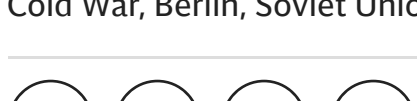


# 'Cold War warriors' deserve medals to recognise 'risk and rigour' in East Germany, says Maj-Gen

Calls to honour veterans who operated covertly in Germany between 1946 and 1990 'fighting for information' key to UK security

Danielle Sheridan, DEFENCE EDITOR  
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One of the Cold War warriors brewing up hot water for tea | CREDIT: BRIXMIS ASSOCIATION

Britain's "forgotten Cold War warriors" have called for recognition of their part in undertaking life-and-death missions in hostile environments following the Second World War.

Their plea comes after veterans who made Britain a nuclear power were awarded medals in 2022 for the first time.

**Ben Wallace**, the former defence secretary, praised the **nuclear test veterans** for their "invaluable contribution to the safety and security of the UK" at the time.

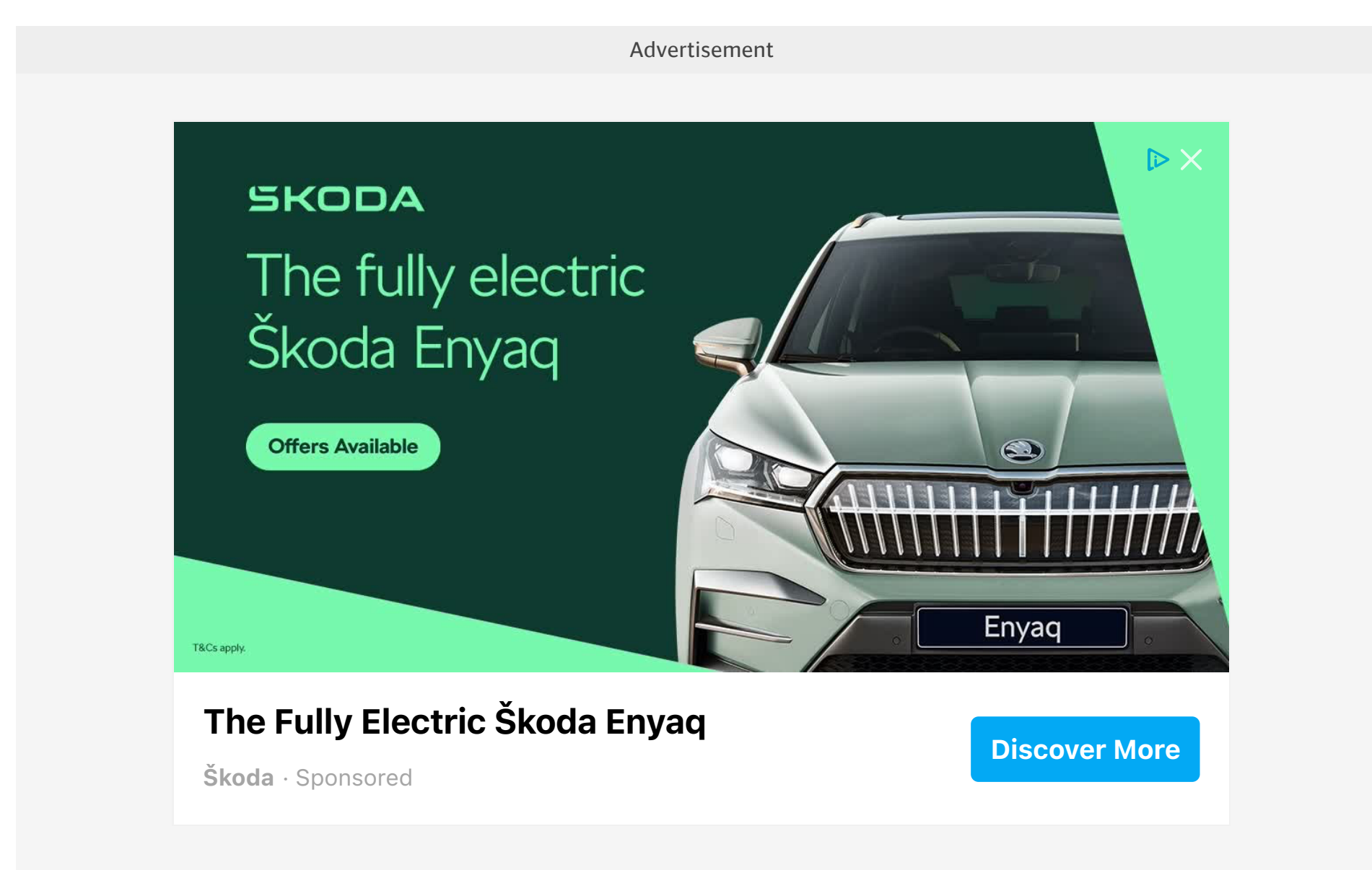
Now, British Intelligence officers who operated behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War have urged **Grant Shapps**, the current Defence Secretary, to ensure they are awarded medals that speak to the "risk and rigour" they displayed during covert operations in East Germany.



Peter Williams, chairman of the BRIXMIS Association, recalls the risks he and his comrades took in East Germany | CREDIT: BRIXMIS ASSOCIATION

There are believed to be under 1,000 veterans of the British Commanders'-in-Chief Mission to the Soviet Forces (BRIXMIS) who operated in Germany between 1946 and 1990.

They say they deserve to be awarded the General Service Medal to acknowledge their efforts.



Over four decades, the Americans, French, Soviet and British forces worked together to establish the right to roam in East Germany for the Western powers, while West Germany acted for their Soviet counterparts as a liaison between the powers so they could circumvent governmental authority in a divided Germany.

Their members claim to have suffered poisoning, laser attacks on patrols, random ramblings and physical assaults on numerous occasions, resulting in damage to mission vehicles, broken bones and even career-ending injuries.

Retired Major General Peter Williams, chairman of the BRIXMIS Association, told The Telegraph the veterans operated on everyday patrolling tactics and techniques that were based on a philosophy of "actively fighting for information that the Soviets and East Germans were determined to keep from us".

### 'Miracle none of us were killed by ramming'

In one particularly harrowing incident, Gen Williams and a number of his team were travelling in a car when it was rammed by an East German air force (EGAF) 10-ton truck outside the main gate of the EGAF radar station at Athensted.

"That none of us was killed or seriously injured was a miracle," he said.

"The car should have rolled, which would have led to serious, possibly fatal, injuries, but we were saved by a roadside fruit tree, and ended up sandwiched between the truck and the tree."

Gen Williams said that in 2011, along with his wife, they returned to the incident site in order to meet the driver of the 10-ton truck, former EGAF corporal Hartmut Luederitz.

He confirmed that the ambush was pre-planned on the instructions of the **Stasi** (East German secret police) and that the Stasi had ordered the ambush to be initiated, he said.

"As we almost reached the front gate his officer ordered him to surge forward across the road and the truck duly rammed the Opel Senator, which was doing about 40mph.

"Luederitz stated to us that he received two weeks' extra leave for his part in the ambush, but he had been told that if they had managed to kill us, he would have received six weeks' leave and a 1,000-mark bonus."



Members of the British Commanders'-in-Chief Mission to the Soviet Forces in 1988 | CREDIT: BRIXMIS ASSOCIATION

This type of incident demonstrates the "risk and rigour" that is considered in the granting of a medal.

He said: "Every tour patrol involved the BRIXMIS crew in taking calculated risks and pushing the envelope to gain every available piece of raw intelligence."

Speaking previously on the matter, Lieutenant General Sir John Foley, who had a distinguished career in military intelligence, said: "In my opinion, based on my experience as an SAS squadron commander and then SAS director, as a battalion commander in Northern Ireland and as a frequent Tourer, the risks faced in East Germany were at least as high as those in other campaigns (Borneo, Northern Ireland, Oman) and were often higher."



The wreck of the car rammed by a 10-ton truck in an incident that Gen Williams and colleagues survived | CREDIT: BRIXMIS ASSOCIATION

Despite this, the BRIXMIS Association has been unsuccessful in its previous submissions for medals, having been twice rejected by the Cabinet Office's advisory military sub-committee (AMSC), apparently "failing" to demonstrate sufficient "risk and rigour".

The group said the risk came from conducting intelligence collection patrols where they were unarmed, had no protective equipment and travelled incommunicado and faced heavily armed, constantly alert Soviet and East German military and the Stasi.

They claim to have displayed rigour by being obliged to fight, by fair means and foul, and that for 44 years, the mission conducted intelligence collection operations "by day and night, every day of the year".

Gen Williams said that for BRIXMIS veterans to be awarded the General Service Medal, it would mean recognition of risk and rigour "endured by 100 per cent of our members".

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