



Latest Developments in the Iraqi Refugee Admissions Program

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On-The-Record Briefing
Washington, DC
June 3, 2008

MR. FOLEY: This is not a formal statement, but just some informal information to share with you at the start of this, and then I'd be glad to take your questions.

First of all, I want to give you the latest statistics on the number of Iraqi refugees who have been resettled in the United States for the month of May. We've now closed the books, and the total was 1,141 Iraqi refugees arrived in and were resettled in the United States during the month of May.

The total therefore for the fiscal year which began October 1 is 4,742 refugees arrived – Iraqi refugees arrived in the U.S.

QUESTION: Four thousand --

MR. FOLEY: -- seven hundred and forty-two. And the total since we began this effort in 2007, so both fiscal years, is currently at 6,350. This does not include figures for special immigrant visa recipients.

This has been, I think, a week of some milestones in our efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of Iraqis and fulfill our humanitarian obligations to them. Not only did we have, I think, significant results in May in terms of the arrival of Iraqi refugees, but we also notably had the first arrival in the United States last week of Iraqis who were processed in country. In other words, they were interviewed, they were processed, pre-screened, interviewed by DHS, out-processed, and traveled from Iraq to the United States. The first two, I believe, arrived in the United States last week. And of course, we are extremely eager to expand the frontiers of in-country processing, and we can get into that if you're interested.

The reason for that is, I might underscore, that we are current interviewing, processing, resettling increasingly large numbers of Iraqi refugees who have either been referred to us by UNHCR or have enjoyed direct access to our program in countries in the Middle East. And these refugees are referred to us on the basis of a broad range of criteria established by UNHCR, vulnerability criteria, persecution criteria, and so it's a broad cross-section of those extremely vulnerable refugees among the several million refugees in the region who UNHCR deems need resettlement in a third country.

But as you are all probably aware, the United States has, and we believe that we have, special obligations to Iraqis who have been employed by the U.S. or have been closely associated with U.S. efforts in Iraq, who are targeted and under threat for their work on our behalf, on behalf of all that we're trying to achieve in Iraq. And the fact that special priority categories were created for them by legislation passed by Congress, signed by the President in January, opens the door to our ability to process them more readily and directly. That, combined with the opening of in-country processing, will, we hope, give us greater access to this subcategory, if you will, of the overall population of Iraqi refugees, particularly the most vulnerable, in need of third-country resettlement.

And then in this connection, the other, I think, bit of significant news today is that we understand that the President has signed the technical correction bill to the special immigrant visa part of the Iraq – Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act that passed in January but that needed correction because while granting – authorizing the granting of 5,000 special immigrant visas per year for five years, the bill was deficient in making it applicable immediately in 2008. And this fix, now signed by the President, does that. And so those special immigrant visas become available going forward – another tool by which we can reach and we can process and we can bring to the United States, again, precisely those Iraqis who have been employed by or associated with the U.S., which is critically important.

Now, the results of our resettlement efforts for refugees in May, I think, reflect a number of things. First of all, certainly, some very hard work by our refugee processing professionals here in the Department of State and the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, and in the field. Also, tremendous work by Department of Homeland Security adjudicators and continued tremendous support and cooperation with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as our processing entities in the region, the so-called OPEs, that are manned by the IOM, the International Organization for Migration, and the ICMC in the region.

I think the results also reflect the fact that our – we have really increased our refugee processing capacity. As you know, the low numbers we had last year and into the first part of this year, we said, were a reflection of the fact that we didn't have our full infrastructure in place. And although conditions for refugee processing are still not optimal in the region, we can say now clearly that the infrastructure is now fully in place.

And finally, these results reflect our commitment to meet the Administration's goals and indeed our humanitarian obligations to the Iraqi people. It's a commitment that Secretary Rice fully supports. She is pleased with these results. But I have to say at the same time that we are not satisfied with these results because in order to reach the goal of 12,000 arrivals of Iraqi refugees this fiscal year, we have a long way to go, and we recognize that.

In fact, if you do the math, as I'm sure you will, we are going to have to average a little over 1,800 refugee arrivals in the final four months of this fiscal year in order to reach that 12,000 goal. This is a tall order. It's a tough hurdle. But we are determined to succeed and increasingly confident that we can succeed.

We're going to have to, as I said, average 1,800-plus per month, and that will probably mean as we get to the end of the fiscal year breaking the 2,000 per month threshold. But we can do that. If you're interested, I could give you some statistics that buttress that. I won't bore you with those details if they are not of interest to you. But we already have a significant number of refugees who have already been either conditionally or fully approved by Department of Homeland Security interviewers; in other words, they've passed the DHS interview either conditionally or unconditionally. And we have, frankly, more than enough to reach the 12,000 goal. The challenge we will face is, frankly, completing security checks, completing out-processing, getting the necessary exit permits from host governments for approved refugees, getting refugees on airplanes and meeting that September 30 deadline. We believe we can do this and we're determined, as I said, to succeed.

We had a minor setback in the last month, although, depending on our results at the end of September, we'll know whether it was a critical setback or not. But we did have to postpone a circuit ride into Lebanon in the month of May that certainly would have yielded a fair number of approved refugees who would have traveled to the U.S., been resettled in the U.S. this fiscal year. We also had, unfortunately, 114 "no shows." In other words, these were refugees who had passed successfully every stage of the process: they were approved, they were cleared, they were booked, they had tickets, they were supposed to get on airplanes and they were unable to travel because it turned out that either they did not have the necessary exit permits or it was believed that they did not have the necessary exit permits. We also have some, frankly, as I told you before, refugees who simply don't – for unknown reasons – appear even though they have been – have their airplane tickets. So there's a certain amount of attrition that we have to deal with, and the arrival numbers would have been really in the 1,250 range had we not had those no shows.

But overall, as I said, we are – we're pleased, not satisfied, with these results. They certainly show that we've got the capacity now and the trend is certainly a positive one. But we have our work cut out for us to reach our goal in the next four months.

I think I will stop there. I'd be happy to answer any questions you have about these numbers or about the process or about our projections and – or about our plans to expand in-country processing in Iraq.

Yes.

QUESTION: I'm just curious about the no shows. Who's responsible for issuing these exit permits and are you getting any pushback from the Iraqi Government for some of these people? Are some of these people considered too valuable to leave?

MR. FOLEY: These are not people inside Iraq.

QUESTION: Okay. So they're in Syria or --

MR. FOLEY: Apart from one couple --

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. FOLEY: -- that I mentioned, the first actually to arrive in the U.S. from inside Iraq, having been processed in Iraq. Everyone else – 1,139 – came from countries in the region.

QUESTION: And so it's those countries --

QUESTION: The no shows. You're asking --

QUESTION: I'm asking about the no shows. So the --

MR. FOLEY: The responsibility – it is the host government that grants exit permits.

QUESTION: But none of the 114 were in-country applicants?

MR. FOLEY: No.

QUESTION: Where – did they mostly come from a certain country that is not issuing these? Is it --

MR. FOLEY: I wouldn't say that they're not issuing them. But – and I would actually have to get back to you with the particular information about each country because in each country the means of obtaining exit permits or exit permission is different. And in some cases UNHCR takes that on, in some cases the individual refugee takes that on, in some countries it is actually rather complicated and time-consuming, and so it differs.

But I don't know, Terry, if you would like to address that now or whether we want to come back with --

MS. RUSCH: Yeah (inaudible). In one or two countries there – some places are very straightforward. In Turkey, for example, refugees who are registered have to go and live in assigned communities all around the country. And some of them do this and others don't. If they don't, and they haven't completed all the requisite paperwork for registration, showing evidence they have been there throughout this period, their getting exit permits is a more complicated process. And the people who are issuing these exit permits – or not – are either not mindful or it doesn't particularly bother them that somebody has a plane ticket for the United States. That's not their main concern. Their main concern is they have regulations that people are supposed to have done X, Y, and Z before they issue an exit permit. So I don't think it's anything people are trying – preventing people from leaving to go to the United States. It's more of a bureaucratic red tape exercise.

MR. FOLEY: It's bureaucratic, but these countries also take those requirements very seriously, and so we are looking at this problem. We are certainly aware that as we get near the end of the fiscal year, and we're mindful of reaching our goal, that we want to make sure that the refugees themselves are keenly aware of the requirements so that they can meet those requirements in the various countries and not be barred from getting on airplanes.

QUESTION: A couple of things. You said -- the circuit ride that was postponed in Lebanon was because of violence?

MR. FOLEY: Yes.

QUESTION: So it wasn't because the Lebanese --

MR. FOLEY: No. No, no, I should have made that clear. I neglected to do so. But you're well familiar with the acute violence that flared up about -- a matter of days before the circuit ride was supposed to begin.

QUESTION: And has that been rescheduled, so these --

MR. FOLEY: Well, let me put it this way. It was the first half of a two-part circuit ride, so the second part will go forward. And it's now a matter of rescheduling that postponed part, which was meant to be about a month. And we are looking at rescheduling it at the tail end of this fiscal year. In other words, that won't yield approvals, or at least arrivals, in the U.S. this fiscal year.

QUESTION: Right. Okay, and then you said that you have more than enough in the pipeline, saying -- and I believe you were talking about people who have been either fully approved or provisionally approved?

MR. FOLEY: Conditionally approved.

QUESTION: Conditionally approved --

MR. FOLEY: Yes.

QUESTION: -- to meet the -- to get the -- what is it you need now, 6,200 and something or other?

MR. FOLEY: I think it's 7,000 something or other.

QUESTION: 7,200, right. Did you say you have more than seven – you have more than --

MR. FOLEY: We have more than that who are --

QUESTION: How many is it that are in – that have either been approved all the way, or conditionally approved and just haven't gotten here?

MR. FOLEY: Well, please understand that these figures change every day. And so this is a snapshot --

QUESTION: Well, in the ballpark.

MR. FOLEY: -- or a ballpark figure. But we have about 7,800 refugees who have had their DHS interview, who have been either conditionally or fully approved. Now, none of this is -- I'm sure you're familiar with by now -- easy. These steps are demanding. And so it is not automatic that these cases turn into arrivals in the U.S. But you can certainly take it to the bank that almost all of the -- of those fully approved and nearly almost all of those conditionally approved will make it to the U.S.

But it is a question of how long that takes and how arduous are the steps. And we need to complete all those steps by the end of September in order to meet our goal and that's going to be our challenge.

QUESTION: And how do they --

MR. FOLEY: Also, if I can add, our ability to meet the goal is dependent also on continued fair weather in the region and cooperation by multiple parties. So we -- on paper, we feel pretty good that we can reach our goal. I do feel comfortable saying that. But this is the Middle East and this is a process that involves multiple organizations, and so there are certainly no guarantees.

QUESTION: How many of those 7,800 are actually in -- are in country, or are none of them?

MR. FOLEY: Oh, a small, smallish number. I think that those who have been approved but not yet traveled out of Iraq probably are in the range of around 70 or so. Would you say that, Terry?

QUESTION: Of the 1,139 who did not come from Iraq this time around, what countries did they come from? Do you have a sense of -- what, are they leaving Syria, are they leaving Jordan? What are --

MR. FOLEY: They're leaving in -- the greatest numbers of refugees, of Iraqi refugees, are in Syria.

QUESTION: Mm-hmm. So the majority are coming --

MR. FOLEY: But our capacity was much more robust and remains more robust in Jordan. So I believe that we are still seeing more arrivals from Jordan than we are from Syria. But they are one and two. And then the other source countries are Egypt and Turkey and the states of the Gulf. And also, we have Iraqi refugees in disparate parts of the world, and that requires us to schedule, in effect, circuit rides not only for DHS adjudicators but for our processing entities which don't have installations in the region. So they need to do the same thing and we send -- Terry, could you describe some of the far-flung places we will process Iraqi refugees?

MS. RUSCH: New Delhi. I think there was one processed in Beijing recently. Malaysia. Well, far-flung -- Greece. But they're turning up in lots of places.

QUESTION: What about your relations with the Syrians now? Because you had some problems in the past. Are they okay now?

MR. FOLEY: Well, as you know, our program was halted there last year. And Syria is where most of the refugees are, and Syria has been generous in opening its borders to vast numbers of Iraqi refugees and in shouldering considerable resource burdens in hosting these large numbers of Iraqi refugees. And despite differences in our bilateral relationship, it emerged from my visit there in late October that we were able to agree on cooperating in this important humanitarian domain. And we are grateful for that, and we are in a position to process a fairly significant number of Iraqi refugees in Syria.

That said, we could process significantly larger numbers of Iraqi refugees in Syria if the conditions that govern our processing there were more favorable. And so there is untapped potential that would benefit Iraqi refugees and that would benefit Syria as well because, you know, we would be in a position to take more refugees off their hands. And they are facing serious burdens, including serious resource burdens and financial burdens, in hosting these large numbers of refugees.

QUESTION: What kind of condition are not favorable enough? What -- what is it -- what is the problem?

MR. FOLEY: Well, I -- we benefit from the ability to process refugees there. The refugees benefit from our program there and Syria benefits from our program there. But it is not a robust program. It's not as robust as we have in Jordan where there are, frankly, possibly a declining number of eligible refugees that UNHCR would deem likely to be qualified for third-country resettlement. Whereas, in Syria there is a -- we believe, not only many more refugees, but many more vulnerable refugees who can't go back to Iraq, who would benefit from third-country settlement. And so the conditions there permit the U.S. program to operate, but we could operate a more robust program, but that would require agreement by the Syrian authorities.

Yes.

QUESTION: What are the numbers that you use -- rule of thumb numbers about the universe of refugees? Is it two and half million people, primarily in Jordan and Syria, that you're concerned about? And also, these reports that violence is easing inside Iraq - are you seeing a resumption of flow of people back into the country?

MR. FOLEY: First of all, we don't claim to have scientific certitude in terms of the overall numbers of Iraqi refugees in the region. Nobody does. Not UNHCR. No one does. And this is largely because of the unique characteristic of this population, which is urbanized and intermingled in neighborhoods, in major Middle Eastern cities, unlike the sort of conventional or classical image one has of refugees in camps, where they can be better counted, if you will. And so it's hard to know this. And we believe that there are up to 2 million refugees, meaning displaced -- Iraqis displaced outside of their country's borders. We believe there are more Iraqis displaced internally.

QUESTION: You mean 2 million or is this in addition to --

MR. FOLEY: No, in addition. There are more additional than --

QUESTION: How many displaced?

MR. FOLEY: Well, I think we'd have to ask USAID for their figure, but it's in the neighborhood of 2.5 million internally displaced, I believe.

In terms of the conditions inside Iraq that would permit, indeed, encourage the refugees to go home, perhaps I could comment on that for a minute. First of all, we yearn for the day when the conditions inside Iraq – first of all, and most importantly, security conditions, but also the policy framework and the governmental services and the infrastructure and the resources – would permit and encourage large-scale returns because this is the ultimate solution to the humanitarian plight of these refugees is their ability to go home, such that – which has to be the wish of the great majority of them.

We recognize that there are significant numbers of refugees who fled persecution, would face persecution, can – and cannot go home, and therefore we have an obligation and we assume that obligation as the United States to resettle large numbers of those Iraqis in those categories. And we recognize the obligation and we want it to be a shared responsibility to meet the pressing humanitarian needs of the refugees in the region as they await that day when they can go home.

But ultimately, we have to continue to press for the restoration of security and stability in Iraq so that they can go home, but we also need to encourage the Government of Iraq to commit the resources, to elaborate the policy – the policies, and to create the framework under which refugees will want to go home and will be able to go home and reintegrate successfully in their country. And there is, frankly, significant work that needs to be done before that – those conditions will have obtained.

Yes.

QUESTION: And how many are going back now? I mean, several months ago there was a surge that dissipated fairly quickly. Are there any Iraqis returning to their country now?

MR. FOLEY: Well, we believe that there continues to be a flow in both directions, especially on the Syrian border, and that, indeed, people are going back and forth. And some of this is -- you know, is business, is commerce. But we do not believe that there is, at present, a significant pattern of return of refugees to Iraq.

In fact, I think you're alluding to the fact that there was a fairly sizeable, certainly noteworthy uptick of returns last fall. I think it was in November. And there has been some follow-up assessment of those returns by UNHCR. And UNHCR found that about 70 percent – I think there were about 40,000 returns all together, and UNHCR found that about 70 percent of the returnees were not able to resettle in their homes; in other words, they returned to what we call secondary displacement. And so it's fairly clear the government was not prepared to provide returnees with housing, with essential services that they require. So there's a lot of work to be done.

Now, the Government of Iraq; I think Prime Minister Maliki in Sweden recently announced that \$195 million has been provided to the Ministry of Displacement and Migration to promote returns, and that is a commendable step. We welcome that. We applaud that. But that is only the tip of the iceberg. That's maybe not the best metaphor for that part of the world, but nonetheless, my point is that that's a small step in a process that will require substantial effort, resources, and commitment on the part of the Iraqi Government. We hope, in cooperation with partners who have the experience and the expertise on the ground – UNHCR, ICRC, NGOs who know how to help promote returns – but -- it's a good step, but it is a modest step.

I believe the government intends to provide financial inducements to returnees with this money. But it has to be accompanied, first of all, with improved security. And we believe the trend lines are in the right direction and were heading to where we need to be. But they are going to need housing for these people. They're going to need a means of adjudicating claims on housing that is occupied. They're going to need services, social services, health, education; ultimately, jobs. There's a lot that goes into creating a framework that would encourage returns.

After all, the bottom line, as far as the international community is concerned, as far as returns go, is the cardinal principle of voluntary returns. They cannot be involuntary returns or UNHCR will not bless those returns, nor will responsible members of the international community.

QUESTION: So you don't see any impact from the improvement of the security situation in Iraq that's taking place and the return of any refugees?

MR. FOLEY: I didn't say that. We – UNHCR's study of the refugees who went back last fall indicated that a certain percentage of them were indeed motivated by the improvement in the security situation. And we believe that the security situation will – is and will be the ultimate determining factor, and that you could very well have a situation in which security had -- and we earnestly pray this day comes quickly, when the security situation, you know, has reached a positive tipping point. And the refugees will determine on their own, and they will know this before we do, that it's safe to go home and they will go home.

The question is: Will the government be ready for their return, if up to 2 million go home? And we think there's a significant – a considerable amount of work that needs to be done between now and that date.

MR. GALLEGOS: I think there's time for a couple more.

QUESTION: You said that there's not yet a significant pattern of return, but is it already clear that the rate of them coming out has dramatically slowed at –

MR. FOLEY: Yes. Yes.

QUESTION: -- in recent, what would one say, in recent – in the last month or months or – and the other question is –

MR. FOLEY: I think that's been a – by now, you could call that a long-term trend.

QUESTION: Right, for this year?

MR. FOLEY: Since, I believe – Terry, would it have been the fall of last year?

MR. PIERCE: Yes, since September.

MR. FOLEY: Yes.

QUESTION: Okay. And --

MR. FOLEY: And that is significant. And it is probably mostly attributed – attributable to the significant improvement in the security situation.

QUESTION: And the other question, then, is: Your goal for this year is to have 12,000 come in?

MR. FOLEY: Yes.

QUESTION: Looking forward, what do you see? What – you know, you've set up this capacity. How many of these refugees do you see processing in future years?

MR. FOLEY: That's a very good question, and we're just starting to grapple with it internally. And that's the first step, is to think about it internally and then to consult with UNHCR, upon whom we rely significantly for referrals and on whom we will rely significantly next year.

We will consult with Congress. We will take into account the views of the public. And at the end of the day, the President will make a determination that he will report to the Congress in September. So we're in the early stages. But your point is a critical one. We have a significant capacity in place in the region that we didn't have a year ago. So, you know, we're flexing our muscles, as it were, and we can indeed resettle significant numbers of Iraqis.

The question is: What should be our goal next year? And that is going to depend on, really, some factors that remain unknown, but we're going to try to identify and that will help us make our estimate. But referrals from UNHCR is a critical variable. Our capacity to process refugees inside Iraq is a critical variable. You know, we have a very strong commitment, given the nature of the population we hope to serve in Iraq. But as you can imagine, doing business inside Iraq is not easy for any endeavor, but for one as complicated as refugee processing, it will be a big challenge.

So we have to try to assess what the volume is we think we can handle inside Iraq in the next fiscal year, understanding that this is a nascent operation that will hopefully improve over time, but which is going to be subject to buffeting by the logistical challenges of operating in Baghdad and of the uncertainties of the security situation. So that is another factor we have to look at. I alluded to another factor – earlier, you questioned me – related to our processing capacity in Syria, where the potential is greater. We could indeed interview and resettle larger numbers of Iraqis in Syria if we are allowed to.

So there are a number of variables and unknowns that we have to grapple with over the next two or three months before we settle on a goal. Another factor I alluded to as well involves the uncertainty of the situation in Jordan, where – which has been, really, the bulwark of our operation in this first year, year and a half, but where -- we understand from UNHCR, as I said, there is less confidence that the same level of referrals will be – of vulnerable cases in need of certain country resettlement will be – will materialize there. So we have some work to do.

QUESTION: Is there enough money in the budget that's been requested to continue this at this level for next year?

MR. FOLEY: Well, I am going to have to take that question. I don't know the answer to it, but I do know that that is – that's going to be one of the variables.

QUESTION: But don't you have to get this year's target first before you can start --

MR. GALLEGOS: Okay. Why don't we wrap this up. This is the last question.

QUESTION: Hold on, Gonzo. Don't you – aren't you first – you're talking about next year already --

MR. FOLEY: Yes.

QUESTION: We haven't gotten this year yet.

MS. RUSCH: Yeah.

QUESTION: And you – as you say, a significant hurdle. So what are your projections for the next four months among the – do you have them? Would you expect --

MR. FOLEY: Well, first of all, we -- to answer your question, we won't have the luxury of waiting till September 30. The President has to make his determination in September. But I think I have expressed our confidence that we are able this year to process and resettle 12,000 refugees. It's going to be challenging to --

QUESTION: (Inaudible) in order to get to 9,000, surely that --

MR. FOLEY: It's going to be challenging to move these numbers up to 2,000 per month in the final months of the fiscal year. But the numbers are there --

QUESTION: Right, but --

MR. FOLEY: -- and we can do this.

QUESTION: But, I guess my question is: Doesn't next year's number depend on how many you actually get in this year? I mean, if you end up 2,000 or a thousand or 500 short this year, that -- doesn't that -- won't that have an effect on what the President decides?

MR. FOLEY: Well, again, he has to make that determination before we know the final results this fiscal year. So the premise of your question doesn't exactly apply. Was there another part to your question?

QUESTION: Yeah, what is -- what are the projections for the next couple months?

MR. FOLEY: Well, we --

QUESTION: You said you had projections.

MR. FOLEY: We have never, since I've been --

QUESTION: I know --

MR. FOLEY: -- in this position, predicted what a given month's total will be. We believe we will reach 12,000.

QUESTION: Right.

MR. FOLEY: As I said, it's going to be hard, but what we believe -- we have been on a steady uptick. You know, we've gone from 300-something in January to 400-something in February to 700-something in March and 900-plus in April and 1,100-plus in May. And we see that increasing. And as I acknowledged, we're going to have to hit 2,000 before the fiscal year is over. But we believe we can do this and that we will do this.

QUESTION: But given these kinds of improvements you've said -- given all the unknowns, the variables that you, I realize, have to get more data before you can make a projection for the next year, is there any chance we're looking at, say, a doubling for the next year and a goal of 24,000 or something? Do you have any kind of a sense of if you're -- things are going so well that you could bring in significantly more in the next year? Do you have any kind of an idea?

MR. FOLEY: No, I think it's way too early to speculate. That is a big a leap to talk about a doubling. I think that given the --

QUESTION: Even more than (inaudible)?

MR. FOLEY: No. No, given the constraints that we're dealing with, some perhaps inherent -- as I mentioned, the uncertainty in Jordan, a prime example, some objective - those conditions, those variables would have to change for us to aim dramatically high.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: Are you considering --

MR. GALLEGOS: This will be the last one.

QUESTION: Okay. Are you considering a visit to Syria to ask them to help you more on the program?

MR. FOLEY: Well, I wouldn't want to speculate on that. I think that as I said, it was a productive visit when I went there before. And things are in place at the moment, so that's premature to speculate on, I'd say, at this point.

Yes.

MS. RUSCH: And maybe I can just clarify that the process that Jim has just described to you, where we take public input and come up with a proposal that's inter -- cleared interagency and the President consults with Congress about, is for the entire refugee program, refugees from all over the world. This is not something that's specific to Iraqis. In fact, this 12,000 number for Iraqis is just part of a much larger ceiling of 28,000 for the Near East South Asia region.

And so your question about a shortfall; this year, the allocated ceiling in the President's determination is 70,000 refugees globally. We'll probably admit about 60,000. So it's a ceiling and it's not --

QUESTION: I'm just surprised we're talking about next year when don't -- we're not even sure that we have (laughter) --

MS. RUSCH: Okay. But if we miss it by 50 or a hundred or --

MR. FOLEY: But wait -- you're surprised we're talking about next year. One of you asked -- I didn't raise the question. One of you guys did.

QUESTION: I know. I know, exactly. What country --

MR. FOLEY: But -- wait, the answer to your question is: It is premature. That comes in September and we're just at the start of June now. So I'm just answering questions.

QUESTION: Well, I -- you said that of the 7,800 or whatever it was who were in line, only about 70 of those people were actually in Iraq that are in country applicants.

MR. FOLEY: Who've been approved.

QUESTION: Right. What could -- presumably, that number could go up quite substantially, the in country, even this fiscal year, yeah?

MR. FOLEY: No. I think not this fiscal year. We are prescreening cases now, even though we have not established a full OPE out in Baghdad; we hope to in a few months. But we have a proto OPE, if you will, there operating, prescreening cases, teeing up for the next DHS circuit ride which we hope will take place sometime in the summer. But you're familiar with the many steps that have to be completed before a refugee gets on an airplane and arrives in the U.S. I think it's unlikely that we'll have additional arrivals in this fiscal year from Iraq, apart from the 70-so who have been approved and are awaiting travel.

But we expect that, again, if security permits and conditions obtain, that we will be able to process not only refugees, but also special immigrant visas, a sizeable number of Iraqis in Iraq over the next fiscal year. But it is impossible to predict a -- even a ballpark figure at this stage.

QUESTION: So the 12,000 figure is only the refugees, huh? Not the --

MR. FOLEY: Yes.

QUESTION: -- special immigrant, huh?

MR. FOLEY: Yes, yes.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. GALLEGOS: Thank you, guys.

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