



What you need to know about Donald Trump's travel ban

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It's not the full-blown "Muslim ban" he proposed during the US election campaign, but it sure feels like a first step.

On Friday afternoon, President Donald Trump signed a sweeping executive order that closes America's borders, for at least the next three months, to millions of foreigners—with a specific emphasis on people from seven predominantly Muslim countries, including Iran, Somalia, and war-ravaged Syria.

The new rules triggered chaos at US airports, where dozens of newcomers—already on their way to America when Trump signed the document—were detained as soon as they landed.

For a while, it appeared the order would even apply to Canadian dual citizens who were born in one of the seven blacklisted countries, but by Saturday night the US State Department had assured the Trudeau government that wasn't the case. Any traveler carrying a Canadian passport "will be dealt with in the usual process," said a statement from the Prime Minister's Office.

Here's what else we know—and still don't—about Trump's controversial immigration ban.

What does the executive order actually say?

It's called "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States," and it runs more than 2,700 words. Simply put, Trump wants his national-security agencies to examine whether enough is being done to adequately screen certain immigrants, refugees, and visitors before they arrive on US soil.

"Deteriorating conditions in certain countries due to war, strife, disaster, and civil unrest increase the likelihood that terrorists will use any means possible to enter the United States," the order reads. "The United States must be vigilant during the visa issuance process to ensure that those approved for admission do not intend to harm Americans and that they have no ties to terrorism."

While that evaluation is being conducted, the order temporarily suspends the flow of all refugees from every country—repeat: all refugees from every country—for 120 days. It also imposes a 90-day ban on all types of immigration from the group of seven: Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Libya, Yemen, and Syria. And depending on what the evaluation concludes, those temporary suspensions could easily become permanent.

Syrian refugees? Trump has deemed them “detrimental to the interests of the United States” and banned them indefinitely. One Syrian family, living in a Turkish refugee camp after fleeing the war, was scheduled to arrive in Cleveland on Tuesday. Not anymore.

The Department of Homeland Security has also confirmed that the executive order applies to so-called “green card” holders (ie. permanent residents who, though not citizens, enjoy legal status). If they leave the country, in other words, they might not be allowed back.

One more thing: “To be more transparent with the American people,” the executive order compels the government to update the public, every six months, on “the number of foreign nationals in the United States” implicated in terrorism offences—or “acts of gender-based violence against women, including honor killings.”

How did Canada react?

Justin Trudeau took a not-so-subtle jab at his US counterpart Saturday afternoon, tweeting a photo of himself meeting the first planeload of Syrian refugees to arrive at Toronto’s Pearson International Airport in 2015.

“To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith,” he wrote. “Diversity is our strength. #WelcomeToCanada.” By Sunday morning, it had been re-tweeted more than 300,000 times.

Provincial premiers, from Ontario’s Kathleen Wynne to Saskatchewan’s Brad Wall to British Columbia’s Christy Clark also tweeted about their continued commitment to refugee resettlement. But it was Jason Kenney—former Immigration Minister under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, now running for the Progressive Conservative leadership in Alberta—who had the harshest words for Trump. “This is not about national security,” he wrote. “It is a brutal, ham-fisted act of demagogic political theatre.”

Will this supposed anti-terror measure actually make America safer?

Not likely. In fact, it could have the opposite effect.

Depending on the source, terrorism in America has killed approximately 120 people since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001—and none of that terrorism was waged by people who came from the seven countries named in Trump’s new visa ban.

The largest attack, last year’s shooting at Orlando’s Pulse nightclub, was the work of a New Yorker, born and raised. The Muslim couple who massacred 14 people in San Bernardino, Calif., two years ago? He was born in Chicago and she was a Pakistani raised in Saudi Arabia. Neither Pakistan nor Saudi Arabia is on Trump’s banned list. Neither is Russia, where the Boston Marathon bombers were born.

“Immigration has zero relationship to terrorism, absolutely zero,” says Phil Gurski, a former analyst at the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), the country’s spy agency. “You look at what’s happened since 9/11, and I can’t think of a single case in either country where

somebody somehow got access to Canada or the United States for the sole purpose of carrying out a terrorist attack.

We've certainly had people who were immigrants, but what Trump fails to realize—or realizes and ignores—is that people who immigrate here as children and who radicalize to violence here, that is a completely different issue than someone getting off a plane and doing something.”

A research paper released last year by the Cato Institute, a Washington-based think tank, concluded that the odds “of an American being murdered in a terrorist attack caused by a refugee is 1 in 3.64*billion*” (their italics).

If anything, Gurski says, Trump's order is a gift for genuine terrorist groups because it bolsters the tired jihadist narrative that the west is at war with Islam.

“If you read the propaganda that groups like the Islamic State put out, they try to convince Muslims—not just in the Middle East, but Muslims in the western world—that nobody wants you and nobody likes you and that the only way you can live as a true Muslim is to come here and live with us,” he tells *Maclean's*. “So when you have these types of pronouncements from the president of the United States, ISIS can say: ‘I told you so.’ ”

What happens next?

More days in court, no doubt. On Saturday night, a federal judge in New York issued an emergency stay—halting any deportations of travelers caught in the dragnet of Trump's executive order—but the legal fight isn't over. The American Civil Liberties Union, among others, is challenging the constitutionality of the executive order, alleging it violates due process and equal protection clauses.

Those arguments are yet to be heard.

In the meantime, Trump continues to insist—despite his campaign musings about banning all Muslims from the country—that his order isn't directed at any particular religious group.

“It's not a Muslim ban, but we were totally prepared,” he told reporters in the Oval Office on Saturday. “It's working out very nicely, you see it at the airports, you see it all over... We're going to have a very, very strict ban and we're going to have extreme vetting, which we should have had in this country for many years.”