



**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 fourth quarter (Q4) of Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 (July 1, 2022, to September 30, 2022)?

Afghan Principal Applicants Issued in Q4	Afghan Derivative Applicants Issued in Q4	Total Afghan SIVs Issued in FY 2022 (October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022)	Total Afghan Numbers Used ¹	Remaining SIVs for Afghan Principal Applicants ²
1,221	4,100	11,612	20,378	14,122

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.

What efficiency improvements have been made to Afghan SIV processing?

State and DHS introduced several processing efficiencies during this quarter. On July 20, the DS-157 Form replaced the I-360 Form as the petition for all new SIV cases and most pending cases for applicants residing outside the United States. This process allows applicants to complete the Chief of Mission (COM) and SIV petition stages almost simultaneously and via one single agency (State) so they can proceed to the IV stage without the need to file an I-360 Form with USCIS. On July 22, State's National Visa Center (NVC) implemented a procedure to only review documents for new cases once all required documents were submitted. The introduction of this procedure supports decreased processing times when creating new cases. As of October 7, 2022, NVC has processed the vast majority of pending emails from potential applicants. NVC is now current with all email correspondence and is responding to emails received in 10 business days or fewer.

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 the 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^{3,4}				
Stage	Step	Description	Average processing time in calendar days	Number of Cases Processed
Chief of Mission (COM) application process	1	Applicant submits COM application package to State's NVC. ⁵	Applicant-controlled	N/A
	2	NVC reviews documents for completeness.	253 ⁶	398,762 ⁷
	3	NVC sends completed application package to the ACOM). ⁸	1	26,826
	4	COM staff reviews the COM application and DS-157 petition for special immigrant status and the COM Designee makes a decision. The applicant is	108	3,255

³ 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ At this stage, the applicant has contacted NVC to express interest in the program and provide the documents necessary to begin processing.

⁶ The Afghan evacuation in August 2021 resulted in a significant increase of emails sent to the Afghan Chief of Mission application mailbox at the NVC: 350,000 in six weeks, which increased to more than 500,000 by the end of 2021. Not all 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 additional staff to address the backlog; as of September 30, 2022, NVC had 204 case processors working to eliminate the backlog at the pre-COM stage. Although the average processing time grew during this quarter, the NVC made significant progress in eliminating the backlog and reducing processing times. The backlog at the pre-COM stage was eliminated in its entirety and normal processing times were met on October 7.

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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)). 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.

		automatically informed of the decision. ⁹		
Form I-360 adjudication process	5	Applicant self-petitions to DHS U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) using Form I-360. ¹⁰	Applicant-controlled	N/A
	6	USCIS adjudicates petition and sends to NVC if approved. ¹¹	36 ¹²	3,412
Visa interview process, including pre- and post-interview ¹³	7	NVC sends instruction packet to applicant requesting standard immigrant visa documentation, including DS-260 application.	9	5,144
	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.	115 ¹⁴	33,368 ¹⁵

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ Certain applicants, such as those already in the United States who had filed an unsigned DS-157 or applicants anywhere in the world who filed no DS-157 at all, will need to file an I-360 to petition for special immigrant status. Additionally, applicants who filed an I-360 before July 20, 2022, are required to wait a USCIS decision on their I-360; they may not switch to the DS-157 petition process.

¹¹ Form I-360 petitions filed with USCIS between July 1, 2022, and September 30, 2022.

¹² As of Q4, the methodology for calculating the average processing time reflects the average time it took NSC to adjudicate an I-360 petition completed in the quarter; the processing time which is calculated from the date NSC receives the petition to the date a final adjudicative decision is rendered on the petition (, i.e. approved, denied or administratively closed). Petitions where a request for evidence ("RFE") or notice of intent to deny ("NOID") was sent to the petitioner prior to final decision are filtered out of the processing time calculation. The petitioner's response time to the RFE or NOID is not calculated as part of the USCIS processing time.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ The Afghan evacuation in August 2021 resulted in a significant increase in the number Afghan SIV applications submitted to the NVC.

¹⁵ 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.

	10	When the immigrant visa application is complete, NVC schedules applicant for interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate. ¹⁶	97 ¹⁷	279
	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. ¹⁸	N/A	1,187 ¹⁹
	12	The applicant's case undergoes administrative processing, if required. ²⁰	9	1,980
Visa issuance to eligible applicants	13	Upon completion of administrative processing, the visa is issued if applicant is eligible.	Applicant-controlled	N/A
		Total U.S. government processing time in calendar days²¹	628	N/A

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ Administrative processing may include a variety of security, fraud, or criminal background checks that are required before the visa may be issued.

¹⁹ Line 11 reflects the number of SQSIV principal applicant interviews conducted at embassies or consulate worldwide.

²⁰ Line 12 totals include data for SIV applicants who completed administrative processing between July 1, 2022, and September 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.

²¹ 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.

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, Afghanistan, suspended 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 September 30, 2022?

Step 1 – 98,488 principal applicants had submitted some, but not all, of the documents required to apply for COM approval.

Step 4 – 29,080 principal applicants were pending COM approval. These applicants submitted all their documents and were being reviewed for COM approval.

Step 6 – 553 principal applicants had Form I-360 petitions pending with the USCIS.

Step 10 – 2,784 principal applicants and 12,885 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 144 principal applicants and 160 derivative family members were undergoing administrative processing as of September 30, 2022.

How many SIV applicants were interviewed in Q4 of FY 2022?

In Q4 of FY 2022, 1,187 Afghan SIV principal applicants who received COM approval were interviewed at a U.S. embassy or consulate. In FY 2022, 46 consular posts have interviewed at least one Afghan SIV applicant. Of these, the vast majority of interviews were conducted by the U.S. Mission to Afghanistan in Doha, Qatar and U.S. Embassies in Abu Dhabi and Islamabad.

The following chart shows the number of Afghan nationals who underwent a visa interview in the fourth 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
July	418	1,527	1,947
August	386	1,323	1,709
September	383	1,314	1,697
Total	1,187	4,166	5,353

How many denials were there in Q4 of FY 2022?

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

2,285 Afghan principal applicants were deemed unqualified to receive COM approval or had the approval revoked during the fourth 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 fourth quarter of FY 2022, 523 appeals were adjudicated. Of the appeals adjudicated during this quarter, 266 were approved after the applicant submitted additional information.

USCIS denied 652 principal applicants' Form I-360 petition during the fourth 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.