

CAMPAIGN NEWS DIGEST

OCTOBER 2007

ENGINEER TO END CAREER

I HAVE served for 21 years, both as an OR and an officer. I took an engineering degree, through ADFA under the NCO Commissioning Scheme, and am extremely grateful for this privilege.

For the past few years, I have watched my equivalent aeronautical engineer peers receiving bonuses and other incentives. During this time, mechanical, electrical and civil engineers were told that bonuses for ground-based engineers would follow shortly.

I have recently been told that the engineer pay case will apply to all officers in the corps of RAEME, RASIGS and RAE. This is insulting to all degree-qualified engineers who have been waiting patiently for equal treatment.

I am extremely disappointed with the outcome and I will be voting with my feet and speeding up my resignation so I can separate more quickly. And, because Reserve engineering officers will not receive the bonus, I have now also decided not to transfer to the Reserve.

This is a disappointing end to what, I believe, has been a wonderful career.

MEDAL FOR WOUNDED IS GOOD IDEA

I HAVE been following the debate in *Soldier* on the medal dispute. I served for five years and deployed on many a tour. I have to agree with a comment about the wounded Serviceman recognition medal and feel that this should be recognised by the powers-that-be.

Having read a number of letters from the RMP about their Close Protection medal, doesn't it make sense to recognise the dangers that people go through? Surely a medal does not cost that much to produce, but it might make the men and women who serve their country feel more appreciated.

BOOTED OUT

AFTER my first week here in Iraq my boots crippled me so I went to the stores to change them.

I was told I could only get new boots with a sick note from the doctor, so went to visit him. The QM's Department then said it would be two weeks before I got new boots so I went back to the medical centre and the doctor told me to wear trainers in the meantime.

Five weeks later, I asked the stores where the boots were and was told I wasn't a priority. When I told them that as a dog handler I patrol up to eight miles a night, they suggested I buy my own.

I was so fed up, I did so, at a cost of £85. What a disgrace. No wonder so many people are signing off.

FITNESS FOR FIGHTERS

I COULD not disagree more with the change to include fitness test performance on performance ratings. Eight years ago, I chose the Air Force over the other services because I could be promoted solely on primary job performance and knowledge. I prefer working for people who get ahead because of career field competence rather than how fast they run. Yes, fitness is crucial for those (such as aircrew members and civil engineers) who work long hours in ridiculously hot weather to take the fight to the bad guys. But there are many more of us with desk jobs out here who are still part of the team, and, realistically, we only have to be in good enough shape to walk from the air-conditioned tent we live in to the air-conditioned tent we work in. As long as our physical appearance does not disgrace the military image, run times should be irrelevant.

I realize that we need to weed out people because this is a boots-on-the-ground war, so I say let us at least be honest about it. Give the Army a couple of hundred thousand more troops to win this thing, and cut all the active-duty Air Force jobs except for those who fly and fix planes.

Australian Army Soldiers' Newspaper, July 26, 2007,
<http://www.defence.gov.au/news/armynews/editions/1171/letters.htm>

Soldier Magazine, June 2007
<http://www.soldiermagazine.co.uk/11/mail3.htm>

Soldier Magazine, July 2007
http://www.soldiermagazine.co.uk/mail_archive/kit.htm

Air Force Times, Sept 2007
http://www.airforcetimes.com/community/opinion/airforce_opinion_letters_070917/

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Student Worksheet

Task 1: pre-reading vocabulary

Before reading the letters, match the words/phrases on the left to a synonym or meaning on the right.

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------|----|--|
| 1 | peers | a) | to discharge |
| 2 | incentives | b) | vital |
| 3 | insulting | c) | authorities |
| 4 | to separate | d) | to separate somebody unwanted |
| 5 | powers-that be | e) | sports shoes |
| 6 | to cripple | f) | inducements |
| 7 | trainers | g) | immaterial |
| 8 | crucial | h) | offensive |
| 9 | irrelevant | i) | ground forces actually fighting in a war or conflict |
| 10 | to weed out | j) | to impair |
| 11 | boots-on-the-ground | k) | equals |

Task 2: comprehension check

Write short answers to the following questions:

- 1 Why has the engineer decided to speed up his resignation?
- 2 What does the writer feel the effect of creating a wounded serviceman recognition medal might be?
- 3 What was the problem with the soldier's boots?
- 4 Why did the soldier think he was wasting the doctor's time?
- 5 Why did the writer of the final letter join the Air Force rather than any other service?
- 6 What has prompted the writer of the final letter actually to write it?

Task 3: discussion

The theme of this month's Campaign News Digest is letters from service personnel. They have been selected from different military magazines from around the world and deal with a number of topics. Choose each of the topic areas in turn (pay, medals, kit, fitness) and discuss the contents of each letter with a partner or in small groups. Consider these questions:

- 1 To what extent do you agree with the views expressed in each letter?
- 2 Discuss each of the topics from a personal perspective, relating them to your own armed forces. Are these issues particular to any one service or are they universal?

Task 4: writing

Re-read each of the letters and choose one to which you would like to write a reply. Your reply letter (no more than 200 words) should be addressed to the editor of the magazine. You may choose to agree or disagree with the writer, expand on the topic, open up a new area for discussion in the same field, or comment, in general, on the effect the letter has had on you.

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Teacher's Notes

Warm-up Task

This month, the main theme of the Campaign News Digest is letters from service personnel. The reading texts have all been sourced from the letters pages of military magazines. The letters mostly express dissatisfaction with various elements of military life. To prepare students for the language in the texts, ask them to complete each of the sentences below which you could write in advance on the board.

- 1 The most unfair thing about my job is...
- 2 The one thing that would make my working life a lot easier is...
- 3 If I could change one piece of kit, it would be...
- 4 If I could abolish any one rule, it would be...

When students have completed their personal list, they should discuss it with a partner. You could then invite students to share their points of view with you as a group and you could make a list of the four points that most of your class would like to change for the better.

When discussing these, and writing them on the board, you might like to focus on (and practise) expressions used to express positive and negative opinions that appear in the texts. You could list these as part of a linear scale, e.g.

+	-
I'm extremely grateful for...	I'm extremely disappointed with...
I'm grateful for...	I'm disappointed with...
I have to agree with...	I have to disagree with...
	I was so fed up...
I could not agree more with...	I could not disagree more with...
	What a disgrace!

The warm-up will also help prepare students for Tasks 3 and 4.

Task 1: pre-reading vocabulary

Before reading the letters, match the words/phrases on the left to a synonym or meaning on the right.

Encourage students to try to deduce the meaning of the words from the context using clues from the text.

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1 peers | k) equals |
| 2 incentives | f) inducements |
| 3 insulting | h) offensive |
| 4 to separate | a) to discharge |
| 5 powers-that be | c) authorities |
| 6 to cripple | j) to impair |
| 7 trainers | e) sports shoes |
| 8 crucial | b) vital |
| 9 irrelevant | g) immaterial |
| 10 to weed out | d) to separate somebody unwanted |
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Task 2: comprehension check

Accept any similar answers.

- 1 He's disappointed his (degree-level) qualifications are not being recognised. He feels that he's not receiving the same recognition for his qualifications as his peers.
- 2 He believes it would make wounded servicemen and women feel more appreciated.
- 3 They were hurting his feet so badly that he couldn't do his job properly.
- 4 He wasn't ill. He just needed a new pair of boots.
- 5 He felt that promotion would depend only on how well he did his job and how much he knew (career field competence), and not on his level of fitness.
- 6 He wants to express his disagreement with the change to include fitness test performance in performance ratings. He feels that fitness tests are irrelevant for people like himself who work at desks.

Task 3: discussion

You may like to review the language used in each of the letters and point out some useful expressions which the writers have used to express their viewpoints, e.g.

I am extremely disappointed with...
I find it hard to see...
I have to agree with...
Doesn't it make sense to...?
I could not disagree more with

These, and other, phrases could be used in the pair/group discussion.

You might also have students underline those phrases in each of the four letters which introduce the writer's point of view. Elicit these from the class, write them on the board, and then practise the stress and intonation of each prior to carrying out the task.

As an alternative to the letters in this edition of the Campaign News Digest, you could ask students to visit the letters pages of a number of military magazines and select several letters on the same theme, but from different viewpoints. The 'Soldier Magazine' website has a useful archive search facility where you can search for letters from previous issues by topic.

http://www.soldiermagazine.co.uk/mail_archive/index.htm

When students have completed the task in pairs/small groups, open the floor to a class discussion on each of the issues in the letters: pay, medals, kit, and fitness.

Task 4: writing

Before asking students to do this task, you may like to review letter-writing in class without focussing too much on the mechanics of layout.

Encourage students to use any of the phrases from the Campaign News Digest letters in their own work.

As a homework task, ask students to read the online or print version of a military magazine in English and then write a real letter prompted by one of the articles or topics in the publication. Ask students to provide you with a copy of the material which prompted their letter.

There are many military magazines from which to choose, but here are some suggestions.

British Army <http://www.soldiermagazine.co.uk>

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Royal Navy	http://www.navynews.co.uk
Royal Air Force	http://www.rafnews.co.uk
Australian Army	http://www.defence.gov.au/news/armynews
US Armed Forces	http://www.defensenews.com
US Marine Corps	http://www.marinecorpstimes.com

If your students do not have easy access to either print publications or internet facilities, you might like to download a selection of letters/articles yourself for distribution to your class.

If you have a particularly strong class, you might like to try the following 'précis' task. Ask students to source an example of a letter to a military magazine online (of at least 350 words in length), and then invite them to edit the letter to a maximum of 200 words. They should supply you with both the original and edited versions.

Again, where internet access is unavailable or restricted, you might like to source a single letter or several letters from which students can work.

Abbreviations used in the letters

ADFA	Australian Defence Force Academy
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
OR	Other Ranks
RAE	Royal Australian Engineers
RAEME	Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
RASIGS	Royal Australian Signals
RMP	Royal Military Police
QM	Quartermaster