

UK steps up support to help British nationals leave Afghanistan

- Military personnel will deploy to the country on a short term basis to assist British nationals to leave
- The British Embassy in Kabul is focusing efforts on consular assistance and accelerating work to provide visas for former UK staff in Afghanistan
- Last week FCDO Travel Advice changed to recommend British nationals leave Afghanistan as soon as possible

The additional deployment of approximately 600 troops is in light of the increasing violence and rapidly deteriorating security environment in the country. In parallel, the number of staff working at the British Embassy in Kabul has been reduced to a core team focused on providing consular and visa services for those needing to rapidly leave the country.

Last Friday the FCDO changed Travel Advice to recommend that all British nationals leave Afghanistan as soon as possible, while commercial travel options remain available. Any British nationals who are still in Afghanistan are encouraged to contact the Embassy in Kabul as soon as possible for assistance.

UK troops will provide force protection and logistical support for the relocation of British nationals where required and assist with the acceleration of the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP). This will help to make sure interpreters and other Afghan staff who risked their lives working alongside UK forces in Afghanistan can relocate to the UK as soon as possible.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace MP said:

I have authorised the deployment of additional military personnel to support the diplomatic presence in Kabul, assist British nationals to leave the country and support the relocation of former Afghan staff who risked their lives serving alongside us.

The security of British nationals, British military personnel and former Afghan staff is our first priority. We must do everything we can to ensure their safety.

The additional military support announced today will arrive in Kabul over the coming days.

Sir Laurie Bristow, the UK's Ambassador to Afghanistan, will continue to lead a small team in Afghanistan which will relocate within Kabul to a more secure

location. This team will focus on helping remaining UK nationals to leave the country, and the continued roll out of the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and working with international partners to support the Afghan Government.

ARAP, launched on 1 April 2021, is the most generous scheme of its kind in the world and has already supported over 3,100 former Afghan staff and their families to start new lives in the UK, with more than 1,800 of them arriving over the last few weeks alone. In the coming days UK Government will further accelerate work on this scheme to ensure those who are eligible go through the necessary security checks and have the required documentation to travel to the UK.

The UK remains committed to Afghanistan and will continue working as part of the international coalition to support the country's government through our diplomacy, development and counter terrorism work. This year the UK will provide Afghanistan with more than £100 million of support to improve critical health and education services.