

Judge-led review to provide greater certainty for troops being investigated



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The review, to be led by a retired judge, will make sure the guidance and policy framework for investigating allegations during overseas operations is fit for the future. This will help ensure that all allegations are taken forward in a timely manner, providing reassurance to victims and closure to innocent personnel caught up in investigations. It will not reconsider past investigations or prosecutorial decisions or reopen historical cases but will look at how processes can be strengthened going forward.

The review will complement the reforms made under the Overseas Operations Bill, which is currently going through parliament. Together they will provide service personnel on future operations with greater clarity and certainty.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

Nobody wants to see service personnel subjected to drawn-out investigations, only for the allegations to prove to be false or unfounded.

At the same time, credible allegations against those who fall short of our high standards must be investigated quickly and efficiently.

This review, which will run in tandem with our Overseas Operations Bill and build on the recommendations of the Service Justice System Review, will help future-proof investigations and provide greater certainty to both victims and service personnel.

The review will begin in the coming months and will consider whether we have the skills and processes in place for all

elements of the investigative process, from allegations through to prosecutions. It will look at whether there is enough cooperation between independent investigators and prosecutors to increase the speed of decision-making, as well as the extent to which such investigations are hampered by organisational culture.

Recommendations from the review will build on existing measures to improve the efficiency of Service Police investigations following the Service Justice System Review conducted by HH Shaun Lyons and Sir John Murphy, published earlier this year.

Measures introduced following that review included setting up a Defence Serious Crime Unit to bring together individual Special Investigation Bureau units, similar to civilian police forces which deal in regional crime, to remove the duplication of work and enhance operational effectiveness.

This announcement follows the Second Reading of the Overseas Operations Bill last month. The Bill will enable stronger legal protections for service personnel and veterans facing the threat of repeated investigations and potential prosecution.

The Bill delivers on the government's manifesto commitment to tackle vexatious claims and end the cycle of reinvestigations against our armed forces.

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