



# Report: The Dismissal of David Neal, ICIBI, and the Suppression of Inspection Reports

## 1. Background

- **David Neal**, a retired Brigadier in the Royal Military Police, was appointed as the **Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI)** in March 2021.
- His role was to provide **independent scrutiny** of the UK's border and immigration functions, including Border Force, asylum casework, and visa processing.
- On **20 February 2024**, Neal was **dismissed by the Home Office**, with the official reason being that he had "lost the confidence" of the Home Secretary.

## 2. Reason for Dismissal

- Neal publicly claimed that **hundreds of private flights at London City Airport had bypassed Border Force checks**.
- The Home Office denied this and accused him of breaching the terms of his appointment.
- His dismissal was widely criticised as undermining the independence of the inspectorate.

## 3. The Missing Reports

- At the time of dismissal, Neal stated he had **14 inspection reports completed and signed off**.
- On **29 February 2024**, the Home Office released **12 reports** in bulk.
- This left **2 reports unpublished**, believed to cover:



- **RAF Wethersfield asylum accommodation centre** (politically sensitive).
- **Maritime enforcement operations** (small boat crossings and coastal security).
- Neal confirmed that once signed, reports cannot be altered — only delayed or suppressed.
- Therefore, the 12 published reports were **unaltered originals**, while the 2 missing reports were withheld entirely.

#### 4. Select Committee Involvement

- On **27 February 2024**, Neal gave oral evidence to the **Home Affairs Select Committee**.
- He told MPs that his dismissal left a **“cliff edge” in oversight** and that 14 reports were sitting unpublished.
- The Committee pressed the Home Office for clarity on:
  - Why Neal was dismissed so abruptly.
  - Why reports had been withheld.
  - The impact of leaving the ICIBI post vacant.
- The Committee received **no valid explanation** from the Home Office, beyond the claim Neal had lost confidence.
- MPs criticised the lack of transparency and warned that suppressing reports undermined accountability.

#### 5. Key Findings from Published Reports

The 12 reports released highlighted:

- **Border Force firearms procedures** — weaknesses in training and oversight.
- **Portsmouth International Port operations** — gaps in passenger checks.



- **Afghan resettlement schemes** — delays and poor communication with refugees.
- **Asylum casework** — inconsistent decision-making and backlog issues.
- **Immigration enforcement operations** — concerns about proportionality and effectiveness.
- **Airport operations** — risks of private flights evading checks (the issue Neal raised publicly).

## 6. Consequences

- Neal's dismissal created a **transparency crisis**, with Parliament and the public denied access to critical oversight reports.
- The **Home Affairs Select Committee** was stonewalled, receiving no substantive answers.
- The missing reports remain unpublished, raising suspicion they were withheld for political sensitivity.
- Neal has since become a **public commentator and adviser**, warning about the dangers of suppressing independent oversight.

## 7. Conclusion

David Neal's dismissal as ICIBI in February 2024 was controversial because it coincided with the suppression of inspection reports. Although 12 reports were eventually published unaltered, 2 remain missing. The Home Affairs Select Committee was denied valid information, leaving serious questions about government transparency and accountability in immigration oversight.