



OPERATION ALLIES WELCOME

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OVERVIEW

On August 29, 2021, President Biden directed the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to lead implementation of ongoing efforts across the federal government to support vulnerable Afghans, including those who worked alongside us in Afghanistan for the past two decades, as they safely resettle in the United States. These coordinated efforts will be known as Operation Allies Welcome. At the President's direction, the Secretary of Homeland Security will work with representatives from across the government to coordinate our response and ensure unity of effort across the federal government.

At the President's direction, DHS has stood up a Unified Coordination Group (UCG) to coordinate efforts under Operation Allies Welcome. The UCG will report directly to the Secretary of Homeland Security and will coordinate the implementation of a broad range of services, including initial immigration processing, COVID-19 testing, and isolation of COVID-positive individuals for anticipated quarantine, additional medical services, and screening and support for individuals who are neither U.S. citizens nor lawful permanent residents. This support includes initial processing of at pre-designated U.S. military bases prior to being connected with resettlement organizations for placement into communities. The work of the UCG will be undertaken in close collaboration with partners in state and local government, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.

OPERATIONAL PHASES

Screening and Vetting Prior to Arrival in the United States

The U.S. government is working around the clock to conduct the screening and vetting of vulnerable Afghans prior to their arrival in the United States, consistent with the dual goals of protecting national security and providing protection for vulnerable Afghans.

DHS has deployed approximately 300 personnel from Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Transportation Security Administration, United States Coast Guard, and United States Secret Service to Bahrain, Germany, Kuwait, Italy, Qatar, Spain, and the United Arab Emirates to conduct processing, screening, and vetting in coordination with the Departments of Defense and State and other federal agencies, with the goal of bringing to the United States Afghan nationals who worked for the United States, as well as other vulnerable Afghans.

The screening and vetting process involves biometric and biographic screenings conducted by intelligence, law enforcement, and counterterrorism professionals from the Departments of Homeland Security and Defense, as well as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), and additional Intelligence Community (IC) partners. The U.S. government has worked with urgency and care to enhance screening and vetting operations to make them more efficient without compromising national security. This has resulted in a robust interagency process that efficiently screens Afghans at risk prior to their travel to the United States.



Additionally, the State Department has deployed staff to all Middle East and Europe transit points to provide humanitarian guidance and liaise with NGO partners and international organizations.

Parole

Most Afghan nationals will be paroled into the United States, on a case-by-case basis, for humanitarian reasons. This permits certain Afghan nationals to come into the United States, on a case-by-case basis, for a period of two years and subsequent to appropriate screening and vetting, provided their movement to the United States is being carried out pursuant to the current operation. Once paroled by CBP, Afghan nationals may be eligible to apply for immigration status through USCIS. Afghan nationals paroled by CBP will also have conditions placed on their parole, to include medical screening and vaccination requirements, and other reporting requirements. Failure to follow these conditions may be cause for denial of work authorization and potentially termination of the parole and initiation of detention and removal.

Special Immigrant Visas

Afghans who have completed the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) SIV process and their dependents will be assisted by the Department of State and non-governmental organizations to begin their resettlement process. Those individuals who have not finished the SIV application process, are paroled in by the Department of Homeland Security while their SIV applications are adjudicated or they determine whether to apply for another immigration status through United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Individuals are paroled on a case-by-case basis. Such individuals will be eligible to apply for work authorization.

COVID-19 Testing, Vaccinations, and Other Medical Services

The U.S. government continues to take every precaution to stop the spread of COVID-19, and other diseases, consistent with CDC guidance. All arrivals – U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and Afghan nationals – are being tested for COVID-19 upon arriving in the United States. These individuals will also have the option to receive COVID-19 and other vaccines either at U.S. government-run sites near Washington Dulles International Airport and Philadelphia International Airport, or at a Department of Defense facility. All testing, vaccinations, and other services are available at no cost.

Arrival in the United States

The Department of State is managing a 24/7 processing site near Dulles Airport, with 200-250 Department of State/USAID staff working shifts a to welcome new arrivals and process them for onward travel to military installations.

Processing at U.S. Military Facilities

After being tested at the airport, American citizens and legal permanent residents can head home while military bases are ready to temporarily take in everyone else, where they will receive a full medical screening and a variety of services before moving onto their next destination. The Department of Defense is providing temporary housing facilities for SIV applicants and other Vulnerable Afghans at eight installations: Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia; Fort Pickett, Virginia; Fort Lee, Virginia; Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico; Fort McCoy, Wisconsin; Fort Bliss, Texas; Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey; and Camp Atterbury, Indiana. While on these bases



they will also complete medical screening and receive other medical services, be able to apply for immigration status and work authorization with USCIS personnel, and be connected to relocation services.

The Department of State works closely with DOD and DHS to coordinate the ~600 civilian and non-governmental staff working at the military bases to ensure Afghans receive basic support and can finalize processing on base in order to transition to resettlement. Once Afghans have completed all processing steps, the Department will work with NGO and IO partners to assign and transfer them to their final destination.

Applying for Immigration Status, Workforce Authorization, and Essential Coverage

USCIS personnel are adjudicating applications for employment authorization, conducting other immigration processing, including the provision of “special immigrant” status to those who qualify, and providing administrative support, including translation services, to expedite the processing of applications for immigrant status and work authorization. The State Department and the Department of Health and Human Services are working to provide initial relocation support to Afghans granted parole ensuring that those Afghans arriving in American communities have initial support, including short-term emergency health insurance.

Integration Support

Arriving Afghans will be connected to non-governmental organizations for initial support and onward integration services. The State Department and the Department of Health and Human Services are leading these resettlement and integration efforts in close coordination with over 200 resettlement organizations and NGOs, and in partnership with the generous help of state and local officials around the country. Additionally, the State Department is coordinating interagency efforts to launch a major public-private partnership initiative to channel support to newly-arrived Afghan allies and their families.

Refugee Resettlement Processing

In addition to Operation Allies Welcome, the State Department is managing referrals to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for Afghans who assisted or were associated with the United States in Afghanistan, so that they can be processed for U.S. resettlement from a third country if they have already left or leave Afghanistan.

The Department of State will provide initial relocation support through the Afghanistan Placement Assistance Program (APA) to Afghans granted parole, including short-term emergency health insurance through agreement with the Department of Health and Human Services.

In coordination with other federal agencies and private sector and non-profit partners, the Department of State is launching a major public-private partnership initiative to channel support to newly-arrived Afghan allies and their families.