

ARMY BRIEFING NOTES CONTAIN INFORMATION <u>WHICH WILL BE RELEVANT TO ALL PERSONNEL,</u> BOTH SERVICE AND CIVILIAN. THEY SHOULD BE DISSEMINATED AS WIDELY AND AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

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# RELEASE OF THE BOARDS OF INQUIRY INTO THE DEATHS OF PRIVATES GRAY AND COLLINSON AT DEEPCUT

#### **ISSUE**

1. The Boards of Inquiry (BOIs) into the deaths of Privates Gray and Collinson at Deepcut are to be published on the MOD's website today and the Minister (Armed Forces) will lay a statement in Parliament.

#### **TARGET AUDIENCE**

2. All members of the Regular Army, the Territorial Army (TA), the Regular Reserves undertaking service duties, cadets, MOD Civil Servants, civilian volunteers when on duty and Crown Servants within the Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations and their Council.

### **KEY POINTS**

- Privates Gray and Collinson were two of four soldiers to die at Deepcut Barracks between 1995 and 2002.
- The impact of their untimely deaths was felt across the MOD and, indeed, across the whole nation.
- The Next of Kin were present at the BOI proceedings and have been presented with copies of the reports in advance of their publication.
- The Board agrees with the Coroner's Open Verdict in both cases.
- The release of these BOIs does not alter the MOD's position on the need for a public inquiry. Given the range of investigations that have now taken place, we do not believe there is any wider public or Service interest in pursuing one.

The BOI reports will be published on the MOD website.

# **BACKGROUND**

- 3. Privates Gray and Collinson were two of four soldiers to die at Deepcut (25 Trg Sp Regt) between 1995 and 2002. Private Gray died on 17 September 2001 and Private Collinson on 23 March 2002. Both were aged 17 and died from rounds fired from SA80 weapons. The Coroner recorded Open Verdicts in both cases. The other two soldiers to die were Pte Benton, who died in June 1995 and Pte James who died in November 1995. Private Benton was adjudged by the Coroner to have committed suicide and an Open Verdict was recorded in the case of Pte James. Surrey Police investigated the deaths of the four soldiers and the Devon and Cornwall Police conducted a peer review of those investigations.
- 4. The BOIs were delayed due to the many investigations and reviews into the deaths at Deepcut, which had to be completed first. Having convened, they were subsequently reconvened to clarify evidence. We deeply regret the additional distress that the delay to the BOIs has caused to the families of Privates Gray and Collinson.
- 5. The Board agrees with the Coroner's Open Verdict in both cases. In the case of Private Collinson, the Board concludes that there were no indications in his general behaviour during his time in the Army to suggest that he was at any risk. In the case of Private Gray, the BOI concurs with the Blake Report (2006) in concluding that there is no substantial evidence supporting third party involvement in his death. In addition to covering the specific circumstances surrounding the deaths, each report covers the background to Deepcut from 1993 until the time of the deaths, including such issues as discipline, staff selection, welfare support and guarding arrangements. Both reports also detail the changes that have been made since the deaths to address these issues.
- 6. The BOIs makes 19 identical recommendations and the BOI for Pte Gray makes one further recommendation. The recommendations are wide-ranging and there is considerable overlap with those made in earlier reviews and investigations into the deaths at Deepcut. For this reason, all have been addressed and further work has been put in train to ensure that all possible related improvements are made. Inter alia, the recommendations focus on support to bereaved families; the Service Inquiry process, including tracking the implementation of recommendations; and the need to maintain momentum with continuous improvement in the training environment.

# 7. Points of contact:

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