



Chair's Opening Statement January 2026

Good morning,

I hope everyone has had a good break.

As we begin a New Year, I would like to make a few remarks. An OPEN but undated version of these remarks will appear posted on the Inquiry website in due course.

1. First, the Inquiry continues to make significant progress with its lines of enquiry. There will be a full programme of witness hearings in the next 12 months, which for National Security reasons will continue to be held in CLOSED.
2. Second, the work of the Forensic team has progressed to the stage where, in a week or so's time, the Inquiry will provide the Ministry of Defence Core Participants with a detailed Note from Counsel to the Inquiry, a sample pack and other material that will provide them with information about the ongoing work within the Inquiry's forensics workstream. This material will, to the extent possible, be shared with other Core Participants, once security checking has taken place.
3. Third, the Inquiry team continues the technical work of examining the server known as "ITS1".
4. Fourth, following my Ruling of 24 September 2025 refusing the Ministry of Defence's application to delay publication of gisted transcripts, the process of gisting has re-started and must gather pace and recover ground. I am grateful for the work that has already been done on this. I continue to pay close attention to the redaction and gisting process, and to keep a close eye on material that is, and that which is not, appropriate to be in the public domain.
5. Fifth, I remind everyone of the importance of adherence to each of my Restriction Orders, and the importance of ensuring that the steps which the Inquiry has taken to protect the anonymity of witnesses are followed *to the letter* and respected.
6. Sixth, in the coming year, I hope and expect everyone continues to have regard at all times to their public and/or professional duty to *maximise* co-operation with

the Inquiry and *minimise* unnecessary and/or repetitious correspondence, argument and delay. And that those charged with the responsibility of *overseeing* the processes and people concerned, continue to ensure that this is the case, and that everyone 'leans in' and cooperates with the Inquiry. You will recall, this was the direction given by CDS and the Chiefs of Defence. I appreciate the pressures, and I understand the stress an Inquiry such as this causes, but it is in nobody's interests that the Inquiry is prolonged any longer than necessary.

7. Finally, you can rest assured that I will continue to have regard to what is in the *public interest* and *fair to all concerned* (as I did recently in pausing the DDO Phase 3B hearings) and I will take the steps which I deem necessary and appropriate to ensure that the Inquiry fulfils its Terms of Reference.

Thank you.