

JUSTIFICATION FOR EMERGENCY REVIEW

Afghanistan Request for Consular Services, OMB Number 1405-XXXX.

The purpose of collecting this information is to assist the Department of State in planning and coordinating the evacuation or relocation from Afghanistan of private U.S. citizens, Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs), Special Immigrant Visa (“SIV”) holders and applicants, and other individuals at risk due to the security situation in the country, and where applicable in facilitating assistance in Afghanistan and onward transportation and assistance, to or in intermediate locations and/or the United States. As requested by the applicant the information may also be used to provide additional information related to consular services. The information may be used by the U.S. Departments of State, Defense and Homeland Security and may be shared with other U.S. or foreign government agencies, international organizations, airlines and other transportation providers, non-governmental organizations and relevant family or other private individuals or entities, consistent with the purposes here described.

Due to the emergency situation surrounding the evacuation and relocation of individuals from Afghanistan, and the disruption to and subsequent suspension of U.S. Embassy operations in Kabul, a web-based form to collect this information was put in use August 14. The original form and a subsequent iteration have been used extensively already and a third version is pending; all solicit largely the same basic identity and contact information from individuals. Collection is intended to continue until eligible individuals are no longer seeking and requesting assistance.

Without the form, the target audience would immediately and frequently submit unsolicited, unstructured requests and data via email, sharing the same or similar information for the same purpose. Use of the form allows the Department to capture the data in such a way as to provide more accurate and efficient service, and to manage the information provided in a systematized and structured manner.

The Department has therefore determined that:

1. This collection is necessary without allowing for the time period normally associated with a routine submission for review under the

provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act. The need for this collection arose out of immediate and unforeseen exigent circumstances in August 2021 in connection with the end of U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan, the unanticipated swift collapse of the Afghan government and the disruption to and subsequent suspension of operations of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. The emergency review is thus related to a clear and specific emergency – a crisis response that requires ongoing Department action to assist U.S. citizens and others in dire circumstances and at risk of serious harms.

2. This collection is essential to the mission of the Department of State, which has no higher priority than protecting the lives and serving the interests of U.S. citizens overseas. The collection also supports the commitments outlined by the President, the Secretary of State and other senior members of the Administration to assist U.S. citizens, LPRs and at-risk Afghans (including SIV applicants) in departing Afghanistan.
3. As described previously, the use of normal clearance procedures would prevent the Department from obtaining this information and would severely impact its ability to evacuate U.S. citizens, LPRs and individuals at risk from Afghanistan, and to process visa applications and inquiries from individuals in Afghanistan or others acting on their behalf. First, were the agency not to utilize the online form to collect and manage this significant amount of information in a structured manner (such as by trying to collect and collate from emails), the agency would be significantly hindered in assisting these individuals efficiently, delaying or even preventing such assistance. Considering the circumstances on the ground in Afghanistan, including an agreement for all U.S. military forces to have withdrawn from the country by August 31, requiring compliance with normal clearance procedures would result in public harm. Second, while the end of the military mission in Afghanistan was anticipated, the rapid fall of the country to the Taliban was not. The agency expected to continue to provide services through normal processes (passport and CRBA and visa issuance) at the Embassy in Kabul. The current circumstances, and their rapid appearance, was unanticipated by the U.S. government. Finally, use of normal clearance procedures would prevent collection of the information in a fashion that is sufficiently structured as to be manageable and actionable in order to support the underlying agency mission to assist the public.

In light of the foregoing, the Department of State requests OMB's formal emergency review and approval of this information collection.

[Signed]

Shane Myers, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Overseas Citizens Services, Bureau of Consular Affairs

Department of State.