The former Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Richard Dannatt, said on 14 May 2008 when the MOD announced that there would be a public inquiry into the death of Baha Mousa:

"The British Army in Iraq has performed exceptionally well under extraordinarily testing conditions and of that there is no doubt. But in September 2003 a number of Iraqi civilians were arrested and taken into custody by soldiers from the 1st Battalion The Queen's Lancashire Regiment. One of those civilians, Mr Baha Mousa, died while being held in Army detention and the subsequent post-mortem examination showed that he had suffered asphyxiation and some 93 injuries to his body.

"Ever since Mr Baha Mousa died my predecessor, General Sir Mike Jackson, and I have been determined to establish how and why this occurred. The Army has a duty to investigate all serious cases of abuse and this incident has been subject to the most intensive investigation. The court martial of Corporal Payne and others last year and the publication of the Aitken Report earlier this year have gone some way to shed light on this disgraceful incident; the Aitken Report in particular was rightly critical of the Army in certain areas and revealed a number of important lessons to be learned which we have taken steps already to put right.

"But we cannot escape the fact that there are important questions that have yet to be answered in connection with Mr Baha Mousa's death. Although the Aitken Report identified important lessons to be learned, it was not able to fully explain how and why these circumstances occurred and I therefore welcome the announcement today by the Secretary of State for Defence of a public inquiry that will examine all the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the death of Mr Baha Mousa. The terms of reference of the public inquiry will be announced in due course and the Army will give the fullest co-operation. There is no wish to hide anything in the inquiry's quest to understand and report on what happened.

"As soldiers we know only too well that the conduct of military operations is both difficult and dangerous but we also know that it is our duty to behave in accordance with both the law and the Army's core values. These core values include courage, integrity and discipline as well as loyalty, selfless commitment and, crucially in this case, respect for others. The Army's operational effectiveness and reputation depend on this.

"And whilst the Army is an extremely professional war-fighting force, committed to campaigns in both Iraq and Afghanistan, a small number of individuals have let us down and we need to understand how and why this came about. All our soldiers know that collectively and individually, we can, and should, be called to account when things go wrong. Our perseverance in this case should therefore come as no surprise and I welcome the transparency that a public inquiry will provide.

"As Chief of the General Staff, and in all my previous appointments, I have made it clear that I

expect all commanders to set an example to their subordinates, and to provide the leadership and supervision that will ensure the delivery of the required outcomes, as well as professional behaviour. The Army knows that Mr Baha Mousa should have been treated properly and lawfully but he was not.

"This was not a case of misjudgement in the heat of battle, or in the heat of the moment. There can be no excuse. We have a genuinely world class reputation and therefore I am determined that we must never allow a few of our people to damage the reputation of the majority in this manner again. That is why I welcome the announcement of the public inquiry today as the right thing to do as we endeavour to find out how and why it came to be that Mr Baha Mousa died in September 2003."