

How many people in Afghanistan are seeking to be evacuated? The number remains elusive.

By Lara Jakes, David Zucchino and Alexandra E. Petri

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WASHINGTON — As the U.S. military undertakes its final withdrawal from Afghanistan, officials are reluctant to offer an estimate of one significant number: how many people ultimately are seeking to be evacuated.

U.S. officials say they believe that thousands of Americans remain in Afghanistan, including some outside Kabul, without a safe or fast way to get to the airport. Tens of thousands of Afghans who worked for the U.S. government over the past 20 years, and are eligible for special visas, are also desperate to leave.

Refugee and resettlement experts estimate that at least 300,000 Afghans are in danger of being targeted by the Taliban for associating with Americans and U.S. efforts to stabilize Afghanistan.

But administration officials say the numbers are continually changing, especially since other countries have their own evacuation operations. And while the U.S. Embassy in Kabul is contacting Americans who are believed to be in Afghanistan, the alerts are going only to Americans who provided the government their location before Kabul fell or in the week since.

“It’s our responsibility to find them, which we are now doing hour by hour,” Jake Sullivan, President Biden’s national security adviser, said on Monday.

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