

## House tightens controls on visa-free travel to US

Hazel Gray

December 9, 2015

The Telegraph, another British newspaper, warned that the changes could cause "transport woes" for up to 5 million Britons who do not yet have a new "e-passport" with a biometric chip, which could become mandatory under some plans being discussed.

This will be the third change to how the Homeland Security Department warns the public about security concerns since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

Among the victims in San Bernardino was an Iranian-American woman who had left the country in the 1980s to escape persecution against her as a Christian.

Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration policy analyst at the libertarian think tank Cato Institute, told ThinkProgress that the recent shooting in San Bernardino shouldn't justify tightening the K-1 visa process, simply because it doesn't attract people trying to enter the US for nefarious reasons. At the moment the FBI is investigating Tashfeen Malik's motive behind the crime and Malik's callous act has stirred the terrorism fear in the hearts of the people. But a White House official confirmed Obama misspoke, meaning to say "visa program".

The bill also mandates that countries participating in the visa-waiver program must keep the USA up-to-date on their intelligence on extremists or risk expulsion from the program.

"This is an outrageous bill that threatens to block Iranian Americans from traveling to Europe under the Visa Waiver Program".

Rep. Leonard Lance, R-N.J., noted that Zacarias Moussaoui, the so-called 20th member of the September 11 attacks, and Richard Reid, the so-called shoe bomber, each traveled to the USA under the visa-waiver program. The Senate would impose a five-year restriction on individuals who have traveled to Iraq or Syria from using the waiver program.

"It was incredibly disappointing", U.S. Rep. Mike Pompeo, R-Kan., said of the speech. On November 30, the White House announced enhancements to the program, including improved

information sharing with partner countries and checking whether travelers have gone to a place "constituting a terrorist safe haven".

This correction is critically important because the Visa Waiver Program is today an essential element in America's efforts to protect our homeland. "It will crack down on passport fraud, and it will force the visa waiver countries to ramp up counterterrorism screenings of travelers". Lost and stolen passports must be reported to Interpol. "There's a variety of databases that applicants, biometrics or facial recognition checks in order to figure out if they have links to criminal activity and then of course checks based on names". Malik actually entered the country on a K1 fiancé visa, not under the VWP.

With Congress rushing to finish its work for the year, leaders are considering adding Miller's bill to a must-pass year-end spending bill now being completed.