

Traumatised

Three former soldiers win PTSD compensation

A former soldier who suffered post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has won £620,000 compensation after the High Court decided the MoD had failed to treat his condition.

The court heard how Malcolm New, a former colour sergeant who completed five tours of Northern Ireland with The Royal Welsh Fusiliers, was a “shadow of his former self” following his service in the province.

It also heard how New suffered a breakdown, lost his marriage, was unable to hold down a job and suffered flashbacks, panic attacks, headaches and has a paranoid fear of strangers.

It is the first time a court has ordered the MoD to pay compensation to someone whose psychological injury was diagnosed but went untreated.

Undecided damages were also awarded to ex-soldier Melvyn West, who was traumatised when a comrade was shot in the head by a high-velocity round in Ulster. A third veteran, who cannot be named, was awarded a payout after he suffered PTSD following a tour in Bosnia but was not properly treated.

The court ruled that there had been no systemic failure by the MoD in terms of combat stress treatment but allowed these three cases to continue because the Army had failed to treat the soldiers’ specific conditions.

They were part of a PTSD group action of about 2,000 claims first heard in 2002, all four of which were thrown out by the courts. Of the four, three pursued claims for damages but the fourth failed to do so.

An MoD spokesman said “The Department recognises PTSD as a serious and disabling condition. We attach a high priority to its prevention, diagnosis and treatment and work hard to ensure our personnel receive the best possible care.”