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Lance-Sergeant Haane Manahi DCM. *Noel Cox.*

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It has been reported that Defence Minister Phil Goff has this week asked Buckingham Palace to reconsider the decision to not review the award of a VC to Lance-Sergeant Haane Manahi. This request is worthy of comment. Mr Goff can be commended for recognising that The Queen is the source of all royal honours and is entitled to be consulted on all matters concerning them. However, it may be questioned whether it was altogether appropriate for Mr Goff to approach the Palace on behalf of the advocates for the late Sergeant Manahi. Mr Goff could be in danger of being seen as a lobbyist for Sergeant Manahi's supporters. As Minister of Defence he has a wider duty, and specific responsibility for gallantry medals. This duty ought to include, one would have thought, taking the broader view of any question and not becoming involved too closely in individual cases. His duty is to uphold policy, not promote departures from it.

It is unfortunately that Mr Goff has been reported as asserting that Manahi's gallantry was "unrecognised". The sergeant, as did many others who were originally nominated for the Victoria Cross, received the Distinguished Conduct Medal. This is almost as highly regarded as the VC.

Ultimately it is both unwise and unhelpful to attempt to second-guess decisions of more than sixty years ago. It is impossible to say with any certainty now whether or not Sergeant Manahi ought to have received the VC rather than the DCM. But he didn't, and the matter should be left to rest. Many thousands of acts of heroism went unrecognised. Many hundreds of soldiers received lesser awards than they were originally nominated for, or than they possibly deserved. These people did not campaign for higher awards--nor, significantly, did Sergeant Manahi.

There is no reason why this one case should be treated as special, or why the long-standing principle of not reviewing such decisions should be abandoned. Nor is it appropriate to portray the Queen, as some media have done, as somehow denying Manahi something which was his by right. Gallantry medals are honours and come from the Crown. There would be precious little honour in them if they were awarded as the result of lobbying. It would also be very unfortunate if the first award of the Victoria Cross for New Zealand were to be made in such controversial circumstances--assuming that this would be an award of a New Zealand medal, rather than of the VC under British regulations, for which Manahi was originally nominated.

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