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Ex-squaddie Hopkins sceptical over Armed Forces tax rebate

The Government's plan to give some members of the Armed Forces serving in Iraq and Afghanistan a partial council tax rebate has been described as "tokenistic and cynical" by Kris Hopkins, the Bradford Council Conservative Group Leader.

Cllr Hopkins, who before entering politics served with the Duke of Wellington's Regiment in Kenya, Northern Ireland and Germany, said the figure of £140 was insufficient and that the money should not be taken from the Ministry of Defence's already hugely overstretched budget.

The Conservative Parliamentary Candidate for Keighley and Ilkley continued:

"The fact that this announcement has been held back until the middle of the Labour Conference highlights that it is a cynical measure designed to cheer that Party's troops rather than those who so bravely serve our country.

"The figure of £140 being offered is tokenistic and an insult to the levels of dedication and commitment our servicemen and women demonstrate in the face of the very grave dangers they face.

"It also appears that members of the RAF, who tend to do four-month as opposed to six-month tours of duty, will not be eligible for the rebate.

"However, the most scandalous element of this empty gesture is that the money is to be taken from the MoD's already very scarce resources.

"It is well known that our Forces have been sent into theatre in both Afghanistan and Iraq with inadequate equipment and several individuals have been killed or injured as a direct consequence of this.

"However, rather than committing to properly rectify this inexcusable situation with a commitment to increase the resources available to the Ministry of Defence, the Government has raided the MoD's coffers to fund this proposed council tax rebate.

"It is simply inexcusable: new money should be found for a much more significant and much less discriminatory form of rebate and that money should come from the Treasury."

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