

Testimony of Dr. Nayla Rush
Senior Researcher
Center for Immigration Studies

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MOST AFGHANS WHO CAME AND WANT TO COME TO THE UNITED STATES ARE NOT OUR “ALLIES”

Summary

The Biden–Harris administration evacuated over 80,000 Afghans during the summer of 2021 as U.S. forces withdrew from Afghanistan. Rahmanullah Lakanwal, the individual charged in the recent ambush attack that killed one National Guard member and critically injured another, was on one of them. The administration did not stop there: it created additional pathways for Afghans to enter the United States – ultimately bringing in more than 200,000 individuals.

Contrary to popular narratives, most Afghans admitted during and after the evacuation had nothing to do with the U.S. government or any of its contractors or subcontractors. They were not U.S. “allies” eligible for Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) nor were they “persecuted” individuals in need of refugee resettlement. Lacking immigrant visas, they were granted “parole”, a temporary permission to enter and remain in the United States.

These arrivals were provided federal benefits, health insurance, work authorization, Social Security numbers, English-language instruction, mental-health support, and more. The associated costs reached into the billions of dollars, borne by American taxpayers.

Furthermore, the Biden-Harris administration contracted resettlement agencies not only to provide the standard Reception and Placement (R&P) assistance – normally limited to refugees – but also to help Afghan parolees pursue long-term immigration pathways, including adjustment of status through qualifying family relationships, SIV applications, or asylum claims.

This raises a fundamental question: Why did the prior administration choose to open the door (and keep it wide open) to hundreds of thousands of Afghans who were not at risk, despite the clear limitations of our vetting capacity of these individuals? And how many more Rahmanullah Lakanwals are there, time-bombs waiting to turn against the country that welcomed them?

EVACUATION: OPERATION ALLIES REFUGE

Following the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, some 80,000 Afghans¹ were evacuated by the Biden-Harris administration as part of “Operation Allies Refuge”² in July-August 2021. Despite the program’s name, the majority of those airlifted were not our “Allies” – i.e. Afghan nationals who had supported the U.S. forces, government personnel, contractors or subcontractors, and faced a serious threat as a result of that employment. Amid the chaos and the urgency of the evacuation, U.S. officials allowed virtually anyone who could reach the airport and board a flight to do so.

On September 3, 2021, former Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, explained the evacuation process to the press. Bottom line, the first priority was to get people out of there, and figure out later on exactly who’s who:

*And given the premium that we put on getting people out as quickly and as safely as possible... then really digging into exactly which categories they may fit into. Were they locally employed staff? Were they SIVs, Afghans at risk, potential P-1 or P-2 [refugees], parolees, et cetera? All of that work now is what we’re doing.*³

Most Afghan evacuees (including Lakanwal) did not have a visa to be admitted into the United States. They did not have Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs)⁴ – visas specifically granted to Afghan “allies” – nor were they “persecuted” Afghans looking to be resettled as refugees under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP)⁵. Hence, the use of “parole” to admit them into the United States.

“Allies” are those who worked as translators, interpreters, or other professionals employed by or on behalf of the U.S. government in Afghanistan and face a serious threat as a result of that employment. They have access to SIVs to come to the United States. Upon admission, SIV holders are granted Lawful Permanent Residence (LPR), also known as green cards. They receive the same benefits and federal services as refugees under the USRAP.

¹ [“Operation Allies Welcome Announces Departure of All Afghan Nationals from the National Conference Center Safe Haven in Leesburg, VA”](#), Department of Homeland Security, News Archive, September 27, 2022.

² [“Statement of President Joe Biden on the Arrival of the First Flight of Operation Allies Refuge”](#), Biden White House Archive, July 30, 2021.

³ [“Secretary Antony J. Blinken Remarks on Afghanistan at a Press Availability”](#), The U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Italy website, September 3, 2021.

⁴ Bruno Andorra, [“Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Programs”](#), CRS report, January 15, 2025.

⁵ [“The United States Refugee Admissions Program \(USRAP\) Consultation and Worldwide Processing Priorities”](#), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website, September 17, 2025.

“Refugees”⁶ are those who are “unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion”. Refugees are resettled into the United States through the USRAP and must apply for a green card one year after arrival. Refugees, like SIVs, have access to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) assistance and federal benefits.

“Immigration Parole”⁷ is an “official permission to enter and remain temporarily in the United States. It does not constitute formal admission under the U.S. immigration system.” The parole provision in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) gives the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) discretionary authority to “parole into the United States temporarily under such conditions as he may prescribe *only on a case-by-case basis for urgent humanitarian reasons or significant public benefit* any alien applying for admission to the United States”⁸ [Emphasis added].

Parolees can stay in the United States for the duration of the grant of parole (typically one year, two for Afghans as requested by former DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas⁹) and can also apply for re-parole. Re-parole was made available to Afghan parolees in 2023¹⁰.

Parole was made available not only to Afghan evacuees but also to those who followed. The legality of the Biden-Harris administration’s expansive use of parole has been widely questioned¹¹. What was equally, if not especially puzzling, was the transfer of power to parolees (who, supposedly, are here on a provisional, short-term basis) by allowing them to sponsor new parolees to join them in the United States, to live and work here, under that same illusory, “temporary”, and highly ambiguous status. Parole is supposed to be granted on a case-by-case basis – not to thousands of individuals at once – and most parolees will never leave when their parole expires.

Both SIVs and refugees are authorized to live permanently in the United States (SIVs are granted green cards upon admission, while refugees must apply for a green card one year after arrival), whereas parolees are only granted periods of authorized stay.

⁶ “[What is a refugee?](#)”, UNHCR US website, undated.

⁷ “[Immigration Parole](#)”, Congressional Research Service report, October 15, 2020.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ “[Operation Allies Welcome](#)”, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, archived content, last updated January 22, 2025.

¹⁰ “[DHS Announces Re-parole Process for Afghan Nationals in the United States](#)”, Department of Homeland Security, News Archive, June 8, 2023.

¹¹ Andrew R. Arthur, “[So Many Errors in CBS News’ Report on Illegal Biden Parole Programs](#)”, Center for Immigration Studies blogpost, July 26, 2023.

Georges Fishman, “[The Pernicious Perversion of Parole](#)”, Center for Immigration Studies report, February 16, 2022.

Elizabeth Jacobs, “[DHS to Return Venezuelan Border-Crossers to Mexico, but Will Allow Thousands in with Parole](#)”, Center for Immigration Studies blogpost, October 14, 2022.

Afghan parolees can apply to adjust their status based, for example, on a qualifying relationship to a family member or apply for either an SIV status or asylum.

Of the over 80,000 Afghan evacuees, 77,000 were paroled into the United States¹². Eighteen months into their stay, fewer than 5,000 were approved for asylum or SIV status¹³.

PROCESSING AND RELOCATION INTO AMERICAN COMMUNITIES: OPERATION ALLIES WELCOME

Once the evacuation effort (Operation Allies Refuge) ended, former President Biden directed Mayorkas to coordinate efforts across the federal government to support all evacuated Afghans: “Operation Allies Welcome” was underway¹⁴.

To coordinate these efforts, Biden appointed former Delaware Governor, Jack Markell, as the White House Coordinator for Operation Allies Welcome¹⁵.

Afghan evacuees were transported to designated temporary overseas transit centers, known as “lily pads¹⁶,” and to military bases within the United States, referred to as “safe havens¹⁷”. Eight such safe haven installations were provided by United States Department of Defense (DOD) – now referred to as the Department of War – to house Afghan evacuees: 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.

This came at a significant cost to American taxpayers. For instance, housing 3,755 Afghan evacuees at Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia for four months (August-December 2021) cost \$226.7 million.¹⁸

Evacuees were provided with a wide array of services on U.S.-bases, including food, shelter and worship tents; medical, dental and psychological care; Afghan-led English classes as well as

¹² [“DHS Has a Fragmented Process for Identifying and Resolving Derogatory Information for Operation Allies Welcome Parolees”](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, May 6, 2024.

¹³ Camilo Montoya-Galvez, [“Tens of thousands of Afghans in U.S. could lose deportation protections unless Congress acts”](#), CBS News, February 16, 2023.

¹⁴ [“Operation Allies Welcome”](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, archived content, last updated January 22, 2025.

¹⁵ Dave Lucas, [“White House’s refugee resettlement czar Jack Markell comes to Albany, already home to strong Afghan community”](#), WAMC Northeast Public Radio, December 7, 2021.

¹⁶ [“DHS Encountered Obstacles to Screen, Vet, and Inspect All Evacuees during the Recent Afghanistan Crisis \(REDACTED\)”](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, September 6, 2022.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ [“Management Advisory: DoD Support for the Relocation of Afghan Nationals at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia”](#), U.S. Department of Defense, Inspector General, January 5, 2022.

classes on American culture; hygiene, and women’s health; internet and recreational movie nights, and more. Afghan nationals were also able to apply for work authorization documents (EADs, or work permits) with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) personnel and were connected to resettlement services.¹⁹

USCIS personnel were adjudicating applications for employment authorization (EADs) and providing administrative support and translation services, “to expedite the processing of applications for immigrant status and work authorization²⁰.” The U.S. Department of State and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services were working to provide “initial relocation support to Afghans granted parole and to ensure that those Afghans arriving in American communities have initial support, including health insurance.” Top relocation states of Afghan parolees were Texas, California and Virginia²¹.

The “Sponsor Circle Program for Afghans”²² was also launched in October 2021 to encourage private individuals to form “sponsor circles” to help with initial relocation, “complementing the work of the State Department’s non-profit resettlement agency partners.”

Through the “Afghan Placement and Assistance Program (APA)”²³ that was created in 2021, individuals were placed in communities across the country. The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) signed new cooperative agreements with nine resettlement agencies to implement the APA Program. Usually, resettlement agencies are only responsible for the Reception and Placement (R&P)²⁴ assistance but under the APA program, they were also required to help Afghan parolees with accessing immigration legal services to apply for asylum or another legal status to remain in the United States following the termination of their parole.

BRINGING IN MORE AFGHANS THROUGH A ROUTE TO CITIZENSHIP

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ “[Operation Allies Welcome](#)”, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, archived content, last updated January 22, 2025.

²¹ Camilo Montoya-Galvez, “[Here’s where Afghan evacuees have resettled in the U.S.](#)”, CBS News, February 24, 2022.

²² “[Launch of the Sponsor Circle Program for Afghans](#)”, U.S. Department of State Press Statement, October 25, 2021.

²³ “[Review of Challenges in the Afghan Placement and Assistance Program](#)”, U.S. Department of State, Office of Inspector General, March 2023.

²⁴ “[Reception and Placement](#)”, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, Archived Content, undated,

On September 27, 2022, the last of the Afghan evacuees departed from the safe haven facility at the National Conference Center (NCC) in Northern Virginia outside Washington to settle in cities across the United States²⁵.

Despite the completion of these relocation operations, the Biden-Harris administration declared it remained “fully committed to continuing the work of welcoming and resettling Afghan nationals”²⁶:

*Our commitment to our Afghan allies is **enduring** and, as part of the U.S. government’s efforts to continue welcoming our Afghan allies, we are adopting a **new model whereby Afghan nationals arriving will travel directly to their new communities** without a safe haven stop-over in the United States.*

The U.S. government also remains committed to supporting and continues to develop processes for family reunification for Afghans. [Emphasis added.]

Accordingly, the prior administration pivoted towards “welcoming Afghan nationals through programs that have long-term durable status²⁷.” Its pledge to resettle Afghans carried no “end date”, “doubling down on existing immigrant pathways” to help those interested in coming to the United States²⁸.

“Operation Allies Welcome” transitioned into “Enduring Welcome”²⁹ as part of a longer-term strategy to bring certain Afghan nationals and their family members who remained abroad through “durable immigration pathways”³⁰. The idea was to move away from the “temporary” parole system and ensure that future Afghan arrivals had a direct pathway to permanent legal status in the United States. The U.S. government focused on three categories of Afghans: immediate family members of U.S. citizens, permanent residents and evacuees; those who qualify for SIVs; and potential refugees.

In August 2021, the Biden-Harris administration announced a Pre-defined Group Access P-2 (Priority 2 - Group Referrals) to USRAP for certain Afghan nationals and their eligible family members³¹. Priority 2 refers to groups of special concern designated by the Department of State

²⁵ [“Operation Allies Welcome Announces Departure of All Afghan Nationals from the National Conference Center Safe Haven in Leesburg, VA”](#), Department of Homeland Security, News Archive, September 27, 2022.

²⁶ [“Operation Allies Welcome Announces Departure of All Afghan Nationals from the National Conference Center Safe Haven in Leesburg, VA”](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, News Archive, September 27, 2022.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Pricilla Alvaraz, [“Biden administration pivoting to long-term strategy to assist Afghans”](#), CNN Politics website, September 1, 2021.

²⁹ [“Enduring Welcome Program”](#), Military One Source, An Official Defense Department website, undated.

³⁰ [“Report to Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2025”](#), U.S. Department of State, Archived Content, September 4, 2024.

³¹ [“U.S. Refugee Admissions Program Priority 2 Designation for Afghan Nationals”](#), U.S. Department of State Factsheet, Archived Content, August 2, 2021.

as having access to USRAP by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement; whereas Priority 1 relates to individual cases referred by designated entities to USRAP by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement.³²

P-2 was made available to Afghans who are not SIVs or SIV applicants but worked for a project in Afghanistan supported by a U.S. government grant or cooperative agreement or to those who worked for a U.S.-based media or NGO as a freelancer.

Afghans who were not “Allies” but were made eligible for this P-2 resettlement by the Biden-Harris administration included the following³³:

- Afghans who do not meet the minimum time-in-service for an SIV but who work/worked as employees of contractors, locally employed staff, interpreters or translators for the U.S. government, including United States Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A), International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), or Resolute Support.
- Afghans who work/worked for a U.S. government-funded program or project in Afghanistan supported through a U.S. government grant or cooperative agreement.
- Afghans who are or were employed in Afghanistan by a U.S.-based media organization or NGO. U.S.-based media organizations may also refer Afghan nationals who worked for them under stringer, freelance, and comparable arrangements.

Afghans who work/worked for sub-contractors and sub-grantees do not qualify for the P-2 designation but can qualify for P-1 referrals.

That said, exceptionally³⁴, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) can accept P-2 referrals “for third-party contractors, particularly from U.S.-based media organizations, and for staff of U.S. NGO wholly- or majority-owned subsidiaries in Afghanistan.”

The Biden-Harris administration continued to process refugee cases for Afghans in third countries across the world. PRM and USCIS began processing applications of Afghan refugees in Pakistan³⁵ in July 2023 and had “significantly increased processing capacity” as of January 2024. As of early July 2024, PRM accepted 28,000 P-1 (individual) and P-2 (group) referrals for Afghan principal applicants.

Moreover, under the Welcome Corps for Afghans³⁶, a new program introduced by the Biden-Harris administration within USRAP, U.S.-based sponsors (including Afghan newcomers) could

³² [“The United States Refugee Admissions Program \(USRAP\) Consultation and Worldwide Processing Priorities”](#), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, last updated September 17, 2025.

³³ [“Report to Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2025”](#), U.S. Department of State, Archived Content, September 4, 2024.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ [“Welcome Corps for Afghans”](#), The Welcome Corps website, undated.

select and welcome Afghan refugees and SIVs to the United States, including those they know. The program allowed for the preferential selection of “refugees”³⁷ by their friends/family already here. Sponsor groups could support one family of up to 10 people at a time. The sponsor group had to wait 90 days, beginning when the individual or family arrived in the United States, before submitting another sponsorship application.

And, in early 2023, the same administration introduced a “Family Reunification for Afghans”³⁸ program that allowed Afghan parolees who are here supposedly temporarily to sponsor their family members to come to the United States as refugees (i.e. as potential future American citizens)³⁹. The program fell under Biden’s policy direction, providing a path toward a “long-term, permanent residence”⁴⁰ to Afghans.

In April 2023, the Office of the Special Coordinator for Afghanistan (OSCA) was created. Daniel Schneiderman was appointed as Senior Coordinator.⁴¹

The Office of the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE)⁴² was established in 2021 as a “whole-of-society operation to continue to relocate and resettle eligible Afghans.” Led by career diplomat Mara Tekach, CARE was the U.S. government’s centralized coordinator for identifying, relocating, processing and admitting Afghans through various pathways including SIV, Refugee status (P-1, P-2, or P-4 (the Welcome Corps)) or parole – from their departure from Afghanistan through their arrival and relocation into American communities. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)⁴³ was updated and signed in 2023 between the State Department and AfghanEvac⁴⁴ (a “coalition of more than 200 organizations working alongside the U.S. Government to support Afghan relocation efforts”) that advocates for the admission of Afghans and a “pathway to permanent residency” for Afghan evacuees already here. The MOU institutionalized “the innovative public-private partnership established in August 2021.”⁴⁵

³⁷ Nayla Rush, “[How the New Biden-Harris ‘Welcome Corps’ for Refugees Works](#)”, Center for Immigration Studies report, October 10, 2024.

³⁸ “[Family Reunification for Afghans](#)”, U.S. Department of State, undated.

³⁹ Nayla Rush, “[Family Reunification: A Path to Permanent Residence for ‘Temporary’ Afghan Parolees](#)”, Center for Immigration Studies blogpost, January 13, 2023.

⁴⁰ “[Operation Allies Welcome Announces Departure of All Afghan Nationals from the National Conference Center Safe Haven in Leesburg, VA](#)”, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, News Archive, September 27, 2022.

⁴¹ “[Daniel Schneiderman](#)”, Center for a New American Security website, undated.

⁴² Alexanderia Haidara, “[Office of the Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts](#)”, State Magazine, August 2024.

⁴³ “[Secretary Blinken Renews Partnership with #AfghanEvac to Continue Supporting, Resettling Afghan Allies](#)”, AfghanEvac website, June 12, 2023.

⁴⁴ “[AfghanEvac](#)”, Website.

⁴⁵ “[Secretary Blinken Renews Partnership with #AfghanEvac to Continue Supporting, Resettling Afghan Allies](#)”, AfghanEvac website, June 12, 2023.

MOST AFGHANS WHO CAME AND WANT TO COME TO THE U.S. ARE NOT “ALLIES”

Under the Biden-Harris administration, U.S. communities (mainly in Texas, California, Virginia, Washington, and Pennsylvania)⁴⁶ welcomed close to 200,000 “Afghan newcomers” following the withdrawal of U.S. troops in August 2021. They were, for the most part, not our “allies”⁴⁷ and were only granted parole (not SIVs).

SIV spots are numerically capped. There are two SIV programs designed for certain Afghan nationals.

The first is a permanent program authorizing SIVs for certain Afghan nationals who worked directly with U.S. Armed Forces or under Chief of Mission authority as translators or interpreters (the Translators program). The “Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for Afghan Translators/Interpreters”⁴⁸ offers visas to up to 50 persons a year (the cap excludes family members such as spouses and children) and remains active.

The second one, the “Special Immigrant Visas program for Afghans who were employed by or on behalf of the U.S. government”⁴⁹ is temporary. According to Current statutory authority⁵⁰ no more than 50,500 SIVs can be issued to principal applicants under this program and of those, only 10,012 spots are remaining. In other words, the program ends when all visas have been issued unless additional spots are added.

The Special Immigrant Visas program for Afghans who were employed by or on behalf of the U.S. government was capped at 1,500 principal applicants per year for FY 2009 through FY 2013.⁵¹ Any unused numbers could be carried forward from one fiscal year to the next. Congress kept adding to these numbers throughout the years. In March 2024, Congress, through the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024⁵², increased the total number of visas

⁴⁶ “[Report to Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2025](#)”, U.S. Department of State, Archived Content, September 4, 2024.

⁴⁷ Nayla Rush, “[Most Evacuated Afghans Were Not ‘Allies’](#)”, Center for Immigration Studies blogpost, March 4, 2025.

⁴⁸ “[Special Immigrant Visas \(SIVs\) for Iraqi and Afghan Translators/Interpreters](#)”, U.S. Department of State, Travel.State.Gov website, undated.

⁴⁹ “[Special Immigrant Visas for Afghans - Who Were Employed by/on Behalf of the U.S. Government](#)”, U.S. Department of State, Travel.State.Gov website, undated.

⁵⁰ Bruno Andorra, “[Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Programs](#)”, CRS report, January 15, 2025.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² “[H.R.2882 - Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024](#)”, Congressional Record, March 23, 2024.

available for issuance after December 19, 2014, to 50,500 (from 38,500) and extended both the employment termination date and application deadline to December 31, 2025. As of March 21, 2025, there were only 10,012 remaining SIVs for Afghan Principal Applicants.⁵³ There are 130,000 principal applicants with pending SIV applications (complete and incomplete).⁵⁴ That said, the program continues to accept new applications; its application deadline is December 31, 2025.

About 143,000 SIVs have been issued to principal applicants and their dependents under this program through March 2024⁵⁵. Demand for these visas spiked following the 2021 U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan. As of June 30, 2024, more than 130,000 principal applicants have pending applications (complete and incomplete) for this program⁵⁶.

Only 28,145 Afghans⁵⁷ were admitted here as refugees through USRAP (from the beginning of FY 2022 through the first three months of FY 2025) and only 68,654 Afghans were granted SIVs⁵⁸ (this includes principal applicants and eligible family members – spouses and children of any age, whether married or unmarried). Knowing that Afghan derivative applicants are usually at least four times that of principal applicants⁵⁹, only about 17,000 SIVs have been granted to principal applicants – i.e., actual Afghan “allies.”

BENEFITS AND SERVICES

In principle, parolees, unlike SIV holders and resettled refugees, have only limited access to federal benefits and services. Afghan (and Ukrainian) parolees, however, were exempted from this rule.

The Biden-Harris administration extended the benefits and beneficiaries of ORR⁶⁰ to include non-refugees on U.S. soil; hundreds of thousands of Afghan (and Ukrainian) parolees were

⁵³ Bruno Andorra, “[Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Programs](#)”, CRS report, January 15, 2025.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ “[Admissions and Arrivals](#)”, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Archives.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ “[Afghan SIV References: Quarterly Reports on Status of Afghan Program](#)”, U.S. Department of State, Travel.State.Gov website, undated.

⁶⁰ “[Extending Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Assistance From 8 Months to 12 Months](#)”, National Archives, Federal Register Notice, March 28, 2022.

added to ORR’s list of beneficiaries⁶¹. In FY 2025, in addition to refugee arrivals through USRAP (capped at 125,000), ORR was projecting to serve 531,500 other arrivals⁶².

Under the prior administration, State and ORR were working to provide “initial relocation support to Afghans granted parole and to ensure that those Afghans arriving in American communities have initial support, including health insurance.”⁶³

Congress later passed legislation (the Afghanistan Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2022, and the Additional Afghanistan Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2022) making Afghan parolees eligible for the same resettlement assistance, entitlement programs, and other federal benefits provided to refugees.

The U.S. Department of State has contracts with religious or community-based organizations called resettlement agencies to assist refugees (and other eligible newcomers such as Afghan parolees) upon arrival and provide them with services and assistance here. These agencies maintain nationwide networks of local affiliates to assist with the reception and placement (R&P)⁶⁴ of these populations.

The Biden-Harris administration expanded the domestic resettlement system; it added a tenth resettlement agency (Bethany Christian Services) to the existing nine. Moreover, more than 150 local resettlement offices were opened or reopened, bringing the total of local affiliates in 226 communities to more than 350.⁶⁵

In March 2022, one of the ten resettlement agencies, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), in partnership with PRM, launched a new virtual case management program, the Virtual Afghan Placement and Assistance (VAPA).⁶⁶ This initiative was to provide remote program support, including direct assistance, to Afghan parolees who independently departed Safe Havens and had not yet been able to access resettlement support services.

In March 2024, PRM approved six of the national resettlement agencies to offer “Virtual Reception and Placement (VR&P)” services as an alternative to the traditional, in-person R&P

⁶¹ [“Status and Documentation Requirements for the ORR Refugee Resettlement Program”](#), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, October 16, 2024.

⁶² [“Report to Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2025”](#), U.S. Department of State, Archived Content, September 4, 2024.

⁶³ [“Operation Allies Welcome”](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, archived content, last updated January 22, 2025.

⁶⁴ [“Reception and Placement”](#), U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, Archived Content, undated,

⁶⁵ [“Report to Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2025”](#), U.S. Department of State, Archived Content, September 4, 2024.

⁶⁶ [“IRC launches groundbreaking Virtual Reception and Placement program to support SIVs”](#), International Rescue Committee press release, March 26, 2024.

services to certain populations, including Afghan SIV holders, refugees and parolees.⁶⁷ VR&P was set to alleviate “capacity constraints on local affiliates and expand USRAP’s ability to resettle refugees”⁶⁸. Instead of working through local affiliate offices, VR&P delivered services remotely through case managers.

The benefits Afghan parolees received were numerous; they included employment training, English-language training, job placement, cash, support with housing, community orientation, health services, enrollment in various benefits and welfare programs, etc. They also had access to Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) upon arrival. Those two programs (RCA and RMA) were extended from eight to 12 months by the Biden-Harris administration⁶⁹.

Afghan parolees are also allowed to apply⁷⁰ for a driver’s license or identification card under section 202 of the REAL ID Act of 2005 (division B of Public Law 109–13; 49 U.S.C. 30301 note), notwithstanding subsection (c)(2)(B) of that law⁷¹, which limits access to certain categories of aliens.

Those numerous benefits were not just made available for the 80,000 individuals who were hastily evacuated out of Afghanistan during Operation Allies Refuge. Those paroled into the United States afterward, throughout fiscal year 2022 (which ended September 30, 2022), were also eligible for the same benefits. Moreover, spouses and children of those Afghan parolees arriving at any time after the end of FY 2022 (no time limit beyond that date was specified) will have access to those benefits as well.

Additional advantages were also added to that list. Contrary to SIVs and refugees, parolees are not provided with a pathway to citizenship and are expected to leave when their period of parole expires. They could, however, apply for work authorization and seek employment during their stay here. Unlike refugees who are authorized for employment incident to status (meaning they are authorized to work indefinitely upon admission to the United States because their immigration status does not expire — and are not charged a fee for applying), parolees are not employment-authorized incident to status and must pay a fee for their work permits — unless the fee is waived or exempted, which is exactly what the Biden-Harris administration did.

The prior administration [provided](#) the “benefits of employment authorization incident to status normally accorded to refugees and a no-fee initial” (and replacement of an initial) EAD to

⁶⁷ [“Report to Congress on Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2025”](#), U.S. Department of State, Archived Content, September 4, 2024.

⁶⁸ [“IRC launches groundbreaking Virtual Reception and Placement program to support SIVs”](#), International Rescue Committee press release, March 26, 2024.

⁶⁹ [“Extending Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Assistance From 8 Months to 12 Months”](#), National Archives, Federal Register Notice, March 28, 2022.

⁷⁰ [“Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act”](#), Public Law, July 17, 2025.

⁷¹ [“H.R.418 - REAL ID Act of 2005”](#), Congressional Record, February 17, 2005.

Afghan (and Ukrainian) parolees in order for them to receive the same treatment as refugees. Effective November 21, 2022, Afghan parolees and their qualifying family members were considered⁷² “employment authorized incident to parole, which means that they do not need to wait for USCIS to approve their Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, before they can work in the United States”. They were not to be charged any fee for these filings.

Afghan parolees had access to other ORR benefits⁷³. ORR funded the Immigration Legal Services for Afghan Arrivals (ILSAA) project⁷⁴, which provided free (i.e., taxpayer-funded) legal services to Afghans in the United States. ILSAA supported “pathways to permanent residence”⁷⁵, such as obtaining asylum, Special Immigrant Visa status, or family reunification.

Moreover, services to Afghan Survivors Impacted by Combat (SASIC)⁷⁶ were launched by ORR in February 2023 to support eligible Afghans and their families⁷⁷ to overcome long-lasting trauma. Through congressional funding provided to ORR, and through a one-time competitive application process, [24 SASIC grants were awarded](#) across the United States. Services through SASIC were to be available through February 15, 2026.

All these benefits and services come with a high cost to U.S. taxpayers. For FY 2025 alone, Biden proposed spending \$5.1 billion⁷⁸ on refugee processing and resettlement (that provides assistance to Afghan parolees, SIVs and refugees), five times more than the average cost before he took office. Under the prior administration, the cost kept increasing⁷⁹: from \$967 million in FY 2021, \$1.4 billion in FY 2022, \$2.2 billion in FY 2023, to \$2.8 billion in FY 2024.

For comparison, the cost was around \$1 billion whether under Trump or Obama⁸⁰: \$892 million in FY 2020, \$1 billion FY 2019, \$1 billion FY 2018, \$1.5 billion FY 2017, \$1.2 billion FY 2016, \$1 billion 2015, \$1 billion 2014, and \$1 billion FY2013.

⁷² [“Certain Afghan and Ukrainian Parolees Are Employment Authorized Incident to Parole”](#), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Archive, November 21, 2022.

⁷³ [“Afghan Re-Parole FAQs”](#), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, last updated April 23, 2025.

⁷⁴ [“Immigration Legal Services for Afghan Arrivals \(ILSAA\)”](#), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, undated.

⁷⁵ [“Afghan Re-Parole FAQs”](#), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, last updated April 23, 2025.

⁷⁶ [“Services to Afghan Survivors Impacted by Combat”](#), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, undated.

⁷⁷ [“Afghan Humanitarian Parolees and Unaccompanied Afghan Minors Eligible for ORR Benefits and Services: ASA-Eligible Afghan Populations”](#), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, Policy Letter, Revised January 05, 2023.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ [“Admissions and Arrivals”](#), U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Archives.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

A 2021 congressional appropriations bill provided about \$6.3 billion for Afghan efforts⁸¹ - including both immediate evacuation and long-term support which covered housing and care on U.S. military bases as well as resettlement services. Moreover, according to some reporting⁸², the U.S. government (i.e. taxpayers) spent from 2021-2024 more than \$14 billion on Afghan efforts, including on both immediate evacuation and long-term support.

VETTING: WHERE AND HOW?

We can't talk about the admission of Afghan nationals without addressing the problem of efficient vetting. Some claim that Afghans are rigorously vetted⁸³, but, as many have explained⁸⁴, the screening and vetting of Afghan nationals is at best misleadingly reassuring. We know there are no dependable screening measures for nationals from conflict zones⁸⁵, such as Afghans and Syrians, and of the impossible task of crosschecking backgrounds.

Furthermore, while vetting is essential, it only gives us a glimpse of the past and present; it doesn't secure the future. Shared values and successful integration are the best shields against radicalization.

The case of Alif Jan Adil, a young Afghan (21 at the time) who was evacuated by the Biden-Harris administration to Camp Upshur at Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia in 2021 is quite telling.⁸⁶

Adil was arrested less than two months into his stay in the United States for engaging in a prohibited sexual conduct with minor and possessing child pornography images. A federal judge convicted Adil of “abusive sexual contact, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2244(a)(3); coercion or enticement of a minor to engage in sexual activity, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2422(b); and possession of child pornography, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2252(a)(4)(A), (b)(2).”⁸⁷

⁸¹ [“The DHS Unified Coordination Group for Operation Allies Welcome Coordinated Afghan Resettlement but Faced Challenges in Funding and Authority”](#), U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, September 29, 2022.

⁸² Stephen Dinian, [“U.S. has spent \\$14 billion on Afghan evacuees”](#), The Washington Times, November 10, 2024.

⁸³ [“Letter to Secretaries Rubio, Hegseth, and Noem”](#), AfghanEvac website, February 8, 2025.

⁸⁴ Mark Krikorian, [“Op-ed: Vetting in All the Wrong Places”](#), National Review, December 2, 2025.

Andrew R. Arthur, [“Assimilation or Removal Afghan vetting and the D.C. Metro shooting”](#), Center for Immigration Studies blogpost, December 1, 2025.

⁸⁵ [“Threats to the Homeland”](#), Homeland Security Government Affairs, Full Committee Hearing, October 8, 2015.

⁸⁶ [“Is Cultural Leniency in Order for Afghan Sexual Offenders?”](#) Center for Immigration blogpost, September 20, 2023.

⁸⁷ [“US v. Alif Adil, No. 22-4740 \(4th Cir. 2023\)”](#), JUSTIA U.S. Law website.

Most of the mitigating circumstances⁸⁸ presented by the defense to get leniency at sentencing touched on his cultural difference: some sexual conduct that is deemed criminal in the United States is considered normal in Afghanistan. Even if he was indeed “rigorously screened” and all the documents pertaining to his judicial history in Afghanistan were available, he would still have been cleared to enter the United States. In this young man’s case, nothing was missed because there was probably nothing to find. His village in rural Afghanistan does not have a regularized criminal justice system; disputes there are resolved through inter-family mediation.

Following Adil’s conviction, his lawyer filed a “Defendant’s Position on Sentencing”⁸⁹, pleading with the court to impose a “sufficient, but not greater than necessary” sentence of no longer than ten years imprisonment. Most of the mitigating circumstances presented by the defense to get leniency at sentencing touch on Adil’s cultural difference: Adil had no time to adapt to American culture.

Afghan evacuees in military bases (including Adil) did receive some cultural orientation. Personnel in Quantico, in coordination with NGO staff, hosted Afghan-led classes open to the entire Afghan evacuee population⁹⁰. These included classes on American culture.

Dar Al-Hijrah⁹¹ is one of the NGOs who worked alongside refugee resettlement agencies to provide Afghan evacuees with numerous services, including cultural orientation. As a result of its work with Afghan evacuees, Dar Al-Hijrah became the only Muslim agency in Northern Virginia⁹² to be officially partnering with the U.S. Department of State to assist refugees and parolees upon arrival to the United States.

Adil, as his lawyer explained⁹³, had been on U.S. soil for less than two months at the time of his arrest, confined to a military camp with other Afghans, which meant “he was still steeped in his home culture and had had little time to assimilate into the U.S.” Adil “may have viewed his relationship with F.J. [the victim, age 14 at the time of the offense] through the lens of his own upbringing.” That said, his lawyer argues: “This is not to diminish the rationale for the laws that protect minors in this country, but it provides context for Mr. Adil’s actions given his origin in a culture so distinctive and remote from our own.”⁹⁴

⁸⁸ [“Is Cultural Leniency in Order for Afghan Sexual Offenders?”](#) Center for Immigration blogpost, September 20, 2023.

⁸⁹ United States v. Adil, No. 1:21-cr-277, Defendant’s Position on Sentencing (E.D. Va. filed December 7, 2022).

⁹⁰ [“Management Advisory: DoD Support for the Relocation of Afghan Nationals at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia”](#), U.S. Department of Defense, Inspector General, January 5, 2022.

⁹¹ [“Dar El Hijrah Islamic Center”](#), Website, undated.

⁹² [“Refugee Services”](#), Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center website, undated.

⁹³ [“Is Cultural Leniency in Order for Afghan Sexual Offenders?”](#) Center for Immigration blogpost, September 20, 2023.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Teenagers in Afghanistan do become engaged and get married.⁹⁵ Adil himself was engaged when he was 15 to a 14-year-old girl in Afghanistan, and they married two years later. In fact, the first instinct of the father of the victim was to demand that Adil marry his daughter.

It is indeed naive to think that newcomers are necessarily going to leave their beliefs and biases behind.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ [“Girls increasingly at risk of child marriage in Afghanistan”](#), UNICEF website, November 12, 2021.

⁹⁶ Nayla Rush, [“Resettled Refugees Do Not Necessarily Leave Their Beliefs and Biases Behind”](#), Center for Immigration Studies blogpost, November 6, 2023.