

# The Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Program

February 2025

## **What is the Afghan special immigrant visa (SIV) program?**

The Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program is a program created by Congress to offer a pathway to Afghan nationals who directly served the U.S. military and diplomatic mission in Afghanistan that began in 2001.

## **Who is eligible for an SIV in the Afghan SIV program?**

To be eligible, Afghan nationals must demonstrate they were employed by or on behalf of the U.S. government in Afghanistan at some point since October 2021 for at least a year of “faithful and valuable” service to the U.S. government.

## **What are the steps in the Afghan SIV program?**

Afghans must first gather various documentation to demonstrate their service, such as letters of employment and recommendation. Once they have the required documentation, the materials are reviewed by the U.S. Department of State for “Chief of Mission” (COM) approval, to determine whether they meet the program’s requirements. Afghans with COM approval can then apply for a green card to obtain lawful permanent resident (LPR) status and come to the United States (before having LPR status).

## **Why was the Afghan SIV program created?**

Afghan nationals were critical to the U.S. and NATO military and diplomatic mission in Afghanistan, serving as interpreters, guides, logistics support, and other critical roles at great personal risk. Due to their support for U.S. and Western forces, Afghan nationals and their family members faced reprisal attacks by the Taliban and other armed groups—threats that have greatly intensified since the Taliban takeover in August 2021. The Afghan SIV program is and has had bipartisan support as an important pathway to safety for America’s Afghan allies.

## **Are Afghan SIVs vetted?**

Like other populations, Afghan SIVs undergo security checks through a multi-layered, inter-agency process of biometric and biographic screenings by the government. Afghan SIVs also must be admissible under U.S. immigration law, clearing health, security, criminal, and other grounds.

## **How are Afghan SIVs arriving in the United States?**

Afghan SIVs and their family members are eligible for resettlement by the [Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts](#), an office in the Department of State that arranges travel for at-risk

Afghans out of Afghanistan. Afghan SIV applicants are relocated to third countries where they complete their processing and can move onto the United States<sup>1</sup>.

### **Doesn't the United States also resettle Afghan refugees?**

Yes. The Afghan SIV program is separate from the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, which vets, processes, resettles, and supports refugees who have fled persecution in their home countries. While both programs resettle Afghan nationals, the criteria and processes for the two programs are different and serve related but distinct needs. Afghan SIVs all have some tie to assisting the U.S. mission and government during the war in Afghanistan.

### **Is the Afghan SIV program affected by the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) suspension?**

The suspension in the U.S. refugee resettlement program [announced](#) on January 20, 2025, resulted in a stop-work order that has affected relocation flights and ceased [Reception & Placement \(R&P\) services](#) for Afghan SIVs.

### **Can Afghan SIVs still come to the United States despite the USRAP suspension?**

Afghan SIVs may still arrange travel for themselves to the United States, as they have a valid immigrant visa for entry and admission. However, Afghan SIV resettlement through U.S. government efforts have frozen amid the stop-work order on certain resettlement operations.

### **Will the Afghan SIV program be impacted by any other executive order?**

Yes, potentially. The “Protecting the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats” [Executive Order](#) includes an evaluation of all U.S. visa programs—with heightened scrutiny of nationals from countries with security risks. Within 60 days of the order, top administration officials will prepare a report identifying countries with deficient vetting that may warrant a full or partial suspension of admissions of their nationals.

### **What's the future of the Afghan SIV program?**

Congress has increased the number of visas allocated for the Afghan SIV program as the visas are used by applicants. Currently, it is estimated there are less than 10,000 visas remaining after the last authorization passed by Congress [in March 2024](#). Without additional visas authorized by Congress in the near future, the Afghan SIV program will run out of visas to allow individuals who helped our military in Afghanistan to come safely to the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> Afghans already in the United States—such as Afghans evacuated by the U.S. government in August 2021 and subsequently—can also apply for a SIV in order to get a green card should they be eligible for the program.

**Is there still a need for the program?**

Yes. It is estimated that thousands of SIV-eligible individuals remain in Afghanistan. These are Afghan nationals [who supported the U.S. mission and former Afghan central government at grave personal risk](#) and cannot safely remain in Afghanistan.

**Why should Afghan SIV resettlement to the United States continue?**

The Afghan SIV program makes the United States safer, stronger, and more prosperous by providing a vetted, protection pathway for Afghans who supported the United States during the war in Afghanistan. It pushes back against Taliban rule in Afghanistan and signals American resolve to other allies. Continued Afghan relocation and resettlement has enjoyed [bipartisan support](#) in recent years, as Americans from all walks of life believe in the United States keeping its word to Afghans who supported U.S. troops, diplomats, and aid workers in Afghanistan.

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