



OPERATION SACRED PROMISE

SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA (SIV) APPLICATIONS (SQ PROGRAM)

The rules and regulations relevant to SIV applications are constantly evolving. OSP recommends that applicants consult with an attorney for additional assistance and guidance.

If you require an immigration attorney, you may search for one [here](#).

SIV APPLICATIONS/WHO CAN APPLY

SIVs are available to certain individuals who worked with the U.S. military or its contractors in Iraq or Afghanistan. Applicants must be experiencing an ongoing, serious threat as a consequence of their employment in order to apply.

Those who receive SIVs can enter the U.S. with lawful permanent residence (also known as a green card).

Applicants who qualify for a SIV through either of the below programs can also apply for visas for their spouse and unmarried children under the age of 21.

There are two active SIV programs:

- (1) Iraqi and Afghan Translator/Interpreter SIV Program (1059), also known as the "SI" program. The applicant must:
 - o Be a citizen of Afghanistan or Iraq; **and**
 - o Have worked directly with the U.S. Armed Forces or the Chief of Mission as a translator or interpreter for at least 12 cumulative months; **and**
 - o Have a favorable written recommendation from a General¹ or Flag Officer².

Note: Only 50 of these visas are issued per year.

¹ The General should be in the chain of command of the U.S. Armed Forces unit that the applicant supported as a translator or interpreter.

² The Flag Officer or the Chief of Mission should work at the embassy where the applicant worked.

- (2) Afghans who were employed by the [U.S. SIV Program](#) (602(b)), also known as the “SQ” program. The applicant must:
- o Be a citizen of Afghanistan **AND** have been employed in Afghanistan for at least one (1) year by:
 - The U.S. government, OR
 - A contractor with a contract for funding by the U.S. government, OR
 - The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF); **and**
 - o Have provided “faithful and valuable service;” **and**
 - o Be facing an ongoing, serious threat because of their work.

Note: In July 2021, Congress authorized an additional 8,000 SIVs, to be issued until their availability runs out.

If an individual is not eligible for a SIV because they worked for less than one (1) year, or they worked for a U.S.-based media company or non-profit organization (NGO), they may still pursue assistance through the [International Refugee Assistance Project](#) (IRAP).

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS: AFGHANS EMPLOYED BY/ON BEHALF OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT (SQ)

STEP 1: APPLY FOR CHIEF OF MISSION (COM) APPROVAL

(1) Collect the following documents:

- (a) Employment verification letter (also known as a “human resources letter”). A sample can be found [here](#). This document **MUST** include the following information:
- o Applicant’s: full name; date of birth; job title; job location; start and end dates of employment (date, month, and year); reason for separation from job (or confirmation that the applicant remains employed)
 - o HR representative’s: name; original (i.e., wet) signature; email address; phone number; date the letter was signed

Note: If your company does not have an HR department, the letter-writer must state so.

- o Project information, including: contractor information for all contracts/subcontracts; project name; contract number; duration of

contract; name of contractor company (if your employer was a subcontractor, include the information above for both the primary and subcontract); and if available, a copy of the contract/subcontract

Note: For ISAF employees, the letter must also include a description of the work that required the applicant to work as an interpreter translator for U.S. military personnel while traveling off-base with U.S. military personnel stationed at ISAF; or to perform activities for U.S. military personnel stationed at ISAF.

- (b) Recommendation letter from the applicant's supervisor³. A sample can be found [here](#). This document MUST include the following information:
- o Applicant's: full name; date of birth; badge number (if available); job title; job location; description of work duties
 - o Supervisor's confirmation that the recommender is/was the applicant's supervisor; start and end date of supervision (day, month, and year); justification for recommending the applicant for COM approval (including that the applicant provided faithful and valuable service to the U.S.); explanation of threats the applicant has experienced because of the employment; opinion on whether the applicant is a threat to the national security or safety of the U.S.; name, title, corporate or U.S. government/military email address, personal email address, and phone number; wet signature (i.e., pen to paper) and date the letter is signed

Note: There is NO requirement that you worked as an interpreter or translator, or performed sensitive and trusted activities, for a SIV to be granted.

- (c) Proof that the applicant worked for a company that received U.S. government funding.
- (d) Form [DS-157](#), Supplemental SIV Chief of Mission Application.
- (e) Scanned copy of Afghan electronic passport or *tazkira* with certified English translation.
- (f) Biographic data. A sample can be found [here](#).
- (g) Scanned copy of employee badge, if available.

³ The letter-writer must be the applicant's direct supervisor who knew them during the employment listed in the accompanying employment verification letter, AND is a U.S. citizen (otherwise, a U.S. citizen who is responsible for the contract must sign the letter).

(2) Scan each of the above documents into a separate PDF file. Attach them to ONE email sent to AfghanSIVApplication@state.gov. The subject line should be “Full Name, Birthdate” (ex: John Doe, 24/07/1980).

Note: The accompanying email message may be brief: “I am writing this email to apply for Chief of Mission approval for Afghan SIV program. Please see attached documentation.”

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS STEP 2: FILE I-360 PETITION WITH USCIS

Once the applicant receives COM approval, they must submit Form I-360 to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). There is **NO FEE** to submit this application.

The full application must include:

- (1) Completed [Form I-360](#). A completed sample can be found [here](#);
- (2) A copy of the applicant’s passport (unexpired) or national identification document (such as the *tazkera*), along with a certified English translation if the document is not in English;
- (3) A copy of the letter of recommendation that was used for COM approval;
and
- (4) A copy of the COM approval letter.

Scan each of these documents into a separate PDF file. Attach them to ONE email sent to NSCI360SIVAPP@uscis.dhs.gov AND sivtranslator.nsc@dhs.gov.

You may also mail a hard copy, including overnight deliveries, to:

USCIS/ Nebraska Service Center (NSC)
P.O. Box 87485
Lincoln, NE 68501-7485

Note: Save a copy of the completed I-360, as the applicant will need this for their visa interview.

USCIS will then send the applicant a Conditional Approval letter. A sample can be seen [here](#).

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 3: FILE DS-260, NONIMMIGRANT VISA APPLICATION

Once the applicant's Conditional Approval letter has been received, they may submit Form DS-260 for their visa interview (they will likely receive an email from the National Visa Center (NVC) with instructions for completing this form).

(This form is ONLY required if you are processing at an overseas consulate. If you came to the U.S. on an evacuation flight, this form is not required. If you have been evacuated and paroled into the U.S., you must instead file Form [I-485](#).)

The full application must include:

- (1) Completed DS-260. The form can be accessed [here](#), and a completed sample can be found [here](#);
- (2) A copy of Afghan electronic passport for EACH person in the case, including children;
- (3) Scanned copies of the following documents:
 - o Afghan *tazkera*, along with a certified English translation if the document is not in English;
 - o If married, a copy of marriage certificate (*Nikah Khet*), along with a certified English translation if the document is not in English;
 - o If divorced, a copy of the divorce certificate.
- (4) A completed [Refugee Benefits Election Form](#);
- (5) A completed [DS-234](#), Special Immigrant Visa Biodata Form.

This application can be submitted online (at the site linked in step 1). However, save the application receipt or confirmation page, as this is needed for the visa interview.

Note: The applicant will then want to scan each PDF individually and send them in ONE email to the NVC at NVCSIV@state.gov. Include the applicant's full name, case number, and date of birth (date, month, and year) in the email message.

BEFORE SENDING, check the USCIS website to ensure that you are emailing your application to the correct address, as it frequently changes.

This form must be completed correctly; incorrect responses may lead to criminal prosecution.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

STEP 4: VISA INTERVIEW

If you were already evacuated to the U.S., your interview will likely take place at the local USCIS field office where you live.

The NVC will contact the applicant to schedule their visa interview. Their letter will often include a list of documents that the applicant must bring to their interview, such as:

- o A copy of the applicant's NVC interview letter;
- o The applicant's unexpired passport and a copy of the page with their name and photo;
- o Two (2) color photos of each person applying for a visa. Photo requirements can be found [here](#);
- o The applicant's birth certificate or original *tazkera*. They must also bring an official English translation and a copy of both the Dari and English versions;
- o Confirmation page from the Form DS-260 that was submitted online;
- o For married applicants, their original marriage certificate, an official English translation, and a copy;
- o If possible, a copy of any badges from the applicant's U.S. employment;
- o A copy of the COM approval letter;
- o The original, signed Form I-360; and
- o Copies of the applicant's recommendation letter, employment verification letter, and other documents submitted in the COM application process.

Note: if there are family members associated with your case, you must also bring a copy of: their unexpired passports, and a copy of the page with their name and photo; color photos; original birth certificate or original *tazkera*, with certified translation in both Dari and English; DS-260 confirmation page;

Frequently asked questions about the interview process can be found [here](#).

Visa interviews are conducted in English. The Embassy usually has an interpreter for non-English speakers. Applicants should contact the Embassy where they are interviewing to request an interpreter, if needed.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

SIV recipients are eligible for certain benefits. If you have received a SIV and are still located overseas, submit the following documents for EACH person involved in the SIV case, including children:

- (1) A copy of your [Refugee Benefits Election Form](#) (the signature page may be scanned); and
- (2) A copy of your [DS-234](#), Special Immigrant Visa Biodata Form (you may simply save the PDF file).

Submit these forms and a copy of the visa page for EACH person involved in the SIV case to the Refugee Processing Center (RPC) at siv_ope@iom.int.

Note: Submitting these documents constitutes an application for an interest-free travel loan from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which will assist with arranging your benefits. If you do not want to travel through IOM, you will be responsible for finding your own housing. You will also need to apply for refugee benefits through your nearest refugee resettlement agency, which can be found [here](#).

HELPFUL TIPS

If the principal has died, their spouse and children may still apply.

A medical examination is typically required for someone to emigrate to the U.S.; however, these examinations may now be postponed until the applicant is inside the U.S., and are often being conducted on U.S. military bases.

Congress recently mandated that processing of these applications be completed within nine (9) months.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Department of State provides updates on the SIV program [here](#).

The [International Refugee Assistance Program](#) (IRAP) consistently updates its website with changes to the SIV application process. It also has extremely useful tips for completing your application.

The [Refugee Processing Center](#) offers Frequently Asked Questions in the following languages:

- o [English](#);
- o [Dari](#);
- o [Pashto](#).