

Taliban-Linked Individuals Among Secret Afghan Arrivals in UK, Raising Security Concerns

July 28, 2025

— Categories: Defence & Security



Evidence has emerged that individuals with alleged Taliban affiliations were among those secretly flown to the UK under a covert relocation programme set up following a major Ministry of Defence (MoD) data breach.

The operation, known internally as Operation Rubific, or the Afghanistan Response Route (ARR), was established to assist Afghans whose identities were exposed in a serious MoD email blunder in 2022. Around 19,000 names were inadvertently leaked, raising fears of Taliban reprisals. In response, the UK government quietly relocated approximately 4,500 individuals, including around 900 primary applicants and 3,600 family members, with an estimated total of 6,900 expected by the programme's conclusion. The cost of the scheme is projected to reach £5 billion.

However, it has since emerged that some evacuees may have exploited the system. Reports indicate that a number of those brought to the UK had criminal records or links to extremist activity, including individuals allegedly connected to the Taliban. In some instances, applicants are believed to have included Islamist-affiliated dependents or relatives on their forms, allowing questionable individuals to enter the UK under the radar.

Security experts and opposition figures have raised serious concerns over the screening process. Critics argue that the combination of a hasty rollout, flawed data security, and limited transparency created loopholes that could compromise national security. There are increasing calls for a formal inquiry into how such individuals were cleared and brought into the country without adequate public or parliamentary scrutiny.

Defence Secretary John Healey has defended the operation, stating that all individuals underwent security and criminal background checks before entry. He dismissed some of the more severe claims as politically motivated and urged anyone with credible evidence to contact the authorities.

The programme had remained entirely hidden from public view due to a super-injunction that blocked reporting on both the data breach and the subsequent airlift operation until July 2025.

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, who inherited the scheme from the previous Conservative administration, has acknowledged the sensitivity of the issue but defended the UK's moral responsibility to assist Afghans who supported British forces. However, his government is now under pressure to review the integrity of the programme and reassure the public that security was not compromised.

With legal action now being launched by some of those evacuated, and others raising alarm over a lack of parliamentary oversight, the government faces growing demands to tighten vetting procedures and ensure greater transparency in future emergency resettlement efforts.