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James Heappey,  
Minister for the Armed Forces,  
Ministry of Defence,  
Main Building,  
Whitehall,  
SW1A 2HB.

23/08/2021

Dear Minister,

Evacuation and safe passage arrangements for Afghan security contractors.

I am writing to you thank you - as the Chairman of the Security in Complex Environments Group (SCEG), the industry body that represents British security firms – for your proactive and decisive action to allow Afghan contractors who provided security to the British Embassy in Kabul to resettle in the UK. We are all immensely grateful for your intervention. Your quick action to adjust the policy has enabled these loyal individuals to be rescued and will save lives.

My understanding is that as of 21 August over 200 of the Afghan security staff who are not UK or other nationals, and who have principally been employed by GardaWorld and G4S, are now to be considered for evacuation. To remain in theatre would have exposed them to great danger. The UK owes them a deep moral obligation and we should ensure their safety and we are grateful that you recognise this.

As you will be aware, as a veteran yourself, several UK private security companies have been working to provide the security and safety for diplomatic, development and commercial operations in Afghanistan these last two decades. Most of these companies are members of SCEG and are looking to SCEG to

work with the UK government to provide a lifeline for the loyal Afghan contractors who were employed on these operations.

We are thus acutely aware that many Afghan contractors who have loyally worked for UK security firms to provide for the safety of Western development, civil society, business, and other initiatives separate from the UK Embassy, remain at great risk in Kabul. We are convinced that elements of the Taliban and other insurgent groupings are unlikely to distinguish between local employees of UK security companies and employees of HMG directly - their fate will be identical. We believe that the UK and Western governments' moral obligations to these Afghans is self-evident, and that they too need to find secure passage to a place of safety preferably via the ARAP scheme.

We would like to propose that SCEG members work closely in the coming days and weeks with the FCDO and MoD, and other HMG departments, to help ensure the best outcomes.

As a first step, SCEG firms which have relevant Afghan engagements could compile data about those Afghans who fall into this category, and could liaise closely with HMG on their condition and possible plans. The situation is likely to evolve and our response would do so too. Several government departments are affiliate members of SCEG including the MOD and the FCDO so we are in touch with officials.

I will, of course, be raising this with the HMG officials with whom we are in contact, but I would also be grateful if I and the Director of SCEG, Paul Gibson, could brief your private office or yourself at a time soon that is convenient.

I am copying this letter to: Nigel Casey, the Prime Minister's Special Representative for Afghanistan; Tom Tugendhat, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee; Paul Lincoln, Director General Border Force; FCDO Crisis Centre and Jon Gray Director of Security and Resilience, ADS Group.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Wylde

Chairman SCEG