



# HIGHLIGHTS

Office of Inspector General  
United States Department of State

AUD-GEER-24-21

## What OIG Reviewed

Following the Department of State (Department) evacuation and suspension of operations at U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan, in August 2021, multiple congressional committees requested that the Office of Inspector General (OIG) review the processing of Afghan special immigrant visas (SIV). OIG is issuing a series of reports in response to the requests. In addition, Section 5275 of the FY 2023 National Defense Authorization Act directed OIG to assess the Department's "efforts to support and process evacuees from Afghanistan and the Afghanistan [SIV] program." OIG incorporated the Section 5275 requirements into its ongoing work related to Afghan SIVs.

OIG conducted this evaluation to (1) determine the extent to which the Department accounted for the total number of individuals evacuated from Afghanistan in 2021 with U.S. government support and (2) assess the systems, staffing, policies, and programs used to screen and vet SIV applicants.

## What OIG Recommends

OIG made two recommendations to improve data sharing between the Department and the Department of Defense (DoD) during military assisted evacuations, including noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO). Based on the Department's response to the draft report, OIG considers one recommendation closed and one recommendation resolved, pending further action. A synopsis of the Department's comments and OIG's reply follow each recommendation in the Results section of this report. The Department's response to the draft report is reprinted in its entirety in Appendix C.

July 2024

## OFFICE OF AUDITS

GLOBAL EMERGENCIES AND EMERGING RISKS

### Evaluation of Department of State Accounting, Screening, and Vetting of Afghan Evacuees

#### What OIG Found

OIG could not confirm the number of individuals evacuated from Afghanistan, regardless of destination, with U.S. government support in 2021. In a September 2021 press statement, Secretary Blinken said the U.S. government and its partners evacuated approximately 124,000 individuals from Afghanistan in August 2021. OIG determined that the Department relied entirely on DoD to track evacuation statistics because the military commander was responsible for conducting the NEO. In addition, the NEO memorandum of agreement (MOA) did not include a provision to provide the Department access to DoD data on evacuees. Although OIG requested DoD documentation to validate the number of evacuees, DoD did not fully respond to OIG's request prior to the issuance of this report. According to DoD officials, the source data may be available, but that data was never provided to OIG despite repeated attempts to obtain it.

Following the NEO, the Department continued relocating Afghan SIV applicants, U.S. citizens, and other eligible Afghans from Afghanistan. OIG found that the Department maintained records of individuals relocated since the NEO ended. According to its records, from September 2021 through December 2023, the Department relocated 35,171 individuals, including 1,971 U.S. citizens and 21,925 Afghan SIV holders and applicants from Afghanistan. Separately, the Department reported that, as of May 28, 2024, it had resettled 1,974 family members of unaccompanied minors for family reunification.

OIG also reviewed a statistical sample of Afghan SIVs issued in 2021 and found that the Department followed its established policies, process, and procedures to screen and vet the Afghan SIV applicants with respect to confirming the applicants' identity and spouses who were minors. In addition, OIG did not find any instances of human trafficking or domestic abuse concerns in the Afghan SIV files reviewed. As such, OIG cannot confirm that consular officers followed all applicable Department procedures but had no indications that appropriate procedures were not followed. As a result, the Department has reasonable assurance that the SIV application review process is functioning as designed.