Independent Inquiry relating to Afghanistan (IIA)

HQ PM(A) Update: March 2024

Hearings

The Rt. Hon Johnny Mercer MP, Minister for Veterans, and Mark Nicol, Defence Journalist, gave evidence on the 20th and 21st February. As per the previous open hearings, they were live-streamed and can be accessed on the IIA's YouTube channel, within the 'Live' category at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/@IndIngrelatingtoAfghanistan. Look for Day 11 and Day 12 to watch the evidence given by these witnesses. The hearings have now moved into mainly MOD witnesses who may have raised Complaints and Concerns.

Disclosing Information

We continue to reach out to individuals who we require evidence from, in order to fulfil Rule 9 requests from the Inquiry. A Rule 9 evidence request is made under the Inquiries Act 2005 and is a legal notification sent to either individuals or organisations instructing them to provide relevant information or material to a Statutory Inquiry. If you are approached by the Inquiry team please speak to our IIA team at this email address: ARMYPM-IIAGroupmailbox@mod.gov.uk. This will ensure that the right support is in place and enables us to act as a single point of contact, as well as ensuring that the agreed processes and protocols in place for the Inquiry to interact with Core Participants, is adhered to. If you are contacted by the media, you should inform both us (using the HQ PM(A) IIA group mailbox) and the MOD press office, using the following email address: DDC-PR-News@mod.gov.uk.

The team would be grateful to hear from anyone who served in the RMP from January 2010-December 2013 in Afghanistan alongside UKSF as a searcher. Please contact the team using HQ PM(A) IIA group mailbox above.

If you have any other information that you believe is relevant to the Inquiry, you may either contact us via the HQ PM(A) IIA group mailbox or you can make direct contact with the Inquiry team using the contact details at this link: https://www.iia.independent-inquiry.uk/contact-us/. If you have any relevant material to share with the Inquiry and wish to remain anonymous, you can use the IIA SecureDrop system. Further information around can be found using the same link as above.

Please continue to monitor your inboxes to ensure that you are up to date with Inquiry related correspondence. If you wish to discuss emails from the Inquiry team, please reach out to the HQ PM(A) IIA group mailbox.

If you are aware of anyone that is affected by the IIA and if they are not already on our communications distribution list, please inform us & we will add them.

Call For Evidence

During Johnny Mercer's hearing on the 20th and 21st February, the Chair of the Inquiry reinforced the point that no one will be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act for disclosing information to the Inquiry. More can be seen below in excerpts from the transcripts from both days.

> Before I do so, I want to reiterate the call for evidence. If ever there was a time for individuals to come forward with information for the Inquiry, it is now. If anyone has any information or material which may be relevant to the Inquiry and has not already got in touch, I urge you to get in contact with the Inquiry immediately and directly.

1 - An excerpt of the transcript from 20th February 2024. Sir Charles Haddon-Cave, Chair of the Inquiry, reiterates his sincere call for evidence. You can read the full passage from Page 2, Paragraph 15 of that transcript, found on the website.

The first is the point that has been raised just now, that I want to assure you, and indeed everybody listening in today, that I have obtained a suite of undertakings from the Attorney General and the Chief of the Defence Staff to clear the pathways for people to come and speak to me and the Inquiry, either confidentially, directly, or in a sense in the witness box in OPEN. Individuals will not be prosecuted, for instance, for having failed at the time to comply with section 113 of the Act and not reported it at the time, and they will not be prosecuted for other matters, because it's recognised that the really important public interest is getting to the truth. So people can be assured that the pathways to the Inquiry are clear.

2 - An excerpt of the transcript from the 21st February 2024. You can read the full passage from Page 63, Paragraph 7 of that days transcript, found on the website.

The Media

Several personnel have already been contacted by the media in relation to RMP legacy investigations, which is likely to continue as the Inquiry progresses. As all personnel both serving and retired are subject to the Official Secrets Act it is advised that you refer any enquiries to the MOD Press Office who will engage and ensure all enquiries are handled appropriately. Their contact number is: MOD Press Office. +44207 2187 907. You may wish to consider the amount of career detail you post on your social media profile(s), which could be used by journalists to make contact. Further information can be found at the following link to assist you in securing your social media accounts: https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/social-media-how-to-use-it-safely

Welfare

Your welfare throughout the proceedings remains of upmost importance to us and we will make ourselves available on any day of the week, or location, that suits you in order to provide you with the support you require. We encourage you to reach out to the following individuals and organisations for support, should you need it:

Army Operational Legacy Branch (AOLB):

Maj Tracey Brooks, tracey.brooks102@mod.gov.uk

RMP Regimental Secretary:

Col Jeremy Green, regsec@rhqrmp.org

The Veterans Gateway:

http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk/

RMP IIA team:

ARMYPM-IIAGroupmailbox@mod.gov.uk

Useful Links

DefNet:

modgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/SitePages/Independent-Inquiry-relating-to-Afghanistan.aspx

Defence Connect:

Independent Inquiry relating to Afghanistan | Defence Connect (mod.uk)

IIA website:

https://www.iia.independent-inquiry.uk/

TORs:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-inquiry-into-alleged-unlawful-activity-by-british-armed-forces-during-deliberate-detention-operations-in-afghanistan/terms-of-reference