

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 256

WHEREAS, on April 14, 2021, President Biden announced that the full U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan would begin on May 1, 2021, nearly 20 years after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and the initiation of major combat in Afghanistan against Taliban forces on October 7, 2001; and

WHEREAS, on July 8, 2021, President Biden announced that the U.S. military operation in Afghanistan would conclude on August 31, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Afghan allies have provided immeasurable support to members of the U.S. military and to the country's operations in Afghanistan for the previous two decades, and stood next to our soldiers in fighting for democracy, stability, and peace; and

WHEREAS, the incoming Taliban regime in Afghanistan poses a severe threat to Afghans who have supported the United States, those who oppose Taliban rule, women's rights advocates, Afghan security forces and government officials, and others whose values do not align with those of the incoming regime; and

WHEREAS, according to the Biden Administration, the United States has relocated over 110,000 people from Afghanistan since the end of July of this year, including tens of thousands of at-risk Afghan nationals and Afghans who have qualified for Special Immigrant Visas ("SIV"), with thousands more expected to be evacuated by the current August 31 withdrawal deadline; and

WHEREAS, Afghans who have been evacuated as part of the military drawdown will be resettled around the world, including across the United States; and

WHEREAS, on August 22, 2021, I informed President Biden by letter that the State of New Jersey stands ready to welcome our Afghan allies, and noted that these brave individuals and families, many of whom have worked to assist our military and put their own lives on the line in support of human rights and American initiatives, must not be left behind; and

WHEREAS, on August 23, 2021, the United States Department of Defense identified Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst as a temporary shelter for up to 9,500 Afghan refugees for up to 365 days in accordance with President Biden's "Planning Order for Department of Defense Support to the Department of State for Afghan Relocation"; and

WHEREAS, on August 25, 2021, the first group of Afghan refugees arrived in New Jersey at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, with the potential for additional arrivals in the coming days or weeks; and

WHEREAS, providing safe harbor for these individuals and families not only expresses our shared American values, but also honors the sacrifice made by U.S. veterans of the War in Afghanistan; and

WHEREAS, we welcome Afghans to New Jersey not only because they will make enormous contributions to our State's culture, community, and economy, but because it is the right thing to do considering the sacrifices these individuals have made in support of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan over the last two decades; and

WHEREAS, coordinated inter-agency efforts are critical and necessary to ensuring efficient and robust supports for this group;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, PHILIP D. MURPHY, Governor of the State of New Jersey, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and by the Statutes of this State, do hereby ORDER and DIRECT:

1. There is hereby established the Task Force on Afghan Refugee Assistance ("Task Force") that will report directly to the Office of the Governor.

2. The Chairperson of the Task Force shall be the Adjutant General and Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs ("DMAVA"), or her designee.

3. In addition to the Commissioner of DMAVA, the Task Force shall consist of the Chief of Staff to the Governor; the Chief Counsel to the Governor; the Chief Policy Advisor to the Governor; the Executive Director of the Governor's Disaster Recovery Office; and the Commissioners or other heads of the following Executive Branch departments and agencies, or their designees:

- a. The Department of Law & Public Safety;
- b. The New Jersey State Police;
- c. The Department of Health;
- d. The Department of Human Services;
- e. The Department of Children & Families;
- f. The Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness;
- g. The Department of State;
- h. The Department of Transportation;
- i. The Department of Community Affairs; and
- j. The Department of Labor & Workforce Development.

4. The Governor may, as determined to be appropriate, appoint additional members to the Task Force, who shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor.

5. Neither the Chairperson nor any member of the Task Force shall be compensated in addition to the compensation received, if any, as an employee or officer of the State.

6. The Task Force shall meet as often as practicable and as requested by the Governor or Chairperson.

7. The Task Force is charged with coordinating State efforts to appropriately prepare for and respond to the arrival of Afghan refugees and SIV holders in New Jersey. The Task Force will coordinate with and, where necessary, call upon any other department, office, division, or agency deemed necessary for consultation and advice. Specific objectives of the Task Force shall include, but not be limited, to the following:

- a. Developing a mechanism for identifying Afghan refugees and SIV holders who arrive in New Jersey and plan to remain for some period of time;
- b. Managing internal efforts among Executive Branch departments and agencies to welcome and provide support to Afghan refugees and SIV holders as they arrive and/or resettle in New Jersey;
- c. Coordinating communications with representatives of the federal government, including the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of Defense, regarding the relocation of Afghan refugees and SIV holders;
- d. Overseeing the provision of vital support and emergency healthcare services for those who need it upon arrival in New Jersey, including Coronavirus disease 2019 ("COVID-19") testing and vaccination as needed;
- e. Creating an intake mechanism for organizations and individuals seeking to provide aid and support to Afghan refugees and SIV holders to contact the Task Force, evaluating and keeping track of such organizations and individuals, and connecting such organizations and individuals with those in need of assistance; and
- f. Providing any other necessary supports to ensure the safe entry and relocation to New Jersey of Afghan refugees and SIV holders.

8. The Task Force is authorized to call upon any department, office, division, or agency of this State to supply it with public data and information, as well as any personnel or other assistance available to such agency as the Task Force determines to be necessary to discharge its duties under this Order. Each Executive Branch

department, office, division, or agency of this State is hereby required, to the extent not inconsistent with law, to cooperate fully with the Task Force and to furnish the Task Force with such assistance on as timely a basis as is necessary to accomplish the purposes of this Order.

9. For purposes of this Order, "Executive Branch departments and agencies" shall mean any of the principal departments in the Executive Branch of State government and any agency, authority, board, bureau, commission, division, institution, office, or other instrumentality within or created by any such department, and any independent State authority, commission, instrumentality, or agency over which the Governor exercises executive authority, as determined by the Attorney General.

10. The Task Force shall be purely advisory in nature and shall provide advice to the Governor and other Executive Branch departments and agencies as requested.

11. This Order shall take effect immediately.

GIVEN, under my hand and seal this
27th day of August,
Two Thousand and Twenty-one,
and of the Independence of the
United States, the Two Hundred
and Forty-Sixth.

[seal]

/s/ Philip D. Murphy

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Parimal Garg

Chief Counsel to the Governor