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4.8.1.2

12 October 2020

Dear Harriet,

Overseas Operations

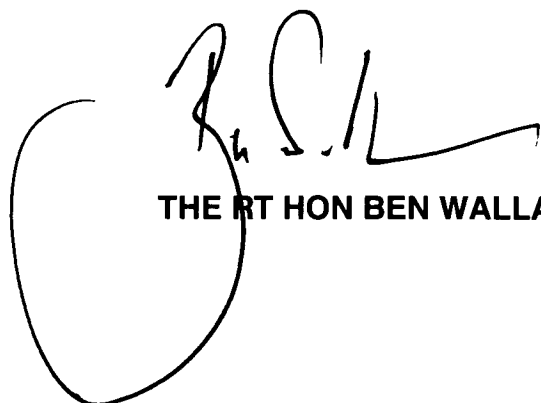
As the Committee will be aware, we have brought the Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Bill before the House to provide reassurance to our personnel that we have taken steps to help protect them from the threat of repeated investigations and potential prosecution in connection with historical operations overseas, many years after the events in question. Ministers have always been clear, however, that an equally important principle is that in relation to operations overseas, where there are serious and credible allegations in relation to UK forces, there must be timely consideration and an efficient and effective investigation where that is appropriate.

With that in mind I am writing to let you know that we intend to complement the work being taken forward in the Bill with a review of the framework, skills and processes in place for dealing with those complex and serious allegations of wrongdoing against UK forces which relate to overseas operations. The review will be led by a senior retired judge and take at least six months; it will be forward looking and, whilst drawing on insights from the handling of allegations from recent overseas operations, will not seek to reconsider past investigative or prosecutorial decisions, or reopen historical cases.

The review will examine processes in the service police and Service Prosecuting Authority, in addition to considering the extent to which such investigations might be hampered by potential barriers in the Armed Forces (or example, cultural issues or operational processes). A key part of the review will be its recommendations for any necessary improvements. I expect to publish the review and the Government's response to it in due course.

The Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

I have today made a written ministerial statement to reflect this and have also written to the Shadow Defence Secretary and other Defence Spokespersons in the House.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized initials and a surname, positioned above the printed name.

THE RT HON BEN WALLACE MP