

THE MONITOR

EDITORIAL: Not welcome

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President Donald Trump last week added six more countries to the list of those whose entry to the United States are severely restricted or banned outright.

People from the African countries of Nigeria, Eritrea, Sudan and Tanzania, along with Myanmar in Southeast Asia and Kyrgyzstan, a former Soviet republic will have a tough time getting travel or residency visas to our country. The majority of the people in most of the countries is Muslim except for Myanmar, which is ethnically diverse but controlled by a Buddhist-majority government.

Trump announced the list Friday and it takes effect Feb. 22.

The countries currently on the not-welcome list — Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Syria, Venezuela and Yemen — were placed ostensibly due to security concerns.

Little terrorist activity against the United States has come from the new additions, however. A study by the libertarian Cato Institute found that over 42 years from 1975 to 2017, just 11 people from all those countries combined were linked to attacks that caused six total deaths. Two brothers who carried out the bombing during the 2013 Boston Marathon reportedly were born in Chechnya but spent part of their infancy in Kyrgyzstan. However, they came to this country as children and one brother said they were influenced by the U.S.

war in Afghanistan. Cato estimates that the total risk of any American being killed on U.S. soil by someone from any of the newly listed countries is 1 in 1.9 billion; people are six times more likely to win the Mega Millions jackpot.

President Trump's rationale for the additions, however, is that conditions in those countries, such as domestic violence, could raise the risk that more people from those countries might seek to come to this country. The listed countries also have resisted U.S. demands that they collect biometric data of people traveling to the U.S. and making the data available to our authorities.

The new list has brought up the same protests that have arisen with previous lists. The Supreme Court has endorsed the president's authority to impose such bans, and it actually is a mere expansion of policies that precede the current administration, including the Cuban ban that has been in place since 1959, with Trump reapplying several restrictions that had been eased or removed during the Obama administration.

Should Trump be able to ban people at will?

Should Obama have been able to open long-locked doors to Cuba? Regardless of one's opinion, the truth remains that any president will be able to issue such orders unless Congress takes action to remove such powers and reclaim its authority to legislate such issues — authority it has abdicated over the years. U.S. immigration policy is woefully outdated and unworkable, and it's a policy that needs to be debated in our halls of governance, not left to the whims of one person, even our president.

We can only hope that Trump's extreme use of his authority inspires our next Congress to formally reestablish parameters for presidential authority. A guide for those parameters already exists — our own Constitution.