

Action Targeting Refugees Endangers Troops, National Security

NEW YORK, NY (January 30, 2017) – President Donald Trump’s recent Executive Order halting the admission of immigrants and refugees from seven Muslim-majority countries, including halting the acceptance of Iraqi translators into the United States, puts troops currently deployed in those countries and our national security at immediate risk. As the leading group representing Post-9/11 veterans, IAVA calls on our Commander-in-Chief to consider the harmful impacts of this Executive Order on our troops and allies and the damage it’s already having on our ability to fight terrorism worldwide.

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), along with veterans and respected military leaders across the country, strongly urge the President to hear our call to reassess and revise this action.

“This short-sighted action is already threatening our national security,” **said Paul Rieckhoff, CEO and Founder of IAVA.** “Right now, US troops are deployed in Iraq and around the world next to local allies who are risking their lives to stand with them in combat. We’ve asked them to have our back when the bullets are flying, but this action turns America’s back on them. The White House just sent a message to interpreters and other allies around the world: if you stand up to fight alongside Americans, there’s no promise of protection later. This dangerous Executive Order compromises the safety of our troops and sets a precedent that jeopardizes the American military’s ability to fight threats like ISIS for years to come. Furthermore, this Executive Order only adds fuel to anti-American propaganda and radical recruiting efforts worldwide.”

The Executive Order also stands in the way of a critical priority in IAVA’s Policy Agenda. Since 2013, IAVA has supported authorization of the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program to continue for as long as the U.S. commits military forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. IAVA has also called for expanding some facets of the SIV program. IAVA’s full position can be seen in our Policy Agenda [Section 5.3 here](#).

“IAVA represents a generation of veterans who have depended on native interpreters to help us on the fields of battle for over a decade,” **continued Rieckhoff.** “When I was a Platoon Leader in Iraq, my Iraqi interpreter was my single most valuable weapon. More than any rifle or bomb, my interpreter kept me and my soldiers safe and saved untold lives—American and Iraqi. Countless IAVA veterans have similar stories that are already pouring in on social media nationwide. IAVA has long stated our support for parameters within the Special Immigrant Visa program to secure the safety of men and women who continue to risk their lives working side by side with American troops. The President’s recent action works against this important goal. We respectfully call on him to listen to our nation’s veterans and reconsider this counterproductive move immediately.”