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## Officials criticize Biden vetting, but Afghan shooting suspect was granted asylum under Trump

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Feedback

### Summary

- Afghan national suspected of shooting two National Guard members
- Trump administration blames Biden for vetting failures
- Afghan suspect granted asylum in April by Trump administration

Dossier says he had no criminal record

WASHINGTON, Nov 27 (Reuters) - The Trump administration on Thursday blamed Biden-era vetting failures for the admission of an Afghan immigrant suspected of [shooting two National Guard](#) members in Washington, D.C., but the alleged gunman was granted asylum this year under President Donald Trump, according to a U.S. government file seen by Reuters.

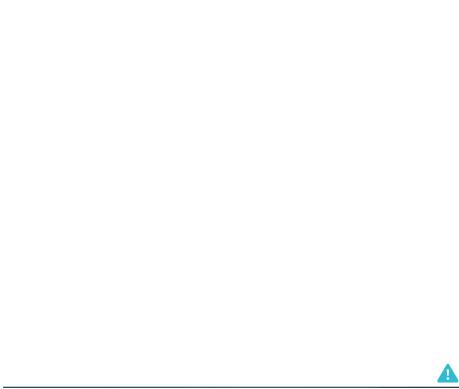
[Rahmanullah Lakanwal](#), a 29-year-old Afghan national, entered the U.S. on September 8, 2021, under Operation Allies Welcome. The resettlement program was set up by former Democratic President Joe Biden after the U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021 that led to the rapid collapse of the Afghan government and the country's takeover by the Taliban.



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FBI Director Kash Patel and Jeanine Pirro, the U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, both Trump appointees, said during a press conference on Thursday that the Biden administration had failed to conduct adequate background checks or vetting on Lakanwal before allowing him to enter the U.S. in 2021.

Neither official provided any evidence to support their assertion.

Patel said Lakanwal, who had worked with U.S. government forces during the U.S. war in Afghanistan, was improperly allowed to enter the U.S. because "the prior administration made the decision to allow thousands of people into this country without doing a single piece of background checking or vetting."

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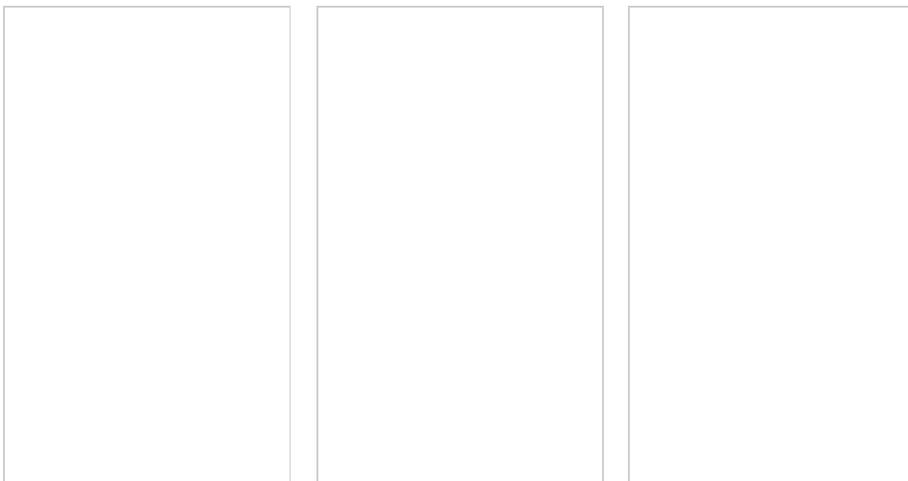
The program, which allowed more than 70,000 Afghan nationals into the U.S., according to a congressional report, was designed with vetting procedures, including by U.S. counter-terrorism and intelligence agencies. But the large-scale and rushed nature of the evacuations led critics to say the background checks were inefficient.

#### **AFGHAN SUSPECT HAD WORKED WITH CIA**

Under the Operation Allies Welcome program, Afghans evacuated to the U.S. were granted a two-year "parole" that allowed them to live and work legally and then apply for a more permanent status.

The document reviewed by Reuters said Lakanwal applied for asylum in December 2024 and was approved on April 23 of this year, three months after Trump took office. Lakanwal, 29, who resided in Washington state, had no known criminal history, the official said.

The government file on Lakanwal said he had been vetted by the U.S. because of his work with U.S. government partners during the war in Afghanistan, and no potentially disqualifying information had been found.





Pictures of National Guard members Andrew Wolfe and Sarah Beckstrom, who were shot on November 26 in Washington, are displayed next to a picture of the suspect of the shooting, Afghan national Rahmanullah Lakanwal, on the day of a press conference with FBI Director Kash Patel, U.S. Attorney for D.C. Jeanine Pirro and other... [Purchase Licensing Rights](#) [Read more](#)

"This animal would've never been here if not for Joe Biden's dangerous policies which allowed countless unvetted criminals to invade our country and harm the American people," said Abigail Jackson, a White House spokeswoman.

CIA Director John Ratcliffe said in a statement that Lakanwal had worked with CIA-backed local units in Afghanistan.

"The Biden Administration justified bringing the alleged shooter to the United States in September 2021 due to his prior work with the U.S. Government, including CIA, as a member of a partner force in Kandahar, which ended shortly following the chaotic evacuation," Ratcliffe said. "This individual - and so many others - should have never been allowed to come here."

The shooting of U.S. troops on American soil by an immigrant is likely to reverberate across the American political landscape. Trump has already ordered the deployment of 500 more troops to Washington.

While Lakanwal was in the country legally, the incident plays directly into Trump's narrative on immigration. He has made cracking down on both legal and illegal immigration a centerpiece of his presidency, and this case may give him an opening to broaden the debate beyond legality to include closer scrutiny of the vetting of immigrants.

In a video message posted by the White House on Wednesday, Trump called Lakanwal an "animal" and the shootings "an act of terror."

Trump called for a "re-examination" of all Afghan nationals who entered the U.S. during the Biden administration. All immigration applications by [Afghan nationals](#) were suspended by the Trump administration on Wednesday night.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement that the Trump administration would review all Biden-era asylum cases, expanding on a review of Biden-era refugees [reported by Reuters](#) earlier this week.

A source familiar with the matter said the suspension included applications by Afghans who had worked with the CIA.

The attack has also revived Trump administration criticism of the chaotic U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.



