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Update on USCIS' Strengthened Screening and Vetting

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Since taking office, President Trump has prioritized national security and public safety by implementing a series of executive orders and proclamations that mandate strict screening and vetting of foreign nationals seeking entry or immigration benefits.

[Executive Order 14161](#), *Protecting the United States from Foreign Terrorist and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats*, directed agencies to vet and screen aliens to the maximum degree possible – particularly those aliens coming from regions or nations with identified security risks. [Presidential Proclamation 10949](#), *Restricting the Entry of Foreign Nationals To Protect the United States From Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats*, and [Presidential Proclamation 10998](#), *Restricting and Limiting the Entry of Foreign Nationals To Protect the Security of the United States*, together restricted entry from 39 countries lacking adequate screening and vetting information. Collectively, these actions represent a renewed commitment to the national interest in immigration.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is committed to the integrity of the immigration system, national security, and public safety. Our top priority is ensuring that all individuals seeking immigration benefits are properly vetted, particularly those from identified high-risk countries. This alert provides the public with a detailed account of what we have found, what we are doing, and what we will continue to do to protect national security, public safety, and root out fraud.

What We Found

Through an ongoing comprehensive review of pending workloads and benefit applications, USCIS ascertained that prior screening and vetting measures were wholly inadequate. Many applicants for naturalization and lawful permanent residence were not sufficiently vetted. As a result, applications were approved and individuals were naturalized who should not have been. These gaps expose the United States to significant national security and public safety risks and compromise the integrity of the immigration system.

What We Are Doing

In accordance with relevant executive orders and presidential proclamations, USCIS issued Policy Memorandum, *Hold and Review of all Pending Asylum Applications and all USCIS Benefit Applications Filed by Aliens from High-Risk Countries* ([PM-602-0192](#)); Policy Memorandum, *Hold and Review of Pending USCIS*

Adjustment of Status Applications Filed by Aliens Under the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program ([PM-602-0193](#)); and Policy Memorandum, *Hold and Review of USCIS Benefit Application Filed by Aliens from Additional High-Risk Countries* ([PM-602-0194](#)). These memoranda placed on hold asylum applications, benefit requests from high-risk countries, and diversity visa adjustment of status applications, among other provisions.

USCIS has implemented a series of robust actions after issuance of those policy memoranda:

- **Enhanced Screening and Vetting Practices**

Over the past several months, USCIS has reviewed and updated screening and vetting practices, including:

- Shortening validity periods for certain Employment Authorization Documents to require more frequent security checks;
- Updating photograph reuse policies to strengthen identity verification, including biometric identity verification when reusing fingerprints;
- Increasing social media and financial vetting and community interviews;
- Launching Operation PARRIS to conduct additional background checks, re-interviews, and merit reviews of refugee claims, led by the USCIS Vetting Center;
- Developing system connectivity for automatic notifications of biometric matches and new criminal information; and
- Requiring final arrest encounter reviews and Department of State Consular Consolidated Database checks before final adjudication.

- **Internal Review Process**

USCIS established an internal process for lifting holds on individual or group cases, requiring comprehensive review by multiple offices. Holds have been lifted for aliens vetted through Operation PARRIS, certain petitions filed by U.S. citizens, intercountry adoption forms, certain rescheduled oath ceremonies, statutory and regulatory decision issuance, refugee registrations for South African citizens/nationals, certain special immigrant visa petitions, certain employment authorization documents, and asylum applications from non high-risk countries. We continue to review all application types and lift holds for both individual and group cases as appropriate.

- **Country-Specific Risk Analysis**

USCIS compiled information on each country listed in the travel ban proclamations and is working with the Department of State to identify risk factors, including indicators of fraud, public safety, or national security risks. USCIS is comparing these to existing screening practices to recommend improvements.

- **Enhanced Vetting Plan Development**

USCIS is developing a layered vetting plan, incorporating classified and unclassified information, as well as expanded criminal history checks, identity verification, and ad hoc security checks to close security gaps.

- **Guidance for Adjudicators**

USCIS is developing guidance to help adjudicators align interview resources to specific risks identified for each country, including document reliability concerns and designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs).

What We Will Continue to Do

USCIS will continue to strengthen our screening and vetting procedures to ensure maximum protection for national security and public safety, and to root out fraud in the immigration system. Our ongoing efforts are designed to ensure that only eligible and vetted individuals are granted immigration benefits.

Our Commitment

These actions reflect the Trump administration's commitment to making America safe again. USCIS will remain vigilant and proactive in protecting the United States from foreign terrorists, criminal aliens, those who commit fraud, and other threats. We are dedicated to maintaining the integrity of America's immigration system and keeping the public informed about our progress.

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