



POLICY

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
2000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2000

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Duckworth:

Thank you for your letter dated July 27, 2021, regarding the development of additional means of employment verification for applicants in the Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program.

The Department of Defense (DoD) recently partnered with the Department of State's Afghan SIV team to help expedite and streamline the SIV process for Afghan nationals who were employed by DoD contractors. The effort known as Project Rabbit, simplifies the Employment Verification & Letter of Recommendation portion of the pre-Chief of Mission (pre-COM) phase of the SIV application process, one of the most burdensome portions of the process. Project Rabbit replaces the need for companies to write employment verification letters and letters of recommendation for each of their Afghan employees who have applied for a SIV. Human resource data and employment records are voluntarily provided by companies and matched to data in the National Visa Center's (NVC) SIV applications submitted by Afghans who worked under DoD contracts. DoD's biometric database is also used to help confirm Afghan employment data. As of September 27, 2021, the team reviewed over 7,800 employment records and matched over 3,400 pre-COM applicants with employment data to assist in moving them forward in the SIV process.

Our nation's commitment to our Afghan partners has no deadline and did not end on August 31. The Department of Defense remains fully committed to supporting these efforts, including continually improving the processes and procedures for verifying employment of our Afghan allies. I will underscore that it remains our expectation – and the expectation of the international community – that those who want to leave Afghanistan and have appropriate documentation should be able to do so free of local interference. The Taliban has committed to allowing safe passage for people with valid travel documents. We, along with our international partners, will hold them to that commitment.

Thank you for your support of our men and women in uniform and our Afghan allies and partners.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colin H. Kahl", is written over a blue circular logo. The logo features a stylized figure or symbol.

Colin H. Kahl, PhD