

# Afghan Special Immigrant Visa Chief of Mission Approval Process Frequently Asked Questions

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## Requesting Chief of Mission Approval

### **Who is the Chief of Mission (COM)?**

The Chief of Mission (COM) is the principal officer in charge at a U.S. diplomatic mission. The COM for Afghanistan reviews the qualifications of those who intend to apply for an Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV). The COM can designate a person to review materials submitted for COM approval. That person is called the COM Designee.

### **Who is eligible for an Afghan Special Immigrant Status?**

The Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 provides the eligibility requirements for an Afghan Special Immigrant Visa. As a principal applicant, you must:

- 1) Prove you are a citizen or national of Afghanistan. You do this by submitting a copy of your Afghanistan passport, National Identity Card, and/or a copy of your Tazkera translated into English.
- 2) Prove you worked in Afghanistan for a minimum total of 12 months beginning after October 7, 2001, and your employment was by or on behalf of the U.S. Government, or by the International Assistance Force (ISAF), or a successor mission. You prove this by submitting a letter written by your employer's Human Resources department.
- 3) Prove you provided faithful and valuable service to the United States Government, and that you have experienced, or are experiencing, an ongoing threat as a consequence of your employment by or on behalf of

the U.S. You prove this by submitting a Letter of Recommendation written by the person who supervised you during your qualifying employment.

Instructions for Applying for Chief of Mission Approval give further details on establishing each qualification.

### **When is the deadline to submit materials to apply for Chief of Mission approval in support of an Afghan Special Immigrant Visa?**

December 31, 2024, is the last day to submit documents to apply for Chief of Mission approval. Send COM review materials to the National Visa Center at [AfghanSIVApplication@state.gov](mailto:AfghanSIVApplication@state.gov). Documents must include the principal applicant's name, birth date, copy or scan of Afghan national identity card (tazkera), and an email address. More documents and information can be sent later if necessary.

### **Will the U.S. continue processing Chief of Mission review materials after the visa limit number is reached?**

Yes, the COM will continue reviewing application for COM approval, even after the visa limit number is reached through December 31, 2024. Once the COM makes a decision on your review materials the COM shares that information with the National Visa Center (NVC). If visas are available, NVC will contact you to schedule your visa interview. If visas are no longer available, NVC will hold your case.

### **How much employment is needed to qualify for an Afghan Special Immigrant Visa?**

One year (12 months) of qualifying employment is now required. Two years was required in the past, but now only one year is needed.

## **I began working for ISAF and I now work for Resolute Support Mission (RSM). Can I qualify for an Afghan Special Immigrant Visa?**

Yes, you might. You may qualify if you have a total of at least one year of employment between October 7, 2001, and December 31, 2024, with ISAF or a [successor mission](#). Here is the definition of a [successor mission](#).

You must have:

- served as an interpreter or translator,
- while traveling off-base *with* U.S. military personnel stationed at ISAF or a [successor mission](#), OR
- traveled off-base to perform activities *for* U.S. military personnel stationed at ISAF or a [successor mission](#).

## **Who should write the HR letter and what must it say?**

Your employer's HR (Human Resources) department should write your HR letter. If there is no HR department, a company representative with access to employment records can write your HR letter. The company representative must state there is no HR department and why they qualify to write your HR letter.

- Your HR letter should include:
  - The date you started working.
  - The date you stopped working.
  - The place you worked (city, town, province, base).
  - Your job title.
  - The company name.
  - Contract information that shows you were employed by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government/ISAF/a successor mission. Here is the definition of a [successor mission](#).
  - The reason you stopped working.

The Instructions for Applying for Chief of Mission Approval provide more details.

**I worked for two different qualifying employers. Can I add those months together to meet the requirement of one year of work?**

Yes, all your time spent working in qualifying employment will be added together. Detail all your qualifying employers and work dates in your application, including any overlapping periods of employment from multiple employers.

**I worked on a U.S. grant or cooperative agreement. Is that qualifying employment?**

No, employment under a U.S. grant or cooperative agreement is not qualifying employment for an Afghan Special Immigrant Visa. Ask your employer's Human Resources department if you do not know if you worked under a U.S./coalition contract, or a U.S. grant or cooperative agreement.

**I worked for a contractor/subcontractor at ISAF or a successor mission. Is that qualifying employment?**

No, work for a contractor/subcontractor at ISAF or a [successor mission](#) is not qualifying employment. The National Defense Authorization Act is interpreted to mean that only direct employment for ISAF or a [successor mission](#) is qualifying employment for an Afghan Special Immigrant Visa.

**I worked for the Afghan government/Afghan military/Afghan police. Is that qualifying employment?**

No, work for the Afghan government, Afghan military, or Afghan security forces (police) is not qualifying employment unless that employer held a contract with the U.S. government.

### **Must a U.S. citizen write my Letter of Recommendation?**

No, that requirement changed. The person who writes your Letter of Recommendation or co-signs your Letter of Recommendation does not need to be a U.S. citizen.

### **Must I have a Co-Signer on my Letter of Recommendation?**

No, that requirement changed. A Co-Signer is no longer required. This is true even when the person who writes your Letter of Recommendation is not a U.S. citizen. A Co-Signer is still allowed, and U.S. citizen co-signers are especially helpful.

### **Who can write my Letter of Recommendation?**

The person who directly supervised you should write a Letter of Recommendation for you.

If your direct supervisor is not able to write a Letter of Recommendation for you, someone higher than your direct supervisor can write the Letter of Recommendation for you. That person must have been in the chain of command above your direct supervisor. For example:

- The company CEO or President can write your Letter of Recommendation.
- A company Vice President, *if* your direct supervisor was under that Vice President's chain of command, can write your Letter of Recommendation.
- A corporate representative in the chain of command of your supervisor can write your Letter of Recommendation.
- A company senior Human Resources Officer, *if* you worked in the Human Resources Department *or* your supervisor was under their chain of command, can write your Letter of Recommendation.

If the person who writes your Letter of Recommendation was not your direct supervisor, they must describe their place in the chain of command and connection to your direct supervisor.

If you were directly employed by ISAF or a [successor mission](#) a U.S. military member who personally worked with you should write your Letter of Recommendation.

The Instructions for Submitting Materials for Chief of Mission Approval provide more details.

### **Is there a template or format for the Letter of Recommendation?**

No, there is no required template or format for a Letter of Recommendation. A Letter of Recommendation must include the details listed in the Instructions for Applying for Chief of Mission Approval. Generic form letters from supervisors are less valuable. You should closely review your Letter of Recommendation. Letters of Recommendation with significant spelling and grammatical errors may delay processing.

### **Should I apply for Chief of Mission approval even if I do not have an HR letter and a Letter of Recommendation?**

Yes, you should submit materials for Chief of Mission approval even if you cannot find your employer or get a Letter of Recommendation. This is especially true if you worked under a U.S. Department of Defense contract. If you are unable to submit an Employment and/or Recommendation Letter, be sure to submit all the other documents that you can.

Some agencies and departments participate in employment and recommendation verification programs as part of the Chief of Mission approval process. If your employer participates in such a program the COM may be able to confirm your employment and recommendation, even if you have not submitted an Employment and/or Recommendation Letter.

If you were employed under a contract under the Department of Defense (DoD) and your employer is collaborating with DoD's ASIV Support Team (DAS-T, formerly known as Project Rabbit), we may be able to confirm your employment and recommendation with the Department of Defense. Be sure to submit all the other documents that you can.

### **Can you help me contact my former supervisor?**

No, the COM and National Visa Center are not able to assist in locating your former supervisor or employer.

### **What are employment and recommendation verification programs like DAS-T?**

Some U.S. government agencies participate in employment and recommendation verification programs as part of the Chief of Mission (COM) approval process. DAS-T is an example of one such program.

Under these programs, U.S. government agencies contact employers who had U.S. Department of Defense or other U.S. government contracts to confirm a Special Immigrant Visa applicant's employment. Not all agencies or employers participate in an employment and recommendation verification program.

Employment and recommendation verification programs only verify employment and recommendations for the COM approval process. Employment and recommendation verification programs cannot provide emergency assistance.



The employment and recommendation verification process happens automatically if your employer uses such a program. You cannot submit your own case to an employment and recommendation verification program. You do not need to contact the U.S. Department of Defense, any other agency or department, your employer, or take any other action to benefit from an employment and recommendation verification program.

If an employment and recommendation verification program provides information to the State Department about a COM application, the State Department will review all the information provided combined with the information the applicant submitted, as well as other sources, to decide if the individual is eligible for COM approval.

If your employer does not use one of the employment and recommendation verification programs your application will continue to be processed.

### **Which employers use employment and recommendation verification programs like DAS-T?**

The list of participating agencies and employers changes frequently. If your employer uses an employment and recommendation verification system, your COM review materials will automatically go through that system based on your employer.

If your employer does not use an employment and recommendation verification program, your COM review materials will continue to be processed.

## **Can I get COM approval if my employment record includes disciplinary action against me?**

Yes, you might still qualify for Chief of Mission (COM) approval even if your employer has a disciplinary action in your employment file. A disciplinary action does not mean an automatic rejection of the review materials you submitted for COM approval.

Generally, it will be harder for you to show a history of faithful and valuable service if a disciplinary action was taken against you. The COM will consider how serious the situation was, and whether your whole employment record, including the disciplinary action, shows faithful and valuable service.

## **My spouse or parent applied, and then died. What happens now?**

You may still qualify for an Afghan Special Immigrant Visa through the COM review materials your spouse or parent filed. We will still process their COM review materials even after their death. Your spouse/parent must have listed you as a family member planning to immigrate to the United States with them. You must submit a new [DS-157 form](#) in your name and with your signature, answering yes to question 4 and providing answers to questions 4a-4e.

## **I think my spouse or parent's work qualified them for an Afghan Special Immigrant Visa, but they died before filing. Can I file for them now?**

Yes, you can submit COM review materials for an Afghan Special Immigrant Visa based on the qualifying employment of your deceased spouse or parent. File a [DS-157 form](#) in your name and with your signature. Give your spouse or parent's information in section 4.