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## **IRAQ UK FORCES: MAY 'WON'T ALLOW VEXATIOUS ALLEGATIONS'**

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BBC

Prime Minister Theresa May has said she will not allow an "industry of vexatious allegations" against UK troops over claims of abuse in Iraq.

The Iraq Historic Allegations Team (IHAT) is examining serious allegations following the 2003 invasion.

Mrs May said allegations would be investigated but steps had been taken to tackle abuse of the system.

Concerns have been raised over the "industrial scale" of claims lodged with IHAT supported by legal aid.

Mrs May said Britons should be proud of the work done by the armed forces and the disciplined way in which they operated.

She insisted that action had been taken to address false claims and IHAT's work would be completed by the end of 2019, after a review of the system by former director of public prosecutions Sir David Calvert-Smith.

[Theresa May] Image copyrightPA

Image captionTheresa May was visiting the UN General Assembly in New York

Speaking to reporters travelling with her to the UN General Assembly in New York, Mrs May said the UK should be proud of the "fantastic job" the armed forces do in defending the UK.

She added: "We can be proud also of the disciplined way in which our armed forces operate.

"But what is important is, if there are allegations - proper allegations - of criminal activity, those need to be investigated.

"But what we do need to make sure is that there isn't an industry of vexatious allegations coming forward. I think measures have been taken".

IHAT was set up to investigate allegations of murder, abuse and torture of Iraqi civilians by UK military personnel between 2003 and 2009.

The team, headed up by former senior civilian police officer Mark Warwick, has considered at least

1,514 possible victims - of whom 280 are alleged to have been unlawfully killed.

Earlier in the year, former PM David Cameron also voiced an intent to stamp out what he described as "spurious" legal claims against British troops.

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