Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Programs

Updated March 29, 2019
**Summary**

Congress has enacted a series of legislative provisions since 2006 to enable certain Iraqi and Afghan nationals to become U.S. lawful permanent residents (LPRs). These provisions make certain Iraqis and Afghans who worked as translators or interpreters, or who were employed by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government in Iraq or Afghanistan, eligible for *special immigrant* visas (SIVs). Special immigrants comprise a category of permanent employment-based admissions under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). While the special immigrant category is unique, it does bear some similarities to other admission categories that are authorized by other sections of the INA, including refugees and Amerasian children.

To apply under the SIV programs for Iraqis or Afghans, a prospective special immigrant must submit a petition to the Department of Homeland Security; be otherwise eligible for an immigrant visa; and be otherwise admissible to the United States. An Iraqi or Afghan SIV applicant whose petition is approved and who is abroad is required to have an in-person visa interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad to determine visa eligibility. Upon admission to the United States, SIV recipients are granted LPR status. Iraqi and Afghan special immigrants are eligible for the same resettlement assistance and federal public benefits as refugees.

There are three SIV programs for Iraqi and Afghan nationals. One is a permanent program for certain Iraqis and Afghans who have worked directly with U.S. Armed Forces, or under Chief of Mission authority, as translators or interpreters. This program is currently capped at 50 principal aliens (excluding spouses and children) per year.

The other two SIV programs for Iraqis and Afghans are temporary. One program is for certain Iraqis who were employed in Iraq by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government during a specified period. It was capped at 5,000 principal aliens annually for FY2008 through FY2012 and included a provision to carry forward any unused numbers from one fiscal year to the next. It expired at the end of FY2013, but was subsequently revived. Current statutory authority provides for the issuance of no more than 2,500 visas to principal applicants after January 1, 2014. Applications are no longer being accepted for this program because the application deadline has passed.

There is a similar SIV program for certain Afghans who were employed in Afghanistan by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government or by the International Security Assistance Force during a specified period. The program was capped at 1,500 principal aliens annually for FY2009 through FY2013, with a provision to carry forward any unused numbers from one fiscal year to the next. Current statutory authority provides for the issuance of no more than 18,500 visas to principal applicants after December 19, 2014. The application period for this program remains open.

Through the end of FY2018, more than 79,000 individuals were granted special immigrant status under the three SIV programs for Iraqi and Afghan nationals. Principal applicants accounted for about 26,000 of the total, and dependent spouses and children accounted for the remaining 53,000.

The Iraqi and Afghan SIV programs have faced challenges with respect to application processing, security screening, and visa availability. The structure of the SIV programs themselves, with statutory timeframes and numerical limitations, introduces additional complication.
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Introduction

The hundreds of Iraqi interpreters who work for the U.S. military conceal their identities in distinctive ways.

One wears a bulletproof Kevlar helmet and a black mask. Another wears sunglasses and a balaclava that covers his entire head.

What they share is the extraordinary danger of their job. Targeted for death by insurgents, they also face suspicion from their employers and often lie to relatives for fear that word of their job will get out.1

This excerpt from a January 2006 article in a Michigan newspaper suggests the dangerous work that Iraqi interpreters and translators performed in support of the U.S. war effort. Other sources similarly document the work performed by Afghan interpreters and translators and the danger they face. For example, a former Afghan interpreter for the U.S. military, profiled in a January 2017 article, said that it was too dangerous for him to return from the Afghan capital to his native province because of the Taliban. According to the interpreter:

[Taliban] will stop the car and block the road, and say, ‘Come here, I need you, bro’ … Then hang me or shoot me.2

In January 2006, the 109th Congress enacted the first in a series of legislative provisions to enable certain Iraqi and Afghan nationals to become U.S. lawful permanent residents (LPRs)3 based on their service to the U.S. government. Section 1059 of the FY2006 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)4 made certain Iraqi and Afghan nationals who had worked directly with U.S. Armed Forces as translators eligible for special immigrant visas (SIVs). Special immigrants comprise a category of permanent employment-based admissions under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).5 Upon admission to the United States, holders of SIVs are granted LPR status. A House Judiciary Committee report on a related bill in the 109th Congress to provide special immigrant status for Iraqi and Afghan translators (H.R. 2293) described the need for the legislation, as follows:

A number of alien translators currently working in Iraq and Afghanistan embedded with units of the U.S. Armed Forces are providing extremely valuable services. Their cooperation and close identification with the U.S. military have put these individuals and their families in danger. This danger will only escalate after U.S. forces leave or reduce their strength in Iraq and Afghanistan.6

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3 Lawful permanent residents, also known as immigrants and green card holders, are noncitizens who are legally authorized to reside permanently in the United States.
4 P.L. 109-163.
Congress subsequently broadened the special immigrant classification for translators and also authorized a second special immigrant classification for certain Iraqi and Afghan nationals who had worked for, or on behalf of, the U.S. government in Iraq or Afghanistan, respectively.

This report analyzes the SIV classifications for Iraqis and Afghans within the context of both the larger INA special immigrant category and selected other permanent admissions categories. It discusses the legislative changes to the individual Iraqi and Afghan special immigrant programs since their initial authorization, provides statistics on visa issuances, and considers challenges that have faced the programs.

**Legislative History of the Special Immigrant Category**

The term *special immigrant* is defined in Section 101(a)(27) of the INA. The definition consists of an enumeration of classifications eligible for this category, such as LPRs who are returning from a temporary stay abroad. Most special immigrant classifications are subject to an annual numerical limitation.

The special immigrant category was added to the INA by a 1965 immigration law, known as the 1965 amendments. The INA, as originally enacted in 1952, included a predecessor category of *nonquota immigrants*, immigrants who could be admitted to the United States without regard to numerical limitations. In the 1952 act, these nonquota immigrants included returning LPRs, natives of Western Hemisphere countries, ministers of religion, and long-serving employees of the U.S. government abroad, among other groups. The 1965 amendments to the INA redesignated the *nonquota immigrants* as *special immigrants* and made some changes to the various classifications.

The Immigration Act of 1990 further amended the special immigrant provisions in the INA. It placed the special immigrant category under a revised INA section on permanent employment-based immigration and imposed an overall annual numerical limitation of 10,000 on special immigrants, with exemptions for certain classifications. In addition, the 1990 act amended the existing special immigrant classifications and added several new ones. A 1991 immigration act changed the overall annual limitation on special immigrants from 10,000 to 7.1% of the worldwide level of employment-based immigration. Subsequent laws added new special immigrant classifications.

Today the special immigrant category encompasses a hodgepodge of classifications, but there are some commonalities among the seemingly disparate groups. Many of the classifications, for example, have a humanitarian element. In another commonality, some of the classifications are

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7 INA §101(a)(27)(A). Returning LPRs are the largest special immigrant group.
8 Returning LPRs are an exception; this special immigrant classification is not subject to a numerical limitation.
9 P.L. 89-236.
10 P.L. 101-169.
12 The 1990 act also imposed a cap of 5,000 on religious workers other than ministers within the overall annual numerical limitation of 10,000.
14 The base worldwide limit on employment-based immigration is 140,000; using this base, the special immigrant limit of 7.1% equals 9,940. See CRS Report R42866, *Permanent Legal Immigration to the United States: Policy Overview*. 
directed at individuals in certain fields of work that have a public service component. These include classifications for religious workers, graduates of foreign medical schools licensed to practice medicine in the United States, and international broadcasters.  

Particularly relevant for this report are special immigrant classifications that apply to individuals who have worked for the U.S. government. These include classifications for 15-year employees or former employees of the U.S. government abroad; nationals of Panama who are 15-year employees or former employees of the U.S. government in the former Canal Zone; and individuals who, after lawful enlistment abroad, have served or will serve on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for 12 years. Some of the classifications based on U.S. government employment apply to individuals who are placed in danger because of their work. For example, there is a special immigrant classification for individuals who were employees of the Panama Canal Company or Canal Zone Government on April 1, 1979, who provided faithful service for at least five years, and “whose personal safety, or the personal safety of whose spouse or children, as a direct result of such Treaty, is reasonably placed in danger because of the special nature of any of that employment.” As discussed in the next section, the two special immigrant classifications for Iraqis and Afghans similarly apply to individuals who performed U.S. government-related service, with one requiring the presence of a serious threat to the individual as a result of that U.S. government employment.

**Special Immigrant Visas for Iraqis and Afghans**

There are two special immigrant classifications specifically for nationals of Iraq and Afghanistan: one for individuals who worked as translators or interpreters and one for individuals who were employed by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government in Iraq or by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government or by the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. These classifications, in their current form, are the product of a series of legislative enactments, which initially established the classifications and then amended them (see Table 1 for a comparison of the main features of the programs within these classifications).

A prospective Iraqi or Afghan special immigrant must submit a petition for classification; be otherwise eligible to receive an immigrant visa; and be otherwise admissible to the United States, as specified. Regarding this last requirement, in order to gain admission to the United States, an individual must be admissible under the INA. The INA sets forth various grounds of inadmissibility, which include health-related grounds, security-related grounds, and public charge (i.e., indigence). The public charge ground does not apply to applicants under the special immigrant programs for Iraqis and Afghans; thus, these applicants are not required to demonstrate economic self-sufficiency.

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15 INA §101(a)(27)(C), (H), (M).
17 INA §101(a)(27)(G). April 1, 1979, was the effective date of the exchange of instruments of ratification of the Panama Canal Treaty of 1977.
18 The special immigrant classifications for Iraqis and Afghans are not enumerated in INA §101(a)(27). The public laws that established them did not amend the INA.
Aliens Who Worked as Translators or Interpreters

Section 1059 of the FY2006 NDAA made certain Iraqi and Afghan nationals who had worked directly with U.S. Armed Forces for at least one year as translators, and their spouses and children, eligible to be classified as special immigrants. The provision capped the number of principal aliens who could become special immigrants at 50 annually and provided that these individuals would count against the overall special immigrant cap (see “Legislative History of the Special Immigrant Category”).

Section 1059 was amended in 2007 to expand eligibility to certain Iraqi and Afghan nationals who had worked directly with U.S. Armed Forces, or under Chief of Mission authority, for at least one year as translators or interpreters. To be eligible for this special immigrant classification, as amended, the alien also had to obtain a favorable written recommendation from the Chief of Mission or a general or flag officer in the relevant Armed Forces unit. The 2007 legislation temporarily increased the numerical limit on this special immigrant program (to 500 for each of FY2007 and FY2008) and provided that the classification would be exempt from the overall numerical limits on special immigrants. Another 2007 amendment provided that if the numerical limits were not reached in a fiscal year any remaining numbers would be carried forward to the next year.

Aliens Who Worked for the U.S. Government

A second special immigrant classification for nationals of Iraq or Afghanistan and their spouses and children was established by Section 1244 of the FY2008 NDAA (for Iraqis) and by Title VI of the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 (for Afghans). This classification, as subsequently amended, is for certain Iraqi and Afghan nationals who were employed by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government in Iraq or Afghanistan, respectively, as specified. The Carl Levin and Howard P. “Buck” McKeon National Defense Authorization Act for FY2015 expanded eligibility for the Afghan program to include certain employees of the International Security Assistance Force. To be eligible for this special immigrant classification for nationals of Iraq or Afghanistan, an alien must obtain a recommendation from a senior supervisor that documents the alien’s “faithful and valuable service” as well as approval from the Chief of Mission. In addition, an applicant must have experienced “an ongoing serious threat” as a result of his or her employment.

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19 Excluding spouses and children.
20 P.L. 110-28, Title III, §3812; P.L. 110-36. These two public laws include many of the same provisions on special immigrant visas for Iraqi and Afghan translators and interpreters.
21 The Chief of Mission is the principal officer in charge of a U.S. diplomatic mission abroad. An individual who worked for the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq, or the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, directly (not as a contractor) is deemed to have worked under Chief of Mission authority.
22 In addition, the legislation authorized the Secretary of Homeland Security to adjust the status of an alien to LPR status if the alien (1) had been paroled into the country or admitted as a temporary legal resident and (2) was otherwise eligible for the special immigrant classification, even if the alien was not in a lawful immigration status, had engaged in unauthorized employment, or had otherwise violated the terms of his or her nonimmigrant visa. With some exceptions, such behavior would typically make an alien ineligible to adjust to LPR status. Parole is discretionary authority that may be exercised by DHS to allow an alien to enter the United States temporarily (without being formally admitted) for urgent humanitarian reasons or when the entry is determined to be for significant public benefit.
23 P.L. 110-161.
24 P.L. 110-181 (Iraqis); P.L. 111-8 (Afghans).
Iraqi Program

The Section 1244 program for Iraqis who were employed by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government in Iraq requires not less than one year of employment on or after March 20, 2003. The law that originally established the program did not specify an end date for the employment period. The Iraqi program was initially capped at 5,000 principal aliens annually for five years (later specified as FY2008-FY2012)26 with a provision to carry forward any unused numbers from one fiscal year to the next, including from FY2012 to FY2013. This program expired for principal aliens at the end of FY2013.27

At the beginning of FY2014, however, the 113th Congress approved a short-term extension of the program in P.L. 113-42.28 For FY2014, P.L. 113-42 provided for the approval of cases that were pending when the program expired on September 30, 2013, as well as 2,000 new cases, as long as the principal aliens in the new cases completed the required one-year period of employment by September 30, 2013, and filed an application with the Chief of Mission in Iraq by December 31, 2013. The NDAA for FY201429 rewrote the extension language in P.L. 113-42 to provide for the issuance of no more than 2,500 visas to principal applicants after January 1, 2014, and to extend the application deadline to September 30, 2014 (for an overview of the application process, see “Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Application Process”). No changes to the numerical cap or application deadline have been made since then.

Afghan Program

A similar SIV program for Afghans who were employed by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government in Afghanistan, as originally enacted, required not less than one year of employment on or after October 7, 2001. It was initially capped at 1,500 principal aliens annually for FY2009 through FY2013 with a provision to carry forward any unused numbers from one fiscal year to the next, including from FY2013 to FY2014.

Several laws passed by the 113th Congress amended the Afghan program’s numerical limitations to provide for additional visas. The FY2014 Consolidated Appropriations Act30 provided for the granting of special immigrant status to up to 3,000 principal aliens for FY2014 and the carrying forward and use of any unused balance for FY2014 through the end of FY2015. This law required the one-year employment period to end by December 31, 2014, and required principal aliens to file an application with the Chief of Mission in Afghanistan by September 30, 2014 (see “Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Application Process”). The Emergency Afghan Allies Extension Act of 201431 provided that an additional 1,000 principal aliens could be granted special immigrant status by December 31, 2014. This language required principal aliens to apply to the Chief of Mission no later than the same December 31, 2014, date.

28 §1.
Making further changes to the Afghan program’s numerical limitations, the FY2015 NDAA provided that an additional 4,000 principal aliens could obtain special immigrant status from the December 19, 2014, enactment date through September 30, 2016. For purposes of obtaining special immigrant status under the new provision, the law set the termination date for the required one-year employment period at September 30, 2015, the deadline to apply to the Chief of Mission at December 31, 2015, and the expiration date for the visa issuance authority at March 31, 2017.

Legislation passed in the 114th Congress further amended the Afghan SIV program. The NDAA for FY2016 increased from 4,000 to 7,000 the number of additional special immigrants visas available for issuance after December 19, 2014, and provided that these visas would remain available until used. The act also modified the employment requirements for certain applicants, requiring no less than two years of employment for those filing petitions after September 30, 2015, and extended both the employment period for eligibility and the application deadline until December 31, 2016. Regarding the future of the Afghan SIV program, the act included the following provision:

> It is the sense of Congress that the necessity of providing special immigrant status under this subsection should be assessed at regular intervals by the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate and the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Representatives, taking into account the scope of the current and planned presence of United States troops in Afghanistan, the current and prospective numbers of citizens and nationals of Afghanistan employed ... and the security climate in Afghanistan.

The NDAA for FY2017 increased the number of additional special immigrant visas to 8,500 and extended both the employment eligibility period and the application deadline to December 31, 2020. At the same time, it placed restrictions on qualifying employment for, or on behalf of, the U.S. government for visa issuance purposes for applications filed after the law’s December 23, 2016, date of enactment. For these applications, eligibility is limited to Afghans employed in Afghanistan (1) to serve as interpreters and translators, particularly while traveling away from U.S. embassies and consulates with personnel of the Department of State or the U.S. Agency for International Development or traveling off-base with U.S. military personnel; or (2) to perform sensitive activities for the U.S. government in Afghanistan.

In the 115th Congress, the FY2017 Consolidated Appropriations Act increased the number of additional visas available under the SIV program for Afghans who were employed by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government from 8,500 to 11,000. The NDAA for FY2018 provided 3,500 additional visas under this program, for a total of 14,500 visas available for issuance after December 19, 2014. The employment termination date and the application deadline remained unchanged at December 31, 2020.

In the 116th Congress, the FY2019 Consolidated Appropriations Act makes an additional 4,000 visas available under the SIV program for Afghans who were employed by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government, for a total of 18,500 visas available for issuance after December 19, 2014. The employment termination date and the application deadline remain unchanged at December 31, 2020. This law also makes the funding for the additional 4,000 visas conditional on the Secretary of State developing a system for prioritizing the processing of Afghan SIV applications and

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33 P.L. 114-328, §1214.
submitting specified reports, including a report on processing improvements that was required under the NDAA for FY2019\(^{37}\) (see “Application Processing”).

### Conversion of Petitions

As noted, since FY2009, the annual numerical limit on the Section 1059 program for translators and interpreters has been 50, well below the numerical limits on the programs for Iraqis and Afghans who were employed by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government in Iraq or Afghanistan, respectively. A 2008 law\(^{38}\) authorized the Secretary of Homeland Security or the Secretary of State to convert an approved special immigrant petition under the former program (filed before October 1, 2008) for which a visa was not immediately available to an approved petition under the latter program and subject to the numerical limits of that latter program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature/duration of Program</th>
<th>Iraqis and Afghans Who Worked as Translators or Interpreters</th>
<th>Iraqis Who Worked for or on Behalf of the U.S. Government</th>
<th>Afghans Who Worked for or on Behalf of the U.S. Government or for the International Security Assistance Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Required work period for eligibility</td>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>At least 1 year between 3/20/2003 and 9/30/2013</td>
<td>At least 1 year (or at least 2 years if petition filed after 9/30/2015) between 10/7/2001 and 12/31/2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability of spouse/children to accompany</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application deadline</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>9/30/2014</td>
<td>12/31/2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current numerical cap</td>
<td>50 per year</td>
<td>2,500 after 1/1/2014</td>
<td>18,500 after 12/19/2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility for refugee benefits</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Application Process

The process of applying for an Iraqi or Afghan special immigrant visa has multiple steps. The application process described in this section is for Iraqis and Afghans who are abroad, who represent the vast majority of applicants.\(^{39}\) (An applicant in the United States whose petition for


\(^{38}\) P.L. 110-242.

\(^{39}\) For additional information on the application process, see U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, *Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) for Iraqi and Afghan Translators/Interpreters*; U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs, *Special Immigrant Visas for Iraqis - Who Were Employed by/on Behalf of the U.S. Government*; and
classification as a special immigrant is approved under the process described below could then submit an application to adjust status\(^\text{40}\) along with supporting documentation; applicants in the United States do not go through the visa process.

The first step under the programs for Iraqis and Afghans who worked for or on behalf of the United States is to apply for Chief of Mission approval. To apply, the principal applicant must submit documentation to the Department of State (DOS), including, among other required information, a letter from the applicant’s employer confirming employment; a letter of recommendation from the applicant’s direct U.S. citizen supervisor; and a statement from the applicant describing the threats he or she received as a result of his or her U.S. government employment. If approval is granted, the applicant receives a Chief of Mission approval letter.

The next step for applicants under the special immigrant programs for Iraqis and Afghans who worked for, or on behalf of, the United States—and the first step for applicants under the program for translators and interpreters—is to file a petition with the Department of Homeland Security’s U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (DHS/USCIS) along with accompanying documents. In the case of the program for those who worked for, or on behalf of, the United States, the required documents include copies of the Chief of Mission approval letter and of the letter of recommendation from the direct supervisor. In the case of the program for translators or interpreters, the required documents include evidence of qualifying employment, a letter of recommendation from the Chief of Mission or a general or flag officer in the relevant U.S. Armed Forces unit, and evidence of a background check and screening by the Chief of Mission or the U.S. Armed Forces.

A petition for classification as an Iraqi or Afghan special immigrant that is approved by USCIS is forwarded to DOS’s National Visa Center (NVC), which contacts the applicant to advise him or her to begin collecting required documents. The applicant must submit forms and documents for all family members applying for visas to the NVC. In addition to the immigrant visa application, these materials include copies of passport biodata pages, birth certificates, and civil documents; police certificates, if applicable;\(^\text{41}\) and a refugee benefits election form, indicating whether the applicant, if approved to receive a special immigrant visa, would like to participate in DOS’s Reception and Placement program and receive associated benefits (see “Resettlement Assistance and Federal Public Benefits”).

The NVC schedules an in-person visa interview for the principal applicant and any family members at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad. The interview is required to determine eligibility for a visa. Applicants’ fingerprints are taken at the time of the interview. Applicants are also required to have a medical examination at their own cost. After the interview, the consular office informs the applicant about any missing documentation and about any problems with the case that may prevent issuance of a visa. Many cases require additional “administrative processing” after the interview.

Applicants who are issued visas and who have elected to participate in DOS’s resettlement program must have their travel to the United States arranged by the International Organization for Migration. Visa recipients who have elected not to participate in DOS’s resettlement program are

\(^{40}\) Adjustment of status is the process of obtaining LPR status from within the United States.

\(^{41}\) A police certificate is required for residents of Iraq. Applicants from Iraq or Afghanistan who have lived in another country for more than 12 months after age 16 must submit a police certificate from that locality. A police certificate is not otherwise required for residents of Afghanistan.

responsible for making their own travel arrangements. Upon admission to the United States, SIV recipients obtain LPR status.

Comparison of Special Immigrants to Other Selected Admissions Categories

Special immigrant classifications have been established to provide for the permanent admission to the United States of specific populations. As noted, special immigrants comprise a subcategory of permanent employment-based immigrants in the INA, although they are not, in fact, admitted for employment purposes. While the special immigrant category is unique, it does bear similarities to other admission categories that are authorized by other sections of the INA.

Refugees

Unlike special immigrants, refugees comprise a category of humanitarian admissions under the INA. As defined in the INA, a refugee is a person who is unwilling or unable to return to his or her home country “because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.” Refugees accepted for admission to the United States can be accompanied by their spouses and children. The admissions process for refugees is separate from and different than the process for immigrants. After one year in refugee status, they are required to apply to adjust to LPR status. By contrast, special immigrants, like immigrants generally, are granted LPR status upon admission to the United States.

Despite the definitional and procedural differences, there is overlap between the refugee category and the special immigrant category, particularly the special immigrant classifications for Iraqis and Afghans. And the same individuals may be eligible to apply for both refugee status and for classification under one of the Iraqi or Afghan special immigrant programs. Unlike the refugee category, the special immigrant classifications for Iraqis and Afghans do not require a showing of persecution. At the same time, the statutory definitions of an eligible alien for the special immigrant programs for Iraqis and Afghans who worked for, or on behalf of, the United States include the following: “has experienced or is experiencing an ongoing serious threat as a consequence of the alien’s employment by the United States Government.”

Another similarity between the special immigrant and refugee categories concerns the element of having a connection to the United States. As noted in the preceding legislative history discussion, U.S. government service is a common feature in special immigrant classifications, including those for Iraqis and Afghans. A U.S. connection also may facilitate access to the U.S. refugee admissions program. Overseas refugee processing is conducted through a system of three

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42 For a general discussion of the permanent immigration system, including employment-based immigration, see CRS Report R42866, Permanent Legal Immigration to the United States: Policy Overview.
43 The refugee admissions process is set forth in INA §207.
44 INA §101(a)(42).
45 See CRS Report RL31269, Refugee Admissions and Resettlement Policy.
Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Programs

Priorities for admission. The priorities provide access to U.S. resettlement consideration. Priority 1, which covers refugees for whom resettlement seems to be the appropriate durable solution, applies to all nationalities and requires no connection to the United States. A U.S. connection, however, is a factor under Priorities 2 and 3, which provide more direct access to the U.S. refugee admissions program. Priority 2 covers specified groups of special humanitarian concern to the United States, which may be defined by their nationalities, clans, ethnicities, or other characteristics. A U.S. connection is a required element for some Priority 2 groups, such as Iraqis associated with the United States. Priority 3, which is limited to designated nationalities, covers family reunification cases and requires the prospective refugee to have an eligible relative in the United States.

Resettlement Assistance and Federal Public Benefits

Iraqi and Afghan special immigrants are treated like refugees for purposes of federal public benefits. Under the refugee provisions in the INA, some inadmissibility grounds are not applicable to refugees. The inapplicable grounds include public charge, as is the case with Iraqi and Afghan special immigrants. Relatedly, needy refugees are eligible for resettlement assistance through programs administered by DOS and the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement (HHS/ORR). Under DOS’s Reception and Placement program, public and private, nonprofit entities provide new arrivals with initial resettlement services and referrals to other services, as needed. ORR’s refugee resettlement programs provide transitional assistance to refugees and other designated groups. Refugees are also subject to special rules with respect to federal public benefits, such as Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for the Aged, Blind and Disabled.

While Iraqi and Afghan special immigrants are now eligible for the same federal public assistance as refugees, this was not always the case. The original law establishing the special immigrant program for Iraqi and Afghan translators included no language on eligibility for resettlement support. Subsequent laws on the Iraqi and Afghan special immigrant programs made Iraqis and Afghans eligible for refugee assistance and benefits on a time-limited basis. With the enactment of the NDAA for FY2010, special immigrants from Iraq and Afghanistan became eligible for the same resettlement assistance, entitlement programs, and other benefits as refugees and for the same periods of time.

Amerasian Children

Amerasian children, like Iraqis and Afghans who have assisted the U.S. government, are the subject of special permanent admissions provisions in the INA. The Amerasian provisions have a humanitarian component, but, like the special immigrant provisions, are not a category of humanitarian admissions. Instead, Amerasian children are admitted to the United States under the

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47 In order to gain admission to the United States, an individual must be admissible under the INA. INA §212(a) sets forth various grounds of inadmissibility, which include health-related grounds, security-related grounds, and public charge (i.e., indigence).


49 See CRS Report RL31269, Refugee Admissions and Resettlement Policy.

50 P.L. 110-161, Div. G, §525 (Iraqi and Afghan eligibility for up to six months); P.L. 110-181, §1244(g), January 28, 2008 (Iraqi eligibility for up to 8 months); P.L. 111-8, Div. F, §602(b)(8) (Afghan eligibility for up to 8 months).

51 P.L. 111-118, §207.
permanent family-based immigration provisions of the INA (as opposed to the employment-based provisions under which special immigrants are admitted).\(^{52}\) A law enacted in 1982 amended the INA to provide for the admission to the United States as family-based immigrants of individuals born in Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea (Cambodia), or Thailand between 1950 and 1982 with U.S. citizen fathers. An immigrant petition could be filed by the eligible individual or by another person on behalf of an eligible individual. Beneficiaries could not be accompanied to the United States by their mothers or other relatives. In the case of minors, the 1982 law required the mother or guardian to sign a written release and provided for placement of the child with a U.S. citizen or LPR sponsor.

A subsequent law enacted in 1987, as amended, eliminated some of restrictions on the immigration of Amerasian children. The 1987 law, which provided for the admission to the United States as immigrants of Vietnamese nationals born in Vietnam between 1962 and 1976 and fathered by a U.S. citizen, permitted the beneficiary to be accompanied by a mother, a spouse, and children. The 1987 law, as amended, also made the public charge ground of inadmissibility inapplicable to these aliens and made them eligible for benefits under the refugee provisions of the INA. With these changes, the treatment of this group became more similar to that of refugees and today’s Iraqi and Afghan special immigrants.

### Special Immigrant Visa Statistics

Through the end of FY2018, more than 79,000 individuals had been issued special immigrant visas abroad, or been adjusted to LPR status in the United States, under the special immigrant classifications for Iraqi and Afghan nationals. Principal applicants accounted for about 26,000 of the total; dependent spouses and children accounted for the remaining 53,000. Table 2 provides data on the special immigrant classification for Iraqi and Afghan translators and interpreters. Table 3 provides data on the special immigrant classification for Iraqis and Afghans who were employed by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government in Iraq or Afghanistan, respectively. As shown in Table 3 and as discussed in the next section, there was a significant drop in visa issuances from FY2017 to FY2018. The tables are mutually exclusive; an individual appears in only one table.\(^{53}\) (The Appendix contains separate tables for Iraqis and Afghans for each special immigrant classification.)\(^{54}\)

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\(^{53}\) As indicated in the table notes, Table 3 includes individuals with approved petitions under the translator/interpreter program whose cases were converted as provided for in P.L. 110-242; however, any such individuals would not be included in Table 2.

### Table 2. Special Immigrant Visas for Iraqi and Afghan Translators and Interpreters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Dependents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>1,003</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>1,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>51</td>
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<td>84</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>80</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>131</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>165</td>
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<td>2017</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>1,576</td>
<td>2,192</td>
<td>3,768</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs.

Notes: The data include individuals classified as special immigrants who adjusted to LPR status in the United States.

### Table 3. Special Immigrant Visas for Iraqis and Afghans Who Worked for the U.S. Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Dependents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>371</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>1,680</td>
<td>1,736</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>947</td>
<td>1,103</td>
<td>2,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,724</td>
<td>2,320</td>
<td>4,044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1,992</td>
<td>3,116</td>
<td>5,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>3,876</td>
<td>6,805</td>
<td>10,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2,636</td>
<td>5,299</td>
<td>7,935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>4,283</td>
<td>10,100</td>
<td>14,383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>4,677</td>
<td>13,713</td>
<td>18,390</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1,801</td>
<td>6,025</td>
<td>7,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>24,307</td>
<td>50,943</td>
<td>75,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs.

Notes: The data include individuals with approved petitions under the translator/interpreter program whose cases were converted in accordance with P.L. 110-242; the data also include individuals classified as special immigrants who adjusted to LPR status in the United States.
Selected Challenges

There is a fundamental tension in the administration of the Iraqi and Afghan SIV programs between a sense of urgency to issue visas in a timely fashion to eligible individuals and a need to conduct appropriate security screening. This tension is quite sharp because on the one hand these programs are aimed at individuals who assisted the United States and face danger because of it, and on the other hand there are serious concerns that this population may pose security threats. Overlaying this dynamic is the structure of the SIV programs themselves, with statutory timeframes and numerical limitations.

Application Processing

The Iraqi and Afghan SIV application process has been subject to much criticism. According to a February 2014 PBS NewsHour piece on the SIV program for Afghans who worked for, or on behalf of, the U.S. government:

Critics describe the process of applying for a visa as opaque, prohibitively complicated and painfully slow, putting the applicant’s [sic] lives at risk with each passing month that their visas aren’t approved.55

In a 2010 assessment of the SIV program for Iraqis who worked for, or on behalf of, the U.S. government, another observer characterized the application process as a series of procedural barriers and argued that it was impossible to navigate the process without English-speaking legal assistance.56 Anecdotal reports describe years-long waits for approval, layers of bureaucracy, and unexpected denials.57

DOS has acknowledged past problems processing Afghan SIV applications but has also cited changes to improve the efficiency of the system. In the 2014 PBS NewsHour piece, Jarrett Blanc, Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, identified the need for approval by the Chief of Mission committee in the U.S. embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, as a “key bottleneck at the start of the process” that has been addressed. Blanc explained that by increasing the number of committees handling cases, applications could be reviewed within two weeks of filing.58

Other changes to the Iraqi and Afghan SIV programs implemented by DOS to decrease processing times were enumerated by Janice Jacobs, former Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs, in written testimony for a July 2011 Senate hearing:

We no longer require documentation that we found to be redundant; we have decreased the amount of paperwork that must be submitted by mail in favor of electronic submissions; and we have reorganized internal procedures so that the process moves faster.59

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58 P.J. Tobia, “Tongue Tied in Afghanistan.”

Incomplete applications also present problems. In response to questions on the SIV program for Iraqis who worked for, or on behalf of, the U.S. government following an October 2011 Senate Judiciary Committee oversight hearing, DHS referred to obstacles faced by SIV applicants in preparing their applications. The cited obstacles included difficulties obtaining a recommendation from a supervisor and a copy of the work contract. In his comments on the parallel Afghan SIV program for the PBS NewsHour piece, Blanc argued that the Afghan applicants share responsibility for the processing delays by failing to submit all the necessary paperwork.

The Department of Homeland Security reported at a December 2012 House Homeland Security Committee hearing that it takes between 3 and 10 days, on average, to process an Iraqi or Afghan SIV petition. The department indicated in response to a question following the October 2011 Senate Judiciary Committee hearing that it did not need additional resources to expedite SIV petition processing (see “Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Application Process”).

The 113th Congress enacted legislation to amend the SIV programs for Afghans and Iraqis who worked for, or on behalf of, the U.S. government to address application processing-related concerns. The FY2014 NDAA established a review process for denial of Chief of Mission approval under each program. More generally, this law directed the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to make changes to the processing of applications under each program such that “all steps ... incidental to the issuance of such visas, including required screenings and background checks, should be completed not later than 9 months after the date on which an eligible alien submits all required materials to complete an application for such visa.” At the same time, the act included an exception to the nine-month limit in “high-risk cases for which satisfaction of national security concerns requires additional time.”

The FY2014 NDAA included reporting requirements related to application processing under the SIV programs for Afghans and Iraqis who worked for, or on behalf of, the U.S. government. It required the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to report to Congress on the implementation of improvements to SIV application processing under both programs. The FY2019 NDAA subsequently required a new report on the implementation of SIV application processing improvements under the Afghan program. The July 2018 conference report on this legislation noted concern that “the SIV application process continues to suffer from inadequate interagency coordination which has resulted in undue delay, needless stress on applicants, and a sizable drop in SIV admissions this year.”

In addition to requiring a congressional report, the FY2014 NDAA provided for public reports on Iraqi and Afghan SIV application processing. It required the Secretary of State and the Secretary

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61 P.J. Tobia, “Tongue Tied in Afghanistan.”


63 DHS further responded: “We respectfully refer you to the Department of State to comment on whether they have unmet resource needs.” DHS oversight hearing, October 19, 2011, p. 44.

64 P.L. 113-66, §§1218-1219.

of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of Defense, to publish quarterly reports describing improvements in efficiency in SIV application processing. The first quarterly reports on the Iraqi and Afghan SIV programs, dated April 2014, stated that the “U.S. government has devoted resources to reducing the amount of time required to complete the SIV process.”

Similar language appears in all subsequent quarterly reports on the Iraqi program through the most recent July 2018 report, and in all subsequent quarterly reports on the Afghan program through the April 2017 report.

Among other data, the quarterly reports on the Iraqi and Afghan SIV programs include average total U.S. government processing time for SIV applications. This statistic excludes any steps in the application process that are the responsibility of the applicant, such as filing a petition with USCIS (see “Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Application Process”). In the initial April 2014 quarterly reports, average total U.S. government processing time was 239 business days for the Iraqi program and 287 business days for the Afghan program. In the January 2016 reports, average total U.S. government processing time was 311 business days for the Iraqi program and 293 business days for the Afghan program. In the most recent quarterly reports for July 2018, average total U.S. government processing time was 252 calendar days for the Iraqi program and 692 calendar days for the Afghan program.

A lawsuit challenging the delays in processing Iraqi and Afghan SIV applications was filed in federal court in the District of Columbia in June 2018. It remains pending as of the date of this report.

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67 Links to all the quarterly reports are available at https://travel.state.gov/content/immigrate/iraquis-work-for-us.html (Iraqi program); https://travel.state.gov/content/immigrate/afghans-work-for-us.html (Afghan program).


Security Concerns

As suggested by the “high-risk cases” language cited in the preceding section, protecting U.S. national security remains a major concern about the Iraqi and Afghan SIV programs. Iraqi and Afghan SIV applicants are subject to security checks conducted by DHS and DOS, a process that involves coordination with other agencies.

Details of the security review process are not publicly available. In her written testimony for the July 2011 Senate hearing, Jacobs said, “While we cannot discuss specifics for security reasons, SIV applicants from Iraq as well as Afghanistan undergo multiple layers of review.”

In written responses to questions following an April 2013 Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, then-Secretary of State John Kerry identified the interagency security screening process as one of the “major obstacles” to the quick processing of Afghan SIV applications. Indicating that security screening “takes the most time,” he offered that “the Department of State is working constantly with our interagency counterparts to streamline this comprehensive and essential process while eliminating bottlenecks.”

Scrutiny of the security review process for Iraqi and Afghan SIV applicants increased in 2011 following the arrest on terrorism charges of two Iraqi nationals who had entered the United States through the U.S. refugee program. The potential security risks posed by prospective refugees and special immigrants from Iraq and elsewhere were discussed at the December 2012 House hearing cited above, which was entitled Terrorist Exploitation of Refugee Programs. At the hearing, then-DHS Deputy Under Secretary for Analysis Dawn Scalici described U.S. government efforts to identify potential threats:

> When we look at on [sic] the potential in the future for terrorist groups to exploit the refugee program, we do have concerns. Hence, we have the enhanced security and vetting procedures.... I will tell you that we have intelligence-driven processes regardless of the immigration program that a terrorist actor may seek to use or just travel to the United States. We are reviewing intelligence on a regular basis, sharing that with interagency partners and developing the procedures by which we can help to identify and further [screen] individuals of concern.

The quarterly reports on application processing under the SIV programs for Iraqis and Afghans who worked for, or on behalf of, the U.S. government mention security screening. For example, the July 2018 reports for both programs reference “thorough screening for national security concerns.” Neither Iraq nor Afghanistan is among the countries subject to entry restrictions or limitations under President Donald Trump’s September 2017 presidential proclamation on enhanced vetting. Regarding Iraq, however, the proclamation includes a recommendation from the Secretary of Homeland Security that “nationals of Iraq who seek to enter the United States be

2018).

72 Testimony of Janice L. Jacobs at Senate hearing, July 13, 2011, p. 522.
Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Programs

subject to additional scrutiny to determine if they pose risks to the national security or public safety of the United States.76

Visa Availability

The SIV program for Iraqi and Afghan translators and interpreters is ongoing, while the programs for Iraqis and Afghans who worked for, or on behalf of, the U.S. government are temporary. As of the date of this report, the temporary Afghan program and the temporary Iraqi program are scheduled to end when all the available visas are issued.

As detailed above, each of the three SIV programs has been subject to statutory numerical limitations from the start.77 The numerical limitations language in the statutes creating the programs for Iraqis and Afghans who worked for, or on behalf of, the U.S. government also provided for the carryover of unused visas from a given fiscal year to the next during a specified period (see “Special Immigrant Visas for Iraqis and Afghans”).

In the case of the program for Iraqis who worked for, or on behalf of, the U.S. government, as amended, any of the 5,000 visas made available annually for principal aliens for FY2008 through FY2012 that were not used in a given fiscal year were carried forward to the next fiscal year, with unused visas for FY2012 carried forward to FY2013. Visas that were carried forward but not used in that next fiscal year were lost. At the end of FY2013, the Iraqi program ended and any remaining visas were lost. The program was subsequently revived and new visas were authorized. Currently, P.L. 113-66 provides for the issuance of 2,500 visas to principal aliens under the Iraqi program after January 1, 2014. This law required that applications be filed by September 30, 2014, but included no deadline for issuance of the visas.

Under the program for Afghans who worked for, or on behalf of, the U.S. government, as originally authorized, any of the 1,500 visas made available annually for principal aliens for FY2009 through FY2013 that were not used in a given fiscal year were carried forward to the next fiscal year. P.L. 113-76 provided for the issuance of 3,000 visas to principal aliens for FY2014 and for the carrying forward of any unused balance for issuance in FY2015. As under the Iraqi program, carried-over visas that were not used in the second fiscal year were lost.

Subsequent Afghan special immigrant visa provisions enacted by the 113th Congress made additional visas available subject to specified employment periods, application deadlines, and visa issuance authority expiration dates. Legislation enacted by the 114th, 115th, and 116th Congresses made additional visas available for issuance after December 14, 2014, but provided that these visas would remain available until used. Some of these laws also extended employment termination dates and application deadlines (see “Afghan Program”). In 2014 and 2017, DOS temporarily stopped scheduling interviews for Afghan special immigrant visa applicants due to a dwindling stock of available visas. The FY2019 Consolidated Appropriations Act provides for the issuance of a total of 18,500 visas to principal aliens under the Afghan program after December 19, 2014.78

The SIV program for translators and interpreters is capped at 50 visas for principal aliens per year. It has been capped at this level for each year except for FY2007 and FY2008, when the cap

76 U.S. President (Trump), Proclamation 9645 of September 24, 2017, “Enhancing Vetting Capabilities and Processes for Detecting Attempted Entry Into the United States by Terrorists or Other Public-Safety Threats,” 82 Federal Register 45161, September 27, 2017.
77 Subsequent amendments, however, made changes to the numerical limitations provisions (see “Special Immigrant Visas for Iraqis and Afghans”).
stood at 500. This program did not originally include carryover provisions, but such language was later added by amendment. As under the other SIV programs, visas that are carried forward but not used in the next fiscal year are lost.

Consideration of these numerical limitation and carryover provisions, in conjunction with the visa issuance data for the SIV programs for Iraqis and Afghans who worked for, or on behalf of, the U.S. government (in Table A-3 and Table A-4 in the Appendix), indicates that thousands of visas provided for these two programs are no longer available. As shown in the tables, through FY2013, visa issuances under both programs consistently fell well below the statutory limits. Under current statutory provisions for the SIV programs for Iraqis and Afghans who worked for, or on behalf of, the U.S. government, as described above, there are no deadlines for the issuance of the visas.

Conclusion

There seems to be broad agreement that the United States should admit for permanent residence Iraqis and Afghans who assisted the U.S. government overseas, provided that they do not pose security risks. Yet implementing the SIV programs intended to accomplish this policy goal has proven difficult. Given the seeming consensus that the U.S. government should assist its Iraqi and Afghan employees in need, an ongoing question for Congress is whether the existing SIV provisions are sufficient to accomplish this, or whether further extensions of the temporary SIV programs for Iraqis and Afghans who worked for, or on behalf of, the U.S. government, or other changes to the SIV provisions are warranted.
Appendix. Additional Special Immigrant Data

Iraqi and Afghan Translators and Interpreters

Table 2 in the main body of the report provides data on visa issuances to Iraqis and Afghans (combined) under the special immigrant program for translators and interpreters. The tables here present visa issuance data under this program for Iraqis and Afghans separately. Table A-1 provides data on Iraqi nationals who were issued special immigrant visas, or who adjusted to LPR status in the United States, under the special immigrant program for translators and interpreters. Table A-2 provides comparable data for Afghan nationals. Both Table A-1 and Table A-2 exclude certain dependents that are included in Table 2. These are dependents (27 in total) who received a special immigrant visa or adjusted status under the translator/interpreter program and are Iraqi or Afghan nationals but were born in a third country. These 27 dependents account for the discrepancy between these tables and Table 2. The significant decreases in Table A-1 and Table A-2 after FY2008 reflect changes in the numerical limitations on this classification (see “Aliens Who Worked as Translators or Interpreters”).

Table A-1. Special Immigrant Visas for Iraqi Translators and Interpreters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Dependents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
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<td>387</td>
<td>824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>2018</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>1,740</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs.

Notes: The data include individuals classified as special immigrants who adjusted to LPR status in the United States; the data do not include dependents born in a country other than Iraq.
Table A-2. Special Immigrant Visas for Afghan Translators and Interpreters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Dependents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>220</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>1,286</td>
<td>2,001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs.

Notes: The data include individuals classified as special immigrants who adjusted to LPR status in the United States; the data do not include dependents born in a country other than Afghanistan.

Iraqis and Afghans Who Worked for the U.S. Government

Table 3 in the main body of the report provides data on visa issuances to Iraqis and Afghans (combined) under the special immigrant programs for Iraqis and Afghans who worked for the U.S. government. The tables here present visa issuance data under these programs for Iraqis and Afghans separately. Table A-3 provides data on Iraqi nationals who were issued special immigrant visas, or who adjusted to LPR status in the United States, under the special immigrant program for Iraqis who were employed in Iraq by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government. Table A-4 provides comparable data for Afghan nationals under the special immigrant program for Afghans who were employed in Afghanistan by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government or by the International Security Assistance Force. Both Table A-3 and Table A-4 exclude certain dependents that are included in Table 3. These are dependents (477 in total) who received a special immigrant visa or adjusted status under these programs and are Iraqi or Afghan nationals but were born in a third country. These 477 dependents account for the discrepancy between these tables and Table 3.
### Table A-3. Special Immigrant Visas for Iraqis Who Worked for the U.S. Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Dependents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>172</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1,418</td>
<td>1,347</td>
<td>2,765</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>1,051</td>
<td>1,991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>352</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>1,661</td>
<td>2,209</td>
<td>3,870</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1,340</td>
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<td>3,555</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>435</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>1,180</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>1,593</td>
<td>2,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>1,577</td>
<td>2,134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,984</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,761</strong></td>
<td><strong>20,745</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs.

**Notes:** The data include individuals with approved petitions under the translators/interpreters program whose cases were converted in accordance with P.L. 110-242, June 3, 2008; the data also include individuals classified as special immigrants who adjusted to LPR status in the United States; the data do not include dependents born in a country other than Iraq.

### Table A-4. Special Immigrant Visas for Afghans Who Worked for the U.S. Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Principals</th>
<th>Dependents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>1,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>3,441</td>
<td>5,666</td>
<td>9,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2,301</td>
<td>4,411</td>
<td>6,712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>3,626</td>
<td>8,460</td>
<td>12,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>4,120</td>
<td>12,050</td>
<td>16,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1,649</td>
<td>5,585</td>
<td>7,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,323</strong></td>
<td><strong>37,705</strong></td>
<td><strong>54,028</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs.

**Notes:** The data include individuals classified as special immigrants who adjusted to LPR status in the United States; the data do not include dependents born in a country other than Afghanistan.
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