

PM remarks at Operation PITTING reception: 24 November 2021

Good afternoon everybody. It's quite amazing to see a military parade here in the heart of our Palace of Westminster.

And James, I think I'm right in saying that for hundreds of years it wasn't even possible it wasn't even legal to have a military parade in the House of Commons in the precincts of the Palace of Westminster, but I'm very, very pleased that one has been organised today.

Thank you very much for coming. I'm so pleased to see so many friends and colleagues for both Houses of Parliament out here today to show our gratitude to you – all of you involved in Operation PITTING.

All of you, not just the military, but civilians, as well, the Home Office, the diplomats, the Border Force, everybody who did such an outstanding job and I'm glad that so many people are here today because I was very lucky I was privileged to go out to Colchester and to see some of you. And to thank you not long after you got back from Kabul.

And I was impressed. Although not just by your bravery, of course, and the way you dealt with so much – including the appalling terrorist attack that happened at Karzai airport.

What really struck me talking to you was the professionalism, the care, with which you dealt with human beings in an extreme state of fear and distress and the diplomacy with which you worked with those Afghans, Taliban or otherwise.

And it was a quite amazing thing to see what you did, and I believe that the safe passage of 15,000 people – 15,000 people – to this country, as well as helping 36 other countries to move those to whom they owe their own debts.

That operation – Operation PITTING – will go down as one of the great achievements of our UK Armed Services in the whole of the post-war era.

And I believe that you stood for and you revealed the very best of the values of this country. And on behalf of all of us here today I want to say thank you, thank you very much.