Report to Congress on
Process by which Applications for Special Immigrant Visas under
Special Immigrant Status for Certain Iraqis Are Processed
Section 1218 (g) of the National Defense Authorization Act of 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 Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program are committed to helping the Iraqi men and women who have taken significant risks to support our military and civilian personnel. The U.S. government has devoted substantial resources to reducing the amount of time required to complete the Iraqi SIV process, authorized under section 1244 of the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act of 2008, as amended, while still ensuring thorough screening for national security concerns, and we continue to strive for improvements.

How many Iraqi SIVs have been issued in the first quarter (Q1) of Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 (October 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023)?

Iraqi Principal Applicants Issued in Q1	Iraqi Derivative Applicants Issued in Q1	Total Iraqi SIVs Issued in Q1 FY 2024 (October 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023)	Total Iraqi Numbers Used[1]	Remaining SIVs for Iraqi Principal Applicants
10	38	48	2,381	119

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[1] Total number of visas issued to SIV principal applicants overseas combined with SIV numbers used through domestic adjustments of status since the current allotment of permanent numbers became available on January 1, 2014.

What efficiency improvements have been made to Iraqi SIV processing?

U.S. Embassy Baghdad continues to work toward restoring full capacity for consular services, following a three-year suspension that resulted from a December 2019 attack on the embassy compound. An entryway damaged during the attack was re-opened in October 2022, and the consular section is now offering all services, including SIV interviews. Staffing and security constraints, however, still limit the section's capacity. Despite these constraints, the Embassy prioritizes SIVs and approves all requests to transfer SIV cases for Iraqi applicants that had been assigned to other posts back to Baghdad. Other units within the consular section have adjusted their scheduling to allow for increased immigrant visa processing capacity, including for SIVs.

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

All steps in the Iraqi 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 National Visa Center (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 application process that are outside of U.S. government control and that depend solely on the applicant's initiative. However, even within each step below that is identified as under U.S. government control, there may be 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.

SIV Processing Steps[2,3]				
Stage	Step	Description	Average processing times in calendar days	Number of Cases Processed
Chief of Mission (COM) application process	1	Applicant submits COM approval application package to State's NVC. (The deadline was September 30, 2014.)	Applicant-controlled	N/A
	2	NVC reviews documents for completeness.	1	36[4]
	3	NVC sends complete COM approval application package to U.S. Embassy Baghdad.	N/A	N/A[5]
COM application process	4	U.S. Embassy Baghdad reviews COM approval application and the COM or COM Designee decides to approve or deny.	N/A	N/A[6]

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[2] Processing steps are for SIVs authorized under section 1244 of the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act of 2008, as amended. This applies to Iraqi nationals in the SQ classification.

[3] Previous versions of this report listed 14 steps. During the first quarter of FY 2022, Step 5 "U.S. Embassy Baghdad advises NVC if COM application is approved. NVC immediately sends approval letter to applicant. (If any documents reveal that the applicant does not qualify for the program, the COM application is denied.)" was fully automated and no longer requires manual processing. As such, the Department will no longer include information on this step in its reporting.

[4] This number reflects the number of case reviews conducted by the NVC within the quarter. This number does not include any new cases or appeals. This number includes the number of cases reviewed for people trying to apply, seeking status on old denied cases, seeking general assistance, or misdirected inquiries. 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 quarter.

[5] During this quarter, there were no cases completed at this stage.

[6] The deadline for Iraqi principal applicants to submit new applications for COM approval was September 30, 2014. The Baghdad COM did not receive any new cases or appeals in the current quarter.

SIV Processing Steps[2,3]				
Stage	**Step**	**Description**	**Average processing times in calendar days**	**Number of Cases Processed**
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.[7]	42	4
Visa Interview Process, including pre- and post-interview[8]	7	NVC sends instruction packet to applicant requesting standard immigrant visa documentation, including DS-260 immigrant visa application.	2	3
	8	Applicant submits required documentation to NVC.	Applicant-controlled	N/A
Visa Interview Process,	9	NVC reviews documents for completeness, corresponding with	1	611[9]

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[7] For I-360 petitions filed with USCIS between October 1, 2023, and December 31, 2023.

[8] The majority of applicants receive SIV status by going through the process explained in this chart. Applicants who obtain SIV status in the United States apply for adjustment of status from USCIS.

[9] As in Step 2, this number reflects the number of case reviews conducted by the NVC. The NVC counts a review each time a 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 per quarter.

SIV Processing Steps[2,3]				
Stage	**Step**	**Description**	**Average processing times in calendar days**	**Number of Cases Processed**
including pre- and post-interview		applicant when additional documentation is needed.		
	10	When the visa application is complete, NVC schedules applicant for next available interview at a U.S. Embassy.[10]	49	4
	11	Applicant is interviewed and biometrics are collected by consular officer on the scheduled appointment date. Administrative processing is initiated following the interview.	N/A	22
	12	The applicant's case undergoes administrative processing.[11]	695	21
Visa issuance to	13	Upon completion of administrative processing, the	Applicant-controlled	N/A

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[10] This Step only includes interviews scheduled by NVC immediately following the case being documentarily completed. It does not include interviews scheduled locally by an embassy or consulate following a case transfer.
[11] This Step measures the time from when a consular officer requests national security, legal, or procedural guidance from the Department through the software used to process immigrant visa applications until the guidance is provided, for those cases in which a consular officer makes such a request.

SIV Processing Steps[2,3]				
Stage	Step	Description	Average processing times in calendar days	Number of Cases Processed
eligible applicants		applicant is instructed to obtain a medical exam. Once the medical exam is completed, the visa is issued if the applicant is eligible. In some cases, the passport will have expired and requires renewal by the applicant.		
		Total U.S. government processing time in calendar days[12]	**741**	**N/A**

Why are applications pending longer than nine months?

Certain applications may be pending longer than nine months due to administrative processing (Step 12). Administrative processing often involves rigorous background checks, which are essential to the integrity of the SIV application process and U.S. national security. The current average processing time reflects numerous complicated long-pending cases that were resolved: two cases from 2016; one each from 2017, 2020 and 2021; seven cases from 2022; and one case from the first quarter of 2023 were closed during the reporting period, while the remaining eight cases closed with an average processing time of 60 days. Resolving long-standing cases is

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[12] 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.

essential; however, it leads to an increased average when calculating processing times.

How many SIV applications are pending as of December 31, 2023?

Step 1 – There were no new COM applications submitted by Iraqi principal applicants pending at NVC during this period. The deadline for Iraqis to apply for COM approval was September 30, 2014.

Step 6 – Six Iraqi principal applicants had a Form I-360 pending with USCIS.

Step 10 – There are no principal applicants or derivative family members pending scheduling for visa interviews.

Step 12 – Applications for 48 principal applicants and 33 family members were undergoing administrative processing.

How many SIV applicants were interviewed in Q1 of FY 2024?

The deadline to apply for COM approval was September 30, 2014. There were 22 SIV principal applicants who, after COM approval, were scheduled for an interview in the first quarter of FY 2024.

The following shows the number of Iraqi applicants who executed an application for an SIV at a visa interview in the first quarter of FY 2024 under section 1244 of the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act of 2008, as amended, after receiving COM approval:

Month	Principal Applicants	Derivative Family Members	Total
October	5	26	31
November	3	12	15
December	14	39	53
Total	**22**	**77**	**99**

How many denials were there in the Q1 of FY 24?

No principal applicants were deemed unqualified to receive COM approval or had their approval revoked during the first quarter of FY 2024. Applicants whose COM applications are denied or revoked can submit one appeal within 120 days of receiving the denial or revocation letter.

USCIS denied three principal applicants' Forms I-360 during FY 2024 Q1.

What are the reasons for a COM denial?

COM application denial generally occurs for one or more of the following:

- Failure to establish employment by or on behalf of the U.S. government. 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-visas-iraqis-employed-us-gov.html.

- Failure to establish one year employment by or on behalf of the U.S. government between March 20, 2003, and September 30, 2013.

- Failure to establish the provision of faithful and valuable service to the U.S. government. Applications denied for this reason generally have involved cases lacking 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 that is incompatible with the requirements of the SIV program. This reason generally relates to information indicating that the applicant engaged in an unlawful, unethical, criminal, or terrorism-related activity.