

News story: No new inquest into military deaths

After careful consideration, the Attorney General Jeremy Wright QC MP has decided not to provide his authority for an application to be made to the High Court for new inquests covering the deaths of four Royal Military Policemen.

The families of the four men – Corporals Simon Miller and Russell Aston, and Lance Corporals Benjamin Hyde and Thomas Keys – submitted applications under the Coroners Act 1988 to request a new inquest into the deaths of their sons on the grounds of new evidence.

The men were killed during an incident at a police station in Majar Al Kabir, Iraq, on 24 June 2003. Two other military personnel were also killed.

An application for a fresh inquest may be made only with the authority of the Attorney General. The Attorney can provide his authority only if he is satisfied there is sufficient admissible evidence that there is a reasonable prospect of the Court being persuaded to order a new inquest.

The Attorney concluded that none of the grounds of challenge set out in the applications had a reasonable prospect of success. Therefore he would not be able to provide his authority for the applications to be made to the High Court.

The Attorney General said:

“I offer my deepest sympathy to the families for their loss – and my gratitude for the sacrifices that their sons made for this country.”

“I have given this matter considerable thought but, as disappointing as it will be for the families involved, it would not be right to pass this matter to the High Court when the tests for a new Inquest are not met.”

The original inquests were held by the Oxfordshire Coroner Nicholas Gardiner in March 2006. The inquests concluded with the verdicts of unlawful killing in respect of each of the six deaths, on 31 March 2006.