



Chair's Statement - Tuesday 22 September 2026

As is apparent from the OPEN versions of the correspondence published with this note, on 6 August 2026 the Ministry of Defence wrote to the Inquiry to say that they had recently discovered “97 million unique records [relating] to the period covered by the Terms of Reference”. The letter also mentions “additional folders that may include relevant material”. It was made clear that this material had not been reviewed or considered at all by the Ministry of Defence when responding to the Rule 9 requests for evidence that the Inquiry has issued over the last three years.

The late appearance of this potentially relevant material is troubling and regrettable, and if not rapidly addressed and managed, has the capacity to delay the important work of this Inquiry, which is now well advanced.

I have called a **public hearing**, to take place at **10:30am on Friday 25 September 2026** at a venue to be confirmed, firstly because it seemed to me that other Core Participants, and the public, must be made aware of this development, and secondly to seek **reassurances** from the Ministry of Defence that:

- (i) This discovery will be addressed by the Ministry of Defence quickly, efficiently, and proportionately, so that *any* material of real relevance is quickly identified and disclosed to the Inquiry, without disruption to the timings of the Inquiry's programme of work.
- (ii) That the carrying out of (i) above by the Ministry of Defence does not impact on its ability to respond to the Inquiry's ongoing workstreams.
- (iii) That the failure, in this incidence, of the Ministry of Defence, to respond to obviously important correspondence from the Inquiry as requested (or at all, until the hearing was scheduled) was an isolated episode and will not be repeated.
- (iv) That steps will be taken to ensure that there will be no further similar revelations during the remaining course of the Inquiry, and that I will receive – in short order – written assurance from a senior official, that the Ministry of Defence is discharging its disclosure obligations to the Inquiry in accordance with the level of candour so clearly required.

I will consider what further steps are required once the hearing has concluded.

Lord Justice Haddon-Cave

**Chair, the Independent Inquiry Relating to Afghanistan
22 September 2026**