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6 January 2008

Thank you for your letter of 19 November 2007 regarding the death of Ali Salam 'Abdul Hassan al-Rukabi, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in the city of Basra on 10 April 2007.

As I wrote in my letter of 18 July 2007, it is UK policy to conduct a review immediately after an incident of this nature. Our findings confirmed that, while a substantial amount of ammunition was expended, the shots fired had all been aimed at clearly identified targets in self defence and in line with our Rules of Engagement. My officials have now received a copy of the investigation papers from the al-Qebalah Police Station. They have seen nothing in them to suggest that the Iraqi police reached a verdict that any of the deaths in this incident should be categorised as anything other than accidental. If you have seen a report which suggests differently, then I would be grateful if you could forward me a copy. Otherwise, I do not believe that there are any grounds for further investigation.

The father of Ali Salam 'Abdul Hassan al-Rukabi filed a claim for compensation for the death of his son at Basra Air Station on 13 June 2007. We will only make compensation payments where it is shown that UK forces were negligent and, as I previously stated, our conclusion was that shots were fired only at clearly identified targets in self defence and in line with current UK Rules of Engagement. The claim was accordingly rejected on 3 October 2007.

The Area Claims Officer has always been located at Basra Air Station and this remains the case to this day. He continues to hold Claims Surgeries twice weekly, and attendance fluctuates from session to session. The surgeries are well advertised, and I am not aware of any problem that Iraqis who wish to submit claims have been unable to do so through the normal channels. The Area Claims Officer continues to strive to

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ensure that a complete and efficient claims service is provided within the security and policy parameters he is given. Since 5 September, when we officially handed over Basra Palace to the Iraqi authorities, he has received and processed approximately 80 claims.

I would like to emphasise again that I consider any civilian death a great tragedy. It is our policy that, if there are any grounds to suspect that the Rules of Engagement have been breached, then this will be treated extremely seriously and investigated by the Service police. The unlawful killing of civilians is, of course, absolutely unacceptable.

I hope that the above addresses your queries.

ORIGINAL SIGNED
The Rt Hon Bob Ainsworth MP