

Testimony of Nadim Yousify

Before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Border Security and Immigration, and the Subcommittee on Crime and Counterterrorism

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Thank you, Chairman Cornyn, Chairman Hawley, Ranking Member Durbin, Ranking Member Padilla, and members of the subcommittees for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Nadim Yousify. I am a Naturalized American citizen, a United States Marine Sargent, and a future nurse. I am here today as an example of what successful refugee resettlement and integration looks like when it is grounded in service, accountability, and commitment to this country. I am testifying in my personal capacity today and my views do not represent those of the United States Marine Corps.

From 2010 to 2015, I served in Afghanistan as an interpreter in direct support of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's operations. I did not simply translate words. I translated intent, warnings, and threats. I helped American personnel operate safely in an environment where misunderstanding would cost lives.

Working alongside American service members shaped who I am. I saw their discipline, their professionalism, and their willingness to risk everything for one another. I was inspired by that example. My family has a long tradition of military service, and after graduating high school, I followed in my older brother's footsteps and I committed myself to serving alongside the Americans we respected so deeply.

Because of this work, I became a target for the drug traffickers, Taliban and other insurgent groups. Like many Afghan allies, my service put my life and my family's lives at risk. After years of documented service and extensive vetting, I later immigrated to the United States through the Special Immigrant Visa program. I want to be very clear about what that process looked like. The SIV process required years of interviews, background investigations, biometric screenings, and continuous repeated reviews by multiple U.S. government agencies. Every detail of my history was examined. It was an obstacle course.

Once I arrived in the United States, my desire to serve did not stop. I tried to enlist in the military immediately, but I did not pass the Armed Service Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test. Instead of giving up, I went to school, improved my skills, and retested. I felt so inspired by the American service members I had worked with that I was determined to earn the right to stand beside them.

I eventually enlisted in the United States Marine Corps and served on active duty, followed by service in the Marine Corps Reserve. I completed one deployment with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, followed by a deployment with the Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force–Crisis Response, during which I returned to Jordan. I accepted the deployments because I believed in the mission and in the people I served with.

Today, I am a nursing student. I am currently in Inactive Reserves status, but my goal is to return to active duty and serve as an officer in the Army Nurse Corps. I want to continue serving this country in uniform, caring for those who serve and sacrifice. I hope my children and grandchildren will one day choose to serve as well, so that when their lives are over, they too can be buried with an American flag on their casket.

I have also been deeply involved in supporting other resettled Afghans in my community since 2021. I help families navigate life in a new country, find stability, and build futures rooted in responsibility and contribution. Service did not end when the uniform came off. It is a way of life.

I understand the concerns raised in this hearing. National security matters. Public safety matters. No one who served alongside American forces like I did would ever dispute that. I also acknowledge the tragic incident involving a fellow servicemember. I lost a Sister in Arms SPC Beckstrom, may her soul rest in peace - I extend my deepest condolences to her family and her unit and a brother SSgt Wolfe who is currently recovering from injuries – their sacrifice deserves respect and seriousness. But it is essential to separate individual criminal acts from the reality of an entire population that was vetted, tested, and proven through service.

From 2001 to 2021, the United States relied heavily on Afghan partners to carry out its mission. During that twenty-year period, an estimated 50,000 Afghan interpreters worked directly with U.S. military and federal agencies. Tens of thousands more Afghans served in Zero Units, and other essential roles such as drivers, logistics personnel, cultural advisors, engineers, and staff supporting U.S. government agencies, contractors, and American-funded NGOs. These individuals were not bystanders. They were mission-critical.

Because of that service, many Afghan allies paid a deadly price. Advocacy organizations and investigative reporting estimate that more than 300 Afghan interpreters and their family members were killed because of their association with U.S. forces either during their service, in targeted attacks afterward, or while waiting for promised visas. Many others were threatened, forced into hiding, or assassinated quietly with no headlines. These risks were real, known, and ongoing.

The Special Immigrant Visa program was created in response to that reality. It was designed to balance national security with moral responsibility by requiring documented service, verification by U.S. supervisors, and extensive multi-year vetting. It was an obstacle course.

Between 2008 and 2021, approximately 70,000 Afghan interpreters and their family members were admitted to the United States through the SIV process. At the time of the U.S. withdrawal, tens of thousands more Afghan allies—including interpreters and other U.S.-affiliated workers—remained in the visa pipeline after years of documented service and repeated screening.

Like any system, oversight and improvement are appropriate. Criminal behavior must be addressed swiftly and individually. Accountability must be firm and uncompromising. But accountability should be individual—not collective. One person's crime should never erase the sacrifices of tens of thousands who stood with American service members under fire.

When I served as an interpreter, I stood between U.S. personnel and uncertainty. I translated not just language, but intent, warnings, and threats. Afghan allies helped save American lives. They believed in the promises made to them.

How we treat those allies today sends a message far beyond Afghanistan. In future conflicts, American forces will again rely on local partners willing to stand with us. The question those future allies will ask is simple: Will the United States keep its word when the war ends?

I believed in America before I ever lived here. That belief led me to serve as an interpreter, then as a Marine, and now as a future nurse. I am not unique—there are thousands like me who continue to serve quietly every day.

Security and compassion are not opposites. Strong vetting and moral responsibility can—and must—exist together. America is safest when it keeps both its borders and its word.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to your questions