

Secretary Blinken Honors AfghanEvac in Washington D.C. Ceremony

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EAST PATCHOGUE, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, June 14, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken signed an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the State Department and the #AfghanEvac coalition at the National Museum of American Diplomacy in Washington D.C. The MOU institutionalizes the innovative public-private partnership established in August 2021 to honor America's promises to Afghans who risked their lives to assist U.S. forces on the battlefield.

Secretary Blinken recognized the volunteers' ongoing contributions during Operation Allies Welcome and Enduring Welcome, and reaffirmed the State Department's commitment to continued efforts to relocate and resettle eligible Afghan allies and their family members.

The partnership, which began following the withdrawal of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, brings together U.S. government leaders and private citizens across the nation in a collaborative effort to help vulnerable Afghan allies.

"Of all the things one has the opportunity to do in life, few things are more meaningful or more powerful than the opportunity we have to help out fellow human beings and make sure their stories continue... until we finish the job," said Secretary Blinken.

#AfghanEvac is a coalition of more than 200 organizations working alongside the U.S. Government to support Afghan relocation efforts. Members represent a cross-section of America, including everyone from attorneys to veterans to children's book authors to members of Congress.

"Our mission at Paws Unite People is to help eliminate the suffering of animals and humans alike. We support animals and the people who love them when they need it the most. We assist shelter, abused, and neglected animals in finding their purpose in life through rehabilitation and training. We also help the people who care about them when they need us, whenever we can. We are currently providing assistance to 2 groups of former animal shelter staff members and their families from Afghanistan who were supposed to make it in to the airport prior to the end of the withdrawal. There are over 200 people in our group who rely on us for their survival. They

are a mix of SIV and P1 applicants and we are committed to keeping them safe. They aren't just animal rescue workers, they are former translators, engineers, teachers, and helped our US Military and Embassy personnel while we were in Afghanistan." - Meredith Festa

The coalition's hundreds of volunteers, many of whom were present at the ceremony, come from all 50 states. The event was hosted by the State Department's Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts (CARE), Mara Tekach.

"This collaboration between the State Department and the American public has surpassed anything I've seen in my lifetime," said Tekach.

#AfghanEvac founder and president Shawn VanDiver joined Secretary Blinken for the ceremony, signing the updated MOU to renew the collaborative relationship between the Department of State and the coalition.

"This partnership, between regular people and their government, is an amazing feat of civic engagement. It is the very definition of the democracy that our Afghan allies joined us in fighting for," said VanDiver. "This agreement shows our Afghan friends that, from the highest levels of the U.S. government to everyday Americans, we are here working and we will not give up until we fulfill our promises to you."

For nearly two years, the volunteer members of the #AfghanEvac coalition have taken on the unprecedented role of coordinating humanitarian support for Afghans leaving their country. These everyday Americans have built and now administer a cooperative network between U.S. government agencies and private groups, working hand-in-hand with these partners, legislators, and the public to coordinate efforts, improve efficiency, and disseminate information to Afghans and the public.

"Our Afghan Allies and their children deserve our support. Their children deserve a future. We can't let them down. Those here in the USA and those waiting in countries to be processed have the same values as us, they stood by us. We must stand by them. Paws Unite People is proud to be a part of a coalition of like minded organizations committed to helping those who fled.-
Meredith Festa

Through initiatives like its community ambassadors program, #AfghanEvac provides regularly updated collections of resources to help Afghans understand the U.S. government's vetting and visa processes, how to access resettlement assistance, and obtaining legal aid. It maintains a database of resilience resources to help veterans, resettled Afghan allies, and handlers to address mental health issues arising from trauma.

About #AfghanEvac

For twenty years, Afghan allies worked and fought side-by-side with U.S. and allied forces through the longest war in American history. The #AfghanEvac coalition is committed to

ensuring that their service, partnership, and commitment to American ideals is honored. The more than 200 organizations that make up the non-partisan #AfghanEvac coalition work hand-in-hand with government entities on relocation and resettlement efforts and advocate for ways to provide new Afghan community members with the stability they need to resettle and thrive in their new lives here.

Information about Paws Unite People's work with Afghan Refugees can be found at www.pawsunitepeople.com/news

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