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## **Major U.S. Airlines, Travel Industry Leaders, American People Unite Around ‘Billion Mile Challenge’ to Secure 70,000 Donated Flights for Afghan Evacuees**

*United Airlines, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, JetBlue, Alaska Airlines, Boeing, Tripadvisor Foundation, and more pledge to support over 20,000 flights in historic cross-divide commitment*

*Welcome.US and Miles4Migrants announce new challenge to close the gap by mobilizing Americans to donate extra frequent flyer miles*

**Washington, D.C.** — Today, [Welcome.US](https://www.welcome.us) and [Miles4Migrants](https://www.miles4migrants.com) announced a new ‘Billion Mile Challenge,’ kicking off a national effort to secure one billion airline miles, or nearly 70,000 donated flights, to address the urgent travel needs facing Afghan evacuees as they depart military bases and relocate to communities across the country. United Airlines, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, JetBlue, Alaska Airlines, The Boeing Company, Tripadvisor Foundation, Frontier Airlines, Air Canada, and other leading organizations have come together in an unprecedented way to contribute more than 20,000 airline tickets for evacuees, including 7,000 flights from United Airlines and 6,000 flights from American Airlines. These corporate commitments match an additional 20,000 flights already supported through frequent flyer miles and credit card points donated by the American people over the last two months.

Even with 40,000 flights and 300 million miles secured since August 15, there is still work to be done to ensure that every Afghan evacuee has an opportunity to travel to their new communities for free. That’s why Miles4Migrants and Welcome.US are challenging businesses, local organizations, and the American people to help secure the remaining 30,000 flights, or 450 million frequent flyer miles, needed to provide every evacuee with a flight to their new home. Each ticket costs approximately \$200 or 15,000 frequent flyer miles.

For Afghan evacuees, finding new homes in communities across America is the first step toward starting their new lives in freedom and safety. While many Afghans have escaped the danger in Afghanistan, they are still far from starting their new beginnings. Thousands are being temporarily

housed on military bases, awaiting reunions with family members and transportation to safe destinations, but many need help paying for travel. Typically, refugees fund for their own travel, and those who cannot afford the cost can receive interest-free loans from the federal government. While Congress recently appropriated funds to meet the needs of newly arrived Afghan evacuees including travel costs, any funding not spent on flights can be reallocated to provide housing and other essential resettlement services.

Donating airline miles is an easy way that Americans can help meet an urgent need and support our new Afghan neighbors as they build their new lives. To donate, pledge airline miles, and track progress toward the one-billion-mile goal, visit [Welcome.US/miles](https://www.welcome.us/miles).

### **Major Airlines and Travel Industry Leaders Step Up to Match Groundswell of Support from Americans**

**United Airlines** is contributing the mile equivalent of **7,000 flights**, building on an effort announced in August through its Miles on a Mission platform to collect donations for three nonprofit organizations, including Miles4Migrants, and match donations up to 15 million miles. Miles4Migrants received 14.2 million of the 15 million match and an additional 32.1 million miles from United MileagePlus members. Together, United and its MileagePlus members have funded nearly **10,000 total flights**. United is also encouraging MileagePlus members to donate by providing a free flight to Miles4Migrants for every 15,000 miles donated. For every MileagePlus member that makes a single donation greater than 25,000 miles, United will reward the member with \$100 in TravelBank cash for future travel.

“United Airlines is honored to continue supporting Afghanistan relief efforts by providing critically needed air travel to help evacuees at our military bases travel to their new homes,” **said Scott Kirby, CEO of United Airlines**. “More than 8,000 United employees raised their hands to support the Afghan evacuee flights we operated as part of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet program, and thousands of our customers have asked how they can help. We’re proud to partner with Miles4Migrants and Welcome.US to give everyone the chance to play a role in supporting this vital mission.”

**Delta Air Lines** is contributing nearly **700 flights**, which follows an August announcement that the company would match up to 10 million miles donated by its SkyMiles members through September. This campaign, promoted widely by Delta, helped bring in an additional 78 million miles from the public to collectively fund nearly **6,000 flights**.

“Through the commitment of the Delta people and the generosity of our customers, we’re providing air travel to reunite and relocate families around the world,” **said Ed Bastian, CEO of Delta Air Lines**. “In partnership with the Department of Defense under the Civil Reserve Air Fleet program, Delta has safely transported 10,000 evacuees from Afghanistan. Alongside our customers, we’ve already donated nearly 90 million miles to help additional refugees arrive safely in communities around the U.S. It’s a privilege to be called to serve and have an opportunity to make a life-changing difference.”

Additionally, **American Airlines** is contributing the cash equivalent of **6,000 flights**, **The Boeing Company** is providing **2,500 flights**, and **JetBlue** is supporting nearly **2,500 flights**. **Alaska Airlines** is contributing **1,500 flights**, building on the 15 million miles donated to Miles4Migrants

since August by Alaska Airlines Mileage Plan members – bringing its total contribution to nearly **2,500 flights**.

“Our purpose at American Airlines is to take care of people on life’s journey, and each day our team finds extraordinary and rewarding ways to do just that,” **said Doug Parker, Chairman and CEO of American Airlines**. “We were proud to help take care of evacuees from Afghanistan through our duties with the Civil Reserve Air Fleet, and we are proud to make this contribution of miles to Welcome.US as another demonstration of our purpose. In joining this effort, our hope is that we can help ease the transition and provide a welcoming experience to those who are beginning their journeys in the United States.”

“Boeing is proud to join with Welcome.US, Miles4Migrants, our airline customers, and industry partners to help Afghan evacuees find safety, community, and a new start through this important humanitarian effort,” **said Dave Calhoun, President and CEO of The Boeing Company**. “It has been inspiring to see the tremendous groundswell of compassion for our Afghan allies, and Boeing is pleased to build on our support for this community in their time of need.”

“Giving back is part of our DNA and core to our mission of inspiring humanity. We are so grateful that the industry has come together with Miles4Migrants and Welcome.US for such a critical cause,” **said Robin Hayes, CEO of JetBlue**. “We look forward to further expanding this partnership next month during JetBlue For Good Month, where we’ll be adding a customer donation component to our program to help get even more Afghan families to places they can now call home.”

“A pilot on our recent Afghan refugee charter flights reported back: ‘They had nothing – no luggage, just hope.’ And that’s exactly why we’re stepping up to lend a hand,” **said Ben Minicucci, CEO of Alaska Airlines**. “This cause is close to my heart. My parents immigrated from Italy to Canada in the 1950s and I understand how challenging it can be to start rebuilding a new life in an unfamiliar place. Showing the Afghan people that we care is the best thing we can do. That’s why I’m so proud to contribute to this collective effort, which represents the best of who we are in the airline industry and in our country.”

The **Tripadvisor Foundation** is contributing **750 flights**, **Frontier Airlines** is providing **500 flights**, and **Air Canada** is pledging nearly **200 flights**. The Tripadvisor Foundation is also doubling the impact of its customers’ donations, matching all financial contributions up to \$150,000.

“As long-term partners of Miles4Migrants, we are grateful and proud to join them and Welcome.US in helping to meet this urgent travel need for our new Afghan neighbors,” **said Stephen Kaufer, CEO and Co-founder of Tripadvisor and Chairman of the Tripadvisor Foundation**.

Miles4Migrants is assisting the federal government in relocation efforts, working with more than 45 nonprofit and governmental partners — including the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the International Rescue Committee — to identify individuals who have legal approval to travel, but cannot afford the cost of a plane ticket.

“We have been moved to see how the American people and the private sector have rallied to support the Afghan people and all displaced persons over the past two months,” **said Andy**

**Freedman, Co-founder of Miles4Migrants.** “Our Billion Mile Challenge is the next step to ensuring that our nonprofit partners and the individuals they support will be able to travel to safe new homes without the burden of financial debt. We are grateful to both Welcome.US and our airline and corporate partners for their unprecedented support.”

“Welcome.US is founded on the belief that the American people are welcomers and the tremendous response we have seen in this campaign demonstrates just how true that is,” **said Nazanin Ash, CEO of Welcome.US.** “There is no better way for Americans to say, ‘We are so eager to welcome you here,’ than to provide flights for our new Afghan neighbors to their new communities. We thank Miles4Migrants and all of our airline and travel industry partners for their leadership — and invite all Americans to transform their airline miles into a force for good.”

“Through the leadership and generosity of airline and travel industry leaders, Welcome.US, Miles4Migrants, and the American people, we are well on our way to providing Afghans at our eight military safe havens with free flights to their new communities in the United States,” **said former Delaware Governor Jack Markell, White House Coordinator for Operation Allies Welcome.** “This collaborative effort to support the resettlement of our new Afghan neighbors reflects the whole-of-America spirit of Operation Allies Welcome.”

This campaign is underpinned by generous support from the Shapiro Foundation, which as part of its mission to serve refugees as they resettle across the world, has donated 500 flights, made contributions to Miles4Migrants and Welcome.US, and helped mobilize the transportation industry around this common purpose.

“This historic alliance among the airline and travel industry, Miles4Migrants, Welcome.US, and many others fills me with so much hope not only for our Afghan allies, but also for the future of refugee resettlement in the United States,” **said Ed Shapiro, Managing Trustee of The Shapiro Foundation.** “It is a reminder of how many Americans believe it is part of who we are as a country to get directly involved in supporting refugees as they start their new lives here.”

### **About Miles4Migrants**

Founded in 2016, Miles4Migrants uses donated frequent flyer miles, credit card points, and cash to help people impacted by war, persecution, or disaster reunite with loved ones and start new beginnings in safe homes. Since its inception, Miles4Migrants has flown more than 9,000 people from 73 countries of origin.

Miles4Migrants has already flown over 3,000 Afghans — including many who assisted the U.S. military — which is more than from any other country of origin. The organization’s work with Afghan evacuees was recently featured in [People](#), [Time Magazine](#), [Forbes](#), [Mashable](#), and other news outlets.

### **About Welcome.US**

Welcome.US is a new national effort that launched in September 2021 to welcome Afghan families as they get settled and build new lives in the United States. Welcome.US provides a single point of entry to channel the outpouring of support from Americans who want to get involved by donating supplies, money, or time to frontline organizations; offering temporary

housing; or sponsoring refugees. President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama, President George. W. Bush and Laura Bush, and President William J. Clinton and Secretary Hillary Clinton serve as honorary co-chairs.

In addition to encouraging Americans to donate to frontline organizations, Welcome.US created the [Welcome Fund](#), which will provide emergency grants to nonprofit organizations working to address the most urgent needs facing Afghan refugees.

Welcome.US is led by CEO Nazanin Ash, former Vice President of Global Policy and Advocacy at the International Rescue Committee, and co-chaired by Cecilia Muñoz, senior adviser to New America and former director of the White House Domestic Policy Council under President Obama, and John Bridgeland, CEO of the COVID Collaborative and former director of the White House Domestic Policy Council under President Bush.

Welcome.US is a sponsored project of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, a 501(c)3 organization.

**To learn more about Welcome.US, please visit [welcome.us](https://welcome.us).**

**For press inquiries, please contact [press@welcome.us](mailto:press@welcome.us).**

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