# MoD faces backlash over flawed Afghan special forces resettlement process



The resettlement process for former Afghan special forces members, especially those linked to elite units like CF333 and ATF444—the Triples—has ignited fierce criticism. Recent remarks during a High Court hearing characterized these processes as fundamentally broken, likening them to a "crime scene." Such statements not only highlight the severe inadequacies in how applications from thousands of Afghans who stood alongside British troops have been handled, but they also reveal a grim picture of the government’s inaction amidst a resurgence of threats from the Taliban since 2021.

Evidence presented in the High Court indicates that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) turned away many applications from individuals with credible ties to the Triples, even though these units were funded and trained by British forces. This blanket refusal policy raises alarming questions about the MoD's commitment to its obligations, leaving countless Afghans in fear for their lives because of their association with British military operations.

Police scrutiny intensified when it was revealed that only a limited number of applications—about 2,000—would be reviewed, and only those previously forwarded to UK special forces for assessment. This restrictive approach undermines any genuine attempts to address the systemic failures highlighted by legal experts. The court disclosed that decision-making within the MoD was rushed, driven by political pressure to expedite evaluations, raising serious doubts about the quality of these life-altering decisions.

Former veterans’ affairs minister Johnny Mercer exposed a troubling conflict of interest by allowing UK special forces to participate in decisions regarding their former Afghan allies, thereby raising valid concerns about bias and discriminatory practices that may jeopardize the safety of these individuals and their families.

Amidst this fallout, public outcry for accountability and transparency has become increasingly urgent. Legal advocates are demanding that the decision-making procedures of the MoD be brought into the open, emphasizing the critical nature of the stakes involved. As Thomas de la Mare KC, representing the claimants, pointedly noted, restoring trust is non-negotiable when lives hang in the balance.

In a rather belated acknowledgment of these issues, the MoD has caved to public pressure and agreed to reassess applications previously deemed ineligible but with credible ties to the Triples. Minister James Heappey announced plans to tighten the review process following extensive media scrutiny, which starkly contrasts with the cavalier approach that has persisted up until now.

Moreover, the recent merger of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) with the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) is framed as the MoD's attempt at a more streamlined operation. However, this initiative should have been implemented long ago, raising further questions about the government’s responsiveness to these pressing humanitarian challenges.

As this distressing situation unfolds, there is a palpable urgency in advocating for those Afghan allies who displayed remarkable bravery alongside British forces. Their futures are now strikingly uncertain, not just depending on judicial resolutions but on the government's capacity to confront its prior failures and regain the public's trust in the resettlement process. The pressing need for sanctuary for these individuals is not merely a matter of bureaucratic redress but a fundamental humanitarian crisis that the new government must urgently acknowledge.

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> - This article reports that UK special forces blocked resettlement applications from Afghan commandos who fought alongside British troops. Leaked documents revealed that British special forces had veto power over resettlement, leading to claims that hundreds of Afghan veterans were left in danger in their home country. The Ministry of Defence is conducting a review amid accusations of conflict of interest, as a public inquiry investigates the conduct of the SAS in Afghanistan between 2010 and 2013.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-68152923> - The BBC reports that former Afghan special forces who served alongside British troops but were denied relocation to the UK will have their cases re-examined. Armed Forces Minister James Heappey stated that ineligible applications with credible claims of links to Afghan specialist units would be reassessed. The 'Triples' were elite units set up, funded, and run by the UK, and hundreds had their relocation claims denied following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021.
4. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/afghan-resettlement-ministry-defence-b2666503.html> - This article discusses the UK's Ministry of Defence's decision to merge two Afghan resettlement schemes into one, aiming to streamline the process. The Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) is for those who served alongside British forces, while the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) is for vulnerable Afghans. The merger is expected to improve efficiency and outcomes, with the Ministry of Defence acknowledging the need for better delivery for eligible Afghans and value for money for taxpayers.
5. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/afghan-uturn-heroes-uk-special-forces-b2486725.html> - The Independent reports that hundreds of Afghan special forces soldiers who were abandoned by Britain despite risking their lives to fight against the Taliban are set to be given sanctuary in the UK. About 400 soldiers who served in two specialist units will have their applications to settle in the UK reviewed after the Ministry of Defence decided to change how it assesses their claims. Some Afghan soldiers have been subjected to torture and murder at the hands of the Taliban after being denied help by the UK Government.
6. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/02/01/u-turn-to-allow-afghan-special-forces-soldiers-into-uk/> - This article reports that hundreds of Afghan special forces soldiers who were abandoned by Britain despite risking their lives to fight against the Taliban are set to be given sanctuary in the UK. About 400 soldiers who served in two specialist units will have their applications to settle in the UK reviewed after the Ministry of Defence decided to change how it assesses their claims. Some Afghan soldiers have been subjected to torture and murder at the hands of the Taliban after being denied help by the UK Government.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ce8dl9jdwe7o> - The BBC reports that the UK government is allowing some 'eligible' Afghan special forces soldiers who fought alongside the British military to resettle in the UK, after they were previously rejected. Under the previous government, about 2,000 Afghans who served with specialist units—known as the 'Triples'—were denied permission to relocate to the UK after the Taliban takeover in 2021. Armed forces minister Luke Pollard stated that a review had found some applications were wrongly turned down.