



## Resettlement Benefits for Iraqi Refugees (Taken Question)

Washington, DC

Question Taken at the MARCH 4, 2009 Daily Press Briefing

March 5, 2009

**Question:** What support/assistance does the United States provide to Iraqi refugees coming into the U.S.? Has that assistance been adjusted to compensate for the economic downturn?

**Answer:**

- Iraqi refugees receive the same resettlement benefits from the Department of State and the Department of Health and Human Services that are provided to all incoming refugees.
- The State Department funds voluntary agencies to provide reception and initial integration services during the refugees' first weeks in the U.S. This includes provision of housing, food, clothing, etc. During this period, voluntary agency staffs also help refugees with tasks such as registering for Social Security, enrolling children in school, accessing English as a Second Language or other training programs, etc.
- The Department's grant to the voluntary agencies is modest - only \$900 per refugee, of which at least half must be used to provide for the material needs of the particular case. The balance funds the costs of the voluntary agency case workers and others who guide the refugees through the initial phase of the resettlement process.
- Beyond the initial Department of State-funded Reception and Placement grant, under the Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) individual refugees are eligible to receive up to eight months of refugee cash assistance and refugee medical assistance. Refugee families may be eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Medicaid, depending on their state's eligibility standards.
- Welfare cash benefit levels are established by state governments.
- In addition, ORR has a number of discretionary programs designed to support and enhance refugee resettlement opportunities in local communities.
- All refugees are able to receive ORR's social services for up to 60 months (five years). These services include:
  - **Employment services**
  - **Employment assessment services and on-the-job training**
  - **English language instruction**
  - **Vocational training**
  - **Case Management**
  - **Translation/Interpreter Services.**
- We refer you to the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement for more details.

**Question:** Does the U.S. Government have any legal obligations to assist the resettlement in the United States of Iraqis who worked for the USG (SIV recipients)? If no legal obligation, is there a voluntary assistance plan in place?

**Answer:**

- In a departure from its treatment of Special Immigrant Visa recipients from all other countries, Congress has legislated that from the time of their arrival in the United States, Afghan and Iraqi Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) recipients are eligible for resettlement assistance, entitlement programs and other benefits, to the same extent as refugees.
- Iraqi SIVs are eligible to receive the Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Refugee Resettlement's (ORR's) refugee cash assistance and refugee medical assistance for up to eight months upon arrival to the U.S. (Afghan SIVs are eligible to receive ORR's refugee cash assistance and refugee medical assistance for up to six (6) months upon arrival to the U.S.)
- Not all Iraqis who worked for the U.S. Government and have come to the U.S. came on SIVs. Many have been admitted to the U.S. as refugees.

###

PRN: 2009/190