Independent Inquiry relating to Afghanistan (IIA)

HQ PM(A) Update: September 2024

Hearings

Sir Ben Wallace, who was Secretary of State for Defence from July 2019 to August 2023, gave evidence in an OPEN hearing at the Royal Courts of Justice on Monday 23rd September 2024. The link to the recording and to the transcript can be viewed on the Inquiry's website.

There have been a number of articles written by various media outlets in response to Sir Ben Wallace's evidence. Notably from The Times, Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, Daily Mail, The Sun and the BBC. The BBC'S latest article can be viewed here.

At the beginning of the hearing, the Chair of the Inquiry, Lord Justice Haddon-Cave, gave an update in his opening remarks on the Inquiry's progress since the last OPEN hearing on 3rd May. The update is very informative and the link to the transcript is here.

Model

16. The model to which the Inquiry is working – which has enabled the considerable progress to date - is to progress the workstreams and hearings in relation to *all three main* questions under the Terms of Reference at the same time, namely:
    1. Is there credible information as to Extra-Judicial Killings?
    2. Were they covered up?
    3. Was the Royal Military Police inquiry fit for purpose?

(3) RMP

17. With this in mind, thirdly, work has been going on simultaneously in relation to the preparation of an expert report regarding the Royal Military Police and Operation Northmoor. Notification as to the date of publication of this expert report will be made in due course.

1 - An excerpt from the Chair's opening remarks in the OPEN hearing on 23rd September 2024.

If you have any queries surrounding Sir Ben Wallace's evidence, or subsequent media articles, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the RMP Inquiry team via the multiuser mailbox.

GOV.UK Notify

We have set up the GOV.UK Notify service so that we can send quick and short notice text messages to you should we have messages to be received quickly. If you would like to be added to the distribution list, please contact SO1 Policy and Communications IIA at the RMP IIA group mailbox.

The only information that will be retained is your mobile number and you can ask us to delete this information at any point. Your mobile number will only be retained for the purpose of receiving Notify text messages.

The text messages will be sent from Notify and will always start with "RMP IIA". There is also the option to text back and reply to the message on Notify should this be quicker for you than emailing the group mailbox. Notify will only be monitored during core working hours.

Communications

We are aware that not everyone who served on Op CESTRO and Op NORTHMOOR receive this newsletter. We would be grateful if you could pass this on to those you served with and ask them to contact us via the RMP IIA group mailbox so that we can add them to the distribution list.

All previous editions of this newsletter can be found on the Regimental Headquarters website under the 'Newsletters' section.

If you would like to receive this newsletter on a different email address then please contact SO1 Policy and Communications IIA with your amendment using the group mailbox.

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 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.

If you are approached to give evidence, this is the opportunity for you to provide your honest thoughts and opinions to support this vital work.

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.

The Media

Several personnel have 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 and 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: +44207 2187 907.

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.

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

Adjutant General's Corps Headquarters:

Assistant Corps Secretary Maj (retired) Ben Culleton, AGCRHQ-0GroupMailbox@mod.gov.uk

The Veterans Gateway:

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

RMP Inquiry team:

ARMYPM-IIAGroupmailbox@mod.gov.uk

Inquiry Welfare page:

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

Useful Links

DefNet:

https://modgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/SitePages/An-update-on-the-Independent-Inquiry-relating-to-Afghanistan.aspx

Defence Connect:

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

Inquiry website:

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

Inquiry Terms of Reference:

https://iiaweb-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/2023090_Terms_Of_Reference_IIA.pdf

Feedback

We are very keen to hear your feedback regarding this newsletter. Is there something we can add that will make this process easier for you? Is there a section, not already included, that you would like to see? Would you like to see profiles of those on the IIA team so that you can get to know us? Please don't hesitate to contact SO1 Policy and Communications IIA with your suggestions using the RMP IIA group mailbox.