



## **Executive order ban on immigration worrisome for international students**

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On Jan. 27, President Donald Trump signed an executive order aimed to keep radical Islamic terrorists out of the United States by barring all people with non-immigrant or immigrant visas from seven Muslim-majority countries.

The effect of this action was felt far and wide, including here on the campus of Texas Tech. At Tech, 149 students are immigrants from the barred countries, and the majority of them are from Iran, Tibor Nagy, vice provost for the Office of International Affairs, said.

“From my point of view, this executive order isn’t making Americans safer at all,” Nagy said. “I know my colleagues, and I agree that the more students who study internationally here the better for the long-term security of our country.”

The reasoning for this, Nagy said, is that international students usually bring a positive perspective of the U.S. back to their countries of origin. This cultural bridge building disproves ideas perpetuated by radical Islamists that westerners despise Middle-eastern culture and religion.

Introducing differing viewpoints promotes an inclusive campus culture, he said. Having a diverse student body provides a more enriching experience for everyone involved.

“I don’t disagree with the principle that the travel ban was based on, which is protecting civilians,” Nagy said. “However, I do disagree with the methodology and implementation of the ban.”

Similar travel bans have been implemented more smoothly in the past, Nagy said, such as former President Barack Obama’s executive order in 2011 that restricted visas from Iraq. The key difference in this case, he said, is that customs agents were unclear on whether the travel ban applied to individuals with work visas, student visas and/or green card holders.

Originally, the White House stated that the travel ban applied to green card holders as well but reversed that decision after political backlash. According to The Washington Post, about 90,000 visas have been affected by the executive order.

“Vetting for refugees has never been more stringent,” Nagy said. “These vetting practices have been highly successful to this point, too. The U.S. took in 84,995 refugees in the 2016 fiscal year and regularly takes in between 70,00 and 80,000.”

It should be noted that not a single Muslim refugee has committed an act of terrorism in the U.S. since the Refugee Act of 1980 set up systematic procedures for accepting refugees into the country, according to the CATO Institute's analysis of immigration risk.

Trump's travel ban has served only to inhibit permanent U.S. citizens from entering the country, Nagy said.

At this point in time, Nagy said he wanted to reassure international students that they are welcomed by the Tech faculty, staff and administration. However, he worries that Trump's executive action could likely be used as an example for radical Islamic recruiting tools going forward.

"In all my time working on the staff of international affairs, I cannot recall an executive action that has troubled people in the way that this one has," Alexa Smith, assistant director of international enrollment development at Tech, said. "It feels unprecedented."

Smith said she had been receiving emails of concern from students in the days following the signing of the order. She, like Nagy, expressed support for Tech's students of international origin by reminding them they are welcomed.

The international perception of the U.S. may be damaged after Trump's executive action, Smith said. Coming to the U.S. for an education is an investment for a brighter future, which should not be denied on the basis of religion.

"International students, on average, graduate at a higher rate, pursue graduate degrees at higher rates and also start businesses at a higher rate than their domestic counterparts," Smith said. "Inhibiting that would be going against our best interests as a country."