

THE LORD COAKER
MINISTER FOR THE HOUSE OF LORDS

MSU/4/4/1/12

4 November 2024

Dear Lord Browne,

Thank you for raising an important question to the House on 15 October 2024, on the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme. I welcome your advocacy and engagement on this matter, as well as that of our colleagues across the Chamber.

I committed to come back to you on your question regarding evidence of payment records, in which you referred to a question you previously asked in December 2023. In that question of December 2023, you specifically mentioned nominal records for “top-up pay.” As I confirmed in the House, the evidence of payments we have now acquired (via the HMG archives) goes beyond previously identified top-up payments and reimbursements for operational expenses, which do not in themselves demonstrate an employment relationship.

Officials have now confirmed that there is evidence of payments from the UK Government to members of Afghan specialist units that, for some individuals, demonstrates a direct employment relationship. I am sure you can understand that record-keeping in the context of a multinational operation across 20 years is notoriously challenging and that it will take time to access and contextualise all records. As such, the update provided on 15 October was a provisional one as officials still need to complete some record analysis.

Please be assured, however, that we are determined to retrieve information from all relevant sources and will provide an update to the House on our progress at the earliest opportunity. I encourage you to share any further information you consider would help us with the review and can assure you that it would be analysed accordingly. I will also ensure that, going forwards, my officials will renew efforts to improve information flows to ensure this does not happen again.

The Rt Hon the Lord Browne of Ladyton
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Finally, I would like to reiterate that I have seen no evidence suggesting a conscious effort by the previous government to mislead the House or the public on this matter. When Ministers in the previous Government provided statements to the house on the Triples, I believe they did so in good faith, based upon the information under consideration at that time.

I hope that this explains the position and thank you again for your continued support and advocacy of the ARAP scheme. I can assure you that this new Government is committed to unblock progress and will ensure eligible former Triples receive the sanctuary they deserve in recognition of their work for, and alongside, the UK Armed Forces.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vernon Coaker". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

THE LORD COAKER