



Feds Reinvestigating Syrian Refugees Not Thoroughly Vetted

Federal agents are reinvestigating dozens of Syrian refugees who were admitted into the United States without being thoroughly vetted. Some of these refugees had potentially negative information in their files that was not discovered prior to their admission, two unnamed U.S. law-enforcement officials told the *Los Angeles Times*.



Immigration authorities are reviewing the cases of some refugees, including one who failed a polygraph test when he applied for employment at an overseas U.S. military installation. Another refugee being reinvestigated may have been in communication with an Islamic State (ISIS) leader, according to the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter.

The *Times* reported that immigration agents have not concluded that any of the refugees being reinvestigated should have been rejected for entry, but the flaw in the vetting process — which was discovered in late 2015 and corrected last year — prevented U.S. officials who conducted background checks on the refugees from learning possible “derogatory” information about them.

The officials said that at the very least, the intelligence lapse would have triggered further investigation that might have resulted in some asylum applications being rejected.

A report about this security lapse in *American Thinker* was critical of how the anonymous agents’ exchange with the *Times* was phrased. *American Thinker*’s Ed Straker noted:

Do you appreciate the minimalist way this was written? There’s nothing to worry about — merely “potentially negative information in their files.” Doesn’t sound very serious, does it? The refugees whose cases are under review include one who failed a polygraph test when he applied to work at a U.S. military installation overseas and another who may have been in communication with an Islamic State leader, according to the officials. I would say communicating with an Islamic State leader would be very “potentially negative information” in a refugee’s file. Wouldn’t you?

Another report in the *Daily Caller* noted that former President Obama’s administration repeatedly stressed that the refugee-vetting process was very rigorous. The *Caller* quoted former White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest’s statement last August asserting that the administration was able to increase the number of Syrian refugees admitted in 2015 “without cutting any corners when it comes to security.” Earnest claimed that “significant screening was put in place to ensure that these individuals



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don't pose an undue threat to our national security.”

In contrast, noted the Caller, Donald Trump repeatedly criticized the resettling of Syrian refugees in the United States throughout the 2016 campaign, saying they posed an unnecessary national security risk.

As we reported on January 26, President Trump is expected to sign an executive order soon that will suspend the issuance of visas and other immigration benefits to “nationals of countries of particular concern,” including Syria.

A draft of Trump's executive order obtained by several news outlets (and posted online by the LexisNexis legal research website) directs the secretary of state to suspend the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) for 120 days and specifies that during that 120-day period, the secretary of state and the secretary of homeland security shall review the USRAP application and adjudication process to determine what additional procedures can be taken to ensure that those approved for refugee admission do not pose a threat to the security and welfare of the United States.

The order will also direct the secretary of homeland security, in consultation with the secretary of state, to submit to the president a list of countries recommended for inclusion on a presidential proclamation that would prohibit the entry of foreign nationals from each country on the list.

The only country that is specifically named in the order is Syria. According to the order,

The Secretaries of State and Homeland Security, as appropriate, shall cease refugee processing of and the admittance of nationals of Syria as refugees until such time as I have determined that sufficient changes have been made to the USRAP to ensure its alignment with the national interest.

The order also provides for “safe zones” in Syria:

Pursuant to the cessation of refugee processing for Syrian nationals, the Secretary of State, in conjunction with the Secretary of Defense, is directed within 90 days of the date of this order to produce a plan to provide safe areas in Syria and in the surrounding region in which Syrian nationals displaced from their homeland can await firm settlement, such as repatriation or potential third-country resettlement.

After the 120-day suspension, the United States will then cap the number of refugees admitted to our country at approximately 50,000. This number would include refugees from around the world, not just Syria or other areas of conflict in the Middle East.



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