



House of Commons  
Defence Committee

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# Withdrawal from Afghanistan

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**Fifth Report of Session 2022–23**

*Report, together with formal minutes relating  
to the report*

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## The Defence Committee

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## Summary

This delayed report relates to events that took place over a year ago, focusing on the work of the Ministry of Defence and the UK Armed Forces. More than 150,000 British Armed Forces personnel served in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021. This came at a cost, with 457 deaths in service, and financial expenditure of £27.7 billion. (Introduction)

The withdrawal of US forces in line with the Doha Agreement made the subsequent collapse of the Afghan Government inevitable. The speed of that collapse was a greater surprise to the military establishment than it might have been. It would have been very difficult in practice for the UK and other NATO allies to retain a military presence in Afghanistan without the US. The end of the NATO mission has been severely detrimental both to the people of Afghanistan and to the security of the region, as well as to Alliance and UK military credibility. (Chapter 1)

The military elements of the evacuation from Afghanistan were a success, and we welcome the award of medals to Armed Forces personnel who served on Operation PITTING. The same praise, however, cannot be given to the efforts of the UK Government's civilian operations in support of the evacuation. The processing and prioritisation of potential evacuees under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) could and should have been much further advanced by the time that the need for the evacuation became urgent. Several thousand eligible Afghans—whose safety is by definition at risk in Afghanistan—still remain to be evacuated under the ARAP well over a year after the end of Operation PITTING, and we ask the Government to set out what action they are taking to ensure safe passage to the United Kingdom for these people. (Chapter 2)

The withdrawal from Afghanistan has understandably had a negative impact on veterans' mental health, increasing demand on related public and charitable services. We urge the Government to ensure charities working in this area are suitably resourced. (Chapter 3)

The Government must conduct an open, honest and detailed review of military operations and political decisions throughout the 20 years of UK involvement in Afghanistan, from the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001 to the evacuation from Kabul in August 2021. (Chapter 4)

# Introduction

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## Our inquiry

1. We acknowledge the delay in publishing this report, which relates to events that took place over a year ago. Many others within Parliament and beyond have already had their say.<sup>1</sup> However, we firmly believe that this short report is still of value, with its particular focus on the work of the Ministry of Defence and the UK Armed Forces.

2. Defence Committees in previous Parliaments have conducted several inquiries into the UK's involvement in Afghanistan since 2001.<sup>2</sup> Their reports have focussed on UK support for Afghan interpreters and other locally employed civilians, alongside more general reports on the UK deployment to Afghanistan and international efforts to secure the future of the country.

3. Our inquiry into the withdrawal from Afghanistan was launched on 9 September 2021, 12 days after the last British military personnel left the country.<sup>3</sup> During the intervening period the withdrawal and evacuation received media and parliamentary attention on a scale not seen in recent years. This brought the conflict to public attention and led to widespread questioning of how British, and wider NATO, involvement in the country ended in the manner it did.

4. We thank all those who contributed to our inquiry. We received and have published 12 pieces of written evidence,<sup>4</sup> as well as receiving confidential written evidence, and we heard from 10 witnesses, including the Secretary of State for Defence.<sup>5</sup> The then Chief of the Defence Staff and National Security Adviser, General Sir Nick Carter and Sir Stephen Lovegrove, also answered questions relating to the withdrawal from Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup>

5. There is a consolidated list of our conclusions and recommendations at the end of the report. We will publish the Government's response when we receive it, normally within two months.

1 Foreign Affairs Committee, First Report of Session 2022–23, [Missing in action: UK leadership and the withdrawal from Afghanistan](#), HC 169 incorporating HC 685; International Development Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2021–22, [Afghanistan: UK support for aid workers and the Afghan people](#); Home Affairs Committee, Evidence taken on [‘Afghanistan: safe routes and resettlement’](#), HC 706 (Session 2021–22); Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, First Report of Session 2021–22, [The UK's national security machinery](#), HC 231/HL 68, Chapter 4.

2 Defence Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2017–19, [Lost in Translation? Afghan Interpreters and Other Locally Employed Civilians](#), HC 572; Fifteenth Report of Session 2013–14, [Afghanistan](#), HC 994; Thirteenth Report of Session 2013–14, [Afghanistan—Camp Bastion Attack](#), HC 830; Tenth Report of Session 2012–13, [Securing the Future of Afghanistan](#), HC 413; Fourth Report of Session 2010–12, [Operations in Afghanistan](#), HC 554; Thirteenth Report of Session 2006–07, [UK operations in Afghanistan](#), HC 408; Fifth Report of Session 2005–06, [The UK deployment to Afghanistan](#), HC 558

3 [“Defence Committee launch inquiry into withdrawal from Afghanistan,”](#) Defence Committee, 9 September 2021

4 Defence Committee, [‘Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Written Evidence,’](#) accessed 27 January 2023

5 26 October 2021: Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP, Secretary of State for Defence, Ministry of Defence (Qq1–101); 16 November 2021: Dr Jack Watling, Research Fellow for Land Warfare, Royal United Services Institute; Brigadier (ret) Ben Barry, Senior Fellow for Land Warfare, International Institute for Strategic Studies; Dr Sara de Jong, Representative, The Sulha Alliance; Peter Gordon-Finlayson, Representative, The Sulha Alliance; Professor Brad Blitz, Representative, Afghan Solidarity Coalition; Dr Neelam Raina, Representative, Afghan Solidarity Coalition (Qq102–190); 23 November 2021: General David Petraeus (ret.), Commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan (2010–11); Jeff Harrison, Interim CEO, Combat Stress; Sarah Jones, Head of Psychological Wellbeing, Help for Heroes (Qq191–244)

6 Oral evidence taken on 9 November 2021, [HC 842](#), Qq1–126 [General Sir Nick Carter]; Oral evidence taken on 30 November 2021, [HC 166](#), Qq253–319 [Sir Stephen Lovegrove]

## UK involvement in Afghanistan

6. On 28 August 2021 British military personnel left Afghanistan on planes departing from Hamid Karzai International Airport, ending the UK's evacuation efforts through Operation PITTING and thus bringing to a close almost twenty years of UK military involvement in the country.

7. The UK's involvement in Afghanistan began as part of a US-led coalition of the willing (Operation Enduring Freedom) which followed the invocation of NATO's Article V collective defence clause on 12 September 2001 as a result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States orchestrated by al-Qaeda. The mission for the UK and allies was to destroy al-Qaeda and defeat Afghanistan's Taliban Government, who had provided the group with support. By the end of 2001, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan had collapsed but an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) remained, with a large contribution from the UK.

8. Over time the ISAF in Afghanistan transferred more responsibility to Afghanistan's own security services and administration and on 20 November 2010 NATO announced a timetable for the withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan. The UK's combat operations officially concluded on 12 December 2014 and the nature of UK involvement shifted to contributing to NATO's Resolute Support Mission where British forces had two main tasks:

- Training and mentoring Afghan Forces; and
- Providing force protection for NATO advisors via the Kabul Security Force/Kabul Protection Unit.<sup>7</sup>

9. On 15 April 2021, NATO Foreign and Defence Ministers confirmed the decision to start withdrawing all remaining forces from Afghanistan. Operation TORAL, the codename for the UK contribution, drew to a close on 8 July 2021 alongside the withdrawal of other NATO forces.<sup>8</sup>

10. The UK military deployed again to Afghanistan on 13 August 2021 as part of Operation PITTING, the military operation to evacuate British nationals and eligible Afghans from Afghanistan following the 2021 Taliban offensive and fall of the Afghan Government.<sup>9</sup> The operation included more than 1,000 military personnel, drawn largely from 16 Air Assault Brigade. Over 15,000 eligible Afghans and British nationals were successfully evacuated but many were left behind. The final evacuation flights departed on 28 August with the very final flight, carrying military personnel, marking the end of the operation and the end of the UK's 20-year military presence.

11. More than 150,000 British Armed Forces personnel served in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021. This came at a cost, with 457 deaths in service.<sup>10</sup> The number of fatalities peaked in 2009 and 2010, during the UK's deployments to Helmand Province, when over 100 personnel were killed. During Operation Herrick (2002–2014), in addition to deaths in

7 Q102 [Brigadier Barry]

8 Ministry of Defence, [Operation TORAL draws to an end as UK transitions to new phase of support to Afghanistan](#), 8 July 2021

9 Ministry of Defence, [Military operation established to support the drawdown of British nationals from Afghanistan](#), 13 August 2021

10 Ministry of Defence (AFG0013) para 1.1

service, there were 616 serious or very serious casualties among armed forces and civilian personnel. According to the MOD, Operations Herrick and TORAL have together cost £27.7 billion.<sup>11</sup>

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11 Afghanistan statistics: UK deaths, casualties, mission costs and refugees, Commons Briefing Pack [CBP9298](#), House of Commons Library, 16 August 2021. Net additional costs resulting from military operations, 2021 prices.



# 1 The Doha Agreement and fall of the Afghan Government

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## The Doha Agreement

12. The Doha Agreement, or the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan, was signed by the Trump Administration and the Taliban on 29 February 2020, to bring an end to the war in Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup>

13. As a result of the agreement, in April 2021 the US announced that they would be withdrawing troops from Afghanistan by 11 September. In parallel, NATO Foreign and Defence Ministers decided on 14 April 2021 to end their mission in Afghanistan (Operation Resolute Support), with the withdrawal starting by 1 May.<sup>13</sup> MOD evidence states that this followed the principle of ‘In Together, Out Together’ that has guided the Alliance’s Commitment to Afghanistan over the last 20 years.<sup>14</sup> The US announced in July 2021 that their military mission in Afghanistan would conclude by 31 August.<sup>15</sup>

14. The MOD’s evidence makes clear that the Doha Agreement limited options in relation to future presence in Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup> The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP, Secretary of State for Defence, told us that the UK played no part in the Doha Agreement and criticised the agreement for withdrawing coalition ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) and air support and, in doing so, removing from the battlefield “the one thing that the Taliban feared”.<sup>17</sup> He told us that an intelligence assessment at the beginning of August 2021 concluded that the withdrawal of ISR/air cover capability increased the ability of the Taliban to take ground or run an offensive.<sup>18</sup> The Defence Secretary told us that the “terms of the deal could probably not have been more helpful to the Taliban in achieving its victory or its aim”,<sup>19</sup> and expanded by saying:

“If you remove from the battlefield the one thing that holds them back and at the same time publicly do a deal with them in Qatar but not necessarily with the actual Government in post, you send a message to the world that you do not have any faith in the Government in post.”<sup>20</sup>

15. In August 2021, the Defence Secretary publicly declared the Doha Agreement a “rotten deal”.<sup>21</sup> The then National Security Adviser, Sir Stephen Lovegrove, told the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy that the assessment following Doha was that there “was always going to be a Taliban-dominated Government.”<sup>22</sup> Brigadier Ben

12 US State Department, [Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan](#), 29 February 2020

13 “North Atlantic Council Ministerial Statement on Afghanistan”, North Atlantic Treaty Organization press release [2021/050](#), 14 April 2021

14 Ministry of Defence (AFG0013) para 1.4

15 BBC News, [Biden defends decision to end Afghan military operation](#), 8 July 2021

16 Ministry of Defence (AFG0013) para 1.3

17 Q2

18 Q11

19 Q3

20 Q3

21 Sky News, [Afghanistan: After Trump’s ‘rotten’ deal, what incentive is there for Taliban to negotiate?](#), 10 August 2021

22 [Oral evidence taken before the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy on 20 October 2021](#), Q4 [Sir Stephen Lovegrove]

Barry, Senior Fellow for Land Warfare at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, summarised the Doha Agreement by stating that:

“From a position of weakness, the US negotiated a ceasefire deal with the Taliban, with no guarantees that the Taliban would stick to their side ... nor that the elected Kabul Government’s interests would be protected”.<sup>23</sup>

16. The Afghan Government and other allies deployed in Afghanistan appeared to be absent from the negotiating table in Doha. The Defence Secretary told us that “you should always have as many of the key stakeholders at any of these discussions” but caveated that by stating that he did not know what went on in secret between the United States and the Afghan Government.<sup>24</sup> Brigadier Barry noted that although there was an Afghan Government delegation at Doha the “US was very much in the driving seat and it was being driven by its proclaimed national interest”,<sup>25</sup> concluding that:

“In the end, the UK was not in the room when the Doha Agreement was signed, and nor was the rest of NATO or the Afghan Government.”<sup>26</sup>

However, we are not sighted on the extent to which the UK enquired or were informed about the progress of negotiations or the terms of the final agreement.

17. The Defence Secretary told us that the deal was taken to the NATO Foreign Ministers’ meeting and that the UK was in a position “where we could try to communicate the importance of taking it step by step”.<sup>27</sup> However he admitted to us that the UK “did not really have a choice” on whether or not to follow the agreement due to the scale and presence of the United States in the framework.<sup>28</sup> The then Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Nick Carter, echoed this remark stating that “we had to leave by 31 August because that was the deal that the Americans struck with the Taliban”.<sup>29</sup>

18. Brigadier Barry told us that UK influence over US military decision-making was limited, with apparently no influence over the Doha negotiations.<sup>30</sup> Dr Jack Watling, Research Fellow for Land Warfare at the Royal United Services Institute, described the Doha Agreement of February 2020 as a roadmap to deliver what the United States wanted at the time; he did not think that the UK had many options in terms of influencing the US trajectory.<sup>31</sup> Dr Watling told us that there was no expectation that the Doha Agreement would benefit Afghanistan and that the Agreement was about America getting out.<sup>32</sup>

**19. The signing of the Doha Agreement served domestic US Administration priorities, by enabling the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan to a defined schedule. The absence of the United Kingdom, other allies and the Afghan Government from the negotiating table was unfortunate, although it is unclear whether the United Kingdom Government made any request to be included. The agreement emboldened the Taliban and gave it a timeframe in which to plan its future operations. The Afghan National**

23 Q114

24 Q9

25 Q104

26 Q104

27 Q2

28 Q4

29 Oral evidence taken on 9 November 2021, [HC \(2021–22\) 842](#), Q49

30 Q102 [Brigadier Barry]

31 Q102 [Dr Jack Watling]

32 Qq106–107

**Security and Defence Forces had become reliant under Western tutelage on air support and logistics contractors to operate effectively. Their withdrawal made the subsequent collapse of the Afghan Government inevitable.**

## The withdrawal of international forces from Afghanistan

20. MOD written evidence tells us that the UK “conducted detailed planning for an orderly and deliberate withdrawal of the majority of UK forces from Afghanistan in line with the wider NATO plan for forces to leave the country by 11 September 2021” advising that “this drawdown began in May 2021 and was complete in July 2021”.<sup>33</sup> The written evidence stated that all options were thoroughly assessed by the UK in advance of the decision to withdraw. This included, it added, the potential for staying longer beyond the US withdrawal, or increasing the UK presence in Afghanistan.<sup>34</sup>

21. The then Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Nick Carter, told the NATO Chiefs of Defence meeting on 27 January 2021 that the withdrawal of forces by 1 May, as under the Doha Agreement, could not be conducted in “good order” and advised that military advice to the North Atlantic Council and Ministers should be that NATO should stay to buy time for a better political outcome.<sup>35</sup> General Carter added that he felt that there may have been merit in thinking about staying beyond what eventually became the 31 August deadline for withdrawal and certainly beyond the 1 May deadline in the Doha Agreement.<sup>36</sup> He did, however, recognise the challenges of staying beyond 31 August as “we would have become protagonists again” and “that would have involved more casualties and a greater level of intense military activity”.<sup>37</sup>

22. When the House of Commons was recalled on 18 August, during the airlift from Kabul Airport, then Prime Minister Boris Johnson mentioned that the UK had explored options to remain in Afghanistan beyond the deadlines announced by the US, but had concluded that “the west could not continue this US-led mission—a mission conceived and executed in support and defence of America—without American logistics, without US air power and without American might”.<sup>38</sup> Mr Wallace told us that he had questioned the timetable for the withdrawal, when it became clear that the Taliban were advancing faster than expected.<sup>39</sup> However, the United States, as the major contributor, was the key scale and enabler to operations in Afghanistan.<sup>40</sup> He told us that he had established that there was no appetite from allies to remain without them.<sup>41</sup>

23. General David Petraeus, Commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan (2010–11), told the Foreign Affairs Committee that the scale of the US military contribution to NATO meant that without the US, “it probably is not possible for the other coalition partners to stay or to be engaged. That was reflected by the reality in Afghanistan and it is somewhat inescapable.”<sup>42</sup>

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33 Ministry of Defence (AFG0013) para 2.8

34 Ministry of Defence (AFG0013) para 2.3

35 Oral evidence taken on 9 November 2021, [HC \(2021–22\) 842](#), Q16

36 Oral evidence taken on 9 November 2021, [HC \(2021–22\) 842](#), Q17

37 Oral evidence taken on 9 November 2021, [HC \(2021–22\) 842](#), Q18

38 HC Deb 18 August 2021, Col 1256

39 Q27

40 Q10. James Tudor-White (AFG0011) para 2.

41 Q16

42 Foreign Affairs Committee, Oral evidence: Government policy on Afghanistan, HC 685 ([Q160](#))

24. Dr Jack Watling argued that the rest of NATO could have sustained a presence in Afghanistan without the US, but only at the cost of commitments in Eastern Europe and elsewhere.<sup>43</sup> Subsequent events in Ukraine suggest that would have been a major strategic error. Dr Watling added that the UK would have been “bent out of shape” if it had tried to do the heavy lifting in Afghanistan itself.<sup>44</sup>

**25. Although the Defence Secretary assured us that he had attempted to find a way to retain a military presence in Afghanistan without the US, we recognise how difficult this would have been in practice. This shows the limits of NATO’s military capability without US involvement.**

### Did NATO and the UK accomplish their objectives in Afghanistan?

26. The MOD’s written evidence states that the primary objective when deploying to Afghanistan in 2001 was to ensure that it could not be used as a base for international terrorism in the wake of the 11 September 2001 attacks. It adds that there have been no terrorist atrocities against UK interests launched from Afghan soil in the two decades since.<sup>45</sup> NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg made a public statement to similar effect.<sup>46</sup> The Defence Secretary emphasised that operations in Afghanistan had been successful in their initial aim: “the expulsion, defeat or dismantling of al-Qaeda”.<sup>47</sup>

27. The Defence Secretary told us that he did not think that NATO was defeated in Afghanistan, adding that “We could have chosen to stay as the force we were if we wanted to continue. Our resolve was found wanting. That is what I would say, rather than “defeated””.<sup>48</sup> Mr Wallace added that he believed NATO were present in Afghanistan to enable a “political resolution and a political campaign” but that it was not their role to deliver it.<sup>49</sup>

28. General Sir Nick Carter agreed that the UK and NATO were “never defeated on the battlefield” adding that what had “unravelling the whole effort” was the political context in which it was all conducted.<sup>50</sup> He, however, refused to call the war in Afghanistan a “victory”.<sup>51</sup>

29. Brigadier Barry disagreed with these assessments: “We should be quite clear that the Taliban won and that the US, UK and NATO were defeated.”<sup>52</sup> In his view, this was not just a military defeat but also a “wider defeat for the values of the West”.<sup>53</sup> Dr Watling concurred: “if you are not able to acknowledge defeat, it will be very difficult for you to acknowledge that there is a problem and that you might need to learn from it”.<sup>54</sup>

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43 Q102 [Dr Jack Watling]

44 Q108

45 Ministry of Defence (AFG0013) para 1.2

46 NATO, [Closing press conference by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meetings of NATO Foreign Ministers in Riga, Latvia, 1 December 2021](#)

47 Q43

48 Q38

49 Q39; Q41; Q55

50 Oral evidence taken on 9 November 2021, [HC \(2021–22\) 842](#), Q5

51 Oral evidence taken on 9 November 2021, [HC \(2021–22\) 842](#), Q11

52 Q122

53 Q123

54 Q124

30. The Defence Secretary accepted that there was potential optimism bias within NATO as to the capacity of the Afghan forces to fight against the Taliban.<sup>55</sup> Brigadier Barry told us that the US and UK had seemed to have underestimated “just how hollowed out the Afghan forces are, what a blow to their morale the US decision to withdraw and the cessation of meaningful air support was, and how very strong the Taliban position was in rural Afghanistan”.<sup>56</sup> Dr Watling noted that assessments of the situation in Afghanistan appeared to differ depending on military rank:

“The strange thing that I observed was that, whenever I spoke to anyone who was lieutenant colonel and below over the past year, their assessment on Afghanistan was that the lights were flashing red. The moment I spoke to somebody who was two-star and above, things became quite rose-tinted.”<sup>57</sup>

Brigadier Barry concurred and said that optimism bias was a persistent problem in the MOD and Whitehall, with parallels to the Iraq War.<sup>58</sup>

31. The MOD’s written evidence concludes that the rate at which the Afghan National Security Forces collapsed over the summer of 2021 was “unexpected”.<sup>59</sup> The Defence Secretary told us that while intelligence assessment got the sequence of the collapse broadly right, they got the pace wrong.<sup>60</sup> General Sir Nick Carter warned that “we need to be careful about blaming intelligence” adding that “I do not know anybody in my vast network of Afghans who expected President Ghani to leg it and expected what actually unfolded at the pace at which it did”.<sup>61</sup>

32. The speed of the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan came as a surprise to many governments, including the United States, Germany, Sweden and Russia.<sup>62</sup> However, we agree with our colleagues on the Foreign Affairs Committee that this does not excuse UK failures in this area.<sup>63</sup> **Optimism bias and failures in intelligence and analysis meant that the rapid collapse of the Afghan Government was a greater surprise to the military establishment than it might have been.**

33. More than a year after the evacuation, it is obvious that the situation for most people in Afghanistan is far worse than it was before the withdrawal. The Taliban have shown themselves to be no more inclusive or diverse or competent than they were in 2001, despite hopes to the contrary. The country faces multiple inter-connected crises, from governance, to the humanitarian situation, to the exclusion of women and girls from society. In the words of one of a series of ‘one-year-on’ think pieces:

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55 Q41

56 Q105

57 Q112

58 Q116

59 Ministry of Defence (AFG0013) para 1.5

60 Q58

61 Oral evidence taken on 9 November 2021, [HC \(2021–22\) 842](#), Q8

62 Reuters, [World must help Afghans fleeing Taliban or risk crisis—Merkel](#), 16 August 2021; Sveriges Radio, [Foreign Minister Linde: “Has gone much faster than expected”](#) [in Swedish], 15 August 2021; and TASS, [Russian envoy describes Taliban’s seizure of Kabul as somewhat unexpected](#), 16 August 2021

63 Foreign Affairs Committee, First Report of Session 2022–23, [Missing in action: UK leadership and the withdrawal from Afghanistan](#), HC 169 incorporating HC 685, Para 12

“the plight of Afghans is worsening. The economic situation is dire, malnutrition rates are increasing, women’s rights are being curtailed, there is continuing migration and internal displacement, and the health care system is crumbling”.<sup>64</sup>

34. In addition, Afghanistan has again become a safe haven for international terrorism, as shown by the need for the CIA operation that killed Ayman al-Zawahiri, the head of al-Qaeda, in Kabul in 2022. The United Nations Security Council described Afghanistan in July 2022 as hosting one of “the most vigorous and best established” Islamic State networks and commented on the “consolidation of power” of key al-Qaeda allies within the Taliban de facto administration, stating that “international terrorist organizations based in the country view the victory of the Taliban as a motivating factor”.<sup>65</sup>

**35. If the initial goal of the NATO deployment was mainly to prevent terrorist attacks against Western nations originating in Afghanistan, current evidence suggests that while there have been no such recent attacks to date, Afghanistan is once again becoming a safe haven for international terrorism. And it is impossible to argue that the mission has been a success if its goal was in part to ensure Afghanistan’s stability as a functioning state, with basic human rights for its population, including women and girls. The fall of the Afghan Government represented a serious strategic blow to NATO and its allies.**

**36. Technically, NATO forces were not defeated in Afghanistan. However, this must not prevent the recognition that the end of the NATO mission has been severely detrimental both to the people of Afghanistan and to the security of the region, as well as to Alliance and UK military credibility.**

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64 Chatham House, *Afghanistan: One year of Taliban rule*, August 2022, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/08/afghanistan-one-year-taliban-rule>

65 Letter dated 11 July 2022 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council. <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S%202022%20547.pdf>



## 2 The Evacuation and Relocation of Eligible Afghans

37. The Foreign Affairs Committee have produced a thorough analysis of the evacuation, especially of the civilian leadership and administration, with an understandable focus on what they have described as “serious and avoidable failings”.<sup>66</sup> We commend their description of events, which we will therefore not repeat at length. Our comments here focus on the role of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces.

38. The evidence we took on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP), the MOD-led relocation scheme introduced in April 2021, highlighted the following key failings:

- a) a lack of preparedness for the actual number of potential applicants, resulting in under-resourcing, which in turn caused backlogs in applications and errors in decision-making.<sup>67</sup> Only one locally employed civilian had been relocated to the UK as at 1 June 2021.<sup>68</sup>
- b) poor communication with applicants, causing not only stress for them but also ever-increasing quantities of communication outside the claims process involving MPs and third parties.<sup>69</sup>
- c) unclear, frequently changing scheme criteria.<sup>70</sup> The criteria initially excluded around 35% of all interpreters, as well as most contractors, including some who had worked at the British Embassy for up to 20 years.<sup>71</sup> Those who had fled Afghanistan were also initially excluded.<sup>72</sup> While criteria were later extended, this is likely to have come too late for many individuals.<sup>73</sup>

### Operation PITTING

39. Operation PITTING was commanded from the UK’s Permanent Joint Headquarters in Northwood to provide military support to the evacuation of British Nationals and Afghan nationals eligible for relocation to the UK. Military planning for the operation began in January 2021. It was led by 600 members of the Armed Forces, with members of 16 Air Assault Brigade deploying first and including members of the Parachute Regiment and the Joint Force Headquarters, the rapid deployment force involving all three branches of the military.<sup>74</sup> On 16 August 2021 the UK announced that a further 200 troops would be sent to Kabul to secure the airport.<sup>75</sup> It was commanded by the Royal Navy’s then Vice

66 HC 169 (Session 2022–23), para 17.

67 Sulha Alliance (AFG0015) Executive Summary; Laure-Hélène Piron et al. (AFG0009) para 8

68 [PQ44193](#) [on Afghanistan: Refugees], 10 September 2021

69 Laure-Hélène Piron et al. (AFG0009) para 9; Adam Smith International (AFG0012) para 1.3; Trina Lawrie (AFG0001) para 2; Trina Lawrie (AFG0001) para 2; Q156 [Dr Raina]; Q157 [Peter Gordon-Finlayson]; Q157 [Dr Sara de Jong]

70 Afghan Solidarity Coalition (AFG0010) para 35; Laure-Hélène Piron et al. (AFG0009) para 11–12; Sulha Alliance (AFG0015) Executive Summary; Q146 [Peter Gordon-Finlayson]

71 Sulha Alliance (AFG0015) para 10; Q151

72 The Times, [Ex-forces chiefs condemn failure to protect Afghan interpreters](#), 28 July 2021

73 Amnesty International (AFG0014) para 8

74 The Times, [Paras sent to rescue Britons in Afghanistan](#), 12 August 2021

75 BBC News, [Afghanistan: Another 200 UK troops sent to Kabul evacuation](#), 16 August 2021

Admiral Sir Ben Key, now First Sea Lord.<sup>76</sup> In conjunction with the military deployment, the Home Office deployed a team of officials to assist the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in Kabul with processing new visas and documents.<sup>77</sup>

40. The US sent approximately 6,000 of its troops to secure the US embassy in Kabul before withdrawing to Hamid Karzai International Airport (Kabul International Airport) alongside UK troops and assisting with its evacuation efforts.<sup>78</sup> On 17 August the US took full control of all of Kabul airport in order to facilitate evacuation, as the only remaining non-Taliban controlled transport route out of Afghanistan. Evacuation planes from a number of coalition countries, including Germany, Denmark and Australia, landed in Kabul and evacuated personnel.<sup>79</sup> Operation PITTING resulted in the safe evacuation of over 15,000 people on 100 flights. This was in the context of a deteriorating security situation outside the airport, culminating in an IS terrorist attack on 26 August 2021 which killed around 100 Afghan civilians and 13 US service personnel.

41. The MOD's evidence argues that Operation PITTING was long planned, with the UK military completing an in-country reconnaissance mission to review contingency plans in April 2021.<sup>80</sup>

42. The MOD led delivery of Operation PITTING, with "cooperation between the MOD, FCDO, Home Office and Border Force ... critical to delivering an effective and timely evacuation". This cooperation was necessary at both ministerial and official level, "to ensure that critical information was brought together in one place and operational decisions could be made in real time".<sup>81</sup> Operation PITTING concluded as the largest British evacuation since the Second World War, with more than 100 RAF flights having taken place.<sup>82</sup>

43. The then Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Nick Carter, said he was proud of Operation PITTING, and that the evacuation "swung into motion very effectively, certainly from a military perspective".<sup>83</sup> The Defence Secretary agreed with this assessment, telling us that "Britain and the United States did an absolutely amazing job in Operation PITTING. We flew out lots of other nations, because there were some nations that were absolutely without any options."<sup>84</sup> The United States' military were critical to enabling the withdrawal due to their role securing the airfield.<sup>85</sup> Mr Wallace told us that he and the Prime Minister discussed the timetable with counterparts in the United States during the final evacuation.<sup>86</sup>

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76 The Telegraph, [Taliban are in charge of security in Kabul, admits man in charge of British evacuation](#), 17 August 2021

77 UK Government, [Military operation established to support the drawdown of British nationals from Afghanistan](#), 13 August 2021

78 BBC News, [Afghanistan: Boris Johnson defends UK's role amid evacuation](#), 13 August 2021

79 The Times, 17 August 2021, [British troops may have to abandon rescue, warns defence chief](#)

80 Ministry of Defence (AFG0013) para 1.4

81 Ministry of Defence (AFG0013) para 4.2–4.3

82 <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-15/93704>

83 Oral evidence taken on 9 November 2021, [HC \(2021–22\) 842](#), Q14

84 Q33

85 Q28

86 Qq27–31



44. Brigadier Barry described Operation PITTING as a “very difficult operational scenario” but stated that the tactical execution on the ground, given the time and the resources, was done “pretty well”.<sup>87</sup> Dr Jack Watling (RUSI) agreed that the military operation was conducted “quite effectively”,<sup>88</sup> adding that the operation evacuated “significantly more people than we anticipated”.<sup>89</sup>

45. General Sir Nick Carter did, however, acknowledge challenges in operating across Whitehall during the operation.<sup>90</sup> These challenges have been thoroughly documented by the Foreign Affairs Committee: our own evidence supports their findings. Dr Watling commented on the lack of joined-up working between the military and the Foreign Office.<sup>91</sup> Our written evidence similarly found that Government departments lacked co-ordination and consistency in their dealings and communications with Afghan applicants for evacuation, through the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP). The Sulha Alliance, a group campaigning for and supporting former Afghan interpreters or LECs who worked with the British Armed Forces, highlighted a case study of an applicant whose visa was refused by the Home Office despite being told to prepare to relocate by the MoD and called forward for evacuation. They believed that:

“The disconnect between the ARAP team and the Home Office in terms of decision making and communication with applicants—the building of hope by one UK Governmental Department before a rejection by another—has meant that the approach has been disjointed. It has resulted in some interpreters selling their homes and packing up their lives because they had believed that they were being evacuated; in others, it has resulted in a sense of anger and rage.”<sup>92</sup>

46. In addition, they suggested that outcomes for individuals applying for evacuation were inconsistent and depended on whether their applications were processed by the MOD or the FCDO, with ARAP applicants placed at a disadvantage.<sup>93</sup> The scheme is still letting down many who risked their lives and their families’ safety by working for the Allies or the Afghan authorities.

47. Professor Brad Blitz, a representative of the Afghan Solidarity Coalition, a grouping of organisations who worked on research and peace-building with partners in Afghanistan, told us that lots of individuals had sought to leave Afghanistan in good time before the fall of the Government but that none had received a call-forward email before the airport closed.<sup>94</sup>

48. Dr Neelam Raina, a representative of the Afghan Solidarity Coalition, suggested that UK efforts to evacuate eligible personnel compared poorly to other countries and were still “chaotic” by November, claiming in contrast that the Germans had run a seamless operation to evacuate their eligible personnel.<sup>95</sup> On the other hand, General Petraeus told us that the US had done “an abysmal job” in meeting their obligation to those who qualified

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87 Q119

88 Q120 [Dr Jack Watling]

89 Q137

90 Oral evidence taken on 9 November 2021, [HC \(2021–22\) 842](#), Q14

91 Q120 [Dr Jack Watling]

92 The Sulha Alliance ([AFG0015](#))

93 The Sulha Alliance ([AFG0015](#))

94 Q162

95 Q171

in the US for a special immigrant visa by having served two years on the ground.<sup>96</sup>

49. **We welcome the award of medals to Armed Forces personnel who served on Operation PITTING, and recognise the success of the military operation element of the evacuation from Afghanistan—though this must not mask the wider context that the operation was only necessary because of the Taliban’s advances following the end of the NATO mission.**

50. **The same praise, however, cannot be given to the efforts of the UK Government’s civilian operations in support of the evacuation. Our colleagues on the Foreign Affairs Committee have taken extensive evidence and reached persuasive findings in these areas. While it was never going to be possible to evacuate everyone who met the eligibility criteria as part of the operation, there was an obvious lack of effective co-ordination across Government, with real and painful human consequences for those who reasonably expected to be evacuated but were not. The processing and prioritisation of potential evacuees under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) could and should have been much further advanced by the time that the need for the evacuation became urgent.**

### Ongoing efforts to relocate eligible Afghans

51. Theoretically the ARAP remains open at the time of writing. In addition to the 5,000 ARAP-eligible individuals (including their family members) who were relocated to the UK during Operation PITTING, a further 6,600 individuals had been relocated under the scheme as of 3 November 2022.<sup>97</sup> At this date 72,269 applications were awaiting a decision. The MOD judged that the vast majority of these were likely to be ineligible. According to their estimates, approximately 4,600 ARAP-eligible Afghans (including dependants) had not yet been relocated to the UK. Some of these had successfully settled elsewhere and were not expected to take up the offer of relocation.<sup>98</sup> Since we finished taking evidence, the Government has also launched the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), formally opened on 6 January 2022 in respect of Afghans already evacuated to the UK and 13 June 2022 for Afghan refugees registered with UNHCR and eligible groups in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries, capped at 20,000 places. This is not an MOD scheme and we do not cover it in detail in this Report. However, we note that over 6,000 ACRS places have been used to grant long-term immigration status to people who had already arrived in the UK (or who had been called forward as eligible) under Operation PITTING, and that some ACRS places are being used for groups (such as British Council workers) who might have fallen within an expanded, uncapped ARAP scheme.<sup>99</sup>

52. The Afghan Solidarity Coalition told us that the UK retains a responsibility not only towards those who received call-forward emails but were not evacuated, and towards others who are ARAP-eligible, but also towards those Afghans who may not be ARAP-eligible, but who are at demonstrably great risk of loss of life, through their association with UK government funded initiatives.<sup>100</sup>

96 Q209

97 UIN 77549, tabled on 2 November 2022

98 UIN 77550, tabled on 2 November 2022

99 <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9307/CBP-9307.pdf>

100 Afghan Solidarity Coalition (AFG0010) para 36

53. The Defence Secretary told the Committee that ARAP was going to remain open,<sup>101</sup> and the MOD confirmed that it was continuing to work to facilitate safe passage out of Afghanistan for eligible people remaining in the country.<sup>102</sup>

54. **We recognise the ongoing efforts of the UK Government and of organisations including the Afghan Solidarity Coalition and the Sulha Alliance to evacuate eligible Afghans remaining in Afghanistan or in third countries. It is concerning, however, that, according to the MOD's own estimates, several thousand eligible Afghans—whose safety is by definition at risk in Afghanistan—remain to be evacuated under the ARAP well over a year after the end of Operation PITTING. We recommend that the Government set out in their response to this report what action they are taking to ensure safe passage to the United Kingdom for eligible Afghans who remain to be evacuated under the ARAP.**

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101 Q73

102 Ministry of Defence (AFG0013) para 1.8

### 3 Mental Health of Veterans

55. The manner of the withdrawal from Afghanistan had a serious impact on the mental health of veterans at the time. Sarah Jones, Head of Psychological Wellbeing at Help for Heroes, told us that the withdrawal increased anxiety in some of their beneficiaries, and had led them to question their contribution.<sup>103</sup> Jeff Harrison, CEO of Combat Stress, told us that there was a massive increase in demand for their services following the withdrawal. Many veterans who had contacted Combat Stress were suffering from moral injury, with some feeling let down and angry. The withdrawal had reactivated past trauma,<sup>104</sup> with a retriggering of PTSD for some.<sup>105</sup>

56. In evidence to us, the MOD said that it is “acutely aware” of the impact on veterans of the withdrawal and subsequent events in Afghanistan. It outlined the actions of the Government in response:

- The Defence and Health Secretaries jointly chaired a mental health summit bringing together experts to discuss support for those who served and their families;
- An additional £2.7 million had been made available to Operation COURAGE to expand services supporting those experiencing complex mental and/or physical trauma, or alcohol and substance misuse; and
- A further £5 million for the Armed Forces Charity sector had been announced to enable a range of projects to support veterans, including those who served in Afghanistan.<sup>106</sup>

57. The Defence Secretary argued that successfully evacuating Afghans who worked with the UK mission was important to veteran’s mental health:

“for many veterans, this is part of closure. This is part of the sense that we cannot do anything about the political situation that unfolded; we cannot save Afghanistan. What we can do is we can stand by those people who stood by us. That will not satisfy all veterans, but those are the sorts of things that help veterans through mental health issues and help them come to terms with the other sacrifices that they have had to make.”<sup>107</sup>

We agree, but it follows that veterans’ mental health will be negatively affected by those Afghans left behind.

58. We have a long-standing concern for the mental health of veterans and current serving personnel. We continue to direct attention towards the recommendations and conclusions of our predecessor Committee which produced two reports in 2019 on mental health and the armed forces.<sup>108</sup>

103 Q221

104 Q222

105 Q223

106 Ministry of Defence (AFG0013) para 5.2

107 Q96

108 Defence Committee, Eleventh Report of Session 2017–19, [Mental Health and the Armed Forces, Part One: The Scale of mental health issues](#), HC 813; Defence Committee, Fourteenth Report of Session 2017–19, [Mental Health and the Armed Forces, Part Two: The Provision of Care](#), HC 1481

59. The withdrawal from Afghanistan and end of the UK's twenty-year military involvement in the country has understandably had a negative impact on veterans' mental health. This has increased demand on services provided by organisations such as Combat Stress and Help for Heroes as well as the NHS. The announcement of £2.7 million extra funding for veteran's mental health through Operation Courage was welcome, as was the Government commitment to another £5 million for military charities to support veterans. *We urge the Government to have an ongoing dialogue with charities working in this area to ensure that they are suitably resourced to engage in their important work.*

## 4 Learning Lessons from Afghanistan

60. Given the scale, length and cost of the British deployment to Afghanistan, its impact on service personnel, and the way in which it ended, it is unsurprising that many of our witnesses focussed in their evidence on the importance of the UK and NATO learning lessons that might be valuable for the future.

61. General Sir Nick Carter highlighted the question of how the mission’s political objectives evolved from destroying al-Qaeda into one that involved nation building,<sup>109</sup> as well as the extent to which “we understood the local political dynamics and how you use the military instrument in that context.”<sup>110</sup>

62. Brigadier Barry suggested that NATO “should be doing a frank and searching lesson-learned exercise on its role in Afghanistan from start to finish”.<sup>111</sup> He told us that the MOD “needs to do a similar exercise to the SDR new chapter after the 2001 attacks” because the UK “lost almost three times as many people in Afghanistan as they did in Iraq, and the scale of the British, US and NATO defeat in Afghanistan is even greater than the scale of their failures in Iraq”.<sup>112</sup> Dr Jack Watling also said that it was critical that there was internal reflection following the withdrawal.<sup>113</sup>

63. Individual Government Departments have conducted internal lessons learned inquiries into the withdrawal from Afghanistan, including the Ministry of Defence (MOD)<sup>114</sup> and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). While the findings of the FCDO’s inquiry have been shared with the Foreign Affairs Committee and published,<sup>115</sup> the outcome of the MOD’s lessons learned review has not been made public or shared with us.

64. Several countries within NATO as well as allies who deployed to Afghanistan have completed internal reviews or lessons learned processes since the withdrawal in August 2021, including internal government inquiries and reviews as well as Parliamentary inquiries.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, NATO conducted a comprehensive assessment of its engagement in Afghanistan following the withdrawal.<sup>117</sup> We are unaware of any such holistic reflection taking place in the UK.

**65. The UK contribution to the war in Afghanistan took the lives of 457 UK armed forces personnel and injured thousands more, and cost more than £27 billion. The evacuation from Afghanistan in August 2021 resulted in 15,000 people being brought to the UK but left many behind. It is therefore of critical importance that the UK Government conduct an open, honest and detailed review of the UK’s involvement in the**

109 Oral evidence taken on 9 November 2021, [HC \(2021–22\) 842](#), Q8

110 Oral evidence taken on 9 November 2021, [HC \(2021–22\) 842](#), Q33

111 Q122

112 Q142 [Brigadier Barry]

113 Q142 [Dr Jack Watling]

114 HC Deb 15 November 2021, c307

115 <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/22321/documents/165032/default/>

116 The United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Minority Report, [A Brief Assessment of the Biden Administration’s Strategic Failures during the Afghanistan Evacuation](#), February 2022; DW, [Germany’s Afghanistan mission investigated — What went wrong and why?](#), 8 July 2022; The Australian Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee, [Australia’s engagement in Afghanistan: interim report](#), January 2022

117 NATO, [Afghan Lessons Learned Process](#), November 2021

*country. This review should include military operations and political decisions covering the full timeline of the UK's involvement, from the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001 and the invocation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, to the evacuation from Kabul in August 2021. This thinking would have been helpful to contribute to the update to the Integrated Review that is currently under way.*

# Conclusions and recommendations

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## The Doha Agreement and fall of the Afghan Government

1. The signing of the Doha Agreement served domestic US Administration priorities, by enabling the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan to a defined schedule. The absence of the United Kingdom, other allies and the Afghan Government from the negotiating table was unfortunate, although it is unclear whether the United Kingdom Government made any request to be included. The agreement emboldened the Taliban and gave it a timeframe in which to plan its future operations. The Afghan National Security and Defence Forces had become reliant under Western tutelage on air support and logistics contractors to operate effectively. Their withdrawal made the subsequent collapse of the Afghan Government inevitable. (Paragraph 19)
2. Although the Defence Secretary assured us that he had attempted to find a way to retain a military presence in Afghanistan without the US, we recognise how difficult this would have been in practice. This shows the limits of NATO's military capability without US involvement. (Paragraph 25)
3. Optimism bias and failures in intelligence and analysis meant that the rapid collapse of the Afghan Government was a greater surprise to the military establishment than it might have been. (Paragraph 32)
4. If the initial goal of the NATO deployment was mainly to prevent terrorist attacks against Western nations originating in Afghanistan, current evidence suggests that while there have been no such recent attacks to date, Afghanistan is once again becoming a safe haven for international terrorism. And it is impossible to argue that the mission has been a success if its goal was in part to ensure Afghanistan's stability as a functioning state, with basic human rights for its population, including women and girls. The fall of the Afghan Government represented a serious strategic blow to NATO and its allies. (Paragraph 35)
5. Technically, NATO forces were not defeated in Afghanistan. However, this must not prevent the recognition that the end of the NATO mission has been severely detrimental both to the people of Afghanistan and to the security of the region, as well as to Alliance and UK military credibility. (Paragraph 36)

## The Evacuation and Relocation of Eligible Afghans

6. We welcome the award of medals to Armed Forces personnel who served on Operation PITTING, and recognise the success of the military operation element of the evacuation from Afghanistan—though this must not mask the wider context that the operation was only necessary because of the Taliban's advances following the end of the NATO mission. (Paragraph 49)
7. The same praise, however, cannot be given to the efforts of the UK Government's civilian operations in support of the evacuation. Our colleagues on the Foreign Affairs Committee have taken extensive evidence and reached persuasive findings in these areas. While it was never going to be possible to evacuate everyone who met



the eligibility criteria as part of the operation, there was an obvious lack of effective co-ordination across Government, with real and painful human consequences for those who reasonably expected to be evacuated but were not. The processing and prioritisation of potential evacuees under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) could and should have been much further advanced by the time that the need for the evacuation became urgent. (Paragraph 50)

8. We recognise the ongoing efforts of the UK Government and of organisations including the Afghan Solidarity Coalition and the Sulha Alliance to evacuate eligible Afghans remaining in Afghanistan or in third countries. It is concerning, however, that, according to the MOD's own estimates, several thousand eligible Afghans—whose safety is by definition at risk in Afghanistan—remain to be evacuated under the ARAP well over a year after the end of Operation PITTING. *We recommend that the Government set out in their response to this report what action they are taking to ensure safe passage to the United Kingdom for eligible Afghans who remain to be evacuated under the ARAP.* (Paragraph 54)

### Mental Health of Veterans

9. The withdrawal from Afghanistan and end of the UK's twenty-year military involvement in the country has understandably had a negative impact on veterans' mental health. This has increased demand on services provided by organisations such as Combat Stress and Help for Heroes as well as the NHS. The announcement of £2.7 million extra funding for veteran's mental health through Operation Courage was welcome, as was the Government commitment to another £5 million for military charities to support veterans. *We urge the Government to have an ongoing dialogue with charities working in this area to ensure that they are suitably resourced to engage in their important work.* (Paragraph 59)

### Learning Lessons from Afghanistan

10. The UK contribution to the war in Afghanistan took the lives of 457 UK armed forces personnel and injured thousands more, and cost more than £27 billion. The evacuation from Afghanistan in August 2021 resulted in 15,000 people being brought to the UK but left many behind. *It is therefore of critical importance that the UK Government conduct an open, honest and detailed review of the UK's involvement in the country. This review should include military operations and political decisions covering the full timeline of the UK's involvement, from the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001 and the invocation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, to the evacuation from Kabul in August 2021. This thinking would have been helpful to contribute to the update to the Integrated Review that is currently under way.* (Paragraph 65)

# Formal minutes

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**Wednesday 1 February 2023**

## **Members present**

Tobias Ellwood, in the Chair

Sarah Atherton

Robert Courts

Richard Drax

Mark Francois

Kevan Jones

Emma Lewell-Buck

Gavin Robinson

John Spellar

Derek Twigg

## **Withdrawal from Afghanistan**

Draft Report (*Withdrawal from Afghanistan*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 65 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Fifth Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

## **Adjournment**

Adjourned till Tuesday 7 February 2023 at 10.00am.

## Witnesses

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The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Tuesday 26 October 2021

**Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP**, Secretary of State for Defence, Ministry of Defence [Q1–101](#)

### Tuesday 16 November 2021

**Dr Jack Watling**, Research Fellow for Land Warfare, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI); **Brigadier (ret.) Ben Barry**, Senior Fellow for Land Warfare, International Institute for Strategic Studies [Q102–143](#)

**Dr Sara de Jong**, Representative, The Sulha Alliance; **Professor Brad Blitz**, Representative, Afghan Solidarity Coalition; **Dr Neelam Raina**, Representative, Afghan Solidarity Coalition; **Peter Gordon-Finlayson**, Representative, The Sulha Alliance [Q144–190](#)

### Tuesday 23 November 2021

**General David Petraeus (ret.)**, Commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan (2010–11) [Q191–220](#)

**Jeff Harrison**, Interim CEO, Combat Stress; **Sarah Jones**, Head of Psychological Wellbeing, Help for Heroes [Q221–244](#)

## Published written evidence

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The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

AFG numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Adam Smith International ([AFG0012](#))
- 2 Afghan Solidarity Coalition ([AFG0016](#))
- 3 Amnesty International UK ([AFG0014](#))
- 4 Blitz, Professor Brad (Head of Department and Professor of International Politics and Policy Department of Education, Practice and Society, University College London); and Dr Neelam Raina (Associate Professor of Design and Development. Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries, Middlesex University London) ([AFG0010](#))
- 5 Gerry KC, Professor Felicity (King's Counsel and Professor of Legal Practice, Libertas Chambers London and Salford University, UK and Crockett Chambers and Deakin University, Australia); Ms Azadah Raz Mohammad (PhD Candidate and Human Rights Advocate, Melbourne University); Ms Anna McNeil (Solicitor, Office of Public Prosecutions (Melbourne, Australia); and Ms Karin Frodé (PhD Candidate and Affiliate of the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law , Monash University) ([AFG0006](#))
- 6 Lawrie, Trina ([AFG0001](#))
- 7 Ministry of Defence ([AFG0017](#))
- 8 Ministry of Defence ([AFG0013](#))
- 9 Piron, Laure-Helene (Director, The Policy Practice); Sarah Hearn; Andrew Kidd; and Harry Leverment ([AFG0009](#))
- 10 Reprieve ([AFG0007](#))
- 11 The Sulha Alliance ([AFG0015](#))
- 12 Tudor-White, Mr James (International Affairs Adviser / Master's Scholar, Independent / University of Groningen) ([AFG0011](#))

# List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

## Session 2022–23

Number	Title	Reference
1st	The Treatment of Contracted Staff for The MoD's Ancillary Services	HC 187
2nd	The Integrated Review, Defence in a Competitive Age and the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy	HC 180
3rd	Defence Space: through adversity to the stars?	HC 182
4th	Developments in UK Strategic Export Controls	HC 282
1st Special	Operation Isotrope: the use of the military to counter migrant crossings: Government response to the Committee's fourth report of Session 2021–22	HC 267
2nd Special	The Treatment of Contracted Staff for the MOD's Ancillary Services: Government Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 702
3rd Special	The Integrated Review, Defence in a Competitive Age and the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 865
4th Special	Defence Space: through adversity to the stars? Government Response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 1031

## Session 2021–22

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Russia and Ukraine border tensions	HC 167
2nd	Women in the Armed Forces	HC 154
3rd	"We're going to need a bigger Navy"	HC 168
4th	Operation Isotrope: the use of the military to counter migrant crossings	HC 1069
1st Special	Obsolescent and outgunned: the British Army's armoured vehicle capability: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2019–21	HC 221
2nd Special	Manpower or mindset: Defence's contribution to the UK's pandemic response: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2019–21	HC 552
3rd Special	Russia and Ukraine border tensions: Government Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 725

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
4th Special	Protecting those who protect us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 904
5th Special	"We're going to need a bigger Navy": Government Response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 1160

### Session 2019–21

<b>Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
1st	In Search of Strategy—The 2020 Integrated Review	HC 165
2nd	The Security of 5G	HC 201
3rd	Pre-appointment hearing for the Service Complaints Ombudsman	HC 989
4th	Foreign Involvement in the Defence Supply Chain	HC 699
5th	Obsolescent and outgunned: the British Army's armoured vehicle capability	HC 659
6th	Manpower or mindset: Defence's contribution to the UK's pandemic response	HC 357
1st Special	Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2018: Government Response to the Committee's Eighteenth Report of Session 2017–19	HC 162
2nd Special	Drawing a Line: Protecting Veterans by a Statute of Limitations: Government Response to the Defence Committee's Seventeenth Report of Session 2017–19	HC 325
3rd Special	In Search of Strategy—The 2020 Integrated Review: Government Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 910
4th Special	The Security of 5G: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 1091
5th Special	Foreign Involvement in the Defence Supply Chain: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report	HC 1380