# UK asylum denial of Afghan ‘Triples’ raised amid war crimes inquiry



A troubling issue has emerged regarding the asylum applications of 1,585 Afghan commandos, known as the Triples, who supported British forces during the Afghan conflict. Recent court documents reveal that a Special Forces officer rejected all these applications, despite the evident risks these soldiers face from the Taliban following the collapse of the Afghan government in August 2021. This rejection occurred in 2023, just months before a High Court inquiry began examining allegations of a shoot-to-kill policy by British Special Air Service (SAS) troops, which reportedly included the unlawful killing of over 80 Afghan captives during operations between 2010 and 2013.

Despite their collaboration with British troops, many of the Triples have been left vulnerable, facing direct threats to their lives. Some have already been killed, highlighting the brutal reality for those who once allied with foreign forces. This precarious situation raises serious questions about the motivations behind the denial of asylum. It is feared that the officer's actions may have been an attempt to prevent these soldiers from testifying about potential war crimes they witnessed, including claims of extrajudicial killings by British armed forces.

Johnny Mercer, a former veterans minister and vocal advocate for the Triples, expressed his outrage over the situation. He remarked, “I stand ready to assist any legal action against the Government for what is increasingly taking on the appearance of criminal negligence that has seen some of these good men killed.” Mercer's comments underscore the ethical implications of the government’s treatment of former allies and the failures in protecting those who risked their lives alongside British troops. While the Ministry of Defence (MoD) initially claimed there was no overarching ban on the Triples' asylum applications, its legal representatives have since been forced to concede that such a policy existed.

The rejection of the Triples' asylum applications has been compounded by allegations of a secretive and potentially unlawful ‘ban’ by the UK Home Office, implemented in late 2022. This undisclosed policy resulted in thousands of applications being paused and only became public knowledge in March 2023. The admitted existence of this ban has further strained relations between Afghan allies and the UK government, as many remain trapped in dangerous circumstances and vulnerable to Taliban retaliation.

The ongoing judicial review, initiated by a Triples officer whose associates have suffered grave fates, is keenly awaited. This inquiry will not only investigate the specifics of the tripartite SAS operations conducted a decade ago but also examine the political and operational decisions that have led to the current asylum denials. With testimonies expected from British soldiers themselves, highlighting wrongful killings of Afghan civilians—even minors—this inquiry holds the potential to reshape the narrative around UK military operations in Afghanistan and its aftermath, including its responsibilities towards those who served alongside them.

As scrutiny on UK military practices intensifies, many observers question the moral obligations of the British government towards its former Afghan allies. Caught between their allegiance to British forces and the hostile environment that now surrounds them, the plight of the Triples serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of conflict and the critical need for accountability and support for those who protected British interests at great personal risk.

## 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)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/f43a2a98-69f4-401b-bb7b-f73c9122d7f5), [[5]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk-special-forces-soldiers-tell-inquiry-afghan-murder-concerns-2025-01-08/)
* 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), [[6]](https://apnews.com/article/b33ea8cb9b162431c418eae39623baa3)
* 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://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/feb/19/uk-special-forces-blocked-resettlement-applications-from-elite-afghan-troops)

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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 denied, 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 many Afghan commandos remain in danger due to the Taliban's resurgence.
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. Despite providing evidence of their collaboration, these applications were rejected, leading to fears of retaliation from the Taliban. The Ministry of Defence is reviewing these decisions, but the process has been criticized for its lack of transparency and potential conflicts of interest.
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, was undisclosed to inspectors for several months and led to about 600 paused applications as of February 2023. The Home Office admitted the ban publicly in March 2023 but only notified applicants in May and resumed issuing visas in July.
5. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk-special-forces-soldiers-tell-inquiry-afghan-murder-concerns-2025-01-08/> - Reuters reports that British special forces soldiers have testified in a public inquiry about concerns that non-threatening Afghans, including minors under 16, were killed during raids against suspected Taliban insurgents. The inquiry, ordered by the UK's Ministry of Defence, examines raids conducted from mid-2010 to mid-2013, following allegations of unlawful killings by the SAS in Afghanistan over a decade ago.
6. <https://apnews.com/article/b33ea8cb9b162431c418eae39623baa3> - The Associated Press reports on an independent inquiry at the Royal Courts of Justice in London investigating claims that British special forces killed dozens of Afghan men unlawfully during counterinsurgency operations between 2010 and 2013. The inquiry aims to determine if there was credible evidence of unlawful killings and if they were covered up, reviewing military police investigations into these allegations.
7. <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 denied, 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 many Afghan commandos remain in danger due to the Taliban's resurgence.