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UK may offer asylum to 650 Afghan translators

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As foreign troops prepare to exit the country, the United Kingdom might offer asylum to 650 Afghan translators working for the British military, a leading newspaper reported on Monday.

While facing risks in performing their duty, the translators are viewed as traitors by the Taliban insurgents, according to The Telegraph, which said the British offer was consistent with policy of most *NATO* states.

Gen Lord Dannatt, former chief of the general staff, acknowledged the British forces would not have been able to do their work effectively without the help of translators.

The daily quoted him as saying: "While each case should be looked into on its own merits, there should, nevertheless, be a presumption to grant such residence in the UK or a third party country, if one can be found."

Ex-Liberal Democrat leader and diplomat Paddy Ashdown said an offer of refuge in Britain was "the least we can do for men who've given so much to help save British lives".

A spokesman for the Foreign Office told the paper: "We are looking very carefully at how to make the appropriate provision. No decision has been taken, but our commitment to local staff remains strong."

Mostly based in southern Helmand province, the interpreters are paid more than £1,000 a month. About 20 of them were killed in the line of duty, and dozens have been injured. Five more were reportedly killed while off duty, the daily said.

