Britain & Ireland

PRESS RELEASE

Defence anaesthetists win outstanding certificate of honour

Embargoed until **Friday 20 January 2012**

Today 138 Regular and Reserve Defence Anaesthetists from the Royal Navy, the Royal Army Medical Corps and the Royal Air Force will receive the Pask Award for their services in Afghanistan since the beginning of the conflict in October 2001. The award will be made by the Council of the Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland (AAGBI) at their Winter Scientific Meeting held in London.

Defence Anaesthetists are a crucial part of the medical team in Afghanistan. Initially a small number worked to support Special Forces with forward resuscitation and critical care evacuation. Since early 2002 they have been part of the coalition of up to 42 Nations who have contributed to the International Stabilisation Assistance Force (ISAF). Consultants and later in the mission, trainees, have been deployed to provide medical support to combat and security operations.

These teams have led advances in care, which have seen a great many unexpected survivors from trauma. This has heralded the lowest mortality amongst casualties in any conflict to date. Key to that has been the involvement of the anaesthetist at every stage of the evacuation chain from pre-hospital care, resuscitation, anaesthesia, intensive care, pain management and aeromedical evacuation, through to command roles as Deployed Medical Directors.

Group Captain, Neil McGuire, the AAGBI Defence Anaesthesia representative commented:

“Many Defence Anaesthetists have seen more severe trauma in a single day than many civilian anaesthetists will see in an entire career, with as many as three major incidents in a 24 hour period being experienced on occasions”.

The outstanding dedication, courage and professionalism of this group of anaesthetists has led to this prestigious award.

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For further information or to arrange an interview please contact the AAGBI Press Office:

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Notes for Editors

About the AAGBI

The Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland (AAGBI) was founded in 1932. It's the leading representative body for over 10,000 anaesthetists in the UK and overseas, and is one of the UK's largest single grant providers for anaesthetic research. The AAGBI has a broad constitution that enables it to promote and advance education, safety and research in anaesthesia, as well as the professional aspects of the specialty and the welfare of individual anaesthetists.

About the Pask Award

The Pask Award was first instituted in 1977 for anaesthetists who had rendered distinguished service, either with gallantry in the performance of their clinical duties, in a single meritorious act or consistently and faithfully over a long period. The award was named after Professor E A Pask who had distinguished career in the Royal Air Force Medical Branch which included dangerous self experimentation, requiring considerable personal courage

About Edgar Alexander Pask (1913-1966)



Born in Derby and educated at the Rydal School, Pask won a scholarship to Downing College, Cambridge. There he obtained first class honours and a scholarship to the London Hospital, later becoming House Surgeon at Oxford until war broke out.

During the Second World War, he joined an experimental RAF team in Farnborough, where he allowed himself to be used as a guinea pig. To test lifejackets for the Royal Air Force, Pask was anaesthetised and thrown into deep water to investigate whether he rotated until his head was above the surface. The design of jacket examined is still in use.

Pask also helped to establish, through oxygen deprivation, that the greatest height for survival in a parachute jump is 30,000 feet. He designed a suit to protect against cold in the sea, and tested it himself by parachuting into the water.

After the war Pask became Reader in Anaesthetics at the University of Durham and was soon promoted to professor. He was awarded the OBE in 1944 and the John Snow Medal in 1946, and gave the Joseph Clover lecture at the Royal College of Surgeons.