

UNCLASSIFIED

**REPORT ON THE REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROCESS  
FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
FY 2019**

Consistent with section 7019(e) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2019 (Div. F, P.L. 116-6) (SFOAA) and Senate Report 115-282, the Department of State, in consultation with the Department of Homeland Security, respectfully submits this report to Congress that describes the process used to examine the admissibility and arrival of refugees in the United States:

*Reports.—Not later than 90 days after enactment of the act, and every 90 days thereafter until September 30, 2019, the Secretary of State, in consultation with the heads of other relevant Federal agencies, shall submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees that describes the process used to examine the admissibility and arrival of refugees in the United States, including: (1) any changes made to the operating procedures of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program since January 1, 2017, including staffing, security, and other vetting requirements; (2) the number of refugees vetted each day by relevant agencies; (3) the locations, dates, and number of refugee officers in each U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services [USCIS] circuit ride completed in fiscal year 2019; the locations, dates, and number of refugee officers for each circuit ride planned for the remainder of fiscal year 2019; and the number of refugees interviewed on circuit rides in fiscal year 2019 and approved for further action; (4) the current staffing levels for the Refugee Corps and the Asylum Corps at USCIS; the number of vacant positions in the Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Directorate, USCIS; and the number of Refugee Corps officers reassigned from the Refugee Corps per month; and (5) the number of refugees resettled in the United States per month.*

**1. Changes Made to the Operating Procedures of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program Since January 1, 2017, Including Staffing, Security, and Other Vetting Requirements**

The top priority of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is the safety and security of the American people. The December 2017 National Security Strategy states that the United States “will enhance vetting of prospective immigrants, refugees, and other foreign visitors to identify individuals who might pose a risk to national security or public safety” and “will set higher security standards to ensure that we keep dangerous people out of the United States.”

In response to Executive Order 13780, *Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States*, the U.S. government conducted a review of the USRAP and identified additional screening and vetting procedures to enable departments and agencies to more thoroughly review refugee applicants to identify potential threats to public safety and national security.

In response to Executive Order 13815, *Resuming the United States Refugee Admissions Program with Enhanced Vetting Capabilities*, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of State, conducted a review to determine whether any actions should be taken to

UNCLASSIFIED

address the risks to the security and welfare of the United States presented by permitting any category of refugees to enter the United States.

As a result of these two reviews, plus routine efforts to improve the efficiency and integrity of the program, the U.S. government has implemented the following changes to USRAP operating procedures since January 1, 2017.

#### **Expanded Security Checks**

- Introduced new measures to ensure that, if applicants change or update key data points, including new or altered biographic information, such data receive renewed scrutiny and triggers fresh security checks.
- Expanded the classes of refugee applicants and I-730 refugee follow-to-join beneficiaries that are subject to Security Advisory Opinions (SAOs).
- Applied Enhanced Fraud Detection and National Security Reviews (EFRs), consisting of social media checks and certain intelligence database checks, to a broader set of refugee applicants.
- More closely aligned vetting of refugee follow-to-join beneficiaries with the vetting of other refugee applicants.

#### **Application Process**

- Increased data collection from all applicants to enhance the effectiveness of biographic security checks.
- Strengthened our ability to identify duplicate identities or identity documents.

#### **Interview and Adjudication Process**

- Institutionalized the forward-deployment of DHS U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Fraud Detection and National Security (FDNS) Officers who are specially trained in identifying and processing potential fraud, national security, and public safety concerns on select USCIS refugee processing circuit rides.
- Required use of the Conflict Data Tool to develop tailored lines of questioning, assess applicant credibility, and identify potential national security concerns when interviewing Syrian refugee applicants.
- Improved interagency information exchange to ensure fraud, national security, and public safety concerns are taken into account for linked cases.
- Allotted additional time for certain refugee interviews to allow officers to further explore potential national security, inadmissibility, and credibility issues.

**DHS/USCIS Guidance**

- Updated guidance and training on inadmissibility grounds related to drug offenses, drug trafficking, prostitution, alien smuggling, torture, membership in totalitarian parties, fraud and misrepresentation, certain immigration violations, and other criminal activity.
- Updated guidance and training on credibility to provide officers greater flexibility in assessing credibility, including expanding factors that may be considered in making a credibility determination consistent with the REAL ID Act.
- Updated guidance and training on working with interpreters.
- Provided supplementary guidance on when it may be appropriate to interview derivative family members apart from principal applicants.
- Updated guidance on denying refugee applicants as a matter of discretion in the totality of circumstances.
- Updated operational guidance on national security indicators based on the results of the review under E.O. 13815 and the process for handling cases with national security concerns.
- Updated guidance and training on additional enhanced vetting requirements for I-730 refugee follow-to-join processing.
- Updated guidance on the validity of a marriage under the law of the jurisdiction where it was celebrated in order to be recognized for immigration purposes.
- Updated guidance on the adjudication of protection claims based on “membership in a particular social group” and clarification on the substantive elements of eligibility.
- Updated hold policy for cases involving persecution under duress.
- Updated fingerprint guidance to prevent the approval of cases before all fingerprint checks are completed, to supplement existing procedures that already prevented travel without completion of fingerprint checks.
- Updated guidance on review of Terrorism-Related Inadmissibility Grounds (TRIG) exemptions.

In February 2017, USCIS temporarily detailed Refugee Affairs Division (RAD) staff to assist the Asylum Division with its increasing backlog of applications and to help address the growing number of credible fear cases.

USCIS also decreased the number of positions in RAD due to a lower refugee admissions ceiling in FY 2018. RAD authorized positions decreased from 352 in FY 2017 to 267 in FY 2018. RAD maintained an authorized staffing level of 267 authorized positions for FY 2019.

The Department of State continues to manage the USRAP Reception & Placement Program to align it with expected arrivals of up to 30,000 refugees and 10,000 Special Immigration Visa recipients (SIVs) in FY 2019. The Department worked closely with domestic resettlement agency partners to reduce the number of affiliated agencies in locations where capacity exceeded expected arrivals. In FY 2019, the USRAP domestic network includes 206 local affiliated agencies compared to 281 at the beginning of FY 2017. Decisions regarding the location of resettlement affiliates are based, as they have always been, on prioritizing family reunification and consideration of the local resettlement environment and economy, and include input from state officials.

## **2. Number of Refugees Vetted Each Day by Relevant Agencies**

Refugee applicants undergo a number of different security checks at different stages in their processing, and these can vary based on the unique traits of each individual applicant. Also, some vetting agencies process vetting requests in batches, making it impossible to provide daily figures. A breakdown of vetting responses received each month since January 1, 2017 for the principal types of security checks is provided in Attachment A.

## **3. Locations, Dates, and Number of Refugee Officers in Each USCIS Circuit Ride Completed in Fiscal Year 2019**

Detailed information about USCIS circuit rides performed in FY 2019 Q1, Q2, and Q3 is provided in Attachment B. Please note that USCIS staff working out of USCIS international offices also conducted in-office refugee processing in Guatemala, China, Thailand, and India. As of April 1, 2019, USCIS has approved 15,782 individuals in FY 2019.

## **4. Current Staffing Levels for the Refugee Corps and the Asylum Corps at USCIS; Number of Vacant Positions in the Refugee, Asylum and International Operations Directorate, USCIS; and the number of Refugee Corps Officers Reassigned from the Refugee Corps per Month**

As of March 31, 2019:

- The Refugee Corps had 157 refugee officers and supervisory refugee officers. This figure does not include RAD staff who provide domestic adjudicative support to the Refugee Corps and RAD headquarters staff.
- The Asylum Corps had 685 asylum officers and supervisory asylum officers. This figure likewise does not include Asylum Division staff who provide support to the adjudicators, including headquarters staff.
- Within the Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations Directorate, there were 574 total vacancies.
- USCIS had assigned Refugee Corps Officers to the Asylum Division as follows:

<b>Month</b>	<b>Number of Refugee Officers Assigned to the Asylum Division</b>
October 2018	70
November 2018	70
December 2018	70
January 2019	0
February 2019	3
March 2019	7

For October through December 2018, the 70 individuals represent a full-time equivalent of 65 officers for 12 weeks in duration. From February to March 2019, the details were 2-12 weeks in duration with variable start dates. These totals represent individuals assigned to the Asylum Division at any point during the month.

**5. Number of Refugees Resettled in the United States per Month**

As of March 31, 2019, the USRAP had resettled 12,154 refugees in the United States in FY 2019 as follows:

<b>Month</b>	<b>Number of Refugees Resettled</b>
October 2018	1,834
November 2018	2,150
December 2018	1,722
January 2019	1,457
February 2019	2,217
March 2019	2,774

UNCLASSIFIED

**Attachment A  
Security Check Results, January 1, 2017 to March 31, 2019**

**Including Interagency Checks (IAC), Security Advisory Opinions (SAO),  
and Consular Lookout and Support System Namechecks (CNC)**

All IAC responses received between 1/1/2017 and 3/31/2019, by FY, Quarter and Month of the response:

Year of IAC Adjudicated	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4			Grand Total
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	
FY 2017				12,495	4,083	6,196	4,319	5,756	6,750	7,896	7,034	6,006	60,535
FY 2018	4,471	6,959	11,726	12,915	16,762	23,036	10,585	7,162	6,451	10,299	9,387	6,360	126,113
FY 2019	8,141	5,778	7,745	11,776	8,274	9,414							51,128

\* this chart shows all completed IACs where a received result was posted to WRAPS. There may be more than one response received for an IAC request and all responses are shown above.

All SAO responses received between 1/1/2017 and 3/31/2019 by FY, Quarter and Month of the response:

Year of SAO Adjudicated	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4			Grand Total
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	
FY 2017				1,227	321	604	479	215	219	203	115	95	3,478
FY 2018	55	9	13	1	1	16	93	74	75	152	166	92	746
FY 2019	293	425	1,329	672	458	440							3,617

All CLASS responses received between 1/1/2017 and 3/31/2019 by FY, Quarter and Month of the response:

Year of CLASS Adjudicated	Q1			Q2			Q3			Q4			Grand Total
	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	
FY 2017				21,662	19,174	12,682	9,548	10,250	19,650	18,873	13,937	16,839	142,675
FY 2018	20,451	12,891	10,982	17,932	18,588	23,435	22,530	22,723	15,002	17,006	13,292	23,236	218,058
FY 2019	22,854	15,375	17,391	16,532	15,060	13,885							101,177

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

**Attachment B  
FY 2019 USCIS Circuit Rides**

**FY 2019 Q1 USCIS Circuit Rides**

Region	Circuit Ride	Location	Dates	Number of People on Team
<b>Africa</b>	Burundi	Burundi	11/4-12/15	7
	Cameroon	Cameroon	11/26-12/14	1
	Chad/Ethiopia	Chad	11/4-12/1	4
		Ethiopia	12/1-12/15	
	Ethiopia	Ethiopia	11/4-12/15	8
	Niger	Niger	10/15-11/4	1
	Rwanda	Rwanda	11/4-12/15	8
	Tanzania	Tanzania	11/3-12/15	13
	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	10/28-11/10	2
Zambia	Zambia	12/10-12/14	1	
<b>Middle East</b>	Jordan/Iraq (Erbil)	Jordan	11/1-11/17	4
		Iraq (Erbil)	11-17- 12/15	
	Jordan/UAE	Jordan	11/1-11/24	4
		UAE	11-24-12/15	
	Pakistan	Pakistan	12/12-12/14	2
Turkey	Turkey	11/5-12/15	9	
<b>Asia</b>	Malaysia	Malaysia	11/4-12/07	4
	Thailand	Thailand	11/3-12/16	5
	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	10/29-11/89	6
<b>Latin America and Caribbean</b>	Grenada/St. Lucia/Trinidad & Tobago/El Salvador/Guatemala and Costa Rica	Grenada	11/1-11/3	2
		St. Lucia	11/3-11/6	
		Trinidad & Tobago	11/6-11/13	
		El Salvador	11/13-12/8	
		Guatemala	12/8-12/14	
		Costa Rica	12/14-12/20	
<b>Europe</b>	Armenia	Armenia	12/1-12/12	1
	Georgia	Georgia	12/2-12/22	1
	Moldova	Moldova	11/25-12/8	1
	Ukraine	Ukraine	10/10-12/14	6
		Ukraine	11/24-12/15	6

UNCLASSIFIED

## FY 2019 Q2 USCIS Circuit Rides

Region	Circuit Ride	Location	Dates	Number of People on Team
Africa	Algiers	Algeria	3/2-3/7	2
	Angola	Angola	3/25-4/3	1
	Burundi	Burundi	2/8-3/27	6
	Malawi	Malawi	3/10-3/24	3
	Morocco	Morocco	3/10-3/22	2
	Rwanda	Rwanda	2/7-3/25	18
	Tanzania	Tanzania	2/8-3/26	23
	Uganda	Uganda	2/8-3/25	10
	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	2/10-2/24	2
Middle East	Egypt/Jordan	Egypt	2/3-3/1	10
		Jordan	3/1-3/15	
	Israel	Israel	2/17-3/7	2
	Lebanon	Lebanon	2/23-3/16	5
	Oman	Oman	2/3-2/14	2
	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	2/2-2/15	2
	Turkey	Turkey	2/4-3/22	14
Asia	Indonesia	Indonesia	3/4-3/21	5
	Malaysia	Malaysia	1/27-3/2	6
	Malaysia	Malaysia	3/3-4/13	7
	Nauru/Papua New Guinea	Nauru	2/3-2/22	8
		Papua New Guinea	2/23-3/14	
	Thailand	Thailand	1/11-1/19	5
	Thailand	Thailand	2/3-3/9	5
Latin America	Ecuador/Central America	Ecuador	2/3-2/25	4
		El Salvador	2/25-3/14	
		Honduras	3/14-3/22	
		Costa Rica	3/22-3/29	
Europe	Austria	Austria	1/14-1/18	1
	Malta	Malta	3/4-3/14	2
	Ukraine	Ukraine	3/1 4/14	13



## FY 2019 Q3 USCIS Circuit Rides

We do not publically provide dates of future circuit rides for purposes of staff safety. The Department of State and USCIS have not finalized circuit ride plans for Quarter 4 of FY 2019.

Region	Circuit Ride	Location	Number of People on Team
Africa	Burundi/Ethiopia	Burundi	7
		Ethiopia	10
	Guinea	Guinea	1
	Niger	Niger	1
	Togo	Togo	1
	Rwanda	Rwanda	14
	Tanzania	Tanzania	13
	Uganda	Uganda	8
	Zambia	Zambia	7
	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	1
Middle East	Iraq/Jordan	Iraq	11
		Jordan	
	Israel	Israel	2
	Turkey	Turkey	14
Asia	Indonesia	Indonesia	4
	Malaysia	Malaysia	3
	Malaysia	Malaysia	5
	Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	4
	Thailand	Thailand	5
Latin America and Caribbean	Curacao/Bahamas/ Barbados	Curacao	3
		Bahamas	
		Barbados	
	El Salvador/ Honduras/ Guatemala/ Costa Rica	El Salvador	5
		Guatemala	
		Honduras	
Costa Rica			
Europe	Moldova	Moldova	4
	Ukraine	Ukraine	13