
U.S. Department of State

Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration

U.S. REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM NEWS



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52,868 Refugee Admissions in Fiscal Year 2004!

The refugee admissions program has completed a remarkable recovery from the events of September 11, 2001. Various factors, including security concerns, contributed to a sharp decline in the number of refugees admitted to the United States in the two subsequent fiscal years. The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, with the support of the White House and the Congress, worked with other U.S. Government agencies, international and non-governmental organizations, and U.S. resettlement partners to rebuild the program. The final number for fiscal 2004 is an 85% increase over last fiscal year's total of 28,422 refugee admissions.

The chart on page 5 shows the final breakdown of fiscal year 2004 admissions, with a comparison by region to FY-2003. The most notable figure may be the more than 29,000 admissions from Africa, constituting more than half of the total for the 12-month period. This reflects the Department's conclusion that a number of African groups -- Somali Bantus, certain Liberians -- could neither be safely repatriated nor successfully integrated into the countries where they had sought refuge.

The total for Europe and Central Asia reflects among other things the continuing legacy of the Lautenberg Amendment of 1989 and the addition of Meskhetian Turks.

The Meskhetians are not traditional refugees as defined by international law. They fall into the category of "rescued" populations -- those in protracted and apparently irresolvable situations.

The Hmong-Lao from Wat Tham Krabok, also a "rescued" population, account for roughly 12% of arrivals in fiscal year 2004. Approximately 15,000 Hmong in Thailand were registered over a six-month period earlier this year. The International Organization for Migration, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Department of Homeland Security all worked quickly to prepare and screen the entire population. The first Hmong refugees from Wat Tham Krabok arrived in the U.S. June 21, 2004.

Latin America and the Near East/South Asia combined made up approximately 10% of the FY-04 total. From the western hemisphere we have welcomed Colombians, Haitians and Cubans. Arrivals from the Near East and South Asia included members of Iranian religious minorities as well as some Afghans, although for most refugees from Afghanistan, returning home is now both possible and desirable.

For information on where the admissions program is heading in 2005, please see page 3.

Refugee Arrivals in Fiscal Year 2004 – A Photo Album



September 27, 2004. Liberian families arrive at JFK Airport. Photos International Organization for Migration (IOM).



September 27, 2004. Moldovans arriving at JFK Airport. Photo IOM.



June 21, 2004 dawns as the Yang family (Hmong-Lao) arrives in Sacramento airport from Thailand. Vang Xieng Yang is welcomed by his sons and cousins. Photo by Christophe Calais / In Visu.



September 27, 2004. Moldovan arrivals at JFK Airport. Photo IOM.



June 21, 2004. Lee Shong (Vang Xieng Yang's wife) on the day of her arrival in Sacramento airport, California. Photo by Christophe Calais / In Visu.



Preparing for Fiscal Year 2005

In September, Secretary of State Colin Powell led the annual consultations with Congress on refugee admissions. He thanked the Senators and Representatives for their support of the admissions program and outlined the Administration’s plan for FY-2005: regional ceilings totaling 50,000; and an unallocated reserve of 20,000 included in the event that numbers allocated to a particular region are insufficient and resources to fund them are identified early in the fiscal year:

Africa	20,000
East Asia	13,000
Europe and Central Asia	9,500
Latin America/Caribbean.	5,000
Near East/South Asia.	2,500
Unallocated Reserve	20,000

The Secretary noted that the substantial cost of processing refugees – over \$3,500 per capita in FY-04, compared to \$2,200 in FY-01 – has a direct impact on the Department’s ability to reach the proposed ceiling. As Assistant Secretary Dewey said in his recent Congressional testimony, “So long as we receive adequate funding, I am confident that we have a system in place that that is capable of sustaining or increasing admissions numbers in coming years”.

The Secretary outlined a number of changes to the program for FY-05:

1. Priorities 1 and 2 have been slightly redefined to include NGO referred cases and to better define “groups”.
2. Priority 1 (P-1) will include all individual cases referred to the program by UNHCR, a U.S. Embassy, or a non-governmental organization.
3. Priority 2 (P-2) will include all groups of special humanitarian concern to the United States, identified by the Department of State in consultation with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, NGOs, UNHCR, and other experts. It will include some groups processed in their countries of origin.
4. Eligibility for family reunification (P-3) consideration will be extended in FY 2005 to nationals of fourteen countries (Burma, Burundi, Congo [Brazzaville], Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC], Colombia, Cuba, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia, and Sudan) who are the spouses, unmarried children under 21, or parents of persons admitted to the United States as refugees or granted asylum, or persons who are lawful permanent residents or U.S. citizens who were initially admitted to the United States as refugees or granted asylum.
5. In order to meet the needs of extraordinary individual protection cases for whom resettlement is requested by a U.S. Embassy, in-country processing authority will be extended to any location in the world on a trial basis during FY 2005, with the understanding that, where there is significant public benefit, parole will continue to be the solution to most such cases. Larger scale in-country programs will continue in the former Soviet Union, Cuba and Vietnam.

Out of the “Warehouse”

(This opinion piece by Assistant Secretary of State Arthur E. Dewey was published in the “Washington Times” on September 10, 2004.)

Long-staying refugees in rural camps or urban ghettos are not commodities in a sad state of storage, but vibrant human beings carving out lives for themselves while in exile. That said, where they do not have the right to work legally or integrate into the community, they can languish in a state of dependency and lose hope for the future. Refugee “warehousing” is an issue that demands attention — and is getting it.

The U.S. Committee for Refugees has made this issue a centerpiece of its current advocacy campaign. Meanwhile, the State Department, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other partner agencies are taking dramatic steps to address the warehousing problem.

The key step is facilitating voluntary repatriation. Tens of thousands of long-staying refugees have returned to Sierra Leone, Angola and Liberia from neighboring countries. More than 80,000 Iraqis have gone home since the fall of Saddam. But the biggest success story of all is Afghanistan, where more than three million have returned from long stays in Pakistan and Iran. This continuing repatriation represents one of the largest refugee solutions in modern times, and the number of refugees caught in these dead-end situations has decreased remarkably.

While “de-warehousing” refugees — through repatriation, local integration, or resettlement — is an important first step, it is not enough. Sustaining repatriation requires commitment from the international

donor community over the long haul. Returnees need long-term transitional help and employment opportunities to restore their dignity and self-reliance. To that end, the U.S. started an employment program called the Afghan Conservation Corps (ACC). Already, 750,000 seedlings have been planted on the dusty hillsides around Kabul by thousands of returning refugees, internally displaced persons, de-militarized militias, and Afghan women. Ultimately, hundreds of thousands will join them to work on similar projects. The ACC is a model for how to make de-warehousing irreversible.

There are still critics who charge us with not doing enough to bring to the United States needy refugees who can’t be repatriated. To them I say, “Watch what we are doing.” Watch, for example, the rapid response to an unexpected opening in Thailand to interview 15,000 Lao Hmong stranded for over a decade in Wat Tham Krabok. By year’s end, most of them will have been resettled in the United States. Watch also our admission of Meshketian Turks from Russia who had been rootless for decades.

The resettlement process is costly and labor-intensive, but we have spared no expense or effort to resettle refugees in the United States, when that is the most appropriate solution. We know that there remain vulnerable people — especially women and children — who have waited for years or even decades for rescue. This Administration is committed to overcoming the obstacles that stand in the way of such a rescue.

We urge other countries to be more generous in giving aid, in admitting refugees, and in facilitating local integration where appropriate. As Secretary Colin Powell said during World Refugee Day

commemorations in June, “We join other nations in easing the plight of all those who will close their eyes tonight in a strange land to dream of the home they were forced to flee. It’s up to all of us to defend the non-negotiable demands of human dignity. It’s

up to all of us to help the world’s refugees feel at home again.”

It takes a home, not a warehouse, to make these dreams come true.

Final Fiscal Year 2003/2004 Admissions Statistics

Region	FY 2003 Regional Ceiling	FY 2004 Regional Ceiling	Total Arrivals in FY 2003	Total Arrivals in FY 2004
Africa	20,000	30,000*	7,737	29,125
East Asia	4,000	8,500*	1,567	8,079
Europe & Central Asia	16,500	13,000	9,881	9,254
Latin America & Caribbean	2,500	3,500	321	3,556
Near East & South Asia	7,000	3,000*	3,764	2,854
TOTAL	50,000	58,000*	23,270	52,868

*President Bush authorized the admission of up to 70,000 refugees for fiscal year 2004, 50,000 regionally allocated and an additional 20,000 unallocated. The unallocated reserve was tapped during the year to provide additional numbers to the African, East Asian, and Near East/South Asian ceilings.

On September 21, the Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security, and Citizenship, held a hearing on “**Refugees – Seeking Solutions to a Global Concern**”. Assistant Secretary of State Dewey and Eduardo Aguirre Director, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, provided official U.S. government testimony, and several non-governmental experts also appeared. Transcripts are available on the Committee’s website: <http://judiciary.senate.gov/hearing.cfm?id=1310>.

Mr. Dewey’s statement is also available at <http://www.state.gov/g/prm/>, the Bureau’s portion of the Department of State’s public website. At this address you will also find past issues of the Admissions Newsletter, texts of recent speeches by Mr. Dewey and other officials, information on U.S. assistance to Sudanese refugees in Chad and announcements of recent funding actions.

Presidential Determination 2004-53, dated October 1, 2004, concerning FY 2005 refugee admissions numbers, is available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/>.