



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

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**Joint Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**  
***Operation Allies Welcome: Examining DHS's Efforts to Resettle Vulnerable Afghans***  
**October 21, 2021**

Just weeks after 9/11, U.S. military operations began in Afghanistan—operations that would last 20 years, until this past August. The recent withdrawal of American forces resulted in the need to quickly evacuate U.S. citizens and Afghan allies. Our military undertook an unprecedented airlift mission, facilitating the evacuation of more than 124,000 people in 17 days.

The President's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan has been fiercely debated, and there are many questions still to be answered about how the evacuation was carried out. But the task before us now is resettling the tens of thousands of vulnerable individuals and families who were evacuated from their country. Many of them risked their lives, and the lives of their families, to assist the U.S. Government and our military over the past two decades. They served bravely in key roles, such as translators, interpreters, and drivers, which made them integral partners in the fight against terrorism. It is critical we honor these Afghans' contributions by welcoming them into communities across the United States and providing them with the support they need to start their new lives.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is uniquely qualified to carry out this work given its experience bringing different agencies together to execute a common mission. DHS often convenes partners—including State and local governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and public—to respond to a crisis. That is why the Biden Administration tapped DHS to lead the Federal government's resettlement efforts, known as Operation Allies Welcome.

As the lead Federal agency, DHS helps ensure unity of effort, clear roles and responsibilities, and effective coordination across the government. To date, Operation Allies Welcome has provided Afghans with initial support such as medical care, language access resources, and immigration assistance while they await transfer from military bases to their new communities. But DHS and the Federal government are not acting alone.

The private sector and a vast network of non-profit organizations are vital partners for ensuring Afghans have the support they need, especially as they resettle in U.S. communities across the nation. Several of these non-profit partners are represented here today. I want to thank the witnesses for joining us and express my gratitude for the important work that you and your organizations are doing. I look forward to hearing how Congress and the Administration can support your efforts to safely and compassionately resettle our Afghan allies.

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