



International Office Closures

Semiannual 1, Fiscal Year 2024

October 11, 2024

Fiscal Year 2024 Report to Congress



**Homeland
Security**

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Message from the Director

October 11, 2024

I am pleased to present the following report, “International Office Closures,” for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, which has been prepared by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

This report was compiled pursuant to direction in Senate Report 118-85 accompanying the FY 2024 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Act (P. L. 118-47).

Pursuant to congressional requirements, this report is being provided to the following Members of Congress:



The Honorable Mark Amodei
Chairman, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Lauren Underwood
Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Chris Murphy
Chair, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Katie Britt
Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (240) 721-1500.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ur M. Jaddou". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ur M. Jaddou
Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Executive Summary

USCIS international field offices play an important role in advancing USCIS's mission to uphold America's promise as a nation of welcome and possibility with fairness, integrity, and respect for all we serve. The international field offices are critical to addressing USCIS's humanitarian workloads, detecting and investigating fraud, protecting national security, and building strategic partnerships with other government agencies, as well as non-governmental and international organizations. USCIS' international presence facilitates timely and efficient provision of immigration benefit services while positioning USCIS to gather information and respond to world events strategically.

USCIS maintains 11 international field offices in 10 countries. Between October 2022 and February 2024, USCIS obtained Department of State (DOS) approval through the National Security Decision Directive (NSDD)-38 process to open six international field offices. As of May 2024, USCIS has opened four of these six offices and expects to open an additional office by the end of FY 2024 and the other in early FY 2025. USCIS is engaged in post-by-post discussions with DOS to assess the feasibility of establishing a permanent USCIS presence in additional locations of interest.

Under the FY 2024 DHS Appropriations Act (P.L. 118-47), USCIS faces substantially reduced appropriations to support international operations. Given the critical work performed by international field offices, USCIS will continue to seek to fully fund and expand international operations through appropriations in the FY 2025 President's Budget Request and beyond as directed by the Administration.



International Office Closures Semiannual 1, Fiscal Year 2024

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I. Legislative Language

This report responds to direction set forth in Senate Report 118-85 accompanying the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Appropriations Act (P.L. 118-47), which states:

International Office Closures.—Within 90 days of the date of enactment of this act, and semi-annually thereafter, USCIS shall provide a report to the Committee that outlines the number of existing and planned international offices, along with the associated staff.

II. USCIS International Operations Work

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) international offices have significant responsibility in advancing the U.S. Government's (USG) strategic priorities in the international migration and refugee protection arenas by providing immigration benefits and services, detecting fraud and national security issues, and building partnerships, including interagency, foreign government agency, and non-governmental partners.

In locations where USCIS does not have an international presence and in limited circumstances where USCIS has a presence abroad, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) completes certain USCIS workloads and other services on behalf of USCIS. Each fiscal year, DOS and USCIS enter into an Interagency Agreement (IAA) pursuant to the Economy Act (31 U.S.C. §§ 1535 and 1536). The IAA governs the workloads and services that USCIS pays DOS CA to perform on USCIS's behalf.

USCIS continually assesses its international footprint and workloads in determining the location of international offices considering the following:

- The Administration's commitment to:
 - Increase refugee admissions.
 - Increase lawful pathways for nationals from the Western Hemisphere.
- National security, public safety, and fraud prevention.
- Worldwide migration patterns.
- Workload backlog reduction.
- Infrastructure, personnel, and budget constraints.

III. Existing International Offices

As of May 2024, USCIS has 11 international field offices in 10 countries:

- Ankara, Turkey
- Beijing, China
- Doha, Qatar
- Guangzhou, China
- Guatemala City, Guatemala
- Havana, Cuba
- Mexico City, Mexico
- Nairobi, Kenya
- New Delhi, India
- San Salvador, El Salvador
- Tegucigalpa, Honduras

The following chart provides authorized staffing levels at existing USCIS international offices as of May 6, 2024.

USCIS International Presence							
Authorized Staffing Level at Existing USCIS International Offices as of May 6, 2024							
Region	Country	Post	U.S. Direct Hires (USDH)	USDH Fraud Detection and National Security (FDNS)*	Locally Engaged Staff (LES)	LES FDNS*	Totals
East Asia/Pacific	China	Beijing	2	-	5	-	7
East Asia/Pacific	China	Guangzhou	4	1	5	-	10
Europe/Eurasia	Turkey	Ankara	2	-	3	-	5
Middle East/North Africa	Qatar	Doha	2	-	3	-	5
South/Central Asia	India	New Delhi	4	1	4	3	12
Sub-Saharan Africa	Kenya	Nairobi	2	-	4	-	6
Western Hemisphere	Guatemala	Guatemala City	2	-	2	-	4
Western Hemisphere	Cuba	Havana	2	-	-	-	2
Western Hemisphere	Mexico	Mexico City	2	1	3	-	6
Western Hemisphere	El Salvador	San Salvador	3	1	4	-	8
Western Hemisphere	Honduras	Tegucigalpa	2	-	3	-	5
Totals			27	4	36	3	70

*Positions on this chart were fully funded by appropriations in FY 2023, except for FDNS positions, which were funded by the USCIS Immigration Examinations Fee Account (IEFA). The FY 2024 DHS Appropriations Act signed March 23, 2024, reduced appropriations for USCIS refugee, parole, and international operations by approximately 32 percent. Accordingly, in FY 2024, some of these positions are funded through IEFA.

Between October 2022 and February 2024, USCIS obtained DOS approval through the National Security Decision Directive (NSDD)-38 process to open six offices. As of May 2024, four of these offices are open: Havana, Cuba; Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Ankara, Turkey; and Doha, Qatar. USCIS expects to open the remaining two offices, Quito, Ecuador and Dhaka, Bangladesh, by the end of FY 2024 and early FY 2025, respectively.

IV. Planned International Offices

USCIS continually evaluates its international footprint and engages with stakeholders, including post-by-post discussions with DOS to assess the feasibility of establishing a permanent USCIS presence at locations of interest. The following chart shows USCIS' approved international office expansion as of May 2024.

USCIS International Presence				
Planned International Office Expansion as of May 2024				
Region	Country	Post	Status	Target Open
Western Hemisphere	Ecuador	Quito	NSDD-38 Approved 12/12/2023	FY 2024 (Tentative)
South/Central Asia	Bangladesh	Dhaka	NSDD-38 Approved 2/29/2024	FY 2025 (Tentative)

Under the FY 2024 DHS Appropriations Act, USCIS faces substantially reduced appropriations to support international operations. USCIS will continue to seek to fully fund and expand international operations through appropriations in the FY 2025 President's Budget Request and beyond as directed by the Administration.

V. Impact of International Operations

USCIS international presence is critical in addressing humanitarian workloads.

Primary workloads for USCIS offices abroad include processing of parole, following-to-join refugee/asylee petitions, and refugee processing under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. These caseloads require in-country presence to verify identity, conduct in-person interviews, collect biometrics, and issue travel documents to eligible individuals. Statutorily, DOS CA does not have authority to perform these adjudications.

While a significant portion of refugee processing is handled by USCIS officers based in the United States who travel on a circuit ride basis around the globe, staff at USCIS international offices:

- Interview and process emergency and/or high-profile refugee cases that might arise when USCIS refugee processing teams are not in the region;
- Serve as control officers for refugee processing team visits; and
- Complete the requisite in-person functions of collecting biometrics and verifying identity to enable USCIS to expand the number of refugee applicants interviewed via videoconferencing.

USCIS international presence is critical in detecting and investigating fraud to ensure program integrity and in protecting national security.

Staff assigned to international offices perform essential fraud detection activities to support the integrity of the immigration system through document verification, site visits, and interviews. They also leverage expertise in local fraud trends and investigation findings to train USCIS domestic offices and other entities to assist in deterring immigration fraud and enhancing border security. In addition, these staff also participate in Law Enforcement Working Groups and liaise with other USG, law enforcement, and foreign government partners to share information on security and fraud threats, exchange best practices to help identify and deter fraud, address national security issues and public safety threats in the immigration process, and prevent bad actors from immigrating to the United States.

USCIS international presence is critical in building strategic partnerships.

Staff assigned to international offices leverage their expertise and knowledge of lawful pathways to assist U.S. embassies in understanding broader immigration legal issues, policies, and processes and serve as key players in inter-agency working groups and efforts related to migration management initiatives. They coordinate closely with non-governmental and international organizations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, to seek to reach the annual USG target for refugee admissions. These staff also share information with and provide technical expertise to other Components and offices within DHS, as well as DOS, the Department of Defense, and other USG entities and foreign government agencies on immigration-related, anti-fraud, and national

security matters in furtherance of agency and departmental goals. Staff at international offices participate in senior-level emergency management and continuity of operations planning abroad to effectively respond based on USCIS expertise to quickly evolving situations overseas, including natural disasters and socio-political unrest.

USCIS international presence facilitates timely and efficient provision of USCIS immigration benefit services.

USCIS presence abroad facilitates faster and more efficient processing of USCIS caseloads; DOS CA has its own priority workloads, limiting its capacity to process USCIS work or to do so as quickly as USCIS offices. USCIS' international offices also provide a breadth of information services to U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and other applicants and beneficiaries abroad in local time zones and, if needed/available, in host country languages, which provides invaluable assistance in resolving complex questions that cannot be addressed via online resources. Staff assigned to USCIS international offices perform other urgent adjudicative services, such as the exceptional adjudication of waivers of inadmissibility to support more rapid processing of immigrant visas and refugee following-to-join cases.

USCIS international presence strategically positions USCIS to gather information and respond to world events.

International offices provide greater visibility and flexibility to USCIS to assist in policy and program development in support of immigration responses to global issues. They facilitate USCIS' ability to gather regional and host country intelligence related to fraud and national security issues that can then be shared throughout the agency to assist in enhancing the integrity of the immigration system. International offices also serve as a launch point for refugee processing teams deploying to the region.

VI. Conclusion

USCIS international offices play a significant role in advancing the USG's strategic priorities in the international migration and refugee protection arenas by providing immigration benefits and services, detecting fraud and potential national security threats, and building partnerships. As of May 2024, USCIS has 11 international field offices in 10 countries and is looking to open 2 additional international field offices in FY 2024. To support its international workload, USCIS will continue to seek to fully fund and expand international operations through appropriations in the FY 2025 President's Budget Request and beyond as directed by the Administration.

VII. Appendix: Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOS	Department of State
CA	Bureau of Consular Affairs
FDNS	Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate
FY	Fiscal Year
IEFA	Immigration Examination Fees Account
IAA	Interagency Agreement
NSDD-38	National Security Decision Directive-38
USCIS	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
USG	U.S. Government