# Inquiry reveals MoD’s ‘disaster area’ resettlement failings for Afghan special forces



The ongoing inquiry into the UK's resettlement process for Afghan special forces personnel has revealed alarming shortcomings that critics have likened to a "disaster area." In the High Court, legal representatives for former members of elite units CF333 and ATF444—collectively known as the Triples—have illustrated the gravity of the situation, describing the decision-making process as akin to a "crime scene."

The Ministry of Defence’s (MoD) handling of approximately 2,000 applications from Afghans who fought alongside British forces has come under fierce scrutiny, especially after significant media investigations unearthed that many applications were denied without adequate review. The court heard testimony from Thomas de la Mare KC, representing a senior commander from the Triples, highlighting systemic failures in the current process, which appears to have operated under a de facto blanket ban. This has resulted in Afghans who risked their lives for UK troops facing potentially fatal retributions in their home country.

Allegations surfaced that UK Special Forces (UKSF) had effectively exercised veto power over these resettlement applications. Internal documents and leaked communications indicate that decisions were not merely about approval or denial but were fraught with conflicts of interest, particularly because some applicants could serve as witnesses in ongoing war crimes investigations. These concerns were compounded when it was revealed that the MoD had previously misled Parliament about the level of influence exerted by UKSF personnel over the applications process—initially denying their veto power before later acknowledging its existence.

The stark contrasts unveiled during the court hearings paint a grim picture of a flawed system. According to the evidence presented, political pressures within the MoD led to rushed decisions during so-called "sprints" to process applications, which were typically made without thorough assessments. De la Mare referenced an internal review that recognised a disturbing trend of blanket refusals pending further scrutiny, suggesting an urgent need for transparency and accountability.

Political figures have also expressed their disquiet about the handling of these cases. Former veterans affairs minister Johnny Mercer raised his own concerns, characterising the involvement of UKSF in decision-making as "deeply inappropriate." His letter to Oliver Dowden in January 2024 highlighted the significant potential for bias and conflict of interest, particularly given the charged context in which these decisions were formulated.

The implications of these findings extend beyond individual applications. They underscore a broader failure by the UK government to honour its commitments to those who served alongside British forces in Afghanistan. Many of these former commandos are not just facing peril in their homeland; their experiences intersect unsettlingly with allegations of unlawful killings and other war crimes concerning British military actions in Afghanistan—investigations that might implicate some of these individuals as potential witnesses.

With the judicial review underway, there is potential for significant changes to the resettlement process. If granted, the case could expose profound flaws in how the MoD administers life-and-death decisions impacting those who stood with British soldiers during the conflict. As the inquiry progresses, observers remain watchful, aware that the outcomes will affect not just the lives of the Afghan commandos involved but may also signal a shift in the UK's approach to its responsibilities postwar.

As the hearing awaits its conclusion, public trust in the MoD and government processes hangs in the balance. There is a palpable sense of urgency for restorative measures that could perhaps begin to mend the frayed ties between the UK and those it once enlisted as allies in combat, in a region marked by considerable bloodshed and betrayal.

**Reference Map**1: Paragraph 1, 2  
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Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/afghan-inquiry-mod-triples-resettlement-uksf-b2755436.html> - 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> - An investigation revealed that UK Special Forces blocked resettlement applications from Afghan commandos who had fought alongside British troops. Leaked documents showed that UKSF had veto power over these applications, leading to concerns about potential conflicts of interest, especially as some of these Afghan soldiers could be witnesses in ongoing war crimes inquiries. The Ministry of Defence is conducting a review of these cases amid accusations of a blanket ban on approvals for these ex-servicemen.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68332923> - BBC Panorama reported that UK Special Forces rejected resettlement applications from Afghan commandos, known as the 'Triples', who had served alongside British forces. Leaked documents indicated that UKSF had the authority to approve or deny these applications, raising concerns about potential conflicts of interest, particularly as some of these individuals could be witnesses in war crimes investigations. The Ministry of Defence acknowledged inconsistencies in the application process and announced a review of the cases.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn00d2ndnlgo> - The UK government admitted to misleading Parliament regarding the resettlement applications of Afghan special forces, known as the 'Triples'. Initially, the Ministry of Defence denied that UK Special Forces had a veto over these applications. However, it was later revealed that UKSF assessments were used by MoD caseworkers to decide on the applications, effectively granting them veto power. This raised concerns about potential conflicts of interest, especially as some of these Afghan soldiers could be witnesses in war crimes inquiries.
5. <https://www.lighthousereports.com/investigation/great-british-betrayal/> - An investigation by Lighthouse Reports uncovered that UK Special Forces had veto power over resettlement applications from Afghan commandos who had served alongside British troops. Leaked documents and internal communications revealed that UKSF could approve or deny these applications, leading to concerns about conflicts of interest, particularly as some of these individuals could be witnesses in ongoing war crimes inquiries. The Ministry of Defence is conducting a review of these cases amid accusations of a blanket ban on approvals for these ex-servicemen.
6. <https://bisi.org.uk/reports/uk-special-forces-blocking-the-resettlement-of-elite-afghan-soldiers> - A report by the Bloomsbury Intelligence and Security Institute highlighted that UK Special Forces blocked resettlement applications from Afghan commandos who had fought alongside British forces. Leaked documents showed that UKSF had veto power over these applications, raising concerns about potential conflicts of interest, especially as some of these Afghan soldiers could be witnesses in ongoing war crimes inquiries. The Ministry of Defence is conducting a review of these cases amid accusations of a blanket ban on approvals for these ex-servicemen.
7. <https://news.sky.com/story/afghan-families-desperate-for-truth-after-mod-admits-uk-special-forces-involved-in-alleged-unlawful-killings-12916457> - Sky News reported that Afghan families are seeking truth after the Ministry of Defence admitted that UK Special Forces were involved in alleged unlawful killings in Afghanistan. The Independent Inquiry Relating to Afghanistan is investigating potential war crimes by British forces, with evidence suggesting as many as 80 civilians were killed in suspicious circumstances between 2010 and 2013. The inquiry aims to determine if there was credible evidence of unlawful killings and if they were covered up, and to review the military police investigations into these allegations.