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## **INDEPENDENT INQUIRY RELATED TO AFGHANISTAN**

Today, the Ministry of Defence announced a statutory inquiry to investigate and report on alleged unlawful activity by British Armed Forces during deliberate detention operations in Afghanistan in the period mid-2010 to mid-2013, and the adequacy of subsequent investigations into such allegations. Lord Justice Charles Haddon-Cave has been appointed to lead the independent inquiry.

As Minister for Veterans' Affairs, I am aware of the impact of this news. I have worked hard over many years to ensure that the Government learns from the past when it comes to dealing with our Veterans during these types of investigations, and there is now a formal network of support available to all those affected by this inquiry.

Any veteran called up by the inquiry will be contacted by the Ministry of Defence in due course and full legal and pastoral support will be provided to you. Further information on the inquiry and how it will proceed can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-inquiry-into-alleged-unlawful-activity-by-british-armed-forces-during-deliberate-detention-operations-in-afghanistan>

If you require any wellbeing support in the meantime, help is also available. You should reach out to:

- Your GP or a local mental health service:
  - In England, veterans and their families can access Op COURAGE: the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/armed-forces-community/mental-health/veterans-reservists/>
  - NHS Wales has dedicated support for veterans and their families: <https://www.veteranswales.co.uk/>
  - NHS Scotland has dedicated support for veterans and their families: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/access/health-rights-for-veterans#health-resources-for-veterans>
  - The Northern Ireland Veterans' Support Office can advise veterans and their families in Northern Ireland on available help: <https://nivso.org.uk/>
- The Veterans UK helpline (0808 1914 218); or
- The Veterans Gateway who can signpost you to the right support, including from one of our excellent service charities (<https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk/> / 0808 802 1212).

All these pathways have received specific direction and advice on how to deal with requests for support arising from this announcement. I know that Ministers across Government share my profound gratitude to all those who served with great bravery and distinction in Afghanistan.

