

## **AFGHAN SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA (SIV) FACT SHEET**

More than 13,000 Afghans who have worked for the United States in Afghanistan (and their family members) have benefited from Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) programs. Of these, more than 70 percent served as translators, with the vast majority serving our nation's military forces in Afghanistan. We have the highest respect for the men and women who take enormous risks in supporting our military and civilian personnel. We are committed to helping those who have helped us -- they are not only qualified, but highly deserving applicants for this special program.

### **How many visas have been issued for Afghans?**

- More Afghan SIVs were issued in FY 2014 than in all previous years of the program combined.
- Over 9,000 Afghans, mainly interpreters and their family members, have received SIVs since October 1, 2013. This includes more than 3,400 principal applicants and more than 5,600 of their family members.

### **How many visas remain available for Afghans?**

- On January 17, 2014, the President signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014. This legislation authorized 3,000 visas for Afghan principal applicants in FY 2014 with carryover of any unused numbers to FY 2015. All of these visas were issued by August.
- On August 8, 2014, the President signed the Emergency Afghan Allies Extension Act of 2014 which authorized the issuance of 1,000 additional visas for Afghan principal applicants by December 31, 2014.
- The additional 1,000 visas for Afghans who have been employed by or on behalf of the U.S. government will likely be exhausted before December 31, 2014. We continue to work with Congress on extending this program further.

### **When is the application deadline?**

- Under current law, applicants must have one year of qualifying employment between October 7, 2001 and December 31, 2014. The deadline to apply for Chief of Mission approval is December 31, 2014. This means the principal applicant must apply for Chief of Mission approval, the first step of the overall application process, no later than December 31, 2014. Those who have applied and are awaiting Chief of Mission approval will continue to be considered for the program after December 31, 2014.
- Although the deadline to apply for Chief of Mission approval is December 31, 2014, the current law provides that no SIVs may be issued under this program after that date. We welcome action by Congress to extend this program.

### **Why have SIV issuances ramped up for Afghans?**

- SIV issuances have ramped up over the past year because of improved processing times at every stage of the SIV process and expanded outreach to current and former employees who may be eligible.
- Last year, Congress clarified the criteria used to demonstrate an ongoing serious threat, which further improved efficiencies at the Chief of Mission stage. Now, a credible sworn statement depicting dangerous country conditions, together with official evidence of such country conditions from the U.S. government, can be considered as a factor to determine whether an applicant has experienced or is experiencing an ongoing serious threat as a consequence of employment by or on behalf of the U.S. government.
- Processing time can vary a great deal depending on a number of case-specific factors, some of which the U.S. government controls and others of which rely upon the applicant. The current average processing time for an SIV in Afghanistan is approximately 13 months.
- The processing time for SIVs remains an area of focus both here in Washington and at our embassy in Kabul. Across the U.S. government, resources have been devoted to reducing the amount of time required for this process, and we are striving for even greater efficiencies and transparency.