



**Report to Congress on
Posting of the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Quarterly Report on the
Department of State's Website
Section 1219 of the National Defense Authorization Act
for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 (P.L. 113-66)**

The Department of State (State), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and other U.S. government (USG) departments and agencies involved in the Afghan 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 second quarter (Q2) of FY 2024 (January 1, 2024, to March 31, 2024)?

Afghan Principal Applicants Issued in Q2	Afghan Derivative Applicants Issued in Q2	Total Afghan SIVs Issued in Q2	Total Afghan SIV Numbers Used ^{1,2}	Remaining SIVs for Afghan Principal Applicants as of Mar. 31, 2024 ^{3,4}
1,978	7,336	9,314	31,455	19,045

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 In March 2024, State conducted an audit of SIV issuances from December 2014 through the end of FY 2023, which resulted in recapturing additional visa numbers now reflected in this table.

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

⁴ 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 Q2.

What efficiency improvements have been made to Afghan SIV processing?

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. Effective July 20, 2022, 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 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 and recordkeeping while maintaining accuracy. ASIV continued to train new staff, focusing resources on a backlog at the employment and recommendation letter verifications stage of the process. As a result, ASIVs' output increased 37 percent from Q1 to Q2 FY 2024.

State's Visa Office continued to dedicate a part-time staff member to cases requiring additional administrative processing, which increased output this quarter, reducing average administrative processing time for Afghan SIVs despite a significant increase in overall case volume.

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.

SIV Processing Steps ^{5,6}				
Stage	Step	Description	Average processing time in calendar days	Number of Cases Processed
COM application process	1	Applicant submits COM approval application package to NVC. ⁷	Applicant-controlled	N/A

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

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

SIV Processing Steps ^{5,6}				
Stage	Step	Description	Average processing time in calendar days	Number of Cases Processed
	2	NVC reviews documents for completeness.	5	73,143 ⁸
COM application process	3	NVC sends completed COM application package to the ASIV Unit. ⁹	1	4,733
	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. ¹⁰	384 ¹¹	10,768

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ The rise in average processing time for step 4 is due to the massive increase in cases that moved from NVC to the ASIV Unit in recent quarters. Average processing time for step 4 is expected to increase as the ASIV Unit works to eliminate the backlog.

SIV Processing Steps ^{5,6}				
Stage	Step	Description	Average processing time in calendar days	Number of Cases Processed
Form I-360 adjudication process	5	Applicant self-petitions to USCIS using Form I-360. ¹²	Applicant-controlled ¹³	N/A
	6	USCIS adjudicates petition and sends to NVC if approved. ¹⁴	30 ¹⁵	140
Visa interview process, including pre- and post-interview ¹⁶	7	NVC sends instruction packet to applicant requesting standard immigrant visa documentation, including Form DS-260.	3	3,620

¹² 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, 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. Once these I-360s are adjudicated, this Step will no longer be a part of the process.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ Form I-360 petitions adjudicated by USCIS between January 1, 2024, and March 31, 2024.

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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.

SIV Processing Steps ^{5,6}				
Stage	Step	Description	Average processing time in calendar days	Number of Cases Processed
	8	Applicant submits required documentation to NVC.	Applicant-controlled	N/A
	9	NVC reviews documents for completeness and corresponds with applicant when additional documentation is needed.	6	46,797 ¹⁷
	10	When the immigrant visa application is complete, and the applicant's desired post of interview has availability, NVC schedules interview	132 ¹⁹	467

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁹ 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.

SIV Processing Steps ^{5,6}				
Stage	Step	Description	Average processing time in calendar days	Number of Cases Processed
		at a U.S. embassy or consulate. ¹⁸		
	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.	N/A	2,370
	12	The applicant's case undergoes administrative processing, if required. ²⁰	8	4,393

¹⁸ 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.

²⁰ 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 January 1, 2024, and March 31, 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.

SIV Processing Steps^{5,6}				
Stage	Step	Description	Average processing time in calendar days	Number of Cases Processed
Visa issuance to eligible applicants	13	Upon completion of administrative processing, the visa is issued if applicant is eligible.	Applicant-controlled	N/A
		Total USG processing time in calendar days²¹	569	N/A

²¹ 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-controlled steps, although there may be significant time spent awaiting 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 IV-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. 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, 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 March 31, 2024?

Step 1: 64,369 principal applicants had submitted some, but not all, documents required to apply for COM approval.

Step 4: 60,230²² principal applicants were pending review for COM approval. These applicants submitted all documents and were being reviewed for COM approval.

Step 6: 27 principal applicants had Form I-360 petitions pending with USCIS.

Step 10: 10,619 principal applicants and 42,058 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.

²² The rise in number of principal applicants pending COM approval is due to the massive increase in cases that moved from NVC to ASIV in recent quarters.

Step 12²³: Applications for approximately 493 principal applicants and 756 derivative family members were undergoing administrative processing.

How many SIV applicants were interviewed in Q2 FY 2024?

In Q2 FY 2024, 2,370 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, 49 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 Q2 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
January	732	2,605	3,337
February	873	3,097	3,970
March	765	2,547	3,312
Total	2,370	8,249	10,619

²³ Administrative processing times for incoming cases were within range, but overall case volume is climbing. The primary reason for the increasing case volume is an overall increase in the number of applicants in the pipeline. Although the number of Afghan applicants undergoing administrative processing has increased, cases are clearing more quickly due to improvements in vetting partner coordination, as reflected in the decrease in average processing time from 17 days in Q1 to 8 days in Q2.

How many denials were there in Q2 of FY 2024?

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

- 6,944 Afghan principal applicants were deemed unqualified to receive COM approval or had the approval revoked during Q2 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 Q2 FY 2024, 1,450 appeals were reviewed. Of the appeals reviewed during this quarter, 294 were approved after the applicant submitted additional information.
- USCIS denied 15 principal applicants' Form I-360 petitions during Q2 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.