

THE AMERICAN RECORD · 2009–2026

THE UNFINISHED MISSION



America's broken promise to Afghan wartime allies and mission partners.

By Shawn VanDiver, President & Founder
An AfghanEvac Special Report · August 5, 2026

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The Unfinished Mission

America's Broken Promise to Afghan Wartime Allies and Mission Partners

By Shawn VanDiver, President and Founder of AfghanEvac

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A letter from AfghanEvac's President and Founder

Five years ago, as Kabul fell, this country made a promise out loud: if you stood with us, we will not leave you behind. That August, thousands of veterans and frontline civilians, government and resettlement agency staff, volunteers and ordinary Americans threw themselves at making it true. AfghanEvac grew out of that effort, but this report is not about us. It is about the promise, the people to whom it was made, and how it is being broken now, quietly, on paper, where most people never see it.

Consider where it stands today. The program built to carry America's wartime allies to safety has been shut off. Tens of thousands of people this country already vetted and approved are stranded, many still in hiding, others waiting on bases and in third countries for flights that no longer come. Since the first day of this year, the United States has not issued a single visa to a principal applicant holding an Afghan passport. These are not strangers. They are the interpreters, the guards, the pilots, the judges, and other men and women who did the work America paid for.

I have watched this up close for five years. I have seen veterans give up their nights trying to pull a former interpreter out of hiding, and families learn that an approval they waited years for had been quietly revoked. What I have not seen, in all that time, is a good reason for any of it.

And this is not only their loss. More than eight thousand family members of American citizens are stranded by this freeze, and every future ally weighing whether to trust an American promise is watching how we keep this one.

I want to be precise about what this report is and is not. It is not a brief for open borders, and I would ask you not to read it as an immigration debate. It is a factual account of a promise Congress built and both parties funded, and a question about whether America's word still means anything, to the people who bled beside us and to every ally and adversary watching how this ends. The report does not dodge the hard part: we owe nothing to anyone who presents a real, individual threat, and it shows the government removing the few who qualify. But that is not what the shutdown does. It suspends a whole nationality, most of them not even in this country, over a danger the government cannot document. That is not vetting. It is abandonment with paperwork.

Here is what should make us angry: none of this is hard. We know it works, because it has, and a bipartisan effort once moved this program at a scale no one thought possible. What is missing is not capacity. It is will, and will is a choice we can make differently tomorrow. We have done this before: after Vietnam, the country eventually kept faith with the people who served alongside us, but only because veterans, advocates, and ordinary Americans refused, for years, to let it look away. Keeping faith with our allies has never been partisan. Read this report, check our math, and help us hold the line again by working to implement our recommendations. Our allies have waited long enough and we have the power to meet this moment.

Sincerely

Shawn VanDiver

Shawn VanDiver
President and Founder, AfghanEvac

A Note on Method and Nonpartisanship

This report is nonpartisan, and it is built to be checked. Every consequential figure in it comes from the government's own record: the State Department's quarterly reports to Congress, Congressional Research Service data, the Department's 2022 After-Action Review, the Inspectors General of State, Defense, and Justice, and federal court filings. Where we combine or interpret those numbers, we show our method and invite you to test it.

Nonpartisanship does not mean silence, and it does not mean neutrality about outcomes. It means holding every actor to the same standard regardless of party. This report does that. It documents a program that nearly died in its infancy under President Obama, grew unevenly and lost its coordinator under the first Trump administration, reached record scale and still left thousands stranded under President Biden, and has now been halted entirely under the second Trump administration. It faults a Congress of both parties that built this program, funded it for a decade, and has not acted to reopen it. Credit and criticism fall where the record puts them. AfghanEvac is at our best when we are speaking truth to power. We did that at our inception, under the Biden administration, and we have continued that tradition under the second Trump administration.

We take no position on any candidate or election. We do take a clear position on the policy, and we state it plainly in our recommendations, because keeping faith with the people who served alongside American troops has never been a partisan cause. The facts in this report belong to the government. The conclusion we draw from them is ours, and we are glad to defend it line by line.

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Executive Summary

The United States made a promise to the Afghans who stood with it during a twenty-year war: if you serve alongside our troops and diplomats, we will not leave you behind. That promise was not made to interpreters alone, though they became its public face. It was made to the guards, drivers, and cultural advisors who kept Americans alive; to the embassy and consulate staff who ran the mission; to the special-forces partners and pilots who fought beside U.S. units; to the women leaders, judges, journalists, and human rights defenders whose work the United States funded and championed; to the Afghans who staffed U.S.-funded development programs and nongovernmental organizations; and to the families who shared their risk.

This report calls that whole population America's wartime allies and mission partners: the people who worked for, alongside, or on behalf of the United States and its coalition partners, whether they held a U.S. government badge, a contractor's letter, a grant-funded position, or no paperwork at all.

Their legal claims are not identical, and this report does not pretend they are. Some hold a statutory entitlement to a Special Immigrant Visa. Others are eligible for the refugee, family-reunification, or parole pathways rather than the SIV. Still others have no individual immigration claim at all, only the moral and strategic obligation a nation owes the people who carried its mission. Legal entitlement, program eligibility, and national responsibility are three different things, and this report keeps them distinct, because all three are being abandoned at once.

The government kept faith with them through several legal pathways, the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, and humanitarian parole, and, after 2021, through Enduring Welcome, the enterprise that tied those pathways together. Enduring Welcome created no new visa authority. It coordinated the existing legal pathways, along with the vetting, relocation, and resettlement machinery, into a single sustained operation.

This report examines the SIV program most closely, because it is the oldest, largest, and most fully documented of those pathways, and therefore the clearest measure of whether the United States is keeping its word. But the obligation, and the failure this report describes, reach every Afghan the United States asked to take that risk, including the tens of thousands in the refugee pipeline and the parole population who have no SIV to wait for. The promise is older than the program. Afghans began serving alongside American forces in 2001, and the visa program meant to protect them did not exist until 2009. Drawing on the State Department's own quarterly reports to Congress, Congressional Research Service data, the Department's 2022 After-Action Review on Afghanistan, and federal court records, this report traces that program across its entire life, from its creation in 2009 through January 2026, and sets it in the wider frame of the commitment it was built to serve.

The numbers tell a story that no administration should be proud of in full, and that several should be proud of in part. Roughly 160,000 Afghan allies and their family members have

received SIVs since 2009, more than half of them after the fall of Kabul in August 2021. [3] [7] The achievement is the whole program, not one administration's share of it, and it was built across seventeen years by career public servants, advocates, veterans, and members of Congress in both parties. It is also an achievement that has now been halted entirely. Since January 1, 2026, under Presidential Proclamation 10998, the United States has issued zero SIVs to applicants holding Afghan passports. [6] The promise is not merely delayed. For the moment, it is suspended.

Key findings

- **The program nearly died in its infancy.** In fiscal year 2011, the United States issued 31 Afghan SIVs, including just 3 to principal applicants. It took an act of Congress, the FY2014 National Defense Authorization Act, to force the program to function. [2] [7]
- **Issuances grew under every administration until this one, and then stopped.** Average monthly issuance rose from roughly 322 under President Obama to 881 under the first Trump administration and 1,719 under President Biden. The second Trump administration is the first in the program's history to halt issuance outright: it has issued zero SIVs to applicants holding Afghan passports since January 1, 2026. [3] [7]
- **The Biden administration recorded more Afghan SIV outcomes than all prior administrations combined,** approximately 82,500 (visa issuances plus adjustments of status), including the all-time record year of FY2024 (33,119 visas). [3] [7] A note on counting, because we ask you to check our math: these figures combine two things the government reports separately, visa issuances abroad and adjustments of status inside the United States. On that combined basis the administration totals in this report sum to about 165,500, against the State Department's roughly 160,000 cumulative SIV issuances; the gap is adjustments of status, concentrated in 2022 and 2023. The direction of the comparison holds under either measure, but the measure should be read as combined SIV outcomes, not consular issuances alone.
- **Enduring Welcome was the first standing enterprise of its kind.** It created no new visa authority. What it built instead was a single overarching, institutionalized system, with a dedicated coordinator, an interagency structure, and its own sustained funding. That structure pulled the existing legal pathways, along with the vetting, relocation, and resettlement machinery, into one enterprise. Earlier efforts moved allies to safety, sometimes in far larger numbers, but never through a standing operation with this level of attention and support. This assessment is AfghanEvac's own.
- **The pipeline is enormous, and most of it is frozen.** Three populations sit behind that sentence, and they are counted differently. First, the approved: 178,110 people are covered by Chief of Mission (COM)-approved cases, 33,883 approved principal applicants and 144,227 of their spouses and children, and 110,241 of that group were documentarily complete, awaiting the final steps the administration has shut off: a consular interview, medical clearance, updated security checks, and visa issuance. Second, those still waiting

on a decision: as of January 31, 2026, roughly 132,000 principal applicants had not yet received COM approval, a figure that counts principals only, so the true number of people is substantially larger. Third, those still inside Afghanistan: Enduring Welcome tracking had identified more than 212,000 individuals, including over 129,000 interview-ready SIV applicants, refugee applicants, and the relatives of U.S. citizens and green-card holders. That last count comes from a different government system and uses a broader definition of interview-ready, so it overlaps the first two and should not be added to them. [3] [6]

- **The failure is not the SIV program's alone.** The refugee pathway that carried tens of thousands of at-risk Afghans to safety before 2025 has admitted no one since refugee admissions were suspended on January 27, 2025, and the parole status that shields most Operation Allies Welcome evacuees inside the United States is being wound down. The mission partners the SIV program was never designed to reach are stranded by the same freeze, and this report should be read as an account of that whole obligation, not one visa line. [3] [6]
- **The stated security rationale collapses against the government's own record.** The 2026 shutdown was justified by a concern about vetting, yet Afghan SIV and refugee applicants are among the most heavily screened people the United States admits, and the screening standards were set under the first Trump administration and never loosened. The government's most rigorous published review identified 55 Afghan evacuees with terrorist-screening-database matches, 46 of whom had been removed from the watchlist by mid-2024. Officials have separately asserted far larger figures, including roughly 2,000 Afghans said to be under investigation and 18,000 suspected terrorists across all nationalities, but have released no methodology or evidence that would let anyone reconcile those claims with the documented review. Where a genuine threat has emerged, officials have located it after arrival, which a halt to visa issuance for vetted applicants abroad cannot reach. A federal court vacated the administration's nationality-based adjudication freezes as unlawful in June 2026. [42]
- **Processing has never come close to the law.** Congress required in 2013 that government-controlled steps be completed within nine months. Average total processing time was 1,191 days, more than four times the statutory standard, in the most recent quarter reported (Q1 FY2026). [3]
- **Federal court supervision has been the program's backstop for six years.** The class action *Afghan and Iraqi Allies v. Pompeo* (now *v. Rubio*) produced enforceable deadlines in 2020 and, in February 2026, the court order that forced COM processing to resume after the administration halted it. The government's own Progress Report to the court, filed June 23, 2026, confirms how little that resumption has produced: in the three months from March 5 to June 3, 2026, the State Department issued a single visa to a class member, the lone issuance in a class of tens of thousands, and the rare exception to a proclamation that has otherwise driven issuance to Afghan-passport holders to zero, while

average Chief of Mission review for class members rose to 698 days, up from 669 the prior period and nearly six times the 120-day standard the court's plan requires. [23] [24]

- **5,970 congressionally authorized visa numbers sit frozen.** Congress has authorized 50,500 principal-applicant visas since December 2014. As of December 31, 2025, 44,530 had been used. [3] [7] The remainder cannot reach the people they were created for while Proclamation 10998 bars visa issuance to applicants presenting Afghan passports.
 - **Congress has not held up its end.** The State Department told Congress in September 2024 that finishing the program would require 35,000 to 40,000 additional visa numbers, and that at least 46,000 more principal applicants were expected to reach the interview stage. [8] Congress has authorized none since March 2024 and has not acted to reverse the shutdown. Members of both parties have introduced the bipartisan Enduring Welcome Act (H.R. 4995) and Afghanistan TPS Act (H.R. 9899), but neither would restart issuance, restore the SIV exemption to Proclamation 10998, or add the numbers the Department says are required, and as of July 2026 neither has advanced out of committee. [55] [56]
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Definitions and Key Terms

This report uses the government's own vocabulary. Because that vocabulary is technical and often confusing, the following terms are defined up front.

Term	What it means
SIV (Special Immigrant Visa)	An immigrant visa created by Congress for Afghans who worked for or on behalf of the U.S. government and face an ongoing serious threat because of that service. Afghan SIVs are issued in the SQ visa classes.
Principal applicant	The Afghan ally who personally performed the qualifying U.S. government service. Congressional visa caps apply only to principal applicants.
Derivative or family member	The spouse and children of a principal applicant, who receive SIVs based on the principal's eligibility. Family members are not counted against the cap.
COM (Chief of Mission) approval	The first major step in SIV processing, in which the Chief of Mission, or a designee acting on the Chief of Mission's behalf, reviews whether an applicant's service and the threat they face qualify them for the program. The COM backlog is the largest chokepoint in the pipeline.
Special immigrant petition (Form DS-157 or I-360)	The petition that establishes SIV classification. Until a 2022 change, applicants filed Form I-360 with USCIS after Chief of Mission approval. For applicants whose COM approval is issued on or after July 20, 2022, the State Department adjudicates the petition itself on a revised Form DS-157 during the COM phase, so they deal with one agency instead of two. Applicants who had already filed an I-360 under the earlier process continue on the USCIS track. The change was part of a streamlining that cut the published process from fourteen steps to eight. [43]
NVC (National Visa Center)	The State Department center that routes applications between processing steps and collects the immigrant visa application (Form DS-260) and supporting documents.
Adjustment of status	The process by which an Afghan already inside the United States, often an evacuee on parole, becomes a lawful permanent resident on the basis of an approved special immigrant petition, without leaving the country for consular processing abroad.
Nine-month requirement	The statutory standard, set in the FY2014 NDAA, that government-controlled SIV steps be completed within nine months (about 270 days) absent a case-specific national security concern.
Doha Agreement (2020)	The U.S.-Taliban agreement that set the terms for U.S. military withdrawal.

Joint Declaration (2020)	The parallel U.S.-Afghan Government political statement issued alongside Doha.
NEO (Noncombatant Evacuation Operation)	The military-led emergency evacuation of civilians from a crisis zone, such as the August 2021 Kabul airlift.
OAR / OAW	Operation Allies Refuge (summer 2021) and Operation Allies Welcome (fall 2021), the emergency U.S. efforts to evacuate and resettle Afghans during and after the collapse.
Enduring Welcome (EW)	The standing, longer-term State Department enterprise, launched after OAW and run by the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE), to process and relocate at-risk Afghans.
After-Action Review	The State Department's review of its Afghanistan policy and operations from January 2020 to August 2021, completed in 2022, provided to Congress in April 2023, and released publicly in June 2023, commissioned by Secretary Blinken.
Proclamation 10998	The 2025 presidential proclamation restricting entry by nationals of designated countries. As applied to Afghan nationals from January 1, 2026, it removed the earlier exemption for SIV recipients, so that visas can no longer be issued to applicants presenting Afghan passports.
CRS (Congressional Research Service)	The nonpartisan research arm of Congress, whose report R43725 is the standard reference series for SIV issuance data.

Part I: How We Got Here

You cannot understand the SIV numbers without understanding the withdrawal that reshaped them. Two documents set the terms of America's exit from Afghanistan, and neither one planned for the people this report is about.

The **Doha Agreement**, signed in February 2020 between the United States and the Taliban, was an operational document. It set a path for the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces in exchange for Taliban counterterrorism assurances, prisoner exchanges, and a commitment to intra-Afghan negotiations. The parallel **Joint Declaration**, issued the same week between the United States and the Afghan government, was a political document meant to keep Kabul aligned with the peace process. Together they created the architecture for ending the war. [15] [16] (AfghanEvac's explainer on the two documents is at afghanevac.org/explainers.)

What neither document contained is the point. Neither one included an evacuation plan, a relocation plan, an SIV acceleration plan, or any post-collapse contingency for the interpreters, contractors, Special Forces partners, female judges, journalists, and civil society leaders who had built their lives around the assumption that the Afghan Republic would survive. Both documents assumed a political settlement would follow. The implicit theory was that withdrawal would create incentives for peace. Critics argued the opposite, that withdrawal removed the leverage needed to secure it. History largely validated the critics. The Republic collapsed in eleven days.

The State Department's own After-Action Review, commissioned by Secretary Blinken and based on more than 150 interviews, is unsparing about what this meant for the SIV program. At the time the Trump administration signed the Doha Agreement in February 2020, the review found, there was already a significant SIV backlog, and that administration "made no senior-level or interagency effort to address the backlog or consider options for other at-risk Afghans despite its commitment to a military withdrawal." [4] When the Biden administration took office, the interagency moved to accelerate processing and stood up an Afghanistan Coordination Task Force, which facilitated the departure of 1,962 SIV applicants and family members in late July and early August 2021. It was not enough, and it was not early enough. When Kabul fell, the SIV pipeline was overwhelmed, refugee pathways were inadequate, and the databases were never designed for a mass evacuation. The military-led airlift that followed moved roughly 125,000 people out of the country in two weeks, at the cost of thirteen American service members' lives. [27]

That gap, between a withdrawal framework that planned for troop movements in great detail and a human aftermath it barely planned for at all, is the space into which AfghanEvac and the modern SIV effort stepped.

Part II: The Life of the Program

The program's history tracks the four administrations that have run it, and each left it in a different place. What follows walks that history administration by administration, from a program that barely functioned, to one that set records, to one that stopped it cold, and then steps back to compare the four directly.

A program built to fail

Before walking that history, it is worth naming the design flaw that runs through all of it. Congress built the Afghan SIV program on the wrong chassis, and it has never fully recovered from that choice. The program was designed as an immigrant-visa process: orderly, document-intensive, sequential, and premised on an applicant who can safely gather paperwork and on a government that already holds the employment records. Applied to wartime allies in a collapsing country, those same features became the obstacle. The program worked despite its design, never because of it, and only when statute and sustained political will forced it to.

The failure was visible immediately. For fiscal year 2011, Congress authorized up to 1,500 principal applicants. The program issued three principal-applicant visas that year, along with 28 for family members. [7] [9] It took an act of Congress, the Fiscal Year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act, to direct that the government-controlled steps should be completed within nine months, which, together with later administrative reforms and sustained attention, finally drove issuance to scale. [2]

It was too narrow, and the narrowness fell hardest on women. The State Department read the statute to cover only those who worked directly on U.S. government contracts. That reading excluded subcontractors, and it excluded grantees and subgrantees, a category that swept in the organizations doing the country's women's programming. The Priority 2 refugee pathway, the supposed fallback, carried the same exclusion. [29] **The effect was that entire classes of Afghans who did the mission's work were never eligible for the program built to protect them:** women judges and prosecutors who sat on courts the United States funded, including the courts established to prosecute violence against women, but who were employed by the Afghan government rather than by Washington; [30] policewomen recruited and trained under U.S. and allied programs; [31] the women of the Female Tactical Platoon who deployed alongside U.S. special operations forces; [32] and the staff of American-funded universities, civil society organizations, and media outlets. **Refugees International put the consequence plainly in October 2021, reporting that resettlement agencies confirmed that while some Afghan women qualified for the SIV program as dependents, "very few if any qualify on their own as principal applicants."** [33]

The most telling fact is a gap in the record. The public federal reporting reviewed for this report does not disaggregate Afghan SIV principal applicants or recipients by sex, not the Congressional Research Service, not the Department of Homeland Security, not the State

Department's quarterly reports to Congress, and not the State Department Inspector General's audits of the program. That gap makes it impossible to state from the government's own published data how many women qualified in their own right. What the record does show is that the eligibility rules excluded whole categories of U.S.-funded work disproportionately held by women, so that the program built to protect the people who served never counted, and could not measure, whether the women among them could reach it. The same blindness runs along ethnic lines. The government's reporting does not identify SIV applicants or recipients by ethnic or tribal group, and no agency ever built the master record that would make such a breakdown possible, so it is impossible to say from the public data how the program reached, or failed to reach, Hazara, Tajik, Pashtun, Uzbek, and other communities.

It required proof the government had made it impossible to produce. The Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 directed the government to study whether a centralized database for adjudicating these applications was feasible. The Defense Department answered in 2013 that no single automated U.S. government database contained historical information with the relevant contracts. Nothing was built. A decade later, the State Department's Inspector General found that the Department lacks a centralized database to document the identity of locally employed staff and contractors, relying instead on systems that are not interoperable, and reported that Defense Department applicants faced additional obstacles because of recordkeeping weaknesses. [9]

The burden fell on the applicant, and it never left the applicant. The government kept no master record of who had worked for it. Proof of service lived in a particular contract, an employer's human-resources file, or a letter from an American supervisor, and the program asked the applicant to produce it years, sometimes decades, after the fact. By then the contracting company had often dissolved, the records were gone, and the supervisor had moved on, retired, deployed, or died. **A person who guarded a forward operating base in 2011 could be asked in 2026 to locate the captain who signed for him, and be denied when he could not.** The same Inspector General review recorded that Afghans were unable to move their applications forward because former employers would not produce documentation, for reasons the report lists as outright refusal, incomplete or inaccurate records, or defunct companies. The result was predictable, and it was measured: as of December 2019, 8,444 of 18,695 applicants, 45 percent of the program, were waiting on a Chief of Mission decision. There was once a modest remedy, a Defense Department Supervisor Locator Program that helped applicants find the Americans who had supervised them. It was discontinued in 2018, and AfghanEvac urged the Biden administration to revive it during its engagement on Enduring Welcome; the recommendation was not taken up. [9]

Then the paperwork it demanded became the reason to remove people. Because the program requires a letter from a U.S. citizen supervisor who knew the applicant personally, and because processing takes years, applicants are routinely asked to re-verify letters long after the government first accepted them. As the International Refugee Assistance Project documented in 2023, the adjudicating unit "presumes that employment documents that cannot be verified

again are invalid, even though the documents were verified previously and years may have passed since the initial verification because of the slow pace of SIV processing." [34] Supervisors move, retire, deploy, and become unreachable. In one case the supervisor could not re-verify a letter because he had been kidnapped by the Taliban. Applicants have had approvals withdrawn for failing to provide a valid letter of recommendation when the author of that letter had already verified it to the government. Some have been denied because the government blacklisted senior officials who signed too many letters, a judgment about the recommender rather than the applicant. [34]

By 2023 those revocations were arriving in batches, and by 2026 they were reaching Afghans who had already become lawful permanent residents, who are now told that an approval granted years earlier has been withdrawn and that removal proceedings may follow. [35] A program that could not keep its own records has made the absence of records a basis for expulsion.

The pattern across all of it is a single design error repeated. The government asked the most endangered people in the world to prove, on paper, a relationship the government itself had failed to document, and then treated the missing paper as the applicant's fault.

Creation and collapse, 2009–2013 (Obama)

Congress created the Afghan SIV program in the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 (AAPA), modeled on the Iraqi program enacted two years earlier. [1] The premise was straightforward. Afghans who worked for or on behalf of the U.S. government, and who faced ongoing serious threats because of that service, would receive a path to safety in the United States.

The execution was anything but. After issuing 628 visas in FY2009 (largely converted translator cases), the program effectively stopped: 43 visas in FY2010, 31 in FY2011, and 125 in FY2012. Interagency security checks had no deadlines, no owner, and no accountability. Applicants waited years with no visibility into their cases while threats against them mounted.

Congress responded in Section 1218 of the FY2014 NDAA, signed in December 2013, which required that all government-controlled processing steps be completed within nine months absent case-specific national security concerns. Paired with State Department reforms and new leadership attention, issuances jumped to 9,107 in FY2014 and 12,086 by FY2016. The nine-month requirement, as we detail in Part IV, would later become the foundation of the most consequential litigation in the program's history.

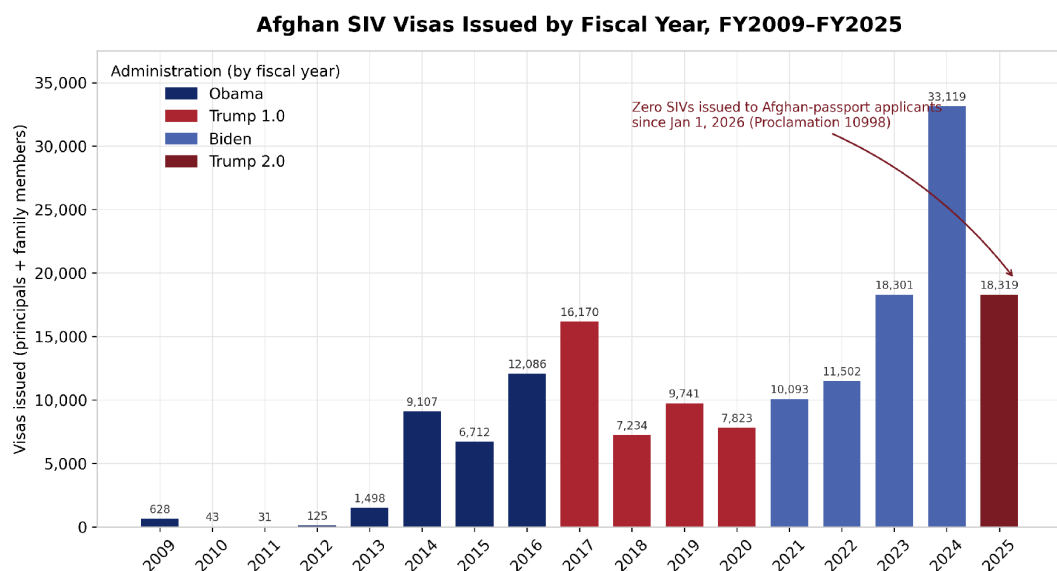


Figure 1. Afghan SIVs issued by fiscal year, FY2009–FY2025 (principals plus family members).

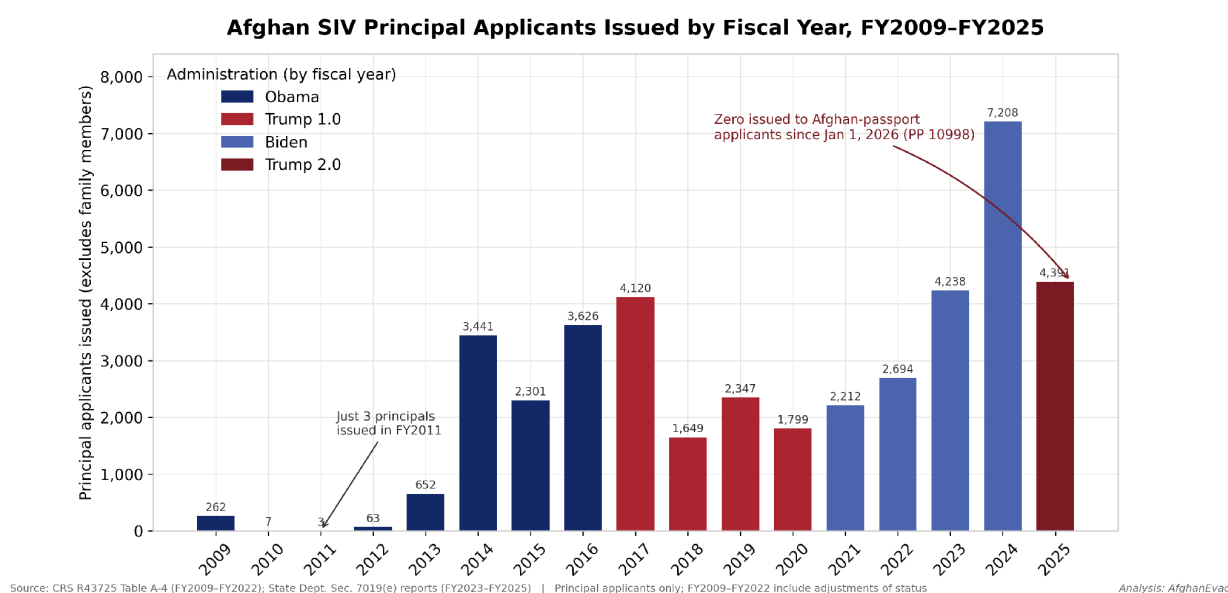


Figure 2. The same years, principal applicants only, the count that is capped by statute.

High point and quiet decline, 2017–2020 (Trump 1.0)

FY2017 was the program's best year of its first decade: 16,170 visas, reflecting momentum and visa numbers added late in the Obama administration and continued processing through the transition. The years that followed told a different story. Issuances fell to 7,234 in FY2018, recovered only partially through FY2020, and the application backlog kept growing. By early 2020, average COM adjudication alone exceeded 500 days, and in Q1 FY2021 total processing time approached 1,000 days.

Two things are true about this period and both belong in the record. First, the first Trump administration issued more SIVs in absolute terms (roughly 42,300, including the first quarter of FY2021) than any prior administration, in part because Congress kept adding visa numbers. Second, the pipeline rotted underneath. The State Department's own Inspector General found in 2020 that the senior coordinating position created to run the SIV program had sat vacant since January 2017, leaving the effort without dedicated leadership for years. [9] It was during this period, in September 2019, that a federal judge ruled the government's delays unreasonable as a matter of law, and in 2020 that the court imposed the program's first enforceable adjudication plan. That litigation, filed in 2018, is a large part of why the program kept moving at all through these years. The COVID-19 pandemic depressed issuances in the administration's final year as consular operations shut down worldwide, which is context, not exoneration: the backlog and the leadership vacuum predated the pandemic and outlasted it.

Collapse, surge, and the record years, 2021–January 2025 (Biden)

The fall of Kabul in August 2021 transformed the SIV program from a bureaucratic backwater into a national moral test. Embassy Kabul suspended visa operations on August 31, 2021, and has never reopened. SIV processing moved to third-country posts, supported by the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE) and, later, the Enduring Welcome enterprise. Applications surged. The number of applicants who had begun but not completed COM applications exploded from about 9,000 in mid-2021 to a peak of 98,488 in September 2022.

The Biden administration's response was slow to start, then unprecedented in scale. After a dismal FY2022 first quarter (424 visas), quarterly issuances climbed steadily for three years: 18,301 visas in FY2023, then a record 33,119 in FY2024, and 10,015 in the first quarter of FY2025 alone, the highest quarterly total in program history. This peak-and-decline pattern is confirmed by a second, independent government dataset. [59] The State Department issued 44,380 COM decisions in FY2025, one of the highest annual totals on record, much of it reflecting systems built in 2023 and 2024. Congress did its part, adding 12,000 visa numbers in March 2024, the largest single increase in the program's history. In total, approximately 82,500 SIV outcomes were recorded from late January 2021 through January 2025, counting visa issuances abroad and adjustments of status inside the United States, more than under every prior administration combined.

What made the surge possible is worth spelling out, because it is effectively the playbook for restarting the program. The gains did not come from lowering the bar. They came from a set of deliberate, fundable choices, resting on a policy foundation laid at the very start of the administration. In February 2021, in his first weeks in office, President Biden issued Executive Order 14013, directing the government to rebuild the refugee-admissions system the prior administration had run down and to review the Iraqi and Afghan SIV programs. That order is what made the machinery of Enduring Welcome possible. The rebuilding also had a roadmap, and it came from the previous administration's own watchdog. In June 2020, the State Department's Office of Inspector General published a review of the Afghan SIV program that

read like a blueprint for everything that was broken, and its recommendations were specific: appoint the senior coordinating official Congress had mandated, who had been missing since 2017, to run the whole program across bureaus; surge staffing at every stage to meet the nine-month deadline; modernize or replace the fragmented, non-interoperable data systems; build the unified database of contractor and locally employed staff the program depended on; and find a way to protect applicants in imminent danger while they waited. [9] Enduring Welcome answered nearly all of it. CARE became the coordinator the Inspector General had called for. The staffing surge, the technology upgrades, the consolidated processing steps, and the third-country platforms that moved endangered applicants to safety were the other recommendations, implemented. The one the government never carried out was the unified database, which is why, to this day, the burden of proving service still falls on the applicant. Enduring Welcome did more than appoint that coordinator. It surged consular officers and staffed up the Afghan SIV Unit. It consolidated redundant processing steps and helped applicants prove their qualifying employment rather than leaving them to chase down records alone. It deployed modern case-management technology. It opened third-country processing platforms and paid for charter flights to move people to them. It spent down the visa numbers Congress had provided and put the additional 12,000 to work. And it was held to step-by-step deadlines by a federal court. None of that was luck, and none of it is lost knowledge. **For a member of Congress looking to fix this, the lesson is direct: the program moves when it is staffed, funded, coordinated, and held to deadlines, and it stalls the moment any one of those is withdrawn.** The collapse in 2025 was not a failure of capacity. It was the removal of those four things.

The record is not unblemished. Processing times for the oldest cases remained far above the statutory nine months, the COM backlog never fell below 45,000, and tens of thousands of applicants remained stranded in Afghanistan and third countries on Inauguration Day 2025. But the trajectory was unmistakable, and it was pointed in the right direction.

Shutdown by policy, January 2025–present (Trump 2.0)

The second Trump administration inherited the strongest SIV pipeline ever built and turned it off in stages. The first stage was not aimed at the SIV program at all, but caught it anyway.

- **January 20, 2025 (Inauguration Day).** Three executive orders reset the field at once, dismantling the refugee-rebuilding framework President Biden had established under Executive Order 14013 four years earlier. Executive Order 14163 suspended the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program worldwide, freezing all processing and travel for Afghan refugees, including roughly 24,000 interview-ready cases that Enduring Welcome was tracking and an estimated 59,000 more identified inside Afghanistan, along with the Priority-1 and Priority-2 cases and the family-reunification cases of U.S. service members. Executive Order 14169 paused virtually all U.S. foreign aid, the stream that funds SIV and refugee travel and the resettlement agencies that receive new arrivals, so that even Afghans already holding visas could no longer be flown out. Families already in the United States

and enrolled in resettlement services could keep receiving them, but SIV families arriving after the freeze were left without reception and placement support until it was partially restored later in the year. Executive Order 14161 ordered the vetting review that would, eleven months later, produce Proclamation 10998. [10] The SIV program's own adjudication steps kept running for a time, but the system around it, the flights, the funding, and the refugee track, was switched off on day one. AfghanEvac tracks these orders and their effects at afghanevac.org/eo-crisis. [11]

- **January 20, 2025.** The same day, with travel funding frozen, the State Department paused all U.S. government relocation flights from Kabul to third-country processing platforms for Afghan SIV and refugee applicants. The pause, recorded in a footnote of the department's own quarterly reports, remains in effect "until further notice." Applicants who cannot reach a post cannot interview, and the interview queue has grown every quarter since, reaching 15,300 principal applicants and 67,441 family members by December 31, 2025.
- **May 2025.** The administration terminated Temporary Protected Status for Afghanistan, effective July 12, 2025, stripping protection from the roughly 11,700 Afghans who held it, and on May 29 notified Congress that it intended to [eliminate CARE](#), the office that runs Enduring Welcome.
- **July 2025.** The administration carried out the CARE cuts. The office's leadership team was terminated in a reduction in force, including, by AfghanEvac's account, a senior CARE executive who was let go roughly twelve hours after giving birth. What remained of the function was folded into the Afghanistan desk of the State Department's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, an organizational box rather than an operational one: no U.S. government relocation flights had departed since January 20, 2025, and none resumed after the reorganization.
- **Quarterly issuances fell by roughly two-thirds**, from 10,015 in Q1 FY2025 (the last Biden quarter) to 3,567, 2,325, and 2,531 across the next three quarters, then 2,036 in Q1 FY2026.
- **October–November 2025.** The government shutdown furloughed two-thirds of the U.S. direct-hire staff of the office that adjudicates COM applications.
- **Late November 2025.** Following the attack on two National Guard members in Washington by an Afghan national, the administration unilaterally paused COM processing. COM decisions fell by more than 4,000 cases quarter over quarter. A federal court ordered processing to resume in February 2026 (see Part IV).
- **December 31, 2025.** The statutory deadline to file COM applications passed. Applicants rushed to beat it, filing 8,857 COM applications in a single quarter, and the COM queue grew for the first time in years, to 51,122.
- **January 1, 2026.** Presidential Proclamation 10998 took full effect for Afghan nationals, removing the prior exemption for SIV holders. By the State Department's own report to

Congress, no Afghan SIVs have been issued to applicants applying with Afghan passports in calendar year 2026. Visas authorized by Congress, adjudicated by the department, and earned by wartime service cannot be printed into Afghan passports.

The program, in other words, has not run out of applicants, visa numbers, or statutory authority. It has been stopped by executive policy.

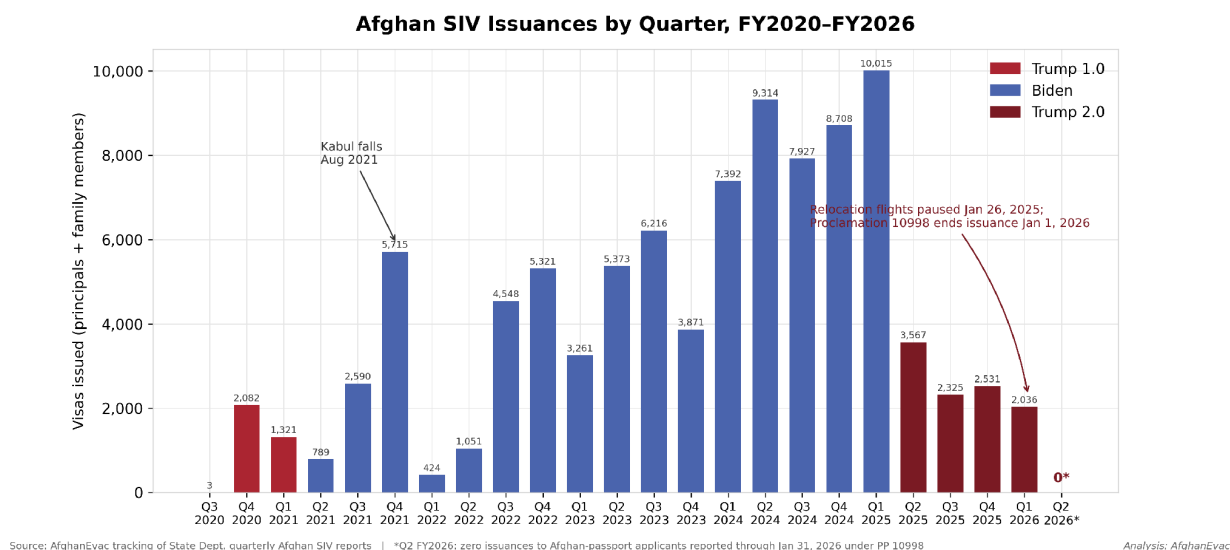


Figure 3. Quarterly issuances, FY2020–FY2026 (principals plus family members).

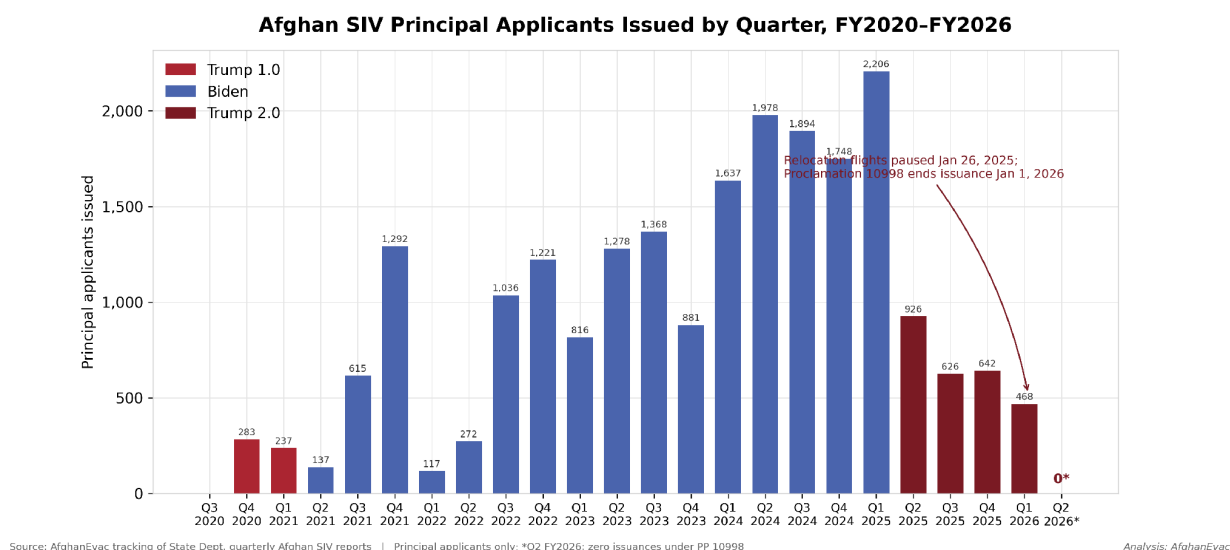


Figure 4. Quarterly issuances, principal applicants only.

The four administrations compared

Comparing administrations requires care, and we show our work in the Methodology section. Transition quarters are assigned to the incoming administration, quarterly attribution begins

when quarterly issuance data becomes available (Q3 FY2020), and earlier years rest on annual CRS data.

Administration	Period (program)	SIV outcomes (total)	Principal visas issued abroad	Avg. total per month
Obama	FY2009 – FY2016*	30,230	10,355	322
Trump 1.0	FY2017 – Dec 2020	42,289	10,152	881
Biden	Jan 2021 – Dec 2024	82,515	18,496	1,719
Trump 2.0	Jan 2025 – May 2026	10,459	2,662	615 [†]

*Quarterly data is not available before FY2020, so Obama-era totals follow fiscal years; the figure modestly understates the Obama share (Oct 2016 to Jan 2017 issuances are counted under Trump 1.0's first fiscal year). "SIV outcomes" combine visa issuances abroad and adjustments of status inside the United States, the two measures the government reports separately; see the Methodology section. [†]The second Trump administration's monthly average is computed over January 2025 through May 2026 and includes 2026 months with no issuance to Afghan-passport holders; over calendar year 2025 its pace was roughly 872, before issuance was halted entirely on January 1, 2026.

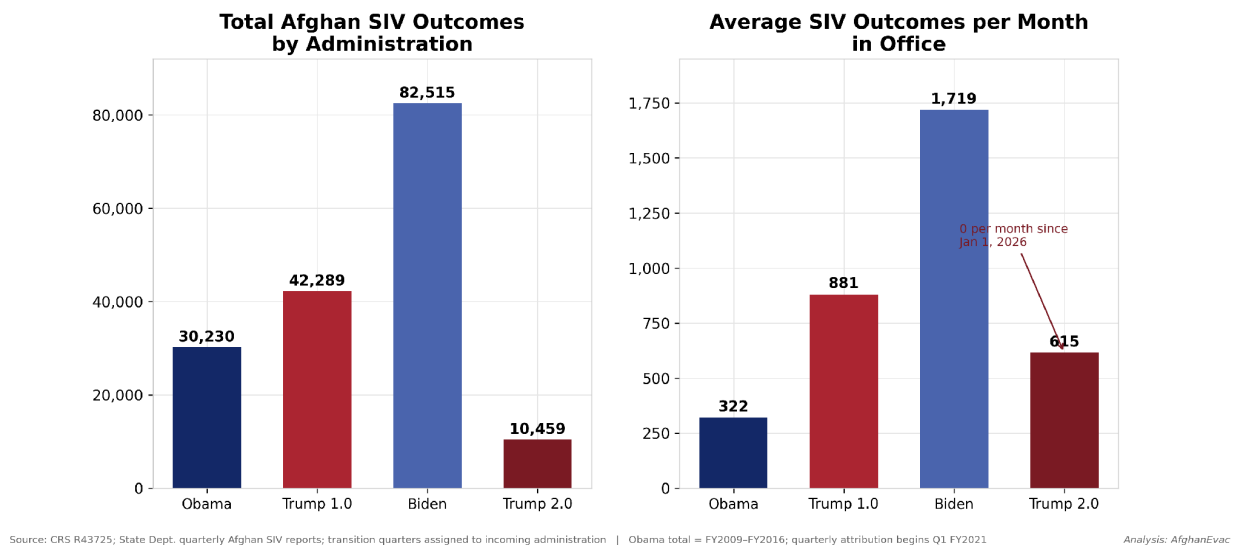
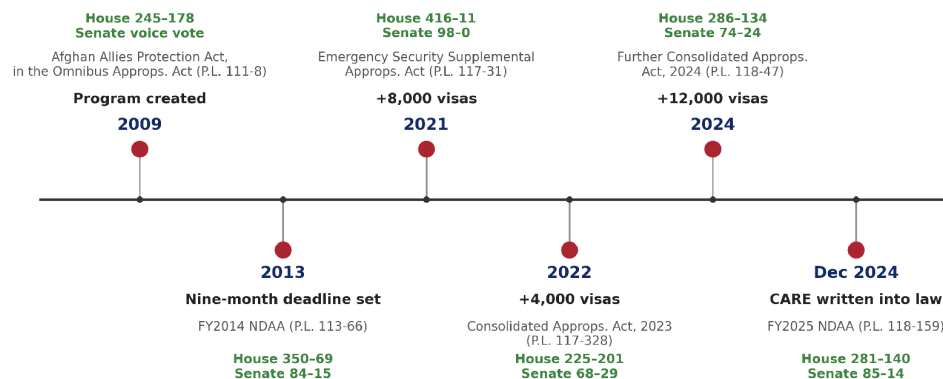


Figure 5. Combined SIV outcomes and monthly pace by administration (visa issuances plus adjustments of status).

no serious vote to reverse the 2025 and 2026 shutdown. Members of both parties have introduced legislation on adjacent fronts, the bipartisan Enduring Welcome Act (H.R. 4995), which would revive the CARE coordination office, and the bipartisan Afghanistan TPS Act (H.R. 9899), which would shield from deportation the Afghans already here. [55] [56] But as of July 2026 neither has advanced out of committee, and neither would do the things that reopen the pipeline: restart visa issuance to Afghan-passport holders, restore the SIV exemption to Proclamation 10998, and authorize the additional numbers the Department says the program needs. The 5,970 numbers that remain, and the tens of thousands the Department itself said it would need, are not a ceiling problem. They are a willingness problem, and the will that is missing now belongs as much to Congress as to the executive.

Congress and the Afghan SIV Program: Two Decades of Bipartisan Action



The Afghan-ally provisions in the 2009, 2022, and 2024 milestones rode inside larger appropriations vehicles, so those chamber votes reflect the whole bill, not a separate vote on the SIV provisions.
Source: congress.gov, House Clerk, and Senate roll-call records for each vehicle
Analysis: AfghanEvac

Figure 7. Congress and the Afghan SIV program: two decades of bipartisan legislative action. Each visa-number increase, and the 2024 codification of CARE, passed with cross-party majorities. The Afghan-ally provisions in the 2009, 2022, and 2024 milestones rode inside larger appropriations vehicles, so those chamber votes reflect the whole bill rather than a separate vote on the SIV provisions.

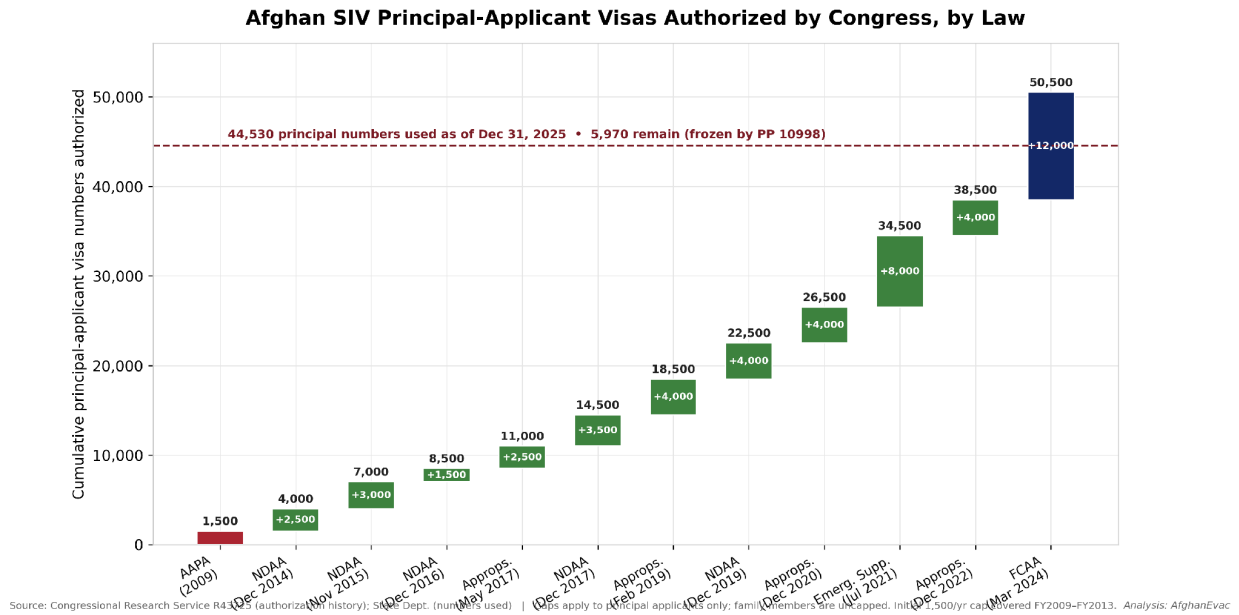


Figure 8. Every increase in the principal-applicant visa cap, by the law that authorized it. The dashed line marks how many numbers have actually been used.

Part III: Enduring Welcome, the First Standing Enterprise of Its Kind

It is worth stating plainly what Enduring Welcome was, because it is easy to lose in the quarterly data.

Enduring Welcome created no new visa or immigration authority. What it created was coordination. It took the legal pathways that already existed, the SIV program, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, and humanitarian parole, and ran them, together with the vetting, transportation, relocation, and resettlement machinery, as one sustained operation under a single office rather than as a scatter of separate programs. Its achievement was not a new law. It was making the existing promises work at scale, at once, and on purpose.

The United States has helped its wartime allies reach safety before, and at far greater scale than in Afghanistan. After the fall of Saigon in 1975, it paroled roughly 130,000 Vietnamese in the initial airlift and, over the following quarter-century, resettled well over a million Southeast Asians through the Orderly Departure Program, the Humanitarian Operation program for former re-education-camp detainees, the Amerasian Homecoming Act, and the general refugee system created by the Refugee Act of 1980. [17] After 2007, it built special immigrant visa programs and a refugee pathway for Iraqi allies that together admitted tens of thousands more. By raw numbers, the Vietnamese effort dwarfs everything that came after.

What sets Enduring Welcome apart is not its size. It is its structure.

Effort	Approximate scale	How it was run
Vietnam and Indochina, 1975–2000s	Well over one million resettled	A patchwork of successive, ally-specific laws layered onto the country's general refugee system
Iraq, 2007–2014	Tens of thousands of SIVs, plus roughly 85,000 refugees admitted through a separate track	Separate visa and refugee programs, chronically under-resourced; the larger visa authorization lapsed in 2014
Afghanistan and Enduring Welcome, 2021–present	More than 200,000 brought to the United States, Aug 2021–end 2025, all pathways	The first single, named, standing enterprise built specifically for wartime allies, with a dedicated coordinator office, interagency structure, and its own funding

The Afghanistan figure, more than 200,000 people resettled in the United States between August 2021 and the end of 2025, spans all arrival pathways, SIVs, parole, and refugee admissions. It is consistent with the State Department's own reporting, which puts the number at over 190,000 Afghans settled since August 2021 through Enduring Welcome and its predecessor, and it is broader than the approximately 160,000 SIVs counted elsewhere in this report, which is the State Department's cumulative SIV issuance figure and reflects only the SIV pathway back to 2009.

The Vietnamese and Iraqi efforts were delivered as a series of one-off statutes running through the country's general refugee machinery. No single institution owned the obligation from end to end, and the Iraqi program in particular was allowed to wither, its larger visa authorization lapsing in 2014. Enduring Welcome was different in kind. For the first time, the United States stood up one named enterprise dedicated specifically to relocating and resettling its wartime allies: the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE), created in 2021 and, in December 2024, written into law in the Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act, with an interagency structure and its own appropriations line. That statute passed with broad bipartisan majorities, 281 to 140 in the House and 85 to 14 in the Senate, though, because the CARE authorization rode inside the larger defense bill, those margins reflect support for the NDAA as a whole rather than a separate vote on the Afghan-relocation provisions. [28] One institution was finally charged with answering the question the withdrawal framework never asked, what the country owes the people who stood with it, and was built to deliver on the answer.

This is a judgment, not a settled fact, and the precedents are debatable. Vietnam moved far more people, and the general refugee system has been a standing institution since 1980. But the distinction holds: never before had the United States treated its obligation to its wartime allies as a dedicated, purpose-built program of state rather than a set of one-off measures bolted onto the general refugee system. The record issuance years of FY2023 and FY2024, and the FY2025 adjudication total of 44,380 COM decisions, are what that machinery looked like when it was allowed to run. That is precisely why halting it, and moving to shutter CARE itself, is so consequential. The country did not merely pause a visa line. It began dismantling the first institution it ever built to keep this kind of promise.

Part IV: The Lawsuit That Kept the Promise Alive

Why Afghan and Iraqi Allies v. Pompeo was necessary

When Congress wrote the nine-month processing requirement into law in December 2013, it did something unusual: it gave wartime allies an enforceable right to timely decisions. For nearly five years, the executive branch treated that deadline as advisory. By June 2018, thousands of Afghan and Iraqi applicants had been waiting years, often four or more, in government-controlled steps. Named plaintiffs in the eventual lawsuit had waited between 18 months and five years. Discovery would later reveal that the government's public reports understated its own processing times.

Nothing else had worked. Congressional reporting requirements produced reports, not speed. Inspectors general documented dysfunction without fixing it. Individual mandamus suits rescued individual clients while the system stayed broken. So on June 12, 2018, the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), with co-counsel Freshfields, filed a class action in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia against the Secretary of State and the Department of Homeland Security: *Afghan and Iraqi Allies Under Serious Threat Because of Their Faithful Service to the United States v. Pompeo*, No. 1:18-cv-01388. The caption has since changed twice, to *v. Blinken* and now *v. Rubio*. The promise at issue has not changed at all. [25] [26] AfghanEvac tracks this and related cases on its [litigation page](#).

What the court did

- **September 2019.** Judge Tanya Chutkan granted partial summary judgment, holding the government's delays unreasonable as a matter of law. [18]
- **February 2020.** The court certified a class of all SIV applicants stuck in government-controlled steps for more than nine months. [26]
- **June 2020.** The court approved a Joint Adjudication Plan covering roughly 10,000 backlogged applications, with deadlines for each processing step, including 120 days for COM decisions, and required the government to report progress to the court every 90 days. [19]
- **November 2022.** After the withdrawal upended the program, the government tried to escape the judgment entirely. The court refused, finding continued unreasonable delay, while allowing the plan to be modified for post-2021 realities. [20]
- **June 2024.** The D.C. Circuit affirmed, in an opinion by Judge Katsas, rejecting the argument that post-2020 improvements erased past unlawful delay. [21]
- **June 2025.** The district court approved a Revised Adjudication Plan with updated step-by-step benchmarks and continued quarterly reporting. The government appealed; that appeal (No. 25-5279) was fully briefed as of July 2026, with amicus support for the class from Ambassador Ryan Crocker and former Representative Earl Blumenauer. [22]

- **February 6, 2026.** After the administration halted COM processing in the wake of the National Guard attack, the court granted the plaintiffs' motion to enforce. Judge Chutkan wrote that officials have "no authority, statutory or otherwise, allowing them to unilaterally suspend processes that Congress has required them to expedite," and ordered COM processing to resume immediately. [23]

The impact

The litigation's fingerprints are on nearly every operational improvement in the program's modern history. The 2020 plan put roughly 10,000 stalled applications on enforceable timelines, and by mid-2021 the government was meeting most of its step-level benchmarks. The 90-day reporting requirement created the most reliable public record of the program's performance, data this report draws on throughout. The 2022 and 2024 rulings established that crisis does not dissolve a statutory duty. And in 2026, the case proved to be the only mechanism in American government capable of restarting the program within weeks of an unlawful halt. State credits staffing and analytics for the FY2025 COM record; advocates credit the injunction. Both can be true. Neither happens without the other.

The honest caveat: a court can compel adjudication, but it has not, to date, compelled visa issuance past a presidential proclamation, and it cannot fly anyone out of Kabul. **Litigation kept the promise alive. It cannot, by itself, keep the promise.**

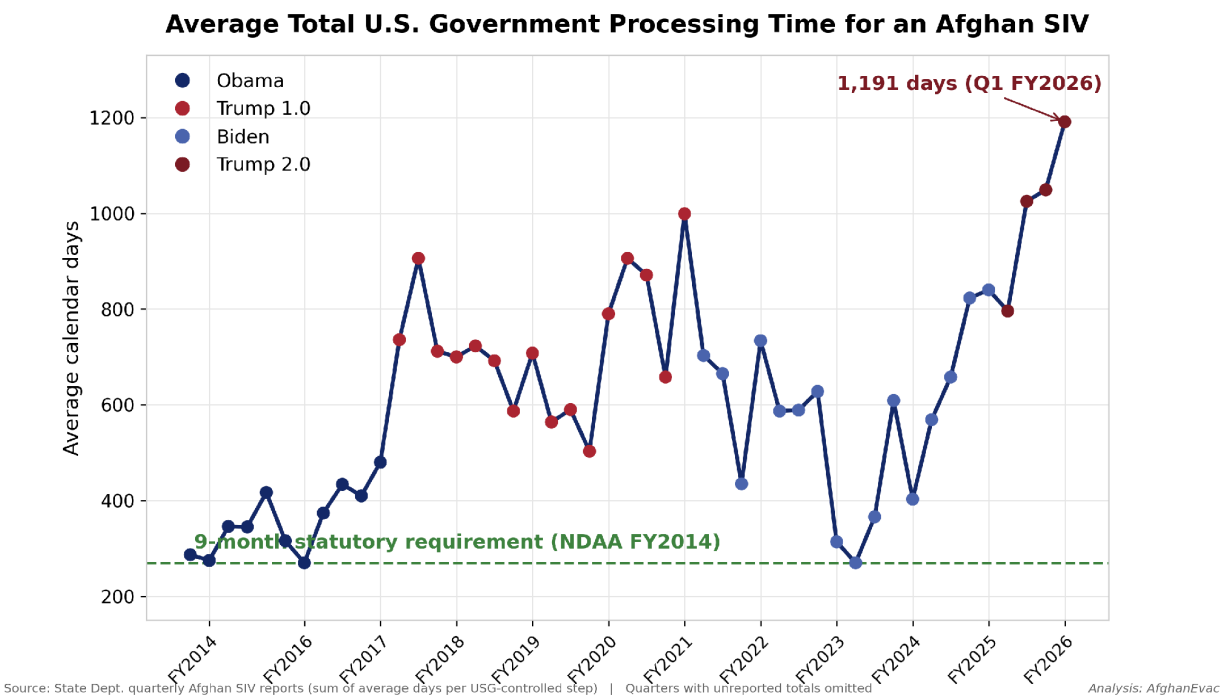


Figure 9. Average total U.S. government processing time vs. the nine-month statutory requirement.

Part V: The Pipeline Today

The historical charts above end where the government's quarterly reports end. The operational picture is starker still. The figures in this section come from the U.S. government's own relocation and case-management systems, as tracked by AfghanEvac. They describe not how many visas have been issued, which is covered by the official reporting cited throughout this report, but how many people are caught in the pipeline right now. For scale: across all pathways, SIV, parole, and refugee admissions, more than 200,000 Afghans were resettled in the United States between August 2021 and the end of 2025. The roughly 160,000 SIVs counted elsewhere in this report are the largest piece of that total. The figures in this section describe the people still waiting.

As of mid-2025 government data, 178,110 people were associated with Chief of Mission-approved cases, 33,883 approved principal applicants and 144,227 of their spouses and children. Chief of Mission approval attaches to the principal applicant's qualifying service and threat. Spouses and children derive their eligibility from that approval, but each remains subject to individual visa, medical, admissibility, and security screening. The breakdown of where they stand is the heart of the matter.

Most COM-Approved Afghans Are Stuck Waiting (May 2025 Snapshot)

Of the 164,758 with Chief-of-Mission approval, 110,241 had completed their documents and needed only an interview and a visa, the exact steps frozen by the January 2025 flight pause. By July 29, 2025, COM approvals had risen to 178,110.



Figure 10. Readiness of the COM-approved population (May 2025 snapshot, persons).

In a detailed readiness snapshot of the COM-approved population, 110,241 people were documentarily complete, meaning they had submitted the required documentation and were awaiting a consular interview and the remaining adjudicative steps, including medical clearance, updated security checks, final adjudication, and visa issuance. Two of those steps are precisely the ones the administration shut off: the interview, by pausing the relocation flights that let applicants reach a consular post, and issuance, by suspending it under Proclamation 10998. What distinguishes this group is that they have done everything asked of them and are waiting on a government that has stopped processing them.

Behind that approved population sits an even larger one still waiting for a COM decision. As of January 31, 2026, roughly 132,000 principal applicants had not yet received Chief of Mission approval, about 67,000 still assembling their applications at the National Visa Center and nearly 65,000 awaiting a decision from the Afghan SIV Unit. Counting the family members who would travel with them, that waiting population is larger still. And inside Afghanistan, the Enduring Welcome relocation tracking had identified more than 212,000 individuals, including over 129,000 interview-ready SIV applicants, an estimated 59,000 refugee applicants, more than 8,000 family members of U.S. citizens, and over 1,000 family members of lawful permanent residents. This inside-Afghanistan count comes from a different government reporting system than the SIV case-management data behind the 110,241 figure above, and it applies a broader definition of interview-ready; the two numbers describe overlapping populations under different definitions and should not be added together. In the most recent reporting, the number relocated out of Afghanistan in the preceding thirty days was zero. These figures move as the government reports, and AfghanEvac maintains a live Enduring Welcome status page at ew.afghanevac.org that tracks the pipeline, the timeline, and the cost as the record changes. [49]

What a frozen pipeline looks like

Camp As Sayliyah in Qatar is one of the platforms Enduring Welcome built to move approved Afghans safely toward the United States. It is now the clearest picture of what happens when the machinery around a visa program is switched off while the people inside it stay put.

The population figures that follow come from AfghanEvac's direct tracking of the Camp As Sayliyah caseload, drawn from U.S. government camp data and current as of July 30, 2026. As of that date, 1,039 Afghans remain there, nearly all of them fully vetted and approved for U.S. resettlement, held since the January 2025 refugee suspension. About 150 are family members of U.S. service members. Of the total, 319 are women, 287 are men, and 433 are children under eighteen, 235 boys and 198 girls, so children are about 42 percent of the camp's population. Twenty of the women are pregnant. And 292 of the 1,039, including 129 children, are in cases that can no longer move onward to the United States, not because those people failed vetting but because a single member of a family has been flagged, frequently for something minor, and a case travels as a family or not at all. A flag on one stops everyone.

Camp As Sayliyah, Qatar

1,039 vetted Afghan allies, approved for U.S. resettlement and stranded

Held since the January 2025 refugee suspension. As of July 30, 2026.

WHO THEY ARE

Women 319	Men 287	Boys 235	Girls 198
--------------	------------	-------------	--------------

433 of them are children under 18, about 42% of the camp.

20

women are
pregnant

~150

are family of U.S.
service members

0

relocated out in the
most recent 30 days

292 can no longer move onward to the United States

including 129 children (76 boys, 53 girls).

Not because these people failed vetting. A case travels as a family, so a single flag on one member, often for something minor, stops the entire household.

Source: AfghanEvac, from U.S. government camp population data.

Camp As Sayliyah, Qatar, as of July 30, 2026. Population and case-status figures from U.S. government camp data, compiled by AfghanEvac.

Residents report being pressed to return to Afghanistan "voluntarily," including through cash offers. The danger reached the camp on February 28, 2026. Earlier strikes on Qatar in 2025 had not touched it, but that day Iran launched a barrage of dozens of ballistic missiles at Qatar, including Al Udeid Air Base, in retaliation for U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran. Qatari and U.S. air defenses intercepted them overhead, and shrapnel rained down across the country, with authorities logging more than one hundred reports of falling debris nationwide. At Camp As Sayliyah, wreckage from an intercepted missile crashed into a family's shelter. From that day, interceptions overhead became a recurring event, alerts sounding as often as every fifteen minutes, and the people the United States had vetted, approved, and told to wait sheltered in place under falling metal, in constant fear. [50] [51]

In April 2026, reporting revealed a State Department proposal to transfer the camp's Afghans to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Three weeks later, on May 17, the World Health Organization declared the Ebola epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda a public health emergency of international concern. Senators of both parties called the plan "one of the most cruel and imprudent betrayals in our nation's history." As of June 2026, the Secretary of State has confirmed that the United States will not admit these Afghans and is "still talking with countries" about where to send them, and the State Department has said the camp will fully demobilize by the end of FY2026. [52] [53]

The demobilization deadline will very likely slip, and AfghanEvac is grateful to Qatar, which has extended its hospitality and patience while the U.S. government failed to deliver on

commitments it made. But gratitude to the host does not resolve the danger. Any onward move would have to be genuinely voluntary, and the concern is that proposals like the Congo transfer are engineered to manufacture a false choice, an option so untenable that it lets the State Department present return to Afghanistan as the only remaining door. **That could amount to refoulement, or at least raise grave non-refoulement concerns, the forced return of vetted allies to the regime they fled, dressed up as a choice, especially if any consent were produced through coercion or the absence of a safe alternative.**

This is the part of the story that the pipeline charts cannot show. These are not applicants whose cases are unresolved. They are people the United States finished vetting, approved, moved out of Afghanistan, and then stopped, on a closing platform, in a country that is not theirs, with nowhere the government is willing to send them. AfghanEvac's companion report *Protection Promised* documents this record in full, along with the forced returns of U.S.-pipeline Afghans from Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Tajikistan. [54]

These people are not abstractions, and they are not evenly distributed. They are waiting in third countries, many in places that are themselves unsafe.



Figure 11. Where interview-ready Afghan allies are waiting, by country (May 2025 snapshot, persons, principal applicants and family members together).

The single largest population is in Pakistan, which has been forcibly returning Afghans to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, the precise outcome the SIV program exists to prevent. Many of them relocated to Pakistan on U.S. instructions, waited on U.S. timelines, and were listed by

name in a fall 2023 understanding under which Pakistan agreed to hold off on enforcement while the United States processed a defined population. When U.S. processing stopped in January 2025, that understanding collapsed and the arrests and deportations resumed. No legislation has been introduced to protect this population specifically. AfghanEvac details the history and the current risk at afghanevac.org/pakistan-explainer. Thousands more wait in Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Tajikistan, and at U.S.-sustained facilities like Camp As Sayliyah, where movement has slowed to a trickle. Every month the system sits frozen, the danger to these families compounds, and the credibility of the American promise erodes a little further.

The SIV pipeline is only part of the picture, and most of America's mission partners were never in it. The United States also built a refugee track for at-risk Afghans, the Priority-1 and Priority-2 referral categories processed through Enduring Welcome, and it too has been frozen. This refugee track admitted roughly 28,800 Afghans between fiscal year 2021 and the January 2025 suspension, and Operation Allies Welcome paroled tens of thousands more. [58] Then it stopped. The most recent State Department operational data counts 24,086 interview-ready refugee applicants awaiting travel, and no Afghan refugee has been admitted since Executive Order 14163 suspended the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program on January 27, 2025. The chart below separates the two tracks. Every figure in it counts a distinct population, and the Chief of Mission and awaiting-approval counts come from the SIV pipeline.

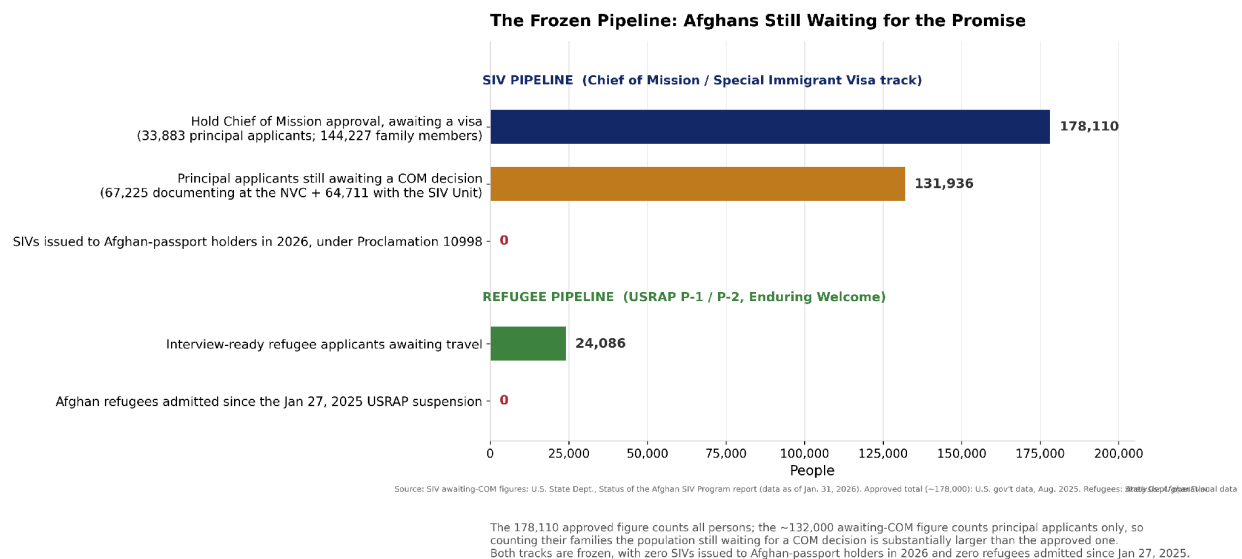


Figure 12. The frozen pipeline, by track. The approved-population total (178,110 persons, 33,883 of them principal applicants and 144,227 family members) reflects U.S. government data as of August 2025; the awaiting-COM figures are principal applicants as of January 31, 2026, drawn from the State Department's Status of the Afghan SIV Program report [5]. The awaiting-COM count includes principal applicants only, so counting their family members the waiting population is substantially larger than the approved one.

Among the most heavily screened people the government admits

It is worth pausing on what these applicants have already been through, because the stated justification for the 2026 shutdown was a concern about vetting. The two pathways at issue are screened differently, and it is worth being precise. An SIV requires Chief of Mission review that verifies the applicant's employment and the threat against them; adjudication of the special immigrant petition, by the State Department on Form DS-157 for cases approved since July 2022, or by USCIS on Form I-360 under the earlier process; adjudication of the immigrant visa application on Form DS-260; an in-person interview and adjudication by a consular officer; and an interagency security check that runs biometric and biographic data against the holdings of the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, the FBI, the National Counterterrorism Center, and the broader intelligence community. Refugees in the USRAP pipeline undergo a comparable multi-agency process, with repeated database checks and in-person interviews, often over several years. Both are among the more rigorous screening regimes the United States applies to anyone seeking entry, and applicants awaiting an interview have not yet completed the final consular adjudication. The separate population of evacuees brought in under the 2021 airlift was screened under emergency conditions and has since been subject to continuing review, a distinct history this report does not conflate with the consular pipeline. The State Department's own Inspector General found in 2020 that the interagency security-check process is so extensive that understaffing it was itself a primary cause of the program's delays. The wait is long, in part, precisely because the vetting is exhaustive. AfghanEvac maintains a step-by-step breakdown of both the consular and refugee vetting tracks, with downloadable explainers, at afghanevac.org/vetting.

Two points follow that the current debate tends to bury. First, the vetting standards at issue were not built by the administration that ran the program at its peak, and they were not loosened by it. The core interagency screening architecture was established during the first Trump administration and was retained and, in important respects, strengthened under the Biden administration. So when officials now assert that these Afghans were inadequately vetted, they are describing a screening regime their own party built and never relaxed. Second, the claim heard most often, that "nobody knows who these people are," is simply false. After twenty years in Afghanistan, the United States holds an enormous volume of information about the people who worked alongside it: employment records, biometrics collected in theater, security-clearance files, and the databases of a dozen agencies. The distinction that matters is between identity and service. On identity, the government holds deep and layered information about who these people are. What it never built was a unified, reliable system for documenting the qualifying employment the SIV statute makes them prove, which is why so many cases stall on records the government itself failed to keep. "Nobody knows who these people are" is false. The harder truth is that the government made proving one's service far more difficult than confirming one's identity.

That is what makes the security rationale for the shutdown a category error. Executive Order 14161 and Proclamation 10998 rest on the premise that Afghanistan, as a country, can no longer

provide reliable identity, criminal, and travel records. That is a statement about the Taliban regime, not about the applicants, who have been vetted by U.S. agencies against U.S. and allied databases, in many cases multiple times and over a span of years. Halting a population that has already moved through this screening, and continues to be checked, in the name of insufficient screening, inverts the logic. It also carries its own national-security cost: every wartime partner watching learns that an American security clearance and an American promise can be revoked after the fact.

The security question, answered honestly

None of that means the United States owes a place here to someone who presents a genuine, individualized security threat. It does not, and advocates should not be reluctant to say so. That limit is the premise that makes everything else in this report credible, and it is the standard the government itself applied for years.

The record shows that standard working. The Department of Homeland Security's Inspector General documented an evacuee paroled into the United States in August 2021 who had been freed from an Afghan prison by the Taliban; roughly three weeks later the FBI developed derogatory information, and ICE removed him from the country. A second evacuee who posed national security concerns was placed in removal proceedings after CBP obtained derogatory information from the FBI. [36] The Defense Department's Inspector General separately identified 31 Afghans in the United States with derogatory information in Department records by September 17, 2021, rising to 50 by November 2 of that year. That Inspector General's own footnote describes the range as running "from the benign, such as a petty theft from a military base, to the serious, such as fingerprints found on improvised explosive devices." [37] The United States began returning individuals to Afghanistan as early as February 2022. [38]

Those cases are serious, and the government acted on each one. **What the record shows is a system doing what it was built to do: identifying individualized threats within a population of roughly 200,000, and acting on them case by case as they surface.**

Set against that record are claims of an entirely different order, though they have to be read carefully, because the two most-cited numbers describe different populations. On December 11, 2025, the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, Joe Kent, told the House Homeland Security Committee that the center had identified around 18,000 known and suspected terrorists who entered the country under the previous administration, a figure spanning all nationalities, not Afghans alone. Separately, he said that roughly 2,000 of the approximately 88,000 Afghans brought in through Operation Allies Welcome were under investigation for potential ties to terrorist organizations. [39] The Director of National Intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard, repeated the 2,000 figure the following day. [40] The figures were restated before a Senate Judiciary subcommittee in January 2026. [41] Neither official released a methodology, a definition of what counts as a "tie," a distinction between a watchlist encounter and a derogatory finding, or any underlying document.

The Afghan-specific claim is the one that matters here, and it is difficult to square with the government's own most rigorous documented review of the same population. The Justice Department's Inspector General audited the FBI's participation in screening Afghan evacuees and reported in June 2025 that the Terrorist Screening Center had identified 55 Afghan evacuees with terrorist screening database matches, of whom 46 had been removed from the watchlist by July 2024, with the remaining nine tracked. [42] The 55 and the 2,000 are not the same kind of number, the first a completed watchlist finding, the second an open investigative count, and the government has released nothing that would let anyone reconcile them. What it has never produced is a documented set of substantiated cases at the scale it has claimed.

The serious cases that exist are matters of public record and should be stated plainly. The killing of Specialist Sarah Beckstrom in November 2025, by an Afghan man who arrived through Operation Allies Welcome and shot two National Guard members near the White House, was a grave security failure and a human tragedy, and it demands a full accounting of what was known about him before and after his arrival. Separately, the Justice Department has charged a small number of Afghan evacuees in terrorism-related matters: a man in Fort Worth charged in December 2025 with threatening to build a bomb and carry out a suicide attack, whose case remains an allegation [44]; and an ISIS-inspired Election Day 2024 plot in Oklahoma that produced a fifteen-year sentence for one defendant and a guilty plea from a second, both of whom stipulated to removal to Afghanistan. [45]

Those cases are real and they are being prosecuted. Intelligence assessments do not always become prosecutions, so the absence of cases at the scale claimed does not by itself disprove the estimate. But it does mean the public record cannot corroborate it, and the government has released neither the methodology behind its number nor any completed re-vetting results that would.

The prosecutions show which part of the system functions. The Oklahoma and Fort Worth cases were developed after entry, through watchlisting, Joint Terrorism Task Forces, and ordinary federal prosecution, the machinery that has run continuously since 2021 and runs today. The Beckstrom case shows the opposite, a failure that screening did not catch, and a reason to ask hard questions about post-entry threat detection. Neither the successes nor the failure is what a blanket suspension of visa issuance addresses.

On the Beckstrom case, even the administration has located the problem after entry rather than before it. The Secretary of Homeland Security said authorities believed the suspect had been "radicalized since he's been here in this country," though she did not publicly present the evidence for that conclusion. [46] He had arrived in September 2021 through Operation Allies Welcome, cleared the National Counterterrorism Center at that time, and was granted asylum by this administration in 2025. [46] [47]

Take that seriously and the case for this particular remedy weakens. If the danger in these cases developed after the men were admitted, then tightening or suspending entry screening is not what would have stopped it, and a blanket halt to visa issuance certainly would not.

Proclamation 10998 applies a pre-entry remedy to a problem the government itself describes as post-entry, and it applies that remedy to more than 178,000 SIV applicants and family members who already hold Chief of Mission approval, and to tens of thousands more in the refugee and family-reunification pipelines, none of whom are in the country and none of whom had anything to do with any of it. The answer to a post-entry risk is well-tailored post-entry detection, not the closing of a pipeline to vetted applicants abroad.

There is a difference between a security threat and a category, and the distinction is the whole argument. A threat is individual, evidenced, and actionable, and when one is established the government should act, as it has. A category is something else. After an Afghan national shot two National Guard members in November 2025, the government suspended all immigration adjudications for Afghan nationals, halted asylum decisions nationwide, froze adjudications for nationals of 39 countries, ordered re-review and re-interview of already-granted statuses for nationals of 19 countries, and directed officers to treat country of origin as a significant negative factor. A federal court vacated all four policies as unlawful in June 2026. Whatever their stated vetting rationale, they operated categorically by nationality rather than through individualized evidence of risk, applied to a population the United States itself screened, transported, and welcomed.

A second court reached a parallel conclusion. On July 29, 2026, in a case brought by a group of Afghan families, a federal judge in the Eastern District of Virginia granted the plaintiffs summary judgment and vacated, as unlawful under the Administrative Procedure Act, the State Department's policy of applying the travel-ban proclamations to deny boarding foils to follow-to-join asylees, the already-approved spouses and children of Afghan asylees moving through the I-730 process. The court ordered the government to issue travel documents to five of the derivative family members within fifteen days, to adjudicate the remaining two individually and without regard to the proclamations within thirty days, and it retained jurisdiction over the case. As of August 5, 2026, the government had not appealed or sought a stay, though it retains the right to do so, and further proceedings could still affect the policy's reach. [57]

The enforcement that has actually occurred does not describe a security operation either. An analysis of FOIA-obtained ICE records by the Deportation Data Project indicates roughly 1,156 recorded removal actions involving Afghan nationals between October 2022 and March 2026, rising from about 240 in 2023 to 478 in 2024. The records count enforcement actions rather than certified unique individuals, and the two are not identical. Most were removals to third countries, chiefly land transfers to Canada, a materially different act from return to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan; at least 104 actions recorded Afghanistan itself as the destination. ICE coded about 97 percent as involving no U.S. criminal conviction or pending charge at the time, a field that speaks to criminal history in ICE's own system and not to national-security information or to whether a removal was lawful. The Deportation Data Project cautions that its removals series is among its less reliable data, so these figures are best read as strong indicators of scale and pattern rather than precise counts. [48] Neither ICE nor the

Department of Homeland Security publishes a nationality-specific public tally of Afghan removals for this period, which is why these case-level FOIA records are the most complete source available. AfghanEvac's companion report *Protection Promised* sets out the same record in fuller detail for use in immigration and asylum adjudications.

There is one further consequence the United States created and now declines to acknowledge. **Afghans who were flown out on American military aircraft, screened at American bases, and resettled in American communities carry a visible association with the United States that the Taliban will impute to them whether or not they ever worked for Washington. The evacuation itself became a mark.** That is precisely the imputed political opinion the refugee and asylum statutes were written to protect, and it is the reason the obligation runs to America's mission partners generally, not only to those the SIV statute happened to cover.

The obligation this report describes has a limit, and the limit is real. It does not extend to anyone who presents a bona fide, individualized threat. It is not limited by an unsourced number, by a nationality, or by an assertion no one has been asked to prove.

Part VI: Where This Leaves Us

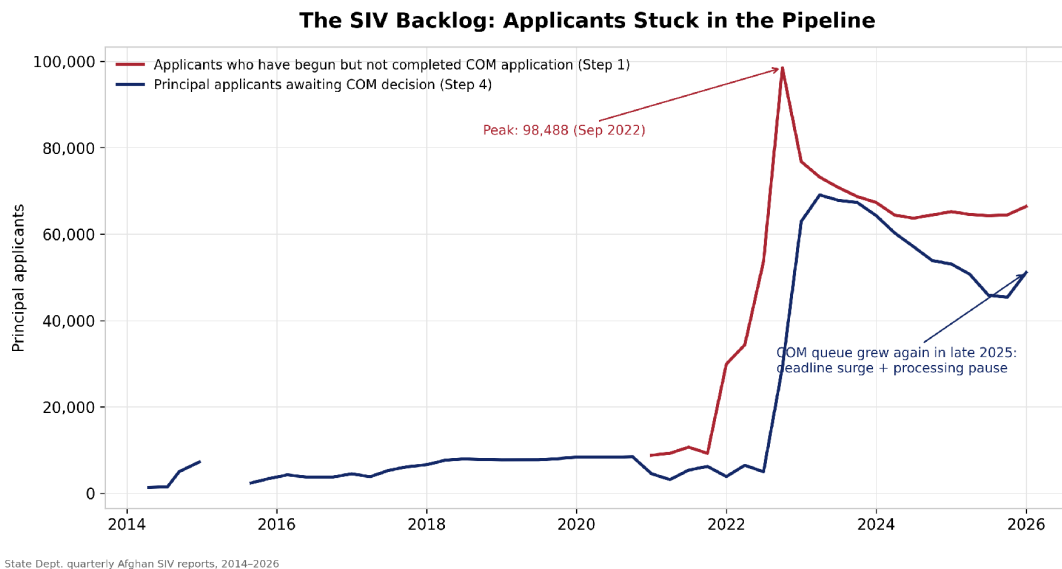


Figure 13. The COM backlog over the life of the program (principal applicants awaiting a Chief of Mission decision).

The Afghan SIV program in July 2026 presents a paradox. The machinery demonstrated record capacity as recently as FY2025, and the adjudication numbers prove it, and then it was deliberately switched off. Congress once provided numbers, money, and statutory authority, but has gone quiet as the program was dismantled. The courts have provided enforceable deadlines. What is missing is the political will, in both branches, to let earned visas be issued and to let cleared applicants travel.

Why this is a national interest, not only a debt

The case for finishing this is usually made as a moral one, and it is a powerful moral case: these people took mortal risks on America's word. But it is also, plainly, a matter of national interest, and that is the argument most likely to move a skeptic past the politics of immigration.

First, it is force protection for the next war. **The United States cannot operate in a conflict zone without local partners, the interpreters, guides, sources, and fixers who make the mission possible and keep American troops alive. Those future partners are watching how this one ends.** If the lesson of Afghanistan is that an American promise expires with the news cycle, the next generation of allies will hesitate to step forward, and Americans will be less safe for it. Allied militaries and intelligence services draw the same lesson about whether U.S. commitments can be relied upon.

Second, this is not a burden to be managed but a vetted, employable, and contributing population. America's Afghan wartime allies who have moved through the SIV and refugee pipelines have passed among the most demanding vetting the United States applies to anyone

seeking entry. They arrive ready to work, and the track record of Afghan and earlier wartime-ally arrivals is one of high employment, entrepreneurship, and service, including, for many, continued service alongside the U.S. military and law enforcement. The closest historical parallel, the resettlement of more than a million Southeast Asians after 1975, became one of the great integration successes in American history; Vietnamese Americans today naturalize at the highest rate of any major immigrant group. Scale and integration were never the obstacle, only will.

Third, abandoning them hands a propaganda victory to the Taliban and to every adversary that tells its own people, and ours, that American friendship is worthless. Finishing the job denies them that victory and reinforces the credibility on which deterrence quietly depends. The force feels this directly. When AfghanEvac and its coalition partners worked with the National Security Council to secure a pathway for the family members of active-duty and recently separated service members, the case rested on exactly this logic: those families faced a grave and specific threat from the Taliban precisely because of their American ties, their capture or killing would be a propaganda prize, and service members cannot focus on the mission in front of them while their relatives are hunted in Afghanistan. What is true for those families is true for the wider population of allies.

And finally, this is about Americans, too. Among those stranded inside Afghanistan are more than eight thousand family members of U.S. citizens and over a thousand family members of lawful permanent residents. **A frozen program does not just strand allies abroad. It keeps American families apart.**

There is a deeper lesson in this record, one that several former senior U.S. officials have pressed on us directly. The Special Immigrant Visa program is, on its own terms, a success: for direct-hire embassy staff after years of service, where the U.S. government owns the employment records and can verify a career at a glance, it works well. But the immigrant-visa machinery it runs on was built to be deliberate and document-heavy, on the sound assumption that someone moving to another country permanently is in no particular hurry. Wartime allies are in the opposite situation. Asking a contractor or a fixer who is being hunted to locate twenty-year-old employment records, reconstruct a chain of subcontracts, and produce civil documents that may no longer exist, all while in hiding, is not merely slow. It is a structural mismatch, and it manufactures the very fraud findings that then justify further delay. The government's own June 2026 progress report to the court bears this out: case after case stalls on lost Afghan company records, mergers that erased the employer, contradictory paperwork, and fraud review, precisely the failure points a document-heavy model produces when it is pointed at people fleeing for their lives. And the model misses some allies entirely. The tribal and militia auxiliaries who fought alongside American special operations forces were partners, not payroll employees, so the SIV's documentary test was never built to reach them, no matter how great the risk they carry.

The conclusion those officials draw, and we share it, is that the durable answer cannot be another visa line that asks the threatened to prove their way to safety one document at a time. It lies in the refugee system: a danger-based category that turns on the risk a person carries for having stood with the United States, that has an answer for the case where Washington suspends embassy operations and the records and the consular officers vanish overnight, and that confers durable status on arrival rather than depositing people into years of further limbo. None of this lessens the obligation to finish the SIV pipeline for the roughly 178,000 people already trapped inside it. They are in danger now, and triage cannot wait for reform. But the system that replaces today's improvisation should be designed for the emergency it will actually face, not the orderly process the immigrant-visa rules imagine.

Recommendations: What the United States Must Do

AfghanEvac's position is unchanged and unambiguous.

- 1. Restore the SIV exemption to Proclamation 10998** and resume issuing visas to Afghan-passport holders whose cases its own officers have already adjudicated.
- 2. Issue the 5,970 authorized numbers that remain.** These belong to people who are, in many cases, already cleared. They should be issued now, not held as leverage or left to expire.
- 3. Authorize roughly 50,000 additional principal-applicant numbers, or remove the numerical cap altogether.** This is a separate and larger ask than spending down the current balance. It goes well beyond the 35,000 to 40,000 floor the Department itself said it would need, and it would end the recurring ritual of a program that runs out of numbers every few years and waits on Congress to refill them.
- 4. Restore the full suite of CARE relocation services,** including chartered relocation flights, safe-house and transit support, and processing at third-country platforms, so that cleared applicants can actually reach their interviews. The State Department's own wind-down plan warned that if CARE relocation operations cease, completion of the program slips past 2029 by an unknown number of years.
- 5. Reopen the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program to Afghans,** including Priority-1 and Priority-2 referrals. These are the pathways the State Department itself identified for the many at-risk Afghans who fall outside the SIV track, and they remain shut.
- 6. Expedite family reunification and end the multi-year separations.** Thousands of these cases are divided families: a principal safe in the United States while a spouse and children remain in hiding in Kabul, or a parent abroad while children wait. The pipeline includes more than 8,000 family members of U.S. citizens and over 1,000 family members of lawful permanent residents still inside Afghanistan, along with the family-reunification and following-to-join cases frozen by the refugee suspension. These cases should be prioritized rather than paused. No family that has cleared vetting should be kept apart for years because of a processing queue or a policy freeze, and ending those separations should be treated as urgent, not incidental.
- 7. Reopen and extend COM eligibility** for those shut out by the December 2025 application deadline.
- 8. Comply fully with the court's orders** rather than litigating against America's own wartime allies and mission partners.

9. Protect the Afghans who are already in the United States. Tens of thousands of Afghans paroled here under Operation Allies Welcome have fallen out of status because the Department of Homeland Security declined to renew their humanitarian parole, and the administration terminated Afghanistan's Temporary Protected Status effective July 12, 2025, exposing the roughly 11,700 people who held it to removal. These are people who passed U.S. vetting and were brought here by the U.S. government. Congress should grant or restore Temporary Protected Status for Afghanistan and provide a stable, lawful status for these families while their cases are resolved, and USCIS should adjudicate, rather than freeze, the benefits they are entitled to seek, including work authorization, asylum, and adjustment to lawful permanent residence, rather than pushing them into undocumented limbo or toward removal to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

10. Build and pass a durable wartime allies program. Every item above can be reversed by the next proclamation or the next lapsed deadline. Congress should enact a permanent, conflict-agnostic framework so that the United States never again improvises its obligations to the people who serve alongside it. The Iraqis who served the United States a decade before Afghanistan never received a standing enterprise on the scale of Enduring Welcome, and the lesson of that gap is precisely why the next framework must be built once and applied to every conflict. This report centers Afghans because that is AfghanEvac's mission; the communities it does not name here, from Iraq forward, are no less deserving of the same commitment. That framework should:

- Cover the wartime allies and mission partners of current and future conflicts, not one country at a time.
- Identify, vet, and track eligible allies from the start of their qualifying service, so that protection does not depend on documents that are lost when a government falls.
- Guarantee a timely relocation timeline, with a clear target measured in months, and grant lawful permanent resident status on arrival.
- Operate free of numerical caps and per-country limits, so the program no longer periodically exhausts its allocation and stalls.
- Waive minimum-service requirements for allies injured or killed in the line of duty, extending eligibility to their surviving spouses, children, and next of kin.
- Ensure parity of resettlement benefits and services with those available to refugees, closing the gaps that leave some arrivals with thinner support than the pathway they came through should provide.
- Include immediate, statutory protection for today's allies that shields screened applicants from blanket entry bans, bars their removal or refoulement from U.S.-run facilities, and forbids retroactive eligibility cutoffs, the mass withdrawal of approved cases, and any payment or pressure to coerce vetted allies in third countries into returning to danger.

- Stand up independent, enduring oversight, with public reporting on commitments and progress and real consequences when protections fail, so the program cannot be quietly eroded by a future administration.
- Coordinate standards with allied governments that relied on the same partners, so that people who took the same risks are not protected by one country and abandoned by another.

These are not novel or partisan demands. They track the standards set out in the Global Alliance Principles [13] and in Local Staff International's 2026 *Guidelines for the Rights and Protection of Local Staff in International Missions*, [14] frameworks developed by an international coalition of veterans, former allied commanders, lawyers, and resettlement practitioners. AfghanEvac's separate report *The Allied Ledger* sets the American record against the rest of the coalition and across half a century of precedent, and makes the case for governments worldwide to adopt those principles. Legislation accomplishing these things should be introduced and passed. Oversight letters and statements of concern are not a substitute for a bill.

Every quarter of delay is measured in human beings: the interpreter in hiding in Kabul, the family stalled in Islamabad with an approved case and no flight, the soldier in Texas still trying to get her translator out.

Seventeen years of data lead to one conclusion. This program succeeds when leaders decide it should, and it fails when they decide it may. The 160,000 people who made it here, and the enterprise the country built to bring them, are proof of the first. The zero visas issued to Afghan-passport holders since January 1, 2026 are proof of the second. Which one comes next is not a question of capacity. It never was. It is a question of will, and the will is ours to find.

Further Reading and Take Action

This report is one of a set AfghanEvac is releasing to mark five years since the withdrawal. Its companion, *Protection Promised: America's Afghan Allies, from Welcome to Removal*, documents the dismantling of Afghan protections since January 2025 and is built for use in immigration and asylum adjudications; it is available now at reports.afghanevac.org/protection-promised. A third report, *The Allied Ledger*, co-authored with Professor Sara de Jong of the University of York, a leading scholar on the protection of wartime allies, sets the American record against the rest of the coalition and half a century of precedent and makes the case for the Global Alliance Principles; it will be available after August 10, 2026 at reports.afghanevac.org/allied-ledger. For deeper analysis of the laws, executive actions, and court decisions shaping the future of Afghan allies, see AfghanEvac's full set of explainers at afghanevac.org/explainers. Two are especially relevant to this report:

- How Afghan allies are vetted, step by step, at afghanevac.org/vetting.
- The current state of the SIV program at afghanevac.org/siv-current-state.

Two AfghanEvac tools track and navigate this in real time. The live Enduring Welcome status page at ew.afghanevac.org follows the numbers, the timeline, the cost, and where allies are still waiting, revised as the record changes. V-PRIC, the Visa Pathways and Relocation Information Center, at pathways.afghanevac.org, is a free, multilingual guide to the U.S. and global pathways available to Afghans and their allies, with a Find My Pathway questionnaire in Dari, Pashto, and English. It is a research starting point, not legal advice.

To act, see afghanevac.org/policy for the latest on what has happened, what is happening, and what needs to happen, including how to reach your representatives and how to move state and local resolutions supporting Enduring Welcome.

Methodology

Data sources. Quarterly program data come from the joint Department of State and Department of Homeland Security quarterly reports on the Afghan SIV program, as compiled in AfghanEvac's longitudinal tracking dataset and verified against the underlying reports, including the four most recent (Q2 FY2025 through Q1 FY2026). Annual issuance figures for FY2009 through FY2022 are from Congressional Research Service report R43725 (Table A-4), which counts visa issuances plus adjustments of status; FY2023 through FY2025 figures are from the State Department's Section 7019(e) reports to Congress, which count visa issuances only. Because of these basis differences, administration totals here sum to approximately 165,500 against State's reported cumulative of approximately 160,000 visas; the difference is primarily adjustments of status by parolees inside the United States, concentrated in FY2022 and FY2023.

Administration attribution. Transition quarters are assigned to the incoming administration (inaugurations fall 20 days into the second fiscal quarter). Quarterly issuance data first appear in Q3 FY2020, so the Trump 1.0 total includes Q1 FY2021 (1,321 total visas issued October to December 2020), and the Biden total runs from Q2 FY2021 through Q1 FY2025. Obama-era totals follow fiscal years FY2009 through FY2016; Q1 FY2017 (October to December 2016) could not be separated and is counted in Trump 1.0's FY2017. This modestly favors Trump 1.0 and disfavors Obama. Months in office for the Obama administration are counted from the AAPA's enactment in March 2009.

Principal applicants versus totals. Where this report distinguishes principal applicants from total issuances, the principal figures count only the Afghan allies who personally performed qualifying service, the population to which the congressional cap applies. Total figures add spouses and children. Both series are drawn from the same sources. The cumulative principal-applicant numbers charged against the congressional cap (44,530 as of December 31, 2025) run somewhat higher than the principal issuances the administration table attributes by period (which sum to about 41,665), because numbers are also consumed by adjustments of status inside the United States, not only by visas issued abroad.

Processing time. "Average total processing time" is the State Department's own measure: the sum of average calendar days for each U.S. government-controlled step, excluding applicant-controlled steps. Quarters in which State did not report a usable total are omitted.

Context sources. Narrative context on the withdrawal draws on the AfghanEvac Doha Agreement explainer and the U.S. Department of State After-Action Review on Afghanistan (completed 2022, released publicly June 2023). Figures on the visa numbers, applicants, and resources required to finish the program are drawn from the State Department's September 2024 wind-down report to Congress. The current pipeline figures in Part V are drawn from U.S. government relocation and case-management systems as tracked by AfghanEvac, with the detailed breakdown as of May 2025 and Chief of Mission approvals updated to July 29, 2025.

The characterization of Enduring Welcome as the first at-scale program of its kind is identified in the text as AfghanEvac's assessment, as is the assessment of congressional inaction.

Wherever sources conflicted, we used the more conservative figure and noted the conflict. The Q3 and Q4 FY2020 issuance figures differ between two tabs of the underlying State reporting; we used the cases-processed series throughout for quarterly data.

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report documents the seventeen-year record of the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa program — how the promise was built, kept at record scale, and then halted.



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