

Afghans who worked with UK forces were wrongly refused relocation and left facing years of danger, delay and uncertainty, according to the House of Commons Defence Committee.

The Defence Committee's report into the Afghan data breach makes sobering reading. The accidental disclosure of personal details relating to thousands of Afghans who had supported UK forces was a serious failure with potentially life-threatening consequences, and lessons must be learned.

At the same time, BAFF would caution against reducing the issue to criticism of a single individual. Mistakes happen in every large organisation, particularly when staff are working under intense pressure during fast-moving operations. The more important question is why the systems in place failed to prevent such an error or to detect and mitigate it more quickly.

The Committee concludes that this was a systemic failure rather than simply an individual one. If that is correct, the response must be to improve processes, training, technical safeguards and oversight so that similar incidents cannot happen again.

Our concern is not to find a convenient scapegoat but to ensure that those entrusted with highly sensitive information have the resources, procedures and support needed to do the job safely. That is the best way to protect both those who served alongside UK forces overseas and the personnel responsible for administering these vital schemes.

Parliament link: [Afghan allies left in danger by years of delay, secrecy and flawed decisions, MPs warn](#)

2023 RUSI commentary by Tim Willasey-Wilsey CMG: [Afghanistan: A Final British Betrayal?](#)

Background note: *BAFF has taken a consistent position on these issues, although we only represent our own serving and former UK forces members, and have no resources to assist individual former local staff or local special forces.*

One of our founding members was a leader of the campaign on behalf of Iraqi former interpreters, a campaign strongly supported by BAFF at a time when the principle of (when necessary) supporting former local staff had not been accepted. Our contacts enabled us to confirm support for that principle, in the interests of safety, efficiency and morale of UK forces.

Another of our founding members was the instigator of a an option within the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) for local staff members, such as interpreters, regardless of ethnicity, to be offered transport to wherever they wished to go, whether to home town or village or to Skopje or Belgrade, in the event of a decision to withdraw the Mission. This duly happened in some areas when the Mission was withdrawn, and was a morale issue for many British Army personnel seconded to the mission who had for many months been relying on local staff in the field.

In the months ahead of the final Afghan withdrawal in August 2021 (Op PITTING), BAFF received a rising number of approaches on social media from former local staff who had worked for UK forces. We supplied details of [The Sulha Alliance CIO](#), the only UK charity whose work solely focusses on supporting Afghan interpreters and other Locally Engaged Civilians (LECs) who worked with the British Armed forces.

We've also commented on the situation of former 'Triples' Afghan special forces such as members of Afghan Special Police Commando Force 333 (CF333). We don't, however, have either the resources or the remit to give further assistance with individual cases.