# Afghan Triples denied asylum amid war crimes inquiry and safety fears



A deeply troubling situation has emerged surrounding the asylum applications of Afghan soldiers, known as the Triples, who served alongside British forces during the war in Afghanistan. A Special Forces officer has reportedly denied the asylum bids of 1,585 of these soldiers, many of whom may have witnessed alleged war crimes committed by British troops. This decision comes amidst heightened concerns for the safety of these soldiers, who continue to face retaliation from the Taliban due to their affiliation with British military operations.

The processing of these applications took place in 2023, coinciding with an ongoing High Court inquiry investigating claims that British Special Air Service (SAS) units conducted extrajudicial killings in Afghanistan between 2010 and 2013. Court documents reveal that the officer's rejection of the Triples' applications raises suspicions that it was a deliberate move to prevent potential witnesses from providing evidence in the inquiry. With the inquiry set to publish its findings later this year, the implications of this denial are significant, especially as some of these Afghan commandos have already been killed since the collapse of the Afghan government in August 2021.

Former veterans minister Johnny Mercer has voiced his outrage at the government's handling of the matter. He stated that he is "appalled" at the rejection of the Triples' bids and expressed a willingness to support any legal actions against the government for what he termed "criminal negligence." Mercer’s testimony highlighted "horrific" accounts from former Afghan special forces members who claimed to have witnessed unarmed detainees and even children being killed, further underscoring the gravity of the allegations against UK forces. He noted that these accusations represent "allegations of straight murder" by British Special Forces and indicated a systematic cover-up regarding the treatment of Afghan allies.

Though the Ministry of Defence has dismissed the notion of a blanket ban on Triples relocating to the UK, Mercer’s recent appearances at public inquiries indicate otherwise. Under scrutiny, officials from the Ministry of Defence were ultimately compelled to admit to the existence of such a policy, leading to deeper questions about accountability within UK military operations. Mercer highlighted a concerning lack of professional curiosity among senior figures within the Ministry when faced with allegations of war crimes, suggesting a profound disconnect between the military leadership and the gravity of the accusations at hand.

As the inquiry continues to unfold, the ramifications of these testimonies and the treatment of Afghan soldiers are likely to reverberate far beyond the corridors of power. With the prospect of legal action lingering in the air and tragic outcomes for those unable to find refuge, the situation epitomises the complexities and ethical dilemmas posed by military operations abroad. The plight of the Triples encapsulates the broader moral responsibilities that nations must confront when their military alliances lead to dire consequences for local allies.

In light of these developments, it remains imperative for the UK government to reassess its stance towards Afghan commandos, ensuring not only their safety but also a commitment to transparency and justice regarding allegations of misconduct by its forces. This is not merely an administrative issue; it touches on the fundamental principles of accountability and the ethical obligations owed to those who stood by and fought for our values.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14744821/Afghan-commandos-denied-asylum-witnessed-war-crimes-British.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68358760)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14744821/Afghan-commandos-denied-asylum-witnessed-war-crimes-British.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68358760), [[6]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/johnny-mercer-ministry-defence-sas-afghanistan-b2499103.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68358760), [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/mar/12/britain-war-afghanistan-special-forces-sas-johnny-mercer), [[6]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/johnny-mercer-ministry-defence-sas-afghanistan-b2499103.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/07/25/johnny-mercer-avoids-jail-afghanistan-whistleblowers/), [[5]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/03/15/johnny-mercer-face-jail-refuse-name-soldiers-afghan-inquiry/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14744821/Afghan-commandos-denied-asylum-witnessed-war-crimes-British.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan_unlawful_killings_inquiry)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14744821/Afghan-commandos-denied-asylum-witnessed-war-crimes-British.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68358760> - Veterans Minister Johnny Mercer testified at a public inquiry, revealing 'horrific' accounts from former Afghan special forces members about the SAS killing unarmed detainees and children. He confirmed these were 'allegations of straight murder' by the SAS. The inquiry is investigating claims that UK special forces conducted extrajudicial killings in Afghanistan between 2010 and 2013. Mercer also noted that UK Special Forces had blocked Afghan commandos, known as the 'Triples', from relocating to the UK after the Taliban's return to power in 2021, raising concerns about potential witnesses to the inquiry.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/mar/12/britain-war-afghanistan-special-forces-sas-johnny-mercer> - Frank Ledwidge discusses the explosive testimony of Johnny Mercer, former UK veterans' minister, regarding alleged war crimes by UK special forces in Afghanistan. Mercer recounted hearing from 'trusted sources' about serial murders and attempted cover-ups by SAS personnel. Despite his efforts to disprove these allegations, Mercer found that information was being withheld, leading him to conclude that there was 'something not right here'. The article highlights the challenges in holding special forces accountable and the culture of impunity within these units.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/07/25/johnny-mercer-avoids-jail-afghanistan-whistleblowers/> - Johnny Mercer, former UK veterans' minister, avoided jail after providing additional information to a public inquiry into alleged extrajudicial killings by UK special forces in Afghanistan. Mercer had previously refused to disclose the names of whistleblowers who alleged war crimes, citing the need to protect their anonymity. After a legal order compelling him to provide information, Mercer shared undisclosed details, leading the inquiry chairman to halt further legal action. The case underscores the complexities of balancing transparency with the protection of whistleblowers.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/03/15/johnny-mercer-face-jail-refuse-name-soldiers-afghan-inquiry/> - Johnny Mercer, UK Minister for Veterans' Affairs, faced potential imprisonment for refusing to disclose the identities of whistleblowers who alleged war crimes by UK special forces in Afghanistan. The inquiry chairman, Sir Charles Haddon-Cave, warned Mercer that his refusal was 'completely unacceptable' and obstructed the inquiry's progress. Mercer had been asked to identify sources who had raised concerns about alleged atrocities committed by the SAS. The situation highlights the tension between protecting whistleblowers and the need for transparency in military operations.
6. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/johnny-mercer-ministry-defence-sas-afghanistan-b2499103.html> - Johnny Mercer, UK Minister for Veterans' Affairs, expressed frustration with the Ministry of Defence's handling of allegations against UK special forces in Afghanistan. He stated that senior figures within UK special forces were 'unable to answer basic questions' and that he 'did not believe them'. Mercer had raised concerns about potential war crimes with Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and other senior officials but found a lack of professional curiosity to investigate the claims. The article sheds light on the challenges within the Ministry of Defence in addressing serious allegations.
7. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan_unlawful_killings_inquiry> - The Afghan Unlawful Killings Inquiry is an independent investigation into allegations of extrajudicial killings by UK special forces in Afghanistan between 2010 and 2013. The inquiry focuses on night-time raids, known as Deliberate Detention Operations, and includes examining the 2012 Shesh Aba raid. The inquiry has the authority to compel witnesses to testify and has faced challenges, including the Ministry of Defence's initial attempt to prevent the British public from hearing criticisms of the special forces. Johnny Mercer, Minister of State for Veterans' Affairs, provided oral evidence to the inquiry in February 2024.