



**U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services**

**NOV 16 2015**

The Honorable J. Randy Forbes  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Forbes:

Thank you for your October 21, 2015 letter. Secretary Johnson asked that I respond on his behalf.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is committed to continuing our Nation's strong history and tradition of accepting vulnerable refugees who fear persecution in their home countries. We are also mindful that this important humanitarian interest must be coupled with proper security vetting, which the Department considers a foundational element of protecting the integrity of the refugee program.

Refugee applicants from all countries, including Syria, are subject to the highest level of security checks of any category of traveler to the United States. The U.S. Government vets all available biographic and biometric information against a broad array of law enforcement, intelligence community, and other relevant databases to help confirm a refugee applicant's identity, check for any criminal or other derogatory information, and identify information that could inform lines of questioning during the interview. In addition, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) continues to work with the law enforcement and intelligence communities to identify new opportunities to protect the integrity of the process and to guard against dangers to the United States.

USCIS reviews all Syrian cases prior to interview to determine whether the case might present national security concerns. For those cases where USCIS does identify potential national security concerns, USCIS conducts open-source and classified research on the facts presented in the refugee claim and synthesizes an evaluation for use by the interviewing officer. This information provides case-specific context relating to country conditions and regional activity and can be used by the interviewing officer to develop lines of inquiry that relate to the applicant's eligibility and credibility.

Every Syrian refugee applicant is interviewed in-person by a specially-trained USCIS officer. In addition to the basic training required of all USCIS officers, refugee officers receive five weeks of specialized training that includes comprehensive instruction on all aspects of the job, including refugee law, grounds of inadmissibility, fraud detection and prevention, security protocols, interviewing techniques, credibility analysis, and country conditions research. In

order to adjudicate Syrian cases, officers must attend a one-week Middle East training course. Before deploying overseas, officers also receive pre-departure training which focuses on the specific population they will be interviewing. These training courses include information on the types of refugee claims they are likely to encounter, detailed country of origin information, and updates on any fraud trends or security issues that have been identified.

Thank you again for your letter and your interest in this important matter. Senator Lankford, who co-signed your letter, will receive a separate, identical response. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact Ronald Alan Atkinson in the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (202) 272-1940.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "León Rodríguez", written over a horizontal line.

León Rodríguez  
Director