

MSU4/7/3

3 July 2024

Dear serving and former members of the armed forces.
Independent Inquiry relating to Afghanistan

As your new Secretary of State for Defence, I am writing to set out my position in relation to the Independent Inquiry relating to Afghanistan ('the Inquiry').

Support for our Armed Forces

First and foremost, I want to recognise the bravery of all those who served in Afghanistan and the dangers we asked them to face – none more than our Special Forces, who carry out the most extraordinary missions with extreme risks to defend us and our allies. Our British armed forces have a proud tradition of upholding the highest standards of military ethics, professionalism and international law. That is fundamental to a disciplined military force and to Britain's standing and moral authority as one of the world's leading democracies, so allegations of unlawful killings and cover-ups could not be more serious.

Support for the Inquiry

I welcomed the Inquiry when it was announced in Parliament in December 2022, and I underscored its importance to protect the reputation of our British Special Forces, to guarantee the integrity of military investigations, and to secure justice for those affected. My position remains unchanged.

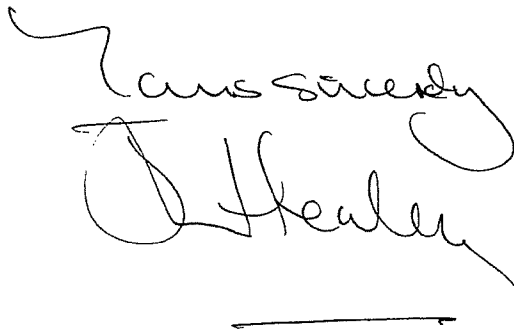
My Ministers and I reiterate our strong support for the Inquiry and urge full cooperation from all Defence personnel and veterans who possess information relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference to come forward and support the Inquiry. MOD can facilitate this. Alternatively, you can contact the Inquiry directly and confidentially [here](#). Protections (known as undertakings) are available for those who engage with the Inquiry on administrative, disciplinary, and vetting matters. You can read more on this in the joint letter from PUS and Chiefs or on the Inquiry's website.

**Head Office
Single Services
Strategic Command
Regimental Associations**

Support for our People

I want to underline the priority that I attach to the wellbeing of our Defence personnel and veterans in the context of this Inquiry, and to signpost the broad range of support that is available, as recently updated on [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk). This is of utmost concern, both to me and my Ministers. We recognise that the prospect of the Inquiry may be stressful, bringing up complex and mixed feelings for you and your families. Accordingly, we will do all we can to support those impacted, including through the provision of full legal and pastoral support, with full confidentiality, for as long as they need it. In doing so, we underscore the essential principles of the presumption of innocence and the privilege against self-incrimination.

May I thank you again for your service. You have my fullest support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Healey', with a horizontal line underneath it.

THE RT HON JOHN HEALEY MP