

Joseph R. Biden Jr.  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write as American veterans who have faithfully protected this country. In Afghanistan, and other places around the globe, our efforts have only been possible because local allies helped us do that job. They patrolled with us on missions, worked beside us on bases, and saved our lives in firefights.

As we draw an end to America's longest war, we must remember that our departure from Afghanistan will put our allies there at grave risk. Providing an exit for these Afghans must be as high a priority as protecting and safely redeploying American troops and equipment. We owe these Afghans a debt of honor; as our armed forces withdraw from Afghanistan, we must honor that debt.

Afghans who risked their lives to serve with American armed forces and have applied for a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) must be evacuated to American territory, where their visas can be safely vetted and processed. This is a big job, and we expect you to command the use of the military's logistical expertise and American diplomatic power to execute it. Our experience tells us that the Department of Defense is up to this task.

The U.S. has successfully undertaken such efforts before. In 1975, the Ford administration evacuated 130,000 Vietnamese to Guam where these refugees went through initial screenings before they were flown to reception centers in the continental U.S. In 1996, the Clinton administration airlifted thousands of Iraqis who had assisted American efforts in Northern Iraq to Guam, where they completed security screening and immigration processing. In 1999, after Serbian forces attacked Pristina in Kosovo, the Clinton administration airlifted 20,000 Kosovar Albanians to Fort Dix, NJ, where they were processed and received refugee status. Honoring our commitments in Afghanistan will rightly be seen as part of a history of American actions to protect allies under threat.

Given the September 11 deadline, now is the time to begin the project of protecting those who helped us as we carried out our mission in Afghanistan. At this moment, the future of a generation of Afghans who believed and worked with us on our mission is at risk. As the U.S. prepares to depart Afghanistan, we must commit to providing refuge to those Afghans who committed themselves to our efforts. It will not only prove that the U.S. keeps its word, but it

will also honor the legacy of those brave Americans who sacrificed their lives for the ideals and freedoms we hold dear.

Most respectfully,

Common Defense

Concerned Veterans for America

High Ground Veterans Advocacy

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

Leave No Veteran Behind

Minority Veterans of America

Modern Military Association of America

Project to Strategically Protect Soft Networks

Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft

Secure Families Initiative

Student Veterans of America

Travis Manion Foundation

Truman National Security Project

Veterans for American Ideals

Veterans for Responsible Leadership

Veterans of Foreign Wars