

**Joint Department of State/Department of Homeland Security Report:
Status of the Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa Program**

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 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 to the process.

How many Iraqi SIVs have been issued in the Second Quarter of FY 2021 (January 1, 2021 to March 31, 2021)?

Iraqi Principal Applicants Issued	Iraqi Derivative Applicants Issued	Total Iraqi SIVs Issued in FY2021 (through March 31, 2021)	Total Iraqi Numbers Used ¹	Remaining SIVs for Iraqi Principal Applicants
2	2	14	2,118	382

What efficiency improvements have been made to Iraqi SIV processing?

In the second quarter of FY 2021, U.S. Embassy Ankara, U.S. Embassy Amman, and U.S. Embassy Cairo accepted transfer cases from U.S. Embassy Baghdad, which has been closed for visa processing since December 31, 2019.

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)² 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.

¹ Number of visas issued since permanent numbers became available on January 1, 2014.

² The Department of State’s National Visa Center (NVC) should not be confused with the National Vetting Center, also known as NVC, established under the National Security Presidential Memorandum 9.

Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Processing Steps³				
Stage	Step	Description	Average processing times in calendar days	# of Cases Processed
Chief of Mission (COM) application process	1	Applicant submits COM application package to State's NVC. (The deadline for this step was September 30, 2014.)	Applicant-controlled	N/A
	2	NVC reviews documents for completeness.	1	92 ⁴
	3	NVC sends completed application package to U.S. Embassy Baghdad.	1	0
	4	U.S. Embassy Baghdad reviews COM application and makes a decision to approve or deny.	N/A ⁵	0
	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.)	1	0

³ 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.

⁴ Starting this quarter, this number reflects the number of case reviews conducted by the National Visa Center within the quarter. The National Visa Center 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 National Visa Center because an individual case might be reviewed multiple times in a quarter.

⁵ The deadline for Iraqi principal applicants to submit new applications for Chief of Mission approval was September 30, 2014.

Form I-360 adjudication process	6	Applicant self-petitions to DHS U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) using form I-360.	Applicant-controlled	N/A
	7	USCIS adjudicates petition and sends to NVC if approved. ⁶	N/A ⁷	4
Visa Interview Process, including pre- and post-interview ⁸	8	NVC sends instruction packet to applicant requesting standard immigrant visa documentation, including DS-260 immigrant visa application.	1	3
	9	Applicant submits required documentation to NVC.	Applicant-controlled	N/A
	10	NVC reviews documents for completeness, corresponding with applicant when additional documentation is needed.	10	3 ⁹
	11	When the visa application is complete, NVC schedules applicant for next available interview at a U.S. Embassy. ¹⁰	N/A	0

⁶ For I-360 petitions filed with USCIS between January 1, 2021 and March 31, 2021.

⁷ USCIS was unable to calculate and average for this quarter as there were no petitions filed in the current quarter for which a final adjudication was rendered.

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 National Visa Center. The National Visa Center 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 National Visa Center because an individual case might be reviewed multiple times in a quarter.

¹⁰ As of November 2017, NVC began scheduling SIV applicants at other embassies on behalf of the U.S. Embassy Baghdad.

	12	Applicant is interviewed by consular officer on the scheduled appointment date. Administrative processing is initiated following the interview. ¹¹	1	0
	13	The applicant's case undergoes administrative processing.	42	4
Visa issuance to eligible applicants	14	Upon completion of administrative processing, the applicant is instructed to obtain a medical exam. The visa is issued if the applicant is eligible. In some cases, the passport will have expired and requires renewal by the applicant.	Applicant-controlled	N/A
		Total U.S. government processing time in calendar days¹²	57¹³	N/A

Why are applications pending longer than nine months?

Certain applications may be pending longer than nine months for completion of administrative processing (Step 13). Administrative processing often involves rigorous background checks, which are essential to the integrity of the SIV program and U.S. national security. The current low average reflects the fact that no long outstanding cases were completed in the current reporting period.

How many SIV applications are pending as of March 31, 2021?

¹¹ Administrative processing may include a variety of security, fraud, or criminal background checks that are required before the visa may be issued.

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.

¹³ This number reflects the current processing time for each step within the current quarter. It is not meant to track start to finish processing times for individual cases. For example, there were no applications this quarter in the COM stage. However, the cases involved may have been pending for longer periods.

- 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 7 – 14 Iraqi principal applicants had a Form I-360 petition pending with USCIS.
- Step 11 – There are three principal applicants and 10 derivative family members pending scheduling for visa interviews.
- Step 13 – Applications for 45 principal applicants and 18 family members were undergoing administrative processing as of March 31, 2021.

How many SIV applicants were there in the Second Quarter of FY 2021?

The deadline to submit an application for COM approval was September 30, 2014. There were no SIV applicants who, subsequent to COM approval, were scheduled for an interview in the second quarter of FY 2021.

How many denials were there in the Second Quarter of FY 2021?

- No principal applicants were deemed unqualified to receive COM approval or had their approval revoked during the first quarter of FY 2021. Applicants whose COM applications are denied or revoked are able to submit one appeal within 120 days of receiving the denial or revocation letter. One principal applicant submitted an appeal during the second quarter of FY 2021.
- Three principal applicants had a Form I-360 petition denied by USCIS during the second quarter of FY 2021.

What are the reasons for a COM denial?

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

- *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 at least one year of employment by or on behalf of the U.S. government between March 20, 2003 and September 30, 2013.*
- *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.

What are the reasons for an I-360 denial?

Denial of an I-360 petition generally occurs for one or more of the following five reasons¹⁴:

- Failure to provide a valid Chief of Mission approval letter.
- Failure to establish nationality by providing a proper national identification document, such as an Iraqi passport.
- Failure to sign the I-360 petition.
- Failure to provide a valid supervisor or flag officer's letter of recommendation.
- Failure to respond to a Request for Evidence issued by USCIS in the course of its adjudication of the I-360 petition.

¹⁴ A denial is generally issued after the applicant has been provided notice of any deficiency and the opportunity to rectify any incomplete or missing evidence.