

UK VETERANS-ONE VOICE PRESS RELEASE

5th February 2016

Op Banner Legacy Issues affecting Veterans

A number of recent press reports regarding the treatment of veterans for events that occurred in service is nothing short of a national scandal. We have written to hundreds of MPs to outline our views on these witch hunts by a section of the legal profession that seems to delight in securing millions from the Defence budget and ultimately the UK taxpayer for spurious claims. The universal responses so far reiterate that service personnel are subject to the Rule of law and that Government cannot interfere in Police investigations.

It doesn't just stop with the Iraq campaign; we are now witnessing similar claims emerging from Op Herrick in Afghanistan where again there seems to be a highly orchestrated mining operation to identify 'victims' of alleged mistreatment.

In Northern Ireland there is also an assault not just on the Regular Forces but also operations by Special Forces and the Police during Operation Banner. Whilst we do not wish to comment on a specific 'live' case, we cannot ignore the ongoing vindictive pursuit of our veterans for alleged actions in a series of incidents during the Troubles in NI. We realise of course that none of the claims have been tested in a criminal law context and we await the outcome of this. If indeed 'Legacy issues' are to be settled in the interests of the 'Peace process' then we should examine ALL unresolved aspects, not just allow the current 'lop sided' approach to try and portray the Armed Forces efforts to the support the Rule of Law in NI in a bad light. We therefore call on the Government to come out and explain the following:

1. When will the IRA open its files for examination by those the organisation murdered?
2. If the Bloody Sunday paras are to face court and should there be any convictions, what action will the Government take to extend the spirit of the Good Friday Agreement to ensure that State Forces are not left hung out to dry because of an anomaly in legislation? (1)
3. When will the NI Director of Public Prosecutions issue a statement about the current status of the RUC Operation Taurus investigation into the activities of Martin McGuinness outlining the reasons why this case has not progressed? (2)
4. Why was Martin McGuinness allowed to decline to answer questions at the Bloody Sunday Inquiry (without sanction) yet with bare faced effrontery able to demand that the State open its files when he and his comrade Gerry Adams continue denials and about their own roles during Op Banner?. (3)
5. What support will the Government put in place to provide veterans, accused of offences during Op Banner, to ensure they are properly supported prior to any trial, during and afterwards?
6. What support will the Government put in place to support the many thousands of veterans who now wish to pursue legitimate complaints about attempts on their lives during Op Banner to seek legal redress?
7. How many of the 350 Royal Pardons given out to individuals in Northern Ireland are for terrorist related offences and why will the Government not publish this information? (4)

8. What plans do the Government have to initiate a similar Inquiry into the events at Narrow water, Bloody Friday, Deal Barracks, Hydepark, Birmingham Pub Bombings, Enniskillen and La Mon and many others? Why did the Government spend £195 million for an Inquiry into Bloody Sunday but has so far failed to do the same major PIRA activity during Op Banner?
9. Will the Government provide adequate funding to the PSNI to investigate the avalanche of complaints now being made by Op Banner veterans about attempts on their lives during Op Banner that they allege were not investigated to the fullest extent in pursuit of the States ECHR Article 2 obligations? (5) This is considering the estimated sum the PSNI Chief Constable feels he needs to investigate the activities of Stakeknife? (6)
10. When will the Government make known its decision on whether to appeal in the aftermath of the Hydepark bombing case and the failures of the PSNI in this case? (7)

If indeed the Rule of Law must apply, then this extends to veterans the 'Right to life under Article 2 ECHR, and now hundreds if not thousands of veterans intend to exercise their rights and entitlements to force the Government to treat them with the same regard that the rule of law extends to citizens of the State and others, whether they be combatants or non-combatants.(5) Thus far veterans feel that the Government wishes this issue would quietly go away, however they must know that veterans will not stand idly by and allow their personal sacrifices and service to the nation to be ignored and vilified for political expediency.

Ends

References:

1. Bloody Sunday Highlights Sentence differences
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2. Operation Taurus <http://www.spectator.co.uk/2011/10/skeletons-in-the-closet/>
3. McGuinness refusal to answer questions at Saville Inquiry
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/mcguinness-refuses-to-reveal-site-of-arms-dump-76927.html>
4. 350 Royal Pardons <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-27260596>
5. Veterans Article 2 ECHR Action <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/calls-by-150-exsoldiers-to-probe-troubles-attacks-on-them-could-bring-psni-to-a-standstill-34418970.html>
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<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/soldier-injured-as-he-saved-two-girls-from-ira-bomb-is-part-of-group-seeking-fresh-terror-probes-34425372.html>
6. PSNI Chief Constable story on funding for 'Stakeknife' investigation.
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-35496645>
7. HydePark Bombing case <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/wms-high-court-judgment-on-downey-case>

Notes to Editors:

ABOUT US

UK Veterans - One Voice, were formed to campaign for fair treatment for all veterans.

We aim to attempt to unite all the groups who are fighting for justice or seeking help for serving military personnel and veterans in need.

We are not a political organisation but people who have served their Country with Professionalism, Honour and the hope that we would always be supported by the Government we represented.