# Special Forces blocked asylum for Afghan commandos despite Taliban threats



The asylum applications of 1,585 Afghan commandos, known as "Triples," who served alongside British troops, were notably rejected by a Special Forces officer amidst grave concerns regarding their safety from the Taliban. Court documents indicate that these applications were dismissed despite the evident risks to the commandos, who could face severe reprisals for their cooperation with British forces during the Afghan conflict. This situation has escalated dramatically since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, with reports of some Triples having been killed during this period, highlighting the urgent need for action.

The context surrounding these rejections becomes particularly poignant against the backdrop of a High Court inquiry into allegations of war crimes involving UK Special Forces, particularly the SAS. This inquiry is examining claims that SAS units participated in extrajudicial killings of Afghan captives during night operations between 2010 and 2013, actions in which the Triples were often present. The inquiry is set to reveal troubling patterns of behaviour that suggest a potential cover-up by the UK government, possibly motivated by a desire to prevent the Triples from providing testimony about the operations they witnessed.

Former veterans minister Johnny Mercer, who has publicly advocated for the resettlement of these Afghan commandos, expressed his outrage at the situation, stating he was "appalled" by the government’s dismissal of their asylum requests. Mercer recounted discussions with high-ranking civil servants, where he was met with incredulity regarding the claims of negligence or complicity in blocking the Triples' applications. His assertion that these actions could amount to criminal negligence underscores the seriousness of the issue, particularly given that some former soldiers have already endured torture and death due to their former affiliations.

Adding to the complexity of the situation, a judicial review into the handling of these asylum applications has brought new revelations. The British Ministry of Defence initially denied any overarching policy against the Triples’ resettlement but later had to concede that there indeed existed a system — referred to as standard operating procedures — by which Special Forces assessments effectively held veto power over these applications. This admission raises questions not only about operational protocols but also about the ethical implications of such a decision-making process.

The plight of individuals like Rahmatullah, an Afghan commando who endured severe torture by the Taliban after his application for relocation was denied, illustrates the human cost of these policy decisions. His harrowing testimony reflects the dire consequences faced by many such soldiers left vulnerable following the British withdrawal. The broader narrative reveals a chilling pattern of apparent complicity and negligence on the part of British officials, as they attempt to navigate the fallout from military actions that have now come under intense scrutiny.

As the inquiry continues and findings are expected later this year, the unresolved fate of the Triples raises essential ethical questions regarding the legacy of the UK's military involvement in Afghanistan. The potential interplay of war crimes allegations, governmental negligence, and the very real dangers faced by the Afghan commandos underscores the urgent need for transparency and accountability in addressing their plight.

## 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), [[4]](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), [[2]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-62083196), [[3]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68358760)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/afghan-special-forces-triples-taliban-torture-b2440463.html), [[6]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn00d2ndnlgo)
* Paragraph 4 – [[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-68358760), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/oct/09/sas-troops-executed-afghan-males-of-fighting-age-inquiry-hears)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## 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-62083196> - An investigation by the BBC revealed a pattern of suspicious killings by a UK Special Forces squadron in Afghanistan between 2010 and 2011. Operational reports detailed multiple instances where Afghan detainees were killed after allegedly attempting to engage forces with weapons like grenades or rifles. Concerns were raised within the military about the high number of fatalities and the plausibility of the reported justifications. Despite internal alarms, the squadron continued operations without significant intervention, leading to questions about potential unlawful killing policies.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-68358760> - Veterans Minister Johnny Mercer testified to a public inquiry, recounting 'horrific' accounts from former Afghan special forces members about the SAS executing unarmed detainees and children. He confirmed these were allegations of 'straight murder' by the SAS. The inquiry is investigating claims that UK Special Forces killed civilians and unarmed individuals during night raids in Afghanistan between 2010 and 2013, with the Afghan commandos, known as the 'Triples,' potentially serving as witnesses.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/feb/19/uk-special-forces-blocked-resettlement-applications-from-elite-afghan-troops> - The Guardian reported that UK Special Forces blocked resettlement applications from Afghan commandos who fought alongside British forces. Despite evidence of their service, these applications were denied, raising concerns about a conflict of interest, especially as the Afghan commandos could be potential witnesses in a public inquiry into alleged SAS war crimes. The Ministry of Defence is conducting a review of these rejections, but questions remain about the decision-making process.
5. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/afghan-special-forces-triples-taliban-torture-b2440463.html> - The Independent detailed the harrowing experience of an Afghan commando, Rahmatullah, who served with British forces. After the Taliban's return to power, he was arrested and tortured for 13 days, enduring severe beatings and threats of execution. Despite his extensive service alongside UK Special Forces, his application for relocation to the UK was denied, highlighting the risks faced by Afghan commandos left behind after the British withdrawal.
6. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cn00d2ndnlgo> - The BBC reported that the UK government admitted to misleading Parliament regarding the denial of entry to former Afghan special forces. Initially, the Ministry of Defence denied that UK Special Forces had a veto over resettlement applications. However, they later acknowledged that under a previous standard operating procedure, UK Special Forces assessments were used by MoD caseworkers to decide on these applications, effectively giving them a veto power.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/oct/09/sas-troops-executed-afghan-males-of-fighting-age-inquiry-hears> - The Guardian reported on a public inquiry into the conduct of UK Special Forces in Afghanistan, revealing that some SAS troops executed Afghan males of fighting age during night raids, even when they posed no immediate threat. These actions were part of a broader pattern of alleged unlawful killings between 2010 and 2013. The inquiry, chaired by Lord Justice Haddon-Cave, is expected to take 12 to 18 months to produce an interim report.