

THE OBSERVER

“Extreme Vetting” Is A Stain On America’s History

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February 8, 2017

This week, I got a text from my mom that read, “You are living in one of the darkest times in American history and it makes me really sad.” Unfortunately, at least to some extent, I agree with her assessment of the state of our union.

If you had told me last year that Donald Trump would be our president— and that he would sign an executive order within his first week in office that bans citizens of seven Muslim-majority nations, including Syrian refugees indefinitely — I would have laughed in your face. The absurdity of such a claim would have been funny to me.

But this is not a joke — far from it. This is reality. And it is scary, hate-filled, and, like my mom told me, one of the darkest times in American history.

There is so much wrong with the president’s “extreme vetting” executive order. Logistically, it is a disaster; it is contrary to everything our great country is supposed to stand for; and it might be one of the first steps in sending the Pentagon’s alert system to DEFCON 1 — imminent nuclear war.

The specifics of the order make little sense. According to CNN, none of the countries listed in the ban are linked to the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, the most lethal terrorist attack in American history, reportedly because of business ties Trump has in those countries. Meanwhile, according to the Cato Institute, a Libertarian think tank, people from these seven countries killed exactly zero people in the United States between 1975 and 2015. The only records of a person dying in this country at the hands of a refugee were from the 1970s. Clearly, this ban will not do anything to hinder terrorism in the United States.

With regard to American values, this ban falls miles short of the standard. The executive order uses crafty language to help certain refugees based on their religion. A small blurb in the order, section 5(b), states that if a refugee is experiencing religious persecution and that their religion is a minority in their home country, an exception may be made and the United States may accept

the refugee. This is cunning language that gives Christian refugees an advantage over Muslim refugees.

Trump's previous rhetoric against Muslims—calling for a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States” in late 2015—helps build the case that this ban targets Muslims. This ban directly contradicts a central tenet of the First Amendment of the Constitution — freedom of religion. It is completely and utterly contrary to American principles.

Despite Trump's repeated desire to “make America safe again,” this ban is counterintuitive to his stated mission. He has claimed that his intent is to keep “bad dudes” off American soil, but what he is doing is just the opposite. He is antagonizing these Muslim-majority nations and fueling the delusional belief held by extremists that “the West” hates the Middle East and other Muslim-majority nations. To put it simply, he is poking actual radical Islamic terrorists with a proverbial stick, which they will see as a dare to attack.

His eagerness to both “bomb the hell out of ISIS” in 2015 and “expand [America's] nuclear capability” in 2016 do not bode well for American safety and stability, either, if those two ideas intersect. The future, it seems, is nuclear.

President Trump seems to have a warped sense of reality regarding this executive order, which — let us not mince words — is a Muslim ban. He does not quite comprehend many of the facts about immigration and terrorism in the United States. If he did, he would not have tackled these very serious issues with an irresponsible restriction on the presence of immigrants from seven Muslim-majority nations whose influence on American terrorism is minuscule. Or maybe he just had not done enough research to have seen these facts and decided to write up an executive order just a week after he took power. Regardless of the circumstances, it is important to recognize this ban's dangerous potential repercussions. It is a catastrophe, a disgrace to American values and a stain on American history. My mom was right — we are truly living in one of the darkest times in American history.