

3.9 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding disciplinary action against the suspended Chief Officer of the States of Jersey Police regarding Operation Blast:

Will the Minister inform the Assembly if any disciplinary action is going to be brought against the suspended Chief Officer of the States of Jersey Police regarding Operation Blast?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand (The Minister for Home Affairs):

It is already in the public domain that the Chief Officer of Police is suspended in relation to the issue and investigation in relation to his involvement, if any, in Operation Blast. The current position is that I have now received the report from Wiltshire in relation to the investigation of Operation Blast, but not the documents in support of that report. The next stage is that I will receive a report from the Deputy Chief Executive to the Council of Ministers. The stage after that is I will decide if I want to meet with Mr. Power in order to discuss matters before deciding whether I proceed with formal disciplinary procedures against him on this. That is the procedure set out in our disciplinary code; that is the procedure that I am contractually bound to follow. It follows from that, in short, that I have not arrived at the stage at which I can properly formally make a decision on that.

3.9.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

In an email sent to Senator Breckon on 1st March, but also copied into all States Members, the Minister did say that he supports the inquiry and he supports it taking place rapidly. I think this is the very core of the problem here. We have a Chief Officer who is up for retirement on 21st July 2010, so my question would simply be is it likely that any further action, apart from the suspension, if any disciplinary action likely to be brought before that date? If that is not the case, what are the implications as to what will happen one way or the other to this man after that date?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

We are at the stage at which I will make decisions as to which disciplinary charges would be appropriate in relation to the matter, but because of the timescales involved and the complexity of matters there is really no prospect of a full disciplinary hearing before the July date. What I said before in relation to information being put out to Members and into the public domain applies equally for the second disciplinary matter, as it did to the first.

3.9.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

The Minister just told us that although he has received the Wiltshire report regarding it, he did not have the documents that he needs to make a final determination. He also mentioned the Deputy Chief Executive. Can he confirm if the Deputy Chief Executive has had the documents and when he received them and when the Minister expects to receive them?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

No, the Deputy Chief Executive does not have the documents. If he had I would treat myself as effectively having access to them. There is a delay pending some discussions with Wiltshire Police in relation to a particular matter which I cannot go into.

3.9.3 Connétable D.J. Murphy of Grouville:

If ever there was a case for open and transparent government this is surely it. Would the Minister please confirm that he will release as much data as is possible regarding the contents of these alleged files that were kept on this? Thank you.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

That is absolutely right. That has consistently been my position, but I am consistently hamstrung by the contractual arrangements. If I had attempted to then I would be blatantly in breach of the contract and that is not something that would be proper or appropriate. As soon as I can the information will go out. That has always been my commitment. There is no reason whatsoever why I would want there to be secrecy about anything. But I have to check exactly in what format it can go out because there are matters, particularly in relation to the second matter, it was not just a disciplinary investigation in relation to the Chief Officer of Police; it was also in relation to other police officers. Also, there were possible criminal issues that arose as well. It is a 3-part investigation, which slightly complicates the matter.

3.9.4 The Deputy of Grouville:

Other civil servants who were also involved in Operation Blast, is it the intention of the Minister to also suspend them?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Decisions in relation to matters relating to other police officers involved are not my decision; they are matters for the Acting Chief Officer of Police and the Deputy Acting Chief Officer of Police.

The Deputy of Grouville:

No, not other police officers; civil servants, I said.

The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):

I do not think that is a matter for the Minister for Home Affairs, but he will no doubt answer.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I am not aware of the involvement of any civil servants in relation to the potential disciplinary matters. It is only police officers.

The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):

Do you wish any final question, Deputy Tadier?

3.9.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

I do. I think we all know who the Deputy of Grouville is alluding to and I am sure that the Minister knows that as well. **[Aside]** No? I think she is clearly talking about the Chief Executive Officer of the States of Jersey who allegedly has had some involvement in Operation Blast. I mean, let us not beat around the bush here. **[Interruption]** That is obviously the case. The final question, if the heckling would stop from Senator Le Main, is that obviously justice must be done swiftly. Clearly it has not been done here even if under the Minister's own admission previously the initial process was rushed. The question is will justice be done either way if the matter is not brought to a close before 21st July? How can justice be done satisfactorily either way? Does the Minister agree that in this case we are not likely to get a satisfactory conclusion to this matter?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

In my opinion, whatever procedure had been followed here, even if it had gone to full disciplinary hearings, even if it had gone to appeals, even if it had gone to the States itself, at the end of the day, members of the public of the Island would still continue to argue over this and individuals involved for many years to come. That was apparent to me right from the start of my involvement in this. It is regrettable that the formal procedures have not occurred, but the members of the public and Members of the States will receive information and they will then have to make up their own minds.