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UK Data Breach Exposes Afghans and Military Personnel

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LONDON, Thousands of Afghans who have resettled in the United Kingdom, alongside British military personnel and civil servants, may have been affected by a recent data breach linked to a firm working with the Ministry of Defence.

Jet Centre, a company responsible for ground handling services for flights, announced late on Friday that it experienced a data security incident. The breach resulted in “unauthorised

access to a limited number of company emails,” potentially exposing sensitive information. The company estimates that approximately 3,700 individuals could be affected.

Among those potentially impacted are Afghans who were relocated to the UK under government schemes, British troops travelling to routine military exercises, and journalists accompanying ministers on official duties. Jet Centre confirmed that the incident is under investigation and that steps are being taken to secure affected accounts.

This is not the first instance of data breaches affecting Afghans who worked alongside British forces. In February 2022, information on 18,714 individuals, including translators, fixers, and other local personnel, was released “in error” by an official, raising concerns about the security of sensitive relocation data.

Many Afghans who collaborated with Western forces faced heightened risks following the Taliban’s return to power. To provide them with protection, the UK introduced the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP). The programme aimed to bring vulnerable Afghans to the UK, offering safety and opportunities for resettlement. The individuals under ARAP include translators, support staff, and others who assisted British military and diplomatic operations.

Civil liberties groups have emphasised the potential consequences of the breach, noting that compromised personal data could endanger relocated Afghans and those connected to UK military operations abroad. While the Ministry of Defence has not released an official statement on the incident, it has previously indicated that the security of ARAP participants is a priority.

Jet Centre has assured clients and affected individuals that it is collaborating with cybersecurity experts to investigate the incident and mitigate any further risks. Notifications are being sent to those potentially impacted, with guidance on steps to protect personal data and prevent misuse.

The company’s spokesperson stated: “We deeply regret this incident and are taking all necessary measures to support those affected. We continue to review our security protocols to prevent any recurrence.”

Data security experts warn that breaches involving sensitive government or military-related information carry unique risks. In addition to the exposure of personal data, such incidents

can complicate international relations, compromise operational security, and increase vulnerabilities for individuals who have previously worked in high-risk environments.

Previous breaches in the UK and overseas have highlighted the importance of robust safeguards for relocation programmes. Government authorities and partner firms are under growing pressure to enhance cyber defences and ensure that sensitive information is handled with the highest level of protection.

The current breach serves as a reminder of the challenges in balancing logistical operations with cybersecurity obligations, particularly when protecting the identities and safety of vulnerable individuals. It also underscores the ongoing risks faced by Afghans who sought refuge in the UK after assisting British forces abroad.

Officials and advocacy groups continue to monitor the situation, urging vigilance and support for those potentially affected. The investigation by Jet Centre and relevant authorities is ongoing, and further updates are expected in the coming days.