



Strictly embargoed: 12.01am Monday 14 June 2004

14 June 2004

**Statement by the Rt Hon Lord Morris of Manchester AO QSO, Honorary
Parliamentary Adviser to The Royal British Legion**

THE RT HON LORD LLOYD OF BERWICK TO HEAD INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO GULF WAR ILLNESSES

The Royal British Legion's 1997 Annual Conference called unanimously for a public inquiry into the 1990-91 Gulf War veterans' illnesses; a call it has maintained ever since.

It is now 14 years since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait precipitated the first Gulf conflict and, with 2,585 veterans – many now terminally ill – already in receipt of war pensions, and over 5,000 reporting a wide range of undiagnosed illnesses, there is clearly a major problem to be addressed.

The Government – while stating that its mind is not closed to an inquiry – has repeatedly resisted one. We are told ministers “remain unconvinced” that an inquiry would help. Only through the programme of research funded by Government, they say, are the causes of Gulf veterans' illnesses likely to be established.

Yet 14 years on many veterans, now in broken health, still find themselves locked in what the Legion describes as “a long hard battle” to have their illnesses accepted as war-related.

On 5th February 2004 the Legion's call for an inquiry was strongly reinforced in a letter sent to me by Stephen Irwin QC, and other lawyers who have taken a close and continuous interest in the problems and needs of Gulf veterans.

Their letter asked me – as Honorary Parliamentary Adviser to the Legion over many years – to draw the attention of the Government and Parliament to the continuing plight of Gulf veterans, in the wake of the finding that legal action based on negligence and/or breach of statutory duty was ‘not currently viable’.

Stephen Irwin and his co-signatories are in no doubt whatever that many Gulf veterans are suffering ill health which experts worldwide associate with service in the Gulf. They also say that 'science has not explained their illnesses' and conclude:

"We would ask the Government to consider instituting a full public review of the position of veterans (as has been called for by The Royal British Legion) and to instigate a process of conciliation with the veterans' groups. This should be designed to mark the effects of war service on the veterans who are suffering and to make good by *ex gratia* payments the deficiencies of the War Pensions Scheme."

It was their letter that brought me to consult widely on the possibility of finding a retired Judge of the highest standing to conduct an independent inquiry; and I am delighted now to announce that **The Rt Hon Lord Lloyd of Berwick** has agreed to fill that role.

There could be no one more fitted and highly qualified than Lord Lloyd to conduct the inquiry.

Lord Lloyd's terms of reference will be to investigate the circumstances that have led to the ill health, and in some cases death, of over 5000 British troops following deployment to the Gulf, and to report. He will call on Gulf veterans, bereaved dependants, and eminent physicians to assist in the inquiry, and hopes to receive the full cooperation of the relevant Government departments.

Lord Lloyd will be joined by Dr Norman Jones as Medical Assessor, and by Sir Michael Davies as administrator. Dr Norman Jones is Emeritus Consulting Physician at St Thomas' Hospital and formerly Treasurer of the Royal College of Physicians. Sir Michael Davies was formerly Clerk of the Parliaments.

Veterans and others who wish to know more about the inquiry should visit: www.Lloyd-gwii.com or telephone: 020 7400 5117. General emails can be sent to: info@Lloyd-gwii.com

Lord Lloyd of Berwick said today: "I was delighted to be invited to conduct an independent public inquiry into Gulf War Illnesses. My intention is to open the inquiry as soon as possible, and to hold hearings in public."

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