

UK Spends Over £450,000 Monthly on Afghan Relocation Flights

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The UK government is spending more than £450,000 each month to fly at-risk Afghans to safety under a relocation scheme prompted by a Ministry of Defence data breach. The Afghan Response Route (ARR) has so far resettled approximately 4,500 individuals since it began in mid-2023.

Official figures show that the average monthly cost of flights stands at £457,800. This covers both RAF and chartered aircraft used to relocate Afghan nationals and their families whose personal information was exposed in the 2022 data breach. That incident compromised the details of around 18,700 individuals who had applied for protection after supporting British forces during the conflict.

The scheme, launched to mitigate risks to those affected, has now concluded. No new invitations will be issued, although applications already underway will continue to be processed. Of those resettled so far, around 900 are principal applicants, and the rest are family members.

Defence Secretary John Healey has stated that the ARR has cost around £400 million to date, with a similar amount expected to be spent before its conclusion, bringing the total cost close to £850 million. While earlier reports speculated that the relocation efforts could reach £7 billion, government sources clarified that the larger figure referred to all Afghan schemes initiated since 2021, not just the response to the data leak.

The resettlement of Afghans through all programmes, including ARAP, ACRS, and ARR, has now reached an estimated 36,000 people. With the closure of these initiatives in July 2025, the government ended a five-year operation to provide refuge for Afghans who worked alongside UK forces.

Despite the scale of the effort, the government has faced criticism over the transparency of its financial reporting. MPs and oversight bodies have pointed to inconsistencies between official statements and court records. The Public Accounts Committee is calling for a full inquiry into how public funds have been spent. Senior MP Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown

said the lack of clarity surrounding the programme's cost was deeply troubling.

While humanitarian organisations have welcomed the UK's commitment to supporting those put at risk, they argue that accountability has been lacking. As the final relocations take place, pressure continues to mount on ministers to explain the full cost and ensure lessons are learned from both the data breach and its aftermath.