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Department for  
Constitutional Affairs  
Justice, rights and democracy

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Des Browne MP  
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Our ref:

July 2006

### **Iraq inquests backlog**

I agreed to give you a progress report on the Iraq inquests backlog since the written ministerial statement on 5 June.

The Oxfordshire Coroner has now appointed Andrew Walker and Selena Lynch as additional assistant deputies. They are barristers who have experience of acting as assistant deputy coroners. As you will see from the attached table, they have each taken a number of cases. All the cases up to 2004 have been allocated. Since 5 June, 5 inquests have been held, 4 further inquests have been listed and 8 are in the process of being listed, subject to witness availability. I expect that a retired High Court Judge, Sir Richard Curtis, will be appointed as assistant deputy coroner on 8 August. He is already doing preparatory work on the Sea King helicopter crash fatalities. An additional Coroner's officer and an administration assistant have been appointed and they are now up to speed and helping with the investigations and listings. A further Coroner's officer is being recruited to replace the one who recently resigned.

The attached table shows the progress which has been made. The table also includes 8 servicemen deaths overseas unrelated to the Iraq conflict, which have recently been identified.

I have written to the US Embassy to request information on cases where the Coroner is waiting for reports from US authorities to enable him to complete his investigations.

The inquests into the deaths of a number of servicemen cannot be listed until MoD Board of Inquiry reports or other investigations have been completed and I would appreciate your assistance to establish when these will be finalised in the following cases:



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Lance Bombardier Evans	)
Sergeant Hehir	)
Major Ward	) Died in Chinook helicopter crash
Captain Guy	) 22 March 2003
Warrant Officer 2 Stratford	)
Colour Sergeant Cecil	)
Marine Hedenskog	)
Operator Maintener (Communications) Seymour	
Corporal Pitchard	died 31 January 2006
Trooper Smith	died 2 February 2006
Private Ellis	)
Captain Holmes	) died together 28 February 2006
Lieutenant Palmer	)

I hope that we can clarify the amount of money you will pay for the additional resources for the Oxfordshire coroner and our officials are in discussion about this.

I plan to publish a further written ministerial statement in early September as I promised in my June statement, and I will continue to liaise with you as we progress. I am, personally, conducting a weekly audit on this and would welcome hearing from you whether the rate of progress is what you expect.

**HARRIET HARMAN**

Approved by the Minister of State  
and signed in her absence

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## Oxfordshire coroner: servicemen and civilian fatalities

	Date of death	Name of deceased	Allocated to	In process of being listed	Date listed	Date inquest heard
1			Andrew Walker			
2			Andrew Walker			
3			Andrew Walker			
4			Andrew Walker			
5			Andrew Walker			
6	21.03.03	Lance Bombardier Evans	Provisionally to Sir Richard Curtis			
7	21.03.03	Sergeant Hehir	Provisionally to Sir Richard Curtis			
8	21.03.03	Major Ward (Royal Marines)	Provisionally to Sir Richard Curtis			
9	21.03.03	Captain Guy (Royal Marines)	Provisionally to Sir Richard Curtis			
10	21.03.03	Warrant Officer 2 Stratford (Royal Marines)	Provisionally to Sir Richard Curtis			
11	21.03.03	Colour Sergeant Cecil (Royal Marines)	Provisionally to Sir Richard Curtis			
12	21.03.03	Marine Hedenskog	Provisionally to Sir Richard Curtis			
13	21.03.03	Operator Maintainer (Communications) 1 Seymour (Royal Navy)	Provisionally to Sir Richard Curtis			
14	22.03.03	Lieutenant Wilson	Provisionally to Sir Richard Curtis			

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	Date of death	Name of deceased	Allocated to	In process of being listed	Date listed	Date inquest heard
15	22.03.03	Lieutenant West	Provisionally to Sir Richard Curtis			
16	22.03.03	Lieutenant Green	Provisionally to Sir Richard Curtis			
17	22.03.03	Lieutenant Williams	Provisionally to Sir Richard Curtis			
18	22.03.03	Lieutenant King	Provisionally to Sir Richard Curtis			
19	22.03.03	Lieutenant Lawrence	Provisionally to Sir Richard Curtis			
20	22.03.03	Flight Lieutenant Main	Andrew Walker	Subject to witness availability		
21	22.03.03	Flight Lieutenant Williams	Andrew Walker	Subject to witness availability		
22	22.03.03	Sapper Allsopp	Andrew Walker		29.09.06	
23	22.03.03	Staff Sergeant Cullingworth	Andrew Walker		29.09.06	
24			Andrew Walker			
25	24.03.03	Sergeant Roberts	Nick Gardiner			
26	25.03.03	Corporal Allbutt	Selena Lynch			
27	28.03.03	Lance Corporal of Horse Hull	Andrew Walker/Selena Lynch			
28	30.03.03	Lance Corporal Brierley				21.06.06 Accidental death
29	30.03.03	Marine Maddison	Andrew Walker	Subject to witness availability		

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	Date of death	Name of deceased	Allocated to	In process of being listed	Date listed	Date inquest heard
30	30.03.03	Major Ballard				
31	01.04.03	Lance Corporal Shearer	Selena Lynch	Subject to witness availability		
32	06.04.03	Fusilier Turrington			28.09.06	
33	06.04.03	Private Muzvuru	Selena Lynch			
34	06.04.03	Lance Corporal Malone	Selena Lynch			
35	13.08.03	Private Smith	Andrew Walker/Selena Lynch	Subject to witness availability		
36	23.09.03	Sergeant Nightingale	Andrew Walker		27.09.06	
37	01.01.04	Sergeant Patterson	Selena Lynch	Subject to witness availability		
38	01.01.04	Major Stenner	Selena Lynch	Subject to witness availability		
39	02.01.04	Lance Corporal Craw		Subject to witness availability		
40						
41						05.07.06 Unlawful killing
42						05.07.06 Unlawful killing
43	28.06.04	Fusilier Gentle				
44	19.07.04	Flight Lieutenant Gover				
45	09.08.04	Private O'Callaghan				21.06.06 Unlawful killing

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	Date of death	Name of deceased	Allocated to	In process of being listed	Date listed	Date inquest heard
46			Selena Lynch			
47	31.10.04	Staff Sergeant Rose	Selena Lynch			
48	08.11.04	Private Tukutukuwaqa				05.07.06 Unlawful killing
49						
50						
51						
52						
53						
54	01.05.05	Guardsmen Wakefield	Selena Lynch			
55	25.05.05	Lance Corporal Brackenbury				
56	29.06.05	Signaller Didsbury	Andrew Walker			
57	15.07.05	Private Spicer	Selena Lynch			
58	15.07.05	Private Hewett	Selena Lynch			
59	15.07.05	2nd Lieutenant Shearer	Selena Lynch			
60			Selena Lynch			
61			Selena Lynch			
62	05.09.05	Fusilier Manning	Selena Lynch			
63	05.09.05	Fusilier Meade	Selena Lynch			
64	30.01.06	Lance Corporal Douglas	Selena Lynch			
65	31.01.06	Corporal Pritchard				
66	02.02.06	Trooper Smith				
67	28.02.06	Private Ellis	Selena Lynch			

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	Date of death	Name of deceased	Allocated to	In process of being listed	Date listed	Date inquest heard
68	28.02.06	Captain Holmes	Selena Lynch			
69	28.02.06	Lieutenant Palmer				
70						
71						
72	15.05.06	Private Morris				
73	15.05.06	Private Lewaicei				
74	07.05.06	Wing Commander John Coxen				
75	07.05.06	Lieutenant Commander Darren Chapman				
76	07.05.06	Captain David Dobson				
77	07.05.06	Flight Lieutenant Sarah-Jayne Mulvihill				
78	07.05.06	Marine Paul Collins				

*Italics* denotes non-Iraq related military death

CAPITALS denotes civilian Iraq related death

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Our ref:

July 2006

#### **Oxfordshire Iraq related inquests**

I am writing further to our telephone conversation on 29 June when we discussed the current backlog of Oxfordshire inquests into the deaths of British servicemen in Iraq where we are waiting information from the US authorities.

Since then my officials have emailed you several times requesting further information on the following cases:

Flight Lieutenant Main	)	Died together on 22.03.03 in a tornado "blue on blue crash. The report is still awaited.
Flight Lieutenant Williams	)	
Lance Corporal of Horse Hull	)	Died on 28.03.03. A depleted uranium case. The Special Investigation Branch have been chasing the US for the report
John Dolman	)	Civilian security guards killed in suicide bombings on 01.01.05. The FBI investigation is still ongoing.
Nicholas Pears	)	
John Eardley	)	
Tracy Hushin	)	

I would be grateful for any update you can give me on these cases as a matter of urgency as I need to write to Des Browne to update him on progress with the backlog of Iraq related deaths. If necessary the Coroner will go ahead and hear the inquests without the US reports.

I look forward to hearing from you by return.

**HARRIET HARMAN**



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