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Adam Ingram MP
House of Commons
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Our ref: 265216

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Dear Adam

PQ2009/4365

On 12 November 2009 I responded to your PQ which asked when the Coroners and Justice Act's provision, to allow Fatal Accident Inquiries (FAIs) into the deaths abroad of service personnel, would come into effect.

I explained that the arrangements would take effect once the Scottish Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) had made the necessary preparations for Fatal Accident Inquiries to be held into overseas deaths of service personnel. I also said that the UK Government would work with the COPFS to bring the new provisions into effect as soon as possible, with the aim of the arrangements being in place ahead of the complete reform of the coroner system in England and Wales, in April 2012. I undertook to write to you about progress in this area. Thank you for your subsequent letter of 21 December asking for an update on this issue.

I can confirm that officials from my department are working closely with their counterparts in the Ministry of Defence and COPFS to ensure that learning from the experience of handling service personnel inquests in England and Wales is shared. They met in December, and they are now liaising over drafting the protocols for the Act's FAI provisions, on which COPFS is leading. They are considering the implementation timetable as part of this work, with the aim of putting advice to the Lord Advocate and Ministers early this year.

My Department is hosting a training event for coroners on service personnel deaths on 11 March 2010, and Sheriffs Principal and representatives from COPFS have been invited to attend. There will, of course, need to be training in due course in Scotland for those concerned with service deaths but the March event should provide a helpful background to the issues these tragic fatalities raise.

I am copying this letter to Joan Humble MP, as she was also keen to receive more information.

*Yours ever
Bridget*

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