EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1968, the United States formalized its longstanding commitment to protecting the most vulnerable among us by ratifying the 1967 Protocol to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Since then, with the successful integration of more than three million refugees from all corners of the world, the United States has reaped the benefits of resettling these new Americans, from the economic boost they provide domestically to the leverage and regional stability they create abroad.

The resettling of refugees is therefore very much in keeping with the Executive Branch’s two major priorities in 2017: national security and job generation. This Report and its recommendations demonstrate how the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program assists the U.S. government in achieving these goals by advancing national security, generating jobs for Americans, and bringing the administration into compliance with its domestic and international humanitarian and legal obligations.

The Report offers new and critical information to Congress and the Executive Branch as they consider how to advance our domestic and international interests, while retaining our tradition of safeguarding refugees and ensuring equal treatment for all. The Report:

- Reviews U.S. legal and moral commitments under domestic and international law that together safeguard people fleeing persecution and fearing return to torture;
- Identifies key national security reasons for supporting and enhancing the refugee program, in keeping with the U.S. foreign policy priorities of preserving regional stability in the Middle East;
- Provides an in-depth discussion of the robust, multistep security assessment mechanisms already in place for screening refugees from Syria and other countries, as well as technological enhancements to the process to make it more efficient and effective;
- Offers viable policy solutions to improve the integration of resettled refugees through enhanced collaboration among government agencies, private resettlement agencies, and sponsors involved in domestic resettlement; and
- Demonstrates the positive economic impact of refugee resettlement in the United States.

This Report draws on over two dozen interviews with leading government officials, key non-governmental organizations, and academics to identify the changes to the refugee admissions system that have significantly improved the efficiency and effectiveness of refugee screening, processing, resettlement, and integration over the past year, as well as the areas in which the U.S. government can do more. Highlighting the perspectives of recognized domestic refugee resettlement experts, the Report provides fresh insights into how longstanding public-private partnerships in U.S. refugee resettlement operate and the ways in which they can be further expanded and strengthened.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Described below are some of the key recommendations that we hope will form the basis of a uniform protocol to (a) strengthen an already robust security assessment system and (b) provide the support refugees need to successfully integrate into and contribute to U.S. society, both as wealth generators and as assets to their communities.

To the Executive Branch, including the Departments of State, Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services:

Department of State
• Continue to implement new technologies to enhance and harmonize effective security checks for refugees, building on the technological advances put in place in 2016, which allow for more efficient screening while still safeguarding national security.
• Facilitate more efficient family reunification for Syrian refugees to ensure the stability refugees need to contribute fully and effectively to U.S. society and boost the economy.

Department of Homeland Security
• Expand the deployment of permanent Refugee Affairs Division officers for refugee screening and use of videoconferencing, when trips to the region are not possible due to security concerns, in order to facilitate more efficient and effective security and eligibility assessments.
• Maintain exemptions to the terrorism-related inadmissibility grounds (TRIG) and continue to work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to identify cases for resettlement where TRIG issues are not present or where TRIG exemptions can be applied.

Department of Health and Human Services
• Create systems to collect relevant data to track outcomes of refugee resettlement, including the successes and contributions of refugees to local economies and communities.
• Adjust the Office of Refugee Resettlement’s funding cycle to states in order to account more quickly for secondary migration and changes to local refugee populations to ensure that refugees are better integrated and on the path to self-sufficiency and economic prosperity.

To the U.S. Congress:

• Expand the Office of Refugee Resettlement’s mandate and invest in resettlement services to facilitate refugees’ integration and contributions to the economy.

To Non-Governmental Organizations and the Advocacy Community:

• Celebrate and recognize the United States’ success in resettling over three million refugees, amplifying this message through high-profile public-awareness campaigns.
• Build on existing public-private partnerships to marshal more resources for resettlement.
• Identify and track the substantial contributions of refugees to local economies and communities.
• Highlight existing security measures that safeguard national security while still promoting refugee admission and resettlement.