

ABN: Very important & very urgent! But please do not pass this outside the Airborne Network!

RHQ PARA is co-ordinating the views of as many Airborne groups as possible on the NI Legacy issues and urgently needs your help. Whether you served in NI or not, or even if you have never been in the Services, you will have a view on this topical and important issue and we would like to hear it-so please can EVERYONE reading this respond to it. Thank you. HMcG

RHQ PARA takes its Duty of Care for its Veterans very seriously and is taking the following measures to support them:

- RHQ PARA has secured a full time 'SO2 NI Legacy' staff officer position that will deal exclusively with those veterans and their families that are affected by legacy issues. SO2 NI Legacy will be responsible for their welfare whilst offering advice and guidance throughout and can be reached on 01206 817072 or on paul.rodgers694@mod.gov.uk until he is allocated a dedicated email address. The current Regimental Secretary Lt Col Paul Rogers, who has the ideal background knowledge, will fill this post in the next few weeks and a new Regt Sec will be appointed.

Any veteran who is affected by these NI issues should get in touch with Paul ASAP for help and support, or just to let him know you are one of those 'in the frame'.

- A group of very senior ex PARA Officers are meeting very soon with the aim of formulating a Regimental policy and view which can be fed in at the highest, appropriate level.
- The establishment of a committee of retired Regimental personnel, who can coordinate our veterans and act outside any MOD constraints.
- Consolidating the views of the Parachute Regiment Association (PRA) and associated Airborne groups eg ABN. See below.

VOTE TO BE HEARD – NI CONSULTATION

At a meeting of Corps and Regimental Secretaries held in Warminster recently, the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) was asked to give a presentation on the consultation process on changes to current NI policy to reflect the Stormont House Agreement of December 2014.

The Stormont House Agreement (SHA) between the UK and Irish Governments and the 5 largest Northern Irish political parties sets out the establishment of 4 new institutions to address different aspects of the legacy of the past. These are:

- The Historical Investigation Unit (HIU): tasked with completing outstanding Investigations into circa 1,000 'Troubles' related deaths, which may lead to prosecution.
- Independent Commission on Information Retrieval: to enable family members to seek information on the 'Troubles' related deaths of their relatives.
- Oral History Archive: to record experiences from the 'Troubles'.
- Implementation and Reconciliation Group: to promote reconciliation and assess the implementation of the SHA institutions.

The consultation process is aimed at 'members of the Armed Forces who served on Op BANNER, veterans and all those who have an interest in the future of Northern Ireland'. The NIO acknowledged that some veterans may find the consultation process difficult and agreed that Corps and Regimental Associations should be offered the opportunity to complete the process on behalf of their memberships. While we would still encourage individuals to complete the consultation form [I circulated this last week-HMcG], the PRA and associated Airborne Groups eg ABN, in conjunction with many of the other Arms and Services Associations, intend to complete a return reflecting the views of the wider Regiment and Airborne Forces, its veterans and serving members.

In order to accurately reflect your views, we would like you to read the position set out below and let RHQ know if you agree with the statement. Responses should be made to the following address: consultation@prahq.com Please reply ASAP or by no later than Friday 31st August 2018, in order to allow RHQ enough time to consolidate the results and complete the consultation documentation. It would also be very helpful if you let RHQ know if you strongly disagree; please use the same address.

[Note: Your views and address will, of course, be kept Confidential by RHQ, but if you would prefer to submit your views through the ABN you can send your message to me personally at info@abnetwork.org and I will remove any contact details before sending the message on to RHQ-Anyway all you need to do is to say you AGREE or you disagree-HMcG]

Statement

The new framework agreed at Stormont provides one of a number of alternative ways in which the situation could be improved. While this framework affects all who have been involved in NI over the past 50 years, it is best left to those who live in the Province to decide. Therefore, we are generally happy with the framework as it is articulated in the SHA.

However, we disagree with the provision of an Historic Investigation Unit, which has the powers to investigate with a view to possible prosecution.

It is the strong view of the Parachute Regimental Association and wider Regimental family that no prosecutions should result from any investigations carried out. It is our belief that time, combined with the social and cultural changes to society in the intervening period, make a safe conviction impossible. We also feel that seeking truth and reconciliation to bring some degree of closure can be better served by a legally binding agreement that proposes:

a. Not to prosecute anyone as the result of any investigation into 'Troubles' related deaths.

b. That statements taken during any investigation by the HIU to determine the facts surrounding a death cannot be used in any future legal action.

Alternatively you can either Agree or Disagree on the [PARA Regt Assoc Facebook Page](#) -you may need to scroll through the posts to find it.

Many thanks for your help! HMcG