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**106 Conservative Members of Parliament demand the PM end witch hunt of Army Veterans**

106 Conservative Members of Parliament and over 50 Members of the House of Lords, including four former Chiefs of Defence Staff, are all lending their support to the campaign to “Defend those who Defended us.”

The Conservative MPs, led by a group of backbenchers, who are all ex-servicemen, will, at lunchtime today submit a letter to the Prime Minister to 10 Downing Street, demanding an end to the legal witch hunts of ex-servicemen and ex-security service personnel who served their country in Northern Ireland, The Falklands, Iraq, Afghanistan and other conflicts.

The Conservative MPs have been strongly supported by over 50 Peers including Lord Dannat, former head of the British Army, Lord Ramsbotham former Adjutant General and four former Chiefs of Defence Staff, a former First Sea Lord, a former General Officer Commanding in NI and a former Northern Ireland Secretary.

The letter, a copy of which is attached, demands a new approach which recognises that all members of the Armed and Security Services are subject to the rule of law but that;

“It is blatantly obvious that the current process of investigating and reinvestigating veterans, for incidents which were all investigated at the time, is completely at odds with the Government’s Manifesto commitments and the Armed Forces Covenant. We therefore believe that this situation simply cannot be allowed to continue as it is.”

Richard Benyon MP, a former Minister who served as a platoon commander in Northern Ireland in the 1980s, summed the feelings of the group up as follows:

“The feelings on the backbenches are now running very high on this issue and we and our colleagues are simply no longer prepared to tolerate the legal hounding of those who served their country by those who are seeking to exploit them for financial and or political gain. We are calling on the government to halt this process and to come up with a solution as soon as possible. Many of us leading this campaign are ex-military men and we regard this as a vitally important mission which can be summarised by its title “Defending those who Defended us” and like all good soldiers we do not intend to fail. We know the vast number of members of the public are also in support.”

Lord Dannat former Chief of General Staff and a platoon commander in Northern Ireland in 1971 said:

“The present system of historic and current investigations is demonstrably not balanced, fair, equitable and crucially is not proportionate. The British Army is a national institution which should be regulated under the authority of the Westminster Parliament, not allowed to become victim to the intrigues of Stormont. The welfare and duty of care towards servicemen and military veterans should be clearly championed by the Secretary of State for Defence and not left to the outcome of a Consultation by the N I Secretary. The British Government must stand up for its security forces and must not be allow itself to be sleep-walked in line with the Republican Agenda.”

**Note to news desks editors:**

**1. A copy of the letter to the Prime Minister, with all the supporting names, is attached and is available to be published.**

**2. The delegation of MPs and Lords will march up Downing Street to deliver the letter to No.10 shortly after noon today, Tuesday 23rd October.**

**ENDS**