

Thousands of Afghans Affected by Second UK Data Breach, Ministers Confirm

August 16, 2025

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The UK government has revealed that a second data breach has compromised the personal information of thousands of Afghan nationals relocated to Britain between January and March 2024. Officials said the breach occurred through a cyberattack on Inflight, The Jet Centre, a third-party supplier contracted by the Ministry of Defence to provide ground handling services at London Stansted Airport. The latest incident has

heightened concerns over the protection of sensitive data for some of the country's most vulnerable residents.

The affected information includes names, passport details, and reference numbers linked to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), which governs the resettlement of those who assisted British forces. While the Ministry of Defence has stated that no government systems were directly compromised, the repeated exposure of personal data has sparked questions about the security protocols surrounding outsourced services and the handling of sensitive records.

Defence Secretary John Healey expressed his “sincere apology” for the breach, acknowledging that the incident highlighted a lack of transparency. He stated that the government's aim is to safeguard the privacy of individuals while maintaining public confidence and parliamentary oversight. Healey added that steps are being taken to notify all potentially affected individuals and to mitigate any possible risk to their safety.

The breach is the second of its kind to affect Afghan nationals relocated to the UK. The previous breach led to the establishment of a secret relocation programme under the prior Conservative government, designed to move Afghan nationals who were at risk but ineligible for other official resettlement schemes. Legal advocates and campaigners have since called for an independent inquiry into the latest breach, emphasising the need for accountability and stronger safeguards to prevent similar incidents in the future.

The Ministry of Defence has confirmed that Inflight is cooperating with the investigation, and the Information Commissioner's Office has been

informed. Officials are reviewing internal protocols and working to ensure that all contractors adhere to strict data protection standards. The repeated exposure of sensitive information has nevertheless raised concerns among refugee support groups and human rights organisations about the potential risks to individuals who have worked with British forces abroad.

Observers note that outsourcing critical operations to private contractors carries inherent risks, particularly when personal and potentially life-sensitive data is involved. The government faces mounting pressure to demonstrate that lessons have been learned from previous breaches and that robust measures are in place to prevent any recurrence. Analysts stress that maintaining trust with vulnerable populations is essential, as any loss of confidence could have implications for future relocation programmes and international partnerships.

As the investigation continues, ministers have pledged to increase scrutiny of third-party suppliers and to enhance security measures. The incident serves as a stark reminder of the importance of diligent oversight in safeguarding the privacy and safety of those who have assisted the United Kingdom in conflict zones. Government officials acknowledge that protecting Afghan nationals is not only a moral obligation but also critical to upholding Britain's international commitments and reputation.

The situation remains under close review, with calls for full transparency and stringent enforcement of data security standards to prevent further breaches and to reassure those affected that their personal information is protected.