



**Report to Congress on
Posting of the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Quarterly Report on the
Department of State's Website
Section 1219 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014
(P.L. 113-66)**

The Department of State (State), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and other U.S. government departments and agencies involved in the Afghan special immigrant visa (SIV) program are committed to helping Afghans who have taken significant risks to support our military and civilian personnel. Congress, under section 602(b) of the *Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009*, as amended, requires this quarterly report to review statistical data on nationals of Afghanistan who have applied for status as special immigrants.

How many Afghan SIVs have been issued in the third quarter (Q3) of FY 2022 (April 1, 2022, to June 30, 2022)?

Afghan Principal Applicants Issued in Q3	Afghan Derivative Applicants Issued in Q3	Total Afghan SIVs Issued in FY 2022 (October 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022)	Total Afghan Numbers Used ¹	Remaining SIVs for Afghan Principal Applicants ²
1,036	3,512	6,291 ³	19,157	15,343

¹ Total number of visas issued to SIV principal applicants overseas combined with SIV numbers used through domestic adjustments of status since permanent numbers became available on November 25, 2015.

² Numbers remaining are preliminary and subject to change. They are accurate as of the date of publication and account for recaptured numbers.

³ Reporting methodology reflects the final outcomes from the visa application process during a specified reporting period. This methodology follows visa applications, including updates to their status (i.e., issued or refused), which could change as the fiscal year progresses, or result in slight changes in data for earlier years. Therefore, individual quarterly issuance reports should not be aggregated, as this will not provide an accurate issuance total for the fiscal year to date. Instead, refer to our annual Report of the Visa Office for final full Fiscal Year statistics.

What efficiency improvements have been made to Afghan SIV processing?

Consistent with the Congressionally mandated prioritization plan, State prioritizes applicants at the chief of mission (COM) approval stage based on the intrinsic threats applicants face due to the nature of their qualifying employment.⁴ Lower priority applicants, therefore, have historically waited longer for review and analysis relative to higher-priority tiers. Beginning in early 2022, the Afghan SIV (ASIV) Unit began to dedicate 20 percent of processing time to processing applications that have been documentarily complete and pending decision the longest, regardless of their prioritization tier. This has already produced significant results, and overall processing time for Step 4 shows a 53 percent decrease in average processing time compared to the second quarter of FY 2022.

During this reporting period, the National Visa Center (NVC) continued to increase staffing levels for SIV processing to work through the significant increase in inquiries and demand leading up to and following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. On May 2, the NVC trained 10 support staff in preparation for more trainees. On May 23, the NVC trained 31 staff on SIV processing, five of which were support staff. On June 6, the NVC trained 30 more staff, two of which were support staff. On June 27, the NVC trained an additional 35 staff on Afghan SIV processing. As of June 30, 2022, NVC has a total of 168 SIV case processors working on processing inquiries and document submissions at the pre-COM stage alone. This increase in staffing, together with the information technology improvements reported in the previous quarter, enabled NVC to make substantial progress during this quarter to process the hundreds of thousands of emails received in the August to October 2021 time period.⁵

State's Bureau of Consular Affairs provided approximately 50 percent more temporary duty staff to support Afghan SIV processing in the U.S. Mission to Afghanistan in Doha, and at the U.S. Embassies in Abu Dhabi and Islamabad in the Q3 of FY 2022, than in the second quarter of FY 2022. This surge in staffing

⁴ Consistent with Section 7076 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2019 (Public Law 116-6), enacted on February 15, 2019, applicants seeking Afghan SQ1 visas will be prioritized in the following order:

- 1) Interpreters and Translators
- 2) U.S. Government Direct Hire Employees
- 3) Contractors with U.S. Government Installation Badges
- 4) Implementing Partners
- 5) All Other Applicants

⁵ As of September 30, 2022, the NVC had a total of 204 SIV case processors working on processing documents and inquiries at the pre-COM stage and was on track to eliminate the backlog in its entirety by mid-October 2022.

contributed to visa issuances nearly as high as those in Q4 of FY2021, prior the suspension of embassy operations in Kabul.

What is the average U.S. government processing time for Afghan SIVs and how many cases are processed in that time?

All steps in the Afghan SIV application process are outlined below and include the current average processing time for all involved U.S. government entities. This statistic captures total U.S. government processing time in calendar days, beginning when the applicant first expresses interest in the program to State's NVC and ending with the date of visa issuance at a U.S. embassy or consulate. It does not capture those steps in the SIV process that depend solely on the applicant's initiative and are outside the control of the U.S. government. Additionally, within each government-controlled step included below, there may be time – often significant time – spent waiting on applicant or third-party action not attributable to the U.S. government entities involved. Therefore the average processing time likely overestimates the total processing time attributable to the U.S. government entities involved.

Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Processing Steps ^{6,7}				
Stage	Step	Description	Average processing time in calendar days	Number of Cases Processed
Chief of Mission (COM)	1	Applicant submits COM application package to State's NVC. ⁸	Applicant-controlled	N/A

⁶ Processing steps are for SIVs authorized under section 602(b) of the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009, as amended. Afghan nationals processed under 602(b) are given the SQ SIV classification.

⁷ Previous versions of this report listed 14 steps. During the first quarter of FY 2022, Step 5 “The ACOM advises NVC if the application is approved. If approved, NVC immediately sends approval letter to applicant” was fully automated and no longer requires manual processing. For this reason, as noted in the report covering the first quarter of FY 2022, the Department will no longer include this step in reporting.

⁸ At this stage, the applicant has contacted NVC to express interest in the program and provide the documents necessary to begin processing.

application process	2	NVC reviews documents for completeness.	261 ⁹	138,896 ¹⁰
	3	NVC sends completed application package to the ACOM ¹¹ .	1	3,912
	4	COM staff reviews the application and the ACOM makes a decision. The applicant is automatically informed of the decision. ¹²	82	5,438
Form I-360 adjudication process	5	Applicant self-petitions to DHS U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) using Form I-360.	Applicant-controlled	N/A
	6	USCIS adjudicates petition and sends to NVC if approved. ¹³	33 ¹⁴	4,860
Visa interview process, including	7	NVC sends instruction packet to applicant requesting standard immigrant visa documentation, including DS-260 application.	9	1,678

⁹ The Afghan evacuation in August 2021 resulted in a significant increase of emails sent to the Afghan Chief of Mission application mailbox at the National Visa Center (NVC): 350,000 in six weeks, which increased to more than 500,000 by the end of 2021. Not all of these emails were related to an SIV application. The unprecedented volume of received emails necessitated the development of a new case management system and bringing on an increase in staff to address the backlog; as of September 30, 2022, NVC has 204 case processors working to eliminate the backlog at the pre-COM stage. Although the average processing time grew during this quarter, the NVC is making significant progress in eliminating the backlog and reducing processing times and expects to eliminate the backlog at the pre-COM stage in its entirety and return to normal processing times by mid-October, 2022.

¹⁰ This number reflects the number of case reviews conducted by the NVC within the quarter. The NVC counts a review each time an SIV applicant submits additional documents to complete their case. This number may be larger than the total number of cases pending at the NVC because an individual case might be reviewed multiple times in a single quarter.

¹¹ COM approval may be provided by the “appropriate Chief of Mission, or the designee of the appropriate Chief of Mission” (See Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 (Public Law 111-8), Section 602(b)(2)(D)). The Assistant Chief of Mission (“ACOM”) was the COM’s designee throughout this reporting period. Since the COM dissolved the COM Committee on August 19, 2021, ASIV sends COM approval agendas directly to the ACOM for a decision.

¹² The COM Approval process involves verifying the SIV applicant’s ability to qualify for special immigrant status based on the information submitted in Step 1 above. This process may require input from third parties. Accordingly, the length of time spent at this stage may vary depending on the responsiveness of such third parties, as well as other factors.

¹³ Form I-360 petitions filed with USCIS between April 1, 2022, and June 30, 2022.

¹⁴ Starting July 20, 2022, all new Afghan SIV applicants will no longer be required to submit a Form I-360, Petition for Special Immigrant, to USCIS. Instead, a revised form DS-157 (already one of several documents required for the Chief of Mission approval application) will now serve as the petition for classification as a special immigrant. See travel.state.gov/afghan for more information.

pre- and post-interview ¹⁵	8	Applicant submits required documentation to NVC.	Applicant-controlled	N/A
	9	NVC reviews documents for completeness, corresponding with applicant when additional documentation is needed.	108 ¹⁶	30,525 ¹⁷
	10	When the immigrant visa application is complete, NVC schedules applicant for interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate. ¹⁸	84 ¹⁹	193
	11	Applicant is interviewed and biometrics are collected by consular officer on the scheduled appointment date. Administrative processing, if needed, is initiated following the interview. ²⁰	N/A	1,343 ²¹

¹⁵ The majority of applicants receive special immigrant status by going through the process explained in this chart. Applicants who obtain special immigrant status in the United States apply for adjustment of status from USCIS.

¹⁶ The Afghan evacuation in August 2021 resulted in a significant increase in the number Afghan SIV applications submitted to the National Visa Center (NVC).

¹⁷ As in Step 2, this number reflects the number of case reviews conducted by the NVC. The NVC counts a review each time an SIV applicant submits additional documents to complete their case. This number may be larger than the total number of cases pending at the NVC because an individual case might be reviewed multiple times in a single quarter.

¹⁸ This number only includes interviews scheduled by the NVC immediately following the case being documentarily completed. It does not include the interviews scheduled locally by an embassy or consulate following a case transfer from Embassy Kabul. Since the U.S. Embassy in Kabul suspended visa operations on August 31, 2021, NVC has been scheduling SIV applicants for visa interviews at any immigrant visa processing U.S. embassy or consulate in the world where the applicant is able to appear.

¹⁹ NVC schedules interviews for documentarily complete applicants who are able to appear at a designated immigrant visa processing post for an interview. In some cases, a lengthy period of time may elapse before an applicant notifies NVC that they are able to travel to such a post. Although the applicant's ability to travel to a third country post is outside State's control, this figure nonetheless includes the time periods during which applicants are documentarily complete, but are unable to travel to a designated immigrant visa processing post for an interview. Therefore, the average processing time for Step 10 is overinclusive and reflects time during which the applicant is not waiting for government-controlled action.

²⁰ Administrative processing may include a variety of security, fraud, or criminal background checks that are required before the visa may be issued.

²¹ Line 11 reflects the number of SQ SIV principal applicant interviews conducted at embassies or consulate worldwide.

	12	The applicant's case undergoes administrative processing, if required. ²²	11	1,984
Visa issuance to eligible applicants	13	Upon completion of administrative processing, the visa is issued if applicant is eligible.	Applicant-controlled	1,036
		Total U.S. government processing time in calendar days²³	589	N/A

Why are applications pending longer than nine months in U.S. government-controlled stages of the SIV application?

Employment verification and risk assessment conducted during the COM approval process in Step 4 can require significant time depending on how difficult it is to locate the applicant's employer to confirm the applicant's eligibility for an SIV, and how long the applicant's employer takes to respond. These response times are not within the U.S. government's control.

The U.S. Embassy in Kabul suspended all operations on August 31, 2021. Nevertheless, the U.S. government continues to process SIV applications at all stages and applicants may request a visa interview at any U.S. embassy or consulate outside Afghanistan where they are able to appear. Because the average processing time at Step 10 includes days where a documentarily complete applicant is scheduled for a visa interview but unable to travel to the interview, this figure includes days where there is no government action required.

How many SIV applications are pending as of June 30, 2022?

Step 1 – 53,633 principal applicants had submitted some, but not all, of the documents required to apply for COM approval.

²² Line 12 totals include data for SIV applicants who completed administrative processing between April 1, 2022, and June 30, 2022. Average processing time for cases that remain pending cannot be calculated until they are completed. A high number in this field reflects older cases being completed, not older cases languishing.

²³ The statistics in this chart were formerly reported in business days in reports published April 2014 – April 2016. U.S. government processing times do not factor in applicant-controlled steps. Overall processing times are greater than U.S. government processing times.

Step 4 – 4,976 principal applicants were pending COM approval. These applicants submitted all their documents and were being reviewed for COM approval.

Step 6 – 1,901 principal applicants had Form I-360 petitions pending with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Step 10 – 2,128 principal applicants and 9,467 derivative family members were pending scheduling for visa interviews. Applicants outside of Afghanistan may be interviewed at any U.S. embassy or consulate that adjudicates immigrant visa applications.

Step 12 – Applications for approximately 149 principal applicants and 175 derivative family members were undergoing administrative processing as of June 30, 2022.

How many SIV applicants were interviewed in Q3 of FY 2022?

In Q3 of FY 2022, 1,343 Afghan SIV principal applicants who received COM approval were interviewed at a U.S. embassy or consulate. In FY2022, 46 consular posts have interviewed at least one Afghan SIV applicant. Of these, the vast majority of interviews were conducted at the U.S. Embassies in Doha, Abu Dhabi, and Islamabad.

The following chart shows the number of Afghan nationals who underwent a visa interview in the third quarter of FY 2022 as part of their application for an SIV under section 602(b) of the *Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009*.

Month	Principal Applicants	Derivative Family Members	Total
April	249	808	1,057
May	332	1,113	1,445
June	762	2,743	3,505
Total	1,343	4,664	6,007

How many denials were there in Q3 of FY 2022?

At the end of this quarter, the following numbers of applications were denied at one of the application stages:

2,615 Afghan principal applicants were deemed unqualified to receive COM approval or had the approval revoked during the third quarter of FY 2022. Applicants whose COM applications are denied or revoked can appeal the decision once within 120 days of notification, or thereafter at the discretion of the Secretary of State. In the third quarter of FY 2022, 297 appeals were adjudicated. Of the appeals adjudicated during this quarter, 137 were approved after the applicant submitted additional information.

USCIS denied 796 principal applicants' Form I-360 petition during the third quarter of FY 2022.

What are the reasons for a COM denial?

Denial of a COM application generally occurs for one or more of the following reasons:

Failure to establish qualifying employment by or on behalf of the U.S. government, or by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) or a successor mission. Applications are denied for this reason if the applicant fails to establish qualifying employment. For information on qualifying employment, see the Department of State website at: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/special-immg-visa-afghans-employed-us-gov.html>.

Insufficient documentation. Applications are denied for this reason if the applicant fails to provide a required document, or if there is a deficiency in a document provided by the applicant.

Failure to establish at least one year of employment by or on behalf of the U.S. government, or by ISAF or a successor mission, during the period specified in section 602(b) of the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009, as amended.

Failure to establish providing faithful and valuable service to the U.S. government. Applications denied for this reason generally have involved cases lacking the requisite positive recommendation or evaluation. In some instances where faithful and valuable service was not confirmed, employment by or on behalf of the U.S. government had been terminated for cause.

Derogatory information associated with the applicant that is incompatible with the requirements of the SIV program. This reason for denial generally relates to information that the applicant engaged in an unlawful, unethical, criminal, or terrorism-related activity.