



**Report to Congress on
Process by which Applications for Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) under
Special Immigrant Status for Certain Iraqis Are Processed
Section 1218 (g) of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2014
(Pub. L. No. 113-66)**

The Department of State (State), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and other U.S. government (USG) departments and agencies involved in Iraqi SIV issuance continued the Iraqi SIV process, authorized under section 1244 of the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act of 2007, as amended, during the reporting period of October 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025 (Q1 FY 2026). As of the end of Q1 FY2026, 214 SIVs remain for Iraqi Principal Applicants.

How many Iraqi SIVs have been issued in the first quarter (Q1) of FY 2026 (October 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025)?

| Iraqi Principal Applicants Issued in Q1 | Iraqi Derivative Applicants Issued in Q1 | Total Iraqi SIVs Issued in Q1 FY 2026 (October 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025) | Total Iraqi SIV Numbers Used ¹ (2014 through December 31, 2025) | Remaining SIVs for Iraqi Principal Applicants ² |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| 2 | 7 | 9 | 2,286 | 214 |

What efficiency improvements have been made to Iraqi SIV processing?

Despite the 43-day government shutdown, consular operations at Embassy Baghdad continued uninterrupted. The embassy prioritized SIVs and approved all requests to transfer back to Baghdad the SIV cases for Iraqi applicants that had been assigned to other posts. The consular section adjusted scheduling to allow for increased immigrant visa processing capacity, including for SIVs.

What is the average USG 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 average processing time for all involved USG entities during Q1 FY 2026. This statistic captures total USG processing time in calendar days, beginning when the applicant first expresses interest in the program to the Department of State's National Visa Center (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 application process that are outside of USG control and that

¹ Total number of visas issued to SIV principal applicants overseas combined with SIV numbers used through domestic adjustments of status since the current allotment of permanent numbers became available on January 1, 2014.

² In February 2026, the Department of State conducted an audit of SIV issuances and numbers used from January 1, 2014, through the end of Q3 FY 2025, including accounting for the actual number of applicants that travelled to the United States on their visas. The audit resulted in a decrease in the number of remaining visas now reflected in this table. Numbers remaining are preliminary and subject to change. They are accurate as of the date of publication and account for recaptured numbers.

depend solely on the applicant's initiative. However, even within each step below that is identified as under USG control, there may be significant time spent waiting on applicant or third-party action not attributable to the USG entities involved. Therefore, the average processing time likely overestimates the total processing time attributable to the USG entities involved.

| SIV Processing Steps^{3,4} | | | | |
|--|-------------|---|--|----------------------------------|
| Stage | Step | Description | Average processing times in calendar days | Number of Cases Processed |
| Chief of Mission (COM) application process | 1 | Applicant submits COM approval application package to State's NVC. (The deadline was September 30, 2014.) | Applicant-controlled | N/A |
| | 2 | NVC reviews documents for completeness. | 0 | 26 ⁵ |
| | 3 | NVC sends complete COM approval application package to U.S. Embassy Baghdad. | N/A | N/A ⁶ |

³ Processing steps are for SIVs authorized under Section 1244 of the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act of 2007, as amended. This applies to Iraqi nationals in the SQ classification.

⁴ Previous versions of this report listed 14 steps. During the first quarter of FY 2022, Step 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.)" was fully automated and no longer requires manual processing. As such, the Department will no longer include information on this step in its reporting.

⁵ This number reflects the number of case reviews conducted by the NVC within the quarter. This number does not include any new cases or appeals. This number includes the number of cases reviewed for people trying to apply, seeking status on old denied cases, seeking general assistance, or misdirected inquiries. 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 quarter.

⁶ During this quarter, there were no cases completed at this stage.

| SIV Processing Steps^{3,4} | | | | |
|---|-------------|--|--|----------------------------------|
| Stage | Step | Description | Average processing times in calendar days | Number of Cases Processed |
| COM application process | 4 | U.S. Embassy Baghdad reviews COM approval application and the COM or COM Designee decides to approve or deny. | N/A | N/A ⁷ |
| Form I-360 adjudication process | 5 | Applicant self-petitions to DHS U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) using Form I-360. | Applicant-controlled | N/A |
| | 6 | USCIS adjudicates petition and sends to NVC, if approved. ⁸ | x ⁹ | 1 |
| Visa Interview Process, including pre- and post-interview ¹⁰ | 7 | NVC sends instruction packet to applicant requesting standard immigrant visa documentation, including DS-260 immigrant visa application. | 2 | 1 |

⁷ The deadline for Iraqi principal applicants to submit new applications for COM approval was September 30, 2014. The Baghdad COM did not receive any new cases or appeals in the current quarter.

⁸ For I-360 petitions adjudicated by USCIS between October 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025.

⁹ The average processing time for the 1244 Iraqi SQ1 program could not be calculated due to an absence of completed adjudications meeting the criteria to be included in the sample. This sample size is smaller than the number of petitions filed and adjudicated as it excludes petitions that were under applicant control due to Requests for Evidence (RFEs) or Notices of Intent to Deny (NOIDs).

¹⁰ 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.

| SIV Processing Steps^{3,4} | | | | |
|---|-------------|--|--|----------------------------------|
| Stage | Step | Description | Average processing times in calendar days | Number of Cases Processed |
| | 8 | Applicant submits required documentation to NVC. | Applicant-controlled | N/A |
| Visa Interview Process, including pre- and post-interview | 9 | NVC reviews documents for completeness, corresponding with applicant when additional documentation is needed. | 9 | 224 ¹¹ |
| | 10 | When the visa application is complete, NVC schedules applicant for next available interview at a U.S. embassy. ¹² | 23 | 1 |
| | 11 | Applicant is interviewed and biometrics are collected by consular officer on the scheduled appointment date. Administrative processing is initiated following the interview. | N/A | 4 |

¹¹ 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.

¹² This step only includes interviews scheduled by NVC immediately following the case being documentarily completed. It does not include interviews scheduled locally by an embassy or consulate following a case transfer.

| SIV Processing Steps^{3,4} | | | | |
|---|-------------|---|--|----------------------------------|
| Stage | Step | Description | Average processing times in calendar days | Number of Cases Processed |
| | 12 | The applicant's case undergoes administrative processing. ¹³ | 764 | 16 |
| Visa issuance to eligible applicants | 13 | Upon completion of administrative processing, the applicant is instructed to obtain a medical exam. Once the medical exam is completed, 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 USG processing time in calendar days¹⁴ | 798 | N/A |

Why are applications pending longer than nine months?

Certain applications may be pending longer than nine months due to administrative processing (Step 12). Administrative processing often involves interagency background checks, which are essential to the integrity of the SIV application process and U.S. national security. State cannot require a third-party agency to complete their actions within a particular timeframe, potentially lengthening the time required to conclude

¹³ This Step measures the time from when a consular officer requests national security, legal, or procedural guidance from the Department 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.

¹⁴ 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.

administrative processing. In addition, applicants may delay in responding to requests for information required to complete administration processing. The current average administrative processing time is 764 days, which reflects the work that State is doing to resolve complicated, long-pending cases, including temporarily assigning additional staff to the SIV portfolio. Of the 16 cases requiring administrative processing that were closed during the reporting period, 10 (63 percent) were created between 2017 and 2024. The remaining 6 cases were created in 2025 and processed in under 180 days. Resolving long-standing cases leads to an increased average when calculating processing times.

Other USG-controlled processing steps include visa document collection and pre-processing by the NVC (Steps 7 and 9), which contributed 2 and 9 days, respectively, to the average USG processing time this quarter (798 days).

How many SIV applications are pending as of December 31, 2025?

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 6 – There were six Iraqi principal applicants who had a Form I-360 pending with USCIS.

Step 10 – There was one principal applicant and one family member pending scheduling for a visa interview during Q1.

Step 12 – Applications for 20 principal applicants and 13 family members were undergoing administrative processing.

How many SIV applicants were interviewed in Q1 of FY 2026?

The deadline to apply for COM approval was September 30, 2014. There was one SIV principal applicant who, after COM approval, was scheduled for an interview in the first quarter of FY 2026.

The following shows the number of Iraqi applicants who executed an application for an SIV at a visa interview in the first quarter of FY 2026 under section 1244 of the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act of 2007, as amended, after receiving COM approval:

| Month | Principal Applicants | Derivative Family Members | Total |
|--------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-------|
| October | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| November | 3 | 11 | 14 |
| December | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 4 | 16 | 20 |

How many denials were there in Q1 of FY 2026?

During the first quarter of FY 2026, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad did not deny any SIV-SQ applicants because they were unqualified to receive COM approval. Applicants whose COM applications are denied or revoked can submit one appeal within 120 days of receiving the denial or revocation letter.

USCIS denied five principal applicant Forms I-360 during the first quarter of FY 2026.

What are the reasons for a COM denial?

COM application denial generally occurs for one or more of the following:

- Failure to establish proof of employment by or on behalf of the USG. Applications are denied for this reason if the applicant fails to establish qualifying employment. For information on qualifying employment, see State's website at: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/special-immig-visas-iraqis-employed-us-gov.html>.
- Failure to establish one year employment by or on behalf of the USG between March 20, 2003, and September 30, 2013.
- Failure to establish the provision of faithful and valuable service to the USG. Applications denied for this reason generally have involved cases lacking requisite positive recommendation or evaluation. 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 that is incompatible with the requirements of the SIV program. This reason generally relates to information indicating that the applicant engaged in an unlawful, unethical, criminal, or terrorism-related activity.

Sec. 7806 Cost and Hours

The total estimated number of personnel hours taken to produce this report is 80 hours.