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U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Establishes New Center to Strengthen Immigration Screening and Target Bad Actors

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New vetting center will focus on powerful screening resources to keep America safe

WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services announced the establishment of a specialized unit to strengthen the ability of America’s immigration system to screen out terrorists, criminal aliens, and other foreign nationals who pose potential threats to public safety or who have committed fraud or other crimes. Once fully operationalized, the USCIS Vetting Center, headquartered in Atlanta, will centralize the enhanced vetting of aliens and allow the agency to respond more nimbly to changes in a shifting threat landscape.

“USCIS’ role in the nation’s immigration system has never been more critical. In the wake of several recent incidents of violence, including a foreign national attacking National Guard service members on U.S. soil, establishing this vetting center will give us more enhanced capabilities to safeguard national security and ensure public safety,” said USCIS Director Joseph B. Edlow.

“Under the Biden administration, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services was pushed to expedite the immigration and naturalization processes with little regard for how that affected national security and the safety of our communities,” said Edlow. “We changed that approach on day one of the Trump administration. Under President Trump, we are building more protective measures that ensure fraud, deception, and threats do not breach the integrity of our immigration system.”

Once the new vetting center is fully operational, it will draw on the full spectrum of classified and nonclassified screening and vetting capabilities and provide a more thorough supplemental review of immigration applications and petitions. These reviews will leverage state-of-the-art technologies, including artificial intelligence.

The center will utilize Department of Homeland Security and other law enforcement and intelligence community screening resources to conduct this critical work and will be tasked with conducting reviews of pending applications as well as a more holistic review of already-approved applications for aliens. Reviews will prioritize applications from presidentially designated countries of concern.

This announcement adds to a series of recent efforts that align with presidential [Executive Order 14161, Protecting the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats](#). These include the recent [implementation of national security measures](#) allowing for immigration officers to consider negative, country-specific factors (such as a nation’s lack of government-issued identity documents and inability

to conduct criminal background checks) when vetting aliens from 19 high-risk countries; the recent pause on affirmative asylum application decisions; record-breaking hiring numbers for new USCIS [homeland defenders](#); a [proposed rule](#) to ensure more robust screening and vetting of certain aliens before extending their employment authorizations; and the establishment of [USCIS special agents](#) with law enforcement authority to investigate, arrest, and prosecute immigration violations.

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