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Content from Dr Dan Poulter MP

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Summer is my favourite season because it means that I can spend more time at home in Suffolk. But this year, my summer was interrupted by the sudden recall of Parliament caused by the Taliban regaining control of Afghanistan.

Many of us will remember where we were on September 11th, 2001 when the twin towers in New York were destroyed by Al-Qaeda terrorists. I also recall the day in 2005 when London was bombed by members of the same Islamic terrorist group.

At that time, Afghanistan was used by Al-Qaeda as a base from which to conduct world terror against western nations, such as the USA and the United Kingdom. Whatever history's verdict may be on the wisdom, conduct or shambolic conclusion of the 20-year war on Afghanistan, I remain in no doubt that it was right for Britain to intervene in the fight against Al-Qaeda and global terrorism. We were right to put British boots on the ground in Afghanistan and play our part in defeating the threat of Islamic terrorism.

The lightning speed of the Taliban advance probably had two causes. The first is the failure of the west to win the hearts and minds of the rural communities of Afghanistan. The second is that once former President Trump had done his deal with the Taliban to withdraw US troops, the Taliban used the next 17 months for secret negotiations with many provinces to surrender without contest.

We should also reflect that even though the Taliban has reclaimed control over Afghanistan (for the time being at least), this doesn't mean that the safety of the world is under the same threat of terrorism now as we were some 20 or so years ago because thanks to the efforts of British armed forces, Al-Qaeda is no longer the threat it once was to the safety of innocent civilians in the United Kingdom.

Our priority now must be to recognise our moral duty to protect and offer refuge to Afghan citizens who may now be at risk, particularly those who have supported our soldiers in the fight against Al-Qaeda. The Government has rightly announced a new resettlement scheme for Afghan refugees. As part of this scheme, it will rightly be asking our councils in Suffolk to do their part, and already, a small number of Afghan interpreters and their families have been helped to resettle in Suffolk.

As we close this chapter in the history of Afghanistan, I am mindful that a number of Suffolk families have lost the lives of loved ones who served on the frontline of the conflict. We all owe those who sacrificed their lives a debt of gratitude for what they have done to make our country a safer place, and in protecting us against the threat of Islamic terrorism. Their sacrifice has not been in vain.