

**GREG STANTON**  
ARIZONA'S FOURTH DISTRICT

*VICE RANKING MEMBER*  
**COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE**  
AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE  
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT SUBCOMMITTEE  
WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
WESTERN HEMISPHERE SUBCOMMITTEE



**WASHINGTON OFFICE**  
207 CANNON BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515  
(202) 225-9888

**DISTRICT OFFICE**  
1220 S. ALMA SCHOOL ROAD, STE. 209  
MESA, ARIZONA 85210  
(602) 956-2463

STANTON.HOUSE.GOV

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

April 19, 2023

**RECEIVED**

**By ESEC at 8:53 am, Apr 21, 2023**

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
245 Murray Lane, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

For many of the tens of thousands of our Afghan allies who we brought to the United States after Kabul fell to the Taliban, the arrival here was the start of a nearly two-year long bureaucratic purgatory through the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service—one that has left them without permanent legal status or the stability to rebuild their lives.

I write to express my deep concern with the slow processing times for one especially vulnerable group—members of the Afghan National Army's Female Tactical Platoon.

FTPs, as they're called, were combat soldiers who were recruited, rigorously vetted, and trained by elite U.S. Special Operations Forces. These courageous women risked their lives by going where male soldiers couldn't in a majority-Muslim country, searching and questioning women and children in pursuit of Taliban targets. In fact, they were recruited specifically to use their status as Afghan women to build trust and draw out information from local populations. The platoon conducted two thousand missions, including high-risk and highly classified missions alongside Green Berets, Navy SEALs and Army Rangers.

Their dangerous work to support our mission makes them and their families a top target for the Taliban. The risk is amplified manyfold by their gender and their ethnicity (Hazara, a predominantly Shiite minority ethnic population that has been persecuted for years by the Taliban). Yet of the women from this unit who are now here in the United States, only three have thus far been granted asylum.

USCIS has kept 40 other FTPs in legal limbo for well past the agency's usual 180-day deadline—some for nearly a year. This is unacceptable. These women have done their part. They have submitted their applications and gone through intense interviews with USCIS agents. But for months they've been left to wait without any communication from your agency.

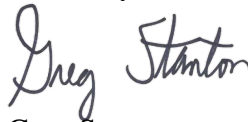
I am concerned that this group of courageous women is receiving disparate treatment from your Department. After all, many male Afghan soldiers, including pilots, have received

their asylum within the 180-day time period. The FTPs also worked alongside U.S. soldiers, were fully vetted throughout their service, and completed their asylum claims in a timely fashion. The only significant distinction is their gender—the very thing that makes their asylum claims all the more vital.

In August, the FTPs will have been here for two years and will lose their humanitarian parole status—and with it, their ability to work and support themselves. As I work with my colleagues in Congress to provide legal refuge to these Afghans and their families, it is well within your power to expedite and resolve these pending cases.

I request your personal attention to and involvement in this important matter, and I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Stanton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Greg Stanton  
Member of Congress



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

July 3, 2023

The Honorable Greg Stanton  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Stanton:

Thank you for your April 19, 2023 letter to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regarding members of the Afghan National Army's Female Tactical Platoon (FTP). I am responding on behalf of the Department.

We understand your concern that these FTP members will lose ability to work after the expiration of their initial two-year parole period. The Department is committed to ensuring continuity of protection and employment authorization for Afghan parolees. As announced by DHS on May 5, 2023, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is providing an opportunity for Afghan parolees, including Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) parolees such as these FTP members, to apply for streamlined, fee-exempted re-parole and employment authorization.<sup>1</sup> This streamlined process began on June 8, 2023, and we believe it will serve as a bridge to long-term immigration pathways that foster stability and the ability to integrate into the U.S. community.<sup>2</sup> For those individuals who have already filed applications for asylum or lawful permanent residence, USCIS will extend on a case-by-case basis, their parole and employment authorization for a period of two years.

In compliance with Section 2502(c) of the *Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act*, USCIS is working to expedite asylum applications for OAW parolees in accordance with statutory requirements. USCIS is committed to fairly and efficiently adjudicating asylum applications filed by individuals paroled under OAW. As of June 18, 2023, USCIS has received over 17,960 affirmative asylum applications, representing more than 32,000 OAW parolees. While we are working diligently to complete the final adjudication within the timeframe required by Congress, it is not always possible to achieve that timeline. Delays in OAW parolees' asylum applications may be caused by standard post-interview processing requirements that may require further interagency review based on the asylum application, and this is not unique to FTP members. We will continue to strive to complete the

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<sup>1</sup> DHS Announces Upcoming Re-parole Process for Afghan Nationals, Press Release, May 05, 2023, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2023/05/05/dhs-announces-upcoming-re-parole-process-afghan-nationals>

<sup>2</sup> Re-Parole Process for Certain Afghans, June 8, 2023, <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/information-for-afghan-nationals/re-parole-process-for-certain-afghans>

final adjudication of OAW parolees' asylum applications within 150 days of filing. Asylum applicants, including FTP members, with asylum applications pending 180 days are eligible for an Employment Authorization Document based on their pending asylum application. FTP members and other asylum applicants may inquire about the status of their cases at any time by contacting the asylum office with jurisdiction over their case. Contact information can be found at <https://egov.uscis.gov/office-locator/#/asy>.

To meet growing needs, the Asylum Division has increased hiring nationwide as well as onboarded and trained record numbers of new asylum officers. Although asylum offices are deploying resources to conduct protection screenings of individuals arriving at the Southwest Border due to the exceptional circumstance associated with the lifting of the Title 42 public health Order on May 12, 2023, USCIS continues to dedicate resources to adjudicate OAW asylum filings to the degree feasible. USCIS asylum offices temporarily cancelled affirmative asylum interviews, including OAW interviews, scheduled for the month of May only in order to devote resources to protection screenings at the Southwest Border. Asylum offices have retained the OAW asylum interviews that are scheduled for June.

DHS and USCIS are committed to providing essential humanitarian protections and continue to explore all options to best support vulnerable Afghans paroled under OAW, increase efficiency, and strengthen lawful pathways to the United States. The Department greatly appreciates your continued support as we work together for our Afghan allies.

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Should you need any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (240) 721-3801.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ur M. Jaddou", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ur M. Jaddou  
Director