# Special Forces officer blocks 1,585 Afghan commandos’ asylum claims amid war crimes inquiry



In a troubling development surrounding the asylum applications of Afghan commandos, a Special Forces officer is reported to have rejected requests from 1,585 soldiers who potentially witnessed war crimes committed by British troops. These commandos, known as the "Triples," served alongside UK forces and now find themselves at grave risk from the Taliban, which has been systematically targeting those who cooperated with foreign militaries since the fall of the Afghan government in August 2021. Some of these soldiers have already paid the ultimate price, killed in the ongoing reprisals following the regime change.

The rejections occurred in 2023, coinciding with the initiation of a High Court inquiry examining allegations that British Special Air Service (SAS) units operated a "shoot-to-kill" policy, resulting in the extrajudicial killings of over 80 men during night raids in Afghanistan between 2010 and 2013. Crucially, the Triples participated in these operations, raising serious concerns about why their applications for asylum were dismissed. It appears that the officer's decisions may have been influenced by a desire to prevent these servicemen from testifying against UK troops.

Former veterans minister Johnny Mercer expressed his outrage at the government's handling of the situation, stating that it appears to involve a “criminal negligence” that has led to the deaths of these men. In his statements, Mercer recounted a heated exchange with a senior civil servant from the UK Special Forces who dismissed the claims about these decisions as offensive or incompetent. He maintained that these Afghan soldiers deserve protection given their service alongside British troops.

This unfolding scenario has drawn deeper scrutiny towards the Ministry of Defence (MoD), which initially insisted that there was no blanket policy obstructing the Triples' resettlement. However, during the inquiry, the MoD's legal representatives were compelled to acknowledge the existence of such a policy, suggesting a significant contradiction in the government's stance. Observers fear that the Special Forces' ability to veto resettlement applications raises grave concerns regarding a conflict of interest, particularly amidst ongoing investigations into alleged British war crimes in Afghanistan.

Compounding the issue, there are reports of a wider, potentially unlawful, secret policy initiated by the Home Office that blocked asylum visas for Afghans, including many affiliated with UK operations. This undisclosed decision, stemming from accommodation shortages, resulted in the stalling of around 600 applications by early 2023. The Home Office has since resumed processing visas, but the criticism it faced over its handling of Afghan refugees has left many questioning the integrity and transparency of the actions taken by UK authorities.

As the judicial inquiry into SAS practices continues, the fate of the Triples remains uncertain. With many still in hiding, vulnerable to Taliban reprisals, the situation underscores the urgent need for accountability and a reevaluation of how the UK assists those who risked their lives for its military mission in Afghanistan. The plight of these soldiers is not merely a matter of asylum; it raises fundamental questions about the ethics and responsibilities of nations towards their allies in times of conflict.

Ultimately, the inquiry's findings, expected later this year, may provide critical insights into the official actions that have put these Afghan commandos in such peril, sparking wider discussions about justice, accountability, and the moral obligations owed to those who have risked everything in support of foreign military efforts.

## 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.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/feb/19/uk-special-forces-blocked-resettlement-applications-from-elite-afghan-troops)
* 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), [[3]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68332923), [[7]](https://kabulnow.com/2025/02/uk-blocks-asylum-for-over-2000-afghan-commandos-despite-credible-evidence/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/feb/19/uk-special-forces-blocked-resettlement-applications-from-elite-afghan-troops), [[6]](https://www.lighthousereports.com/investigation/great-british-betrayal/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/f43a2a98-69f4-401b-bb7b-f73c9122d7f5), [[5]](https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2024-02/uk-afghanistan-special-forces-refugees.html)
* 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), [[6]](https://www.lighthousereports.com/investigation/great-british-betrayal/)

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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.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/feb/19/uk-special-forces-blocked-resettlement-applications-from-elite-afghan-troops> - The Guardian reports that UK Special Forces blocked resettlement applications from Afghan commandos who fought alongside British troops. Despite evidence of their service, these applications were rejected, raising concerns about potential conflicts of interest amid ongoing investigations into alleged war crimes by UK forces in Afghanistan. The Ministry of Defence is conducting a review of these cases, but questions remain about the decision-making process and its implications for Afghan personnel seeking safety in the UK.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68332923> - BBC News reveals that UK Special Forces had the authority to veto resettlement applications from Afghan commandos, known as the 'Triples,' who served alongside British forces. This power was exercised during a public inquiry into alleged war crimes by UK forces in Afghanistan, leading to concerns about potential conflicts of interest. The Ministry of Defence is reviewing these cases, but the situation has left many Afghan soldiers in precarious positions, facing threats from the Taliban.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/f43a2a98-69f4-401b-bb7b-f73c9122d7f5> - The Financial Times reports on a potentially unlawful 'secret' policy by the UK Home Office that blocked visas for Afghans fleeing the Taliban, including those who had worked for UK authorities. This decision, initiated in November 2022 due to accommodation shortages, was undisclosed to inspectors for several months and led to about 600 paused applications by February 2023. The Home Office admitted the ban publicly in March 2023 and resumed issuing visas in July, following criticism and legal challenges.
5. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2024-02/uk-afghanistan-special-forces-refugees.html> - Vatican News discusses the UK Special Forces' veto over resettlement requests from Afghan soldiers they fought alongside. This power was exercised amid a public inquiry into alleged war crimes by UK forces in Afghanistan, raising concerns about conflicts of interest. The article also highlights the challenges faced by Afghan soldiers seeking sanctuary in the UK, emphasizing the need for clear communication and responsible action from authorities.
6. <https://www.lighthousereports.com/investigation/great-british-betrayal/> - Lighthouse Reports investigates the UK's denial of relocation to Afghan commandos trained and funded by British forces. Despite evidence of their service, many applications were rejected, with some alleging they witnessed or reported war crimes by UK forces. The article highlights the conflict of interest in UK Special Forces having veto power over these applications during an ongoing public inquiry into alleged war crimes.
7. <https://kabulnow.com/2025/02/uk-blocks-asylum-for-over-2000-afghan-commandos-despite-credible-evidence/> - KabulNow reports that the UK Ministry of Defence confirmed denying resettlement requests from over 2,000 Afghan commandos who served alongside British Special Forces. Despite credible evidence of their service, these applications were blocked, raising concerns about potential conflicts of interest amid investigations into alleged war crimes by UK forces in Afghanistan. The situation has left many Afghan soldiers in hiding, facing threats from the Taliban.