



Chair Phyllis J. Randall

Newsletter



Hello, Loudoun

Ashburn Supervisor Mike Turner and I met earlier today with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to discuss the potential for a resettlement operation for people from Afghanistan to be temporarily located in Loudoun County. While it is true a location in Loudoun is being considered as a "safe haven" location for evacuees from Afghanistan who were allies to the U.S. Government operations during the 20-year Afghanistan war, at the time of this writing, DHS has not signed a contract with any facility in Loudoun County for such an operation. In addition, a contract will not be signed if certain entities in Loudoun government are not willing to take part in **Operation Allies Welcome**.

Having said that, if a contract is signed, I want to offer as many facts and answer as many questions as possible. Here's what we know so far, which is important to understand should the federal government's resettlement operation be set up in Loudoun:

- These individuals are not refugees; they are our allies and family members of American citizens and lawful permanent residents. Because they are allies of the U.S., they and their families cannot return to their home country without high risk of being killed by the Taliban, who are now in power.
- These individuals have been repeatedly screened and vetted by the U.S. Government for security risks before arriving in the U.S.
- About 1,000 asylum-seekers could be processed through the facility each month. Each individual or family would remain in Loudoun County for 2 to 4 weeks before moving on to their final destination, which could be anywhere in the U.S.
- About 65% are women and children.
- These individuals have been provided with all age-appropriate vaccinations required before entering the U.S., including measles, mumps, rubella,

varicella (chicken pox) and COVID-19. In addition, they are tested every five days for COVID.

- These individuals are now located at U.S. military bases in other countries where they have been going through the appropriate pre-arrival processes.
- Among those potentially arriving, these evacuees are:
 1. Special Immigration Visa holders or applicants and their families
 2. Women who were teachers (the Taliban does not allow females to teach)
 3. Judges and prosecutors
 4. Embassy personnel
 5. Interpreters for the U.S. military
 6. Guides for the U.S. military
 7. Women rights activists
 8. Journalists
 9. Family members of American Citizens and lawful permanent residents
- Any site that is set up in Loudoun County will be federalized, and all services will be provided on site. The site would be secured and movements in and out of the facility would be controlled. The site would have a full pharmacy, medical services and staff, mental health services, food, etc., on site. DHS will contract with a private ambulance service, and if there is a medical emergency that cannot be handled on site, they will be taken to a local hospital.
- The individuals WILL NOT be locating in Loudoun or NOVA. We are not their final destination. The children will not be enrolled in LCPS. This facility will be a place for cultural training and act as a temporary stop as locations across the country are identified as homes for our allies.
- If a federal crime is committed, this will be handled by the FBI. If a non-federal crime is committed, DHS security personnel will arrest and detain the person then notify local law enforcement to investigate. It is important to note, there have been VERY FEW law enforcement incidents at “safe haven” facilities, which have processed more than 75,000 evacuees. The vast majority of the few cases have been what we in the U.S. consider domestic violence cases, but which may be “accepted” in other cultures. When cultural competency training is completed, the incidents of domestic violence reduced.
- Loudoun’s Fire Marshall has signed off on the facility under consideration, and our Fire Department would respond to any fire incidents. The facility can easily handle the number of guests expected, and the fact that the facility allows for private quarters is a major plus for this type of operation.
- DHS is a willing partner in mitigating any impacts on traffic in the neighborhood, including coordinating regularly with the Loudoun County Public Schools and other organizations to deconflict traffic flow.

- If a contract is signed, the Ashburn District Supervisor, Mike Turner, and I will hold a public, in-person meeting for Lansdowne on the Potomac residents before any evacuees arrive. After that, we will hold ongoing virtual meetings as needed. Supervisor Turner and I will invite the Sheriff's Office, Fire Department, and all relevant federal agencies to participate in these meetings and answer your questions.
- If a contract is signed soon, the first evacuees would not be scheduled to arrive for weeks.
- Supervisor Turner has asked if the Lansdowne community can participate in welcoming cultural exchanges with the asylum families. That will be possible, and his office will coordinate these efforts.
- Loudoun County Government will provide more comprehensive information as we learn whether DHS will ultimately set up a "safe haven" site in Loudoun. We will continue to have as much communication as possible with members of the community and the county as a whole if a contract is signed.

I can assure that our federal partners have been forthcoming regarding their planning activities and their consideration of a site in Loudoun County as part of their efforts to resettle our Afghan allies. This possible staging area in Loudoun County for the next phase of Operation Allies Welcome is something we can all be proud of as the United States works to resettle people who were at risk of being killed if they stayed in Afghanistan. They helped us when we were in their country. Now, we should help them by finding them new, safe homes in our country.

Thank you, and I will continue to keep you informed.

Contact Us

Sincerely,

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