



**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 (Pub. L. No. 113-66)**

The Department of State, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and other U.S. government (USG) departments and agencies involved in the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) process 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 2024 (April 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024)?**

Afghan Principal Applicants Issued in Q3	Afghan Derivative Applicants Issued in Q3	Total Afghan SIVs Issued in Q3	Total Afghan SIV Numbers Used <sup>1,2</sup>	Remaining SIVs for Afghan Principal Applicants as of June 30, 2024 <sup>3,4</sup>
1,894	6,033	7,927	34,771	15,729

**What efficiency improvements have been made to Afghan SIV processing?**

The Department of State and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) streamlined the process for derivative family members to continue their visa application after the principal applicant adjusts status in the United States. As a result of this change, overseas derivative family members of adjusted principal applicants no longer need to file USCIS Form I-824 in most cases. In addition, effective July 20, 2022, the Department of State and DHS simplified and streamlined the SIV application process for principal Afghan applicants. New Afghan SIV applicants filing on or after July 20, 2022, only need to file one form with the Department of State – a revised Form DS-157 – as their SIV classification petition, instead of having to first file Form I-360 – Petition for Special Immigrant Status – with USCIS. The National Visa Center (NVC) continues to maintain processing times of 10 business days or fewer to review incoming document submissions in the visa processing stage.

The Afghan SIV Unit (ASIV) continued to expand its use of advanced analytics and automation to streamline the Chief of Mission (COM) approval process

<sup>1</sup> 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 December 19, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> In July 2024, State conducted an audit of SIV issuances from December 2014 through the end of Q1 FY 2024, which resulted in recapturing additional visa numbers now reflected in this table.

<sup>3</sup> Numbers remaining are preliminary and subject to change. They are accurate as of the date of publication and account for recaptured numbers.

<sup>4</sup> In March 2024, Congress allocated an additional 12,000 Afghan SIV numbers. These are reflected in the number of SIVs remaining through the end of Q3.

and recordkeeping while maintaining accuracy and safeguarding national security. During the quarter, ASIV undertook a focused review of some of the longest-pending cases in its queue. As a result, ASIV's average processing time increased from 384 days in Q2 FY 2024 to 453 days in Q3 as more of the long-pending cases began to receive their COM decisions. While output decreased slightly from Q2 to Q3 FY 2024 because of this effort, year over year, ASIV output increased 30 percent from Q3 2023 to Q3 2024.

The Department of State's Visa Office transitioned a key immigrant visa vetting process to the National Vetting Center (NVC) in Q3 as part of an ongoing interagency modernization effort to make interagency screening and vetting broader and more efficient. The improved vetting process contributed to a reduction in the number of cases requiring administrative processing for national security vetting, despite the continued rise in the overall number of cases in the visa adjudication pipeline. The visa office continued to dedicate a part-time staff member to cases requiring additional national security vetting, which assisted in maintaining normal processing times during the transition.

**What is the average USG processing time for Afghan SIVs and how many cases are processed in that time?**

The stages and steps in the Afghan SIV application process are outlined below and include the current average processing time for each step, including the time required by relevant USG entities. This statistic captures total USG processing time in calendar days, beginning when the applicant first expresses interest in applying for an SIV to the NVC and ending with the date of visa issuance at a U.S. embassy or consulate. It does not capture time taken for those steps in the SIV process outside the control of the USG that depend solely on the applicant's initiative. However, even within each step below identified as under the control of the USG, there may be significant time spent awaiting applicant or third-party action not attributable to the USG entities involved. Therefore, the average processing

time listed below likely overestimates the total processing time solely attributable to USG entities.

<b>SIV Processing Steps<sup>5,6</sup></b>				
<b>Stage</b>	<b>Step</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Average processing time in calendar days</b>	<b>Number of Cases Processed</b>
COM application process	1	Applicant submits COM approval application package to NVC. <sup>7</sup>	Applicant-controlled	N/A
	2	NVC reviews documents for completeness.	8	69,512 <sup>8</sup>
	3	NVC sends completed COM application package to the ASIV Unit. <sup>9</sup>	1	5,066

<sup>5</sup> Processing steps are for SIVs authorized under section 602(b) of the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009, as amended. Afghan national cases processed under 602(b) are given the SQ SIV classification.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> At this stage, the applicant has contacted NVC to express interest in the program and provide the documents necessary to begin processing.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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 ASIV director was the COM’s designee throughout this reporting period. Since the COM dissolved the COM Committee on August 19, 2021, the ASIV Unit sends COM approval agendas directly to the COM designee for a decision.

<b>SIV Processing Steps<sup>5,6</sup></b>				
<b>Stage</b>	<b>Step</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Average processing time in calendar days</b>	<b>Number of Cases Processed</b>
COM application process	4	ASIV Unit reviews the COM approval application and form DS-157 petition for special immigrant status and the COM or Designee decides. The applicant is automatically informed of the decision. <sup>10</sup>	453 <sup>11</sup>	9,925
Form I-360 adjudication process	5	Applicant self-petitions to USCIS using Form I-360. <sup>12</sup>	Applicant-controlled <sup>13</sup>	N/A

<sup>10</sup> 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 and other factors.

<sup>11</sup> There previously was a rise in the number of principal applicants pending COM approval due to a massive increase in cases that moved from NVC to ASIV. The number of principal applicants pending COM approval is now decreasing.

<sup>12</sup> As of July 20, 2022, all new SIV applications are filed with the Department of State via Form DS-157, consolidating the COM approval and petition adjudication responsibilities to Department of State. Only certain applicants who had a COM approval before July 20, 2022 and are in the United States or or applicants who filed no DS-157 with their initial SIV application, 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 await a USCIS decision on their I-360-; they may not switch to the DS-157 petition process.

<sup>13</sup> Effective July 20, 2022, State and DHS simplified and streamlined the SIV application process for Afghan applicants. New Afghan SIV applicants filing on or after July 20, 2022, only need to file one form with State, a revised form DS-157, as their SIV classification petition, instead of having to file the Form I-360, Petition for Special Immigrant Status, with USCIS.

SIV Processing Steps <sup>5,6</sup>				
Stage	Step	Description	Average processing time in calendar days	Number of Cases Processed
	6	USCIS adjudicates petition and sends to NVC if approved. <sup>14</sup>	31 <sup>15</sup>	98
Visa interview process, including pre- and post-interview <sup>16</sup>	7	NVC sends instruction packet to applicant requesting standard immigrant visa documentation, including Form DS-260.	3	4,066
	8	Applicant submits required documentation to NVC.	Applicant-controlled	N/A
	9	NVC reviews documents for completeness and	7	46,479 <sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Form I-360 petitions adjudicated by USCIS between April 1, 2024, and June 30, 2024.

<sup>15</sup> As of FY 2022 Q4, the methodology for calculating the average processing time reflects the average time it took USCIS to adjudicate an I-360 petition completed in the quarter; the processing time is calculated from the date USCIS 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.

<sup>16</sup> Most 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 with USCIS.

<sup>17</sup> 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.

<b>SIV Processing Steps<sup>5,6</sup></b>				
<b>Stage</b>	<b>Step</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Average processing time in calendar days</b>	<b>Number of Cases Processed</b>
		corresponds with applicant when additional documentation is needed.		
	10	When the immigrant visa application is complete, and the applicant's desired post of interview has availability, NVC schedules interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate. <sup>18</sup>	139 <sup>19</sup>	369
	11	Applicant is interviewed and biometrics are collected by consular officer on	N/A	2,226

<sup>18</sup> 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 Embassy 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.

<sup>19</sup> This number reflects the average processing time between when an applicant is considered documentarily complete and when they are scheduled for an interview. NVC schedules interviews for documentarily complete applicants who can 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 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.

<b>SIV Processing Steps<sup>5,6</sup></b>				
<b>Stage</b>	<b>Step</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Average processing time in calendar days</b>	<b>Number of Cases Processed</b>
		the scheduled appointment date. Administrative processing, if needed, is initiated following the interview.		
	12	The applicant's case undergoes administrative processing, if required. <sup>20</sup>	16	2,129
Visa issuance to eligible applicants	13	Upon completion of administrative processing, the visa is issued if applicant is eligible.	Applicant-controlled	N/A
		<b>Total USG processing time in calendar days<sup>21</sup></b>	<b>658</b>	<b>N/A</b>

<sup>20</sup> This step measures the time from when a consular officer requests national security, legal, or procedural guidance from State 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. Step 12 totals include data for SIV applicants who completed this step between April 1, 2024, and June 30, 2024. Average processing time for remaining cases pending cannot be calculated until they are completed. A high number in this field reflects older cases being completed, not older cases languishing.

<sup>21</sup> The statistics in this chart were formerly reported in business days in reports published April 2014 – April 2016. USG processing times do not factor in applicant or third-party action not attributable to the USG entities involved. Moreover, the total USG processing time may overestimate the processing time for any individual applicant because not all applicants are required to undergo processing at step 6 or step 12. Overall processing times are greater than USG processing times.



## **Why are applications pending more than nine months in USG-controlled stages of the SIV application?**

Step 10 includes both USG-and applicant-controlled timeframes. While the USG is responsible for scheduling, applicants must designate an immigrant visa-processing U.S. embassy or consulate (IV post) outside Afghanistan where they can appear to have their visa interviews scheduled before the USG can do so, unless they are relocated by CARE. The average processing time at step 10 includes the period in which the applicant has not designated an IV post for interview. The timeframes indicated for steps 2 and 9 reflect NVC processing time only. Due to the surge in demand for Afghan SIVs related to the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, the Department of State experienced a significant processing backlog, which has now moved to step 4 of the process. The ASIV Unit continues to implement processing improvements and increase staffing to reach decisions as quickly as possible without undermining the integrity of the process or national security.

## **How many SIV applications are pending as of June 30, 2024?**

Step 1: 63,674 principal applicants had submitted some, but not all, documents required to apply for COM approval.

Step 4: 57,094<sup>22</sup> principal applicants were pending review for COM approval. These applicants submitted all documents and were being reviewed for COM approval.

Step 6: 29 principal applicants had Form I-360 petitions pending with USCIS.

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<sup>22</sup> There previously was a rise in the number of principal applicants pending COM approval due to a massive increase in cases that moved from NVC to ASIV. The number of principal applicants pending COM approval is now decreasing.

Step 10: 11,238 principal applicants and 55,802 derivative family members were pending scheduling of visa interviews. Applicants outside of Afghanistan may be interviewed at any U.S. embassy or consulate that adjudicates immigrant visa applications.

Step 12<sup>23</sup>: Applications for approximately 316 principal applicants and 303 derivative family members were undergoing administrative processing.

### **How many SIV applicants were interviewed in Q3 FY 2024?**

In Q3 FY 2024, 2,226 Afghan SIV principal applicants who received COM approval were interviewed at a U.S. embassy or consulate, not including derivative family members. In FY 2024, 42 consular posts worldwide have interviewed at least one Afghan SIV applicant. Of these, most interviews were conducted by the Afghanistan Affairs Unit in Doha, Qatar; U.S. embassies in Ankara, Türkiye; Islamabad, Pakistan; Tirana, Albania; Kigali, Rwanda; and the U.S. Consulate in Frankfurt, Germany.

The following chart shows the number of Afghan nationals who underwent a visa interview in Q3 of FY 2024 as part of their application for a SIV under the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009, as amended.

Month	Principal Applicants	Derivative Family Members	Total
April	689	2,128	2,817
May	841	2,598	3,439
June	696	2,050	2,746
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,226</b>	<b>6,776</b>	<b>9,002</b>

<sup>23</sup> Average processing time in Q3 was 16 days. This is up from 8 days in Q2 but follows the overall trend in recent quarters. The slight increase in processing time in Q3 is because, as volume of cases requiring administrative processing decreased due to the IVO transition to NVC, the typical case in Q3 became more complex.

## How many denials were there in Q3 FY 2024?

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

- 5,649 Afghan principal applicants were deemed unqualified to receive COM approval or had the approval revoked during Q3 FY 2024. Applicants whose COM approval applications are denied or revoked may file their intent to appeal the decision within 120 days of notification, or thereafter at the discretion of the Secretary of State. In Q3 FY 2024, 1,023 appeals were reviewed. Of the appeals reviewed during this quarter, 300 were approved after the applicant submitted additional information.
- USCIS denied nine principal applicants' Form I-360 petitions during Q3 of FY 2024.

## What are the reasons for a COM denial?

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

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

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