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## TRUMP ADMINISTRATION TIGHTENS LIMITS ON GETTING INTO THE U.S., TARGETING SIX NATIONS AND REFUGEE PROGRAM

*New rules lay out more restrictive definition as to who constitutes close family, raising the ire of immigration advocates*

By Laura Meckler  
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WASHINGTON – The Trump administration began enforcing its temporary ban on refugees and on visitors from six Muslim-majority nations on Thursday evening, exempting only those travelers with close family or business ties in the U.S., officials said.

The guidelines are a narrow reading of [a Supreme Court ruling on Monday](#) that required the U.S. to continue to admit people who have “bona fide” relationships – with either people or institutions – into the country. Under the new rules, for instance, a sister or a husband of an American citizen wouldn’t fall under the ban, but an aunt or a grandparent would.

But late Thursday, the administration reversed course and included people engaged to be married on the list of those with close family ties who are exempt from the ban.

The new rules came under immediate legal challenge. Challengers in one of the two principal legal cases, from Hawaii, made emergency court filings Thursday asking a federal judge there to “clarify” what the Trump administration can and can’t do with its partial ban. They argued for a broader set of exemptions.

It was unclear when the court would rule.

The travel ban has been one of the most divisive acts of Donald Trump’s short presidency. Mr. Trump and his backers have argued it is an overdue effort to fight terrorism, while a coalition of Democrats, immigration lawyers, refugee advocates and Muslim activists say it runs contrary to the Constitution and American values of diversity.

“As recent events have shown, we are living in a very dangerous time, and the U.S. government needs every available tool to prevent terrorists from entering the country and committing acts of bloodshed and violence,” said White House spokesman Michael Short.

While the executive order on the travel ban has been toned down [since its introduction in January](#), it continues to spark protests. Still, few people on either side of the debate were expecting [the sort of chaos that unfolded at airports](#) following the abrupt implementation of the first version of the order.

[A revision issued in March](#) after courts blocked the initial one exempted travelers holding visas and legal permanent U.S. residents. Administration officials said Thursday that, under the latest rules, refugees booked for travel before July 6 will be admitted.

Guidelines being issued to Customs and Border Protection agents who work at ports of entry direct them to honor valid visas and only turn back people who would be rejected under normal operating procedures, administration officials said.

But concerned about the sort of bad publicity that accompanied the first order, officials cautioned that foreigners arriving in the U.S. are routinely subjected to rigorous screening and said advocates shouldn't assume the executive order is to blame if someone from one of the targeted countries is subjected to it.

Most of the action is likely to be invisible to the public, unfolding overseas at the desks of consulate officers as they reject visa applications from citizens of the targeted nations – Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen – that might have otherwise been accepted. People rejected for visas can request waivers, and they will be considered case by case, officials said.

For refugees, Mr. Trump set the cap on admissions for this fiscal year at 50,000, and officials said that as of Wednesday evening, 49,009 had already been admitted. Under the Supreme Court ruling, though, refugees who can prove close ties to the U.S. won't be counted in the total.

Both the January and March executive orders were quickly put on hold by federal courts around the country, finding them likely to be unconstitutional. The first order was found to lack due-process protections. Lower court judges ruled the March order likely discriminated against Muslims and said the president didn't properly justify the action.

On Monday, the Supreme Court allowed the Trump administration to begin implementing the order until the justices can hear and rule on a pair of legal challenges this fall. But the high court also ordered the administration to make exceptions for visa and refugee applicants who have a bona fide relationship with people or institutions in the U.S.

Interpreting that order, administration officials said visa applicants and refugees with U.S.-based spouses, children, parents and siblings, including in-law and step relationships, would be allowed in. But those with only lesser ties – such as grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles and cousins – would be subject to the ban.

A senior administration official said the line designating close family ties was drawn to ensure the exceptions aren't so broad as to swallow the rules altogether and allow virtually anyone in.

Officials said the administration based its decision on exemptions for relatives on the definition of family in the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. The administration added parents-in-law, as they were specified in the court decision, officials said.

The change on fiancés was made at the suggestion of government attorneys, an administration official said.

For refugees, the administration closed off one potential path to admission. The State Department said a connection to a resettlement agency isn't a bona fide relationship that qualifies for an exception to the ban. Agencies had argued that it was.

Hawaii's challenge asked that the ban not be enforced against people with other types of family relationships. The state also argued that the ban shouldn't apply to refugees with a

close connection to a person or organization in the U.S., even if that connection wasn't family-based.

The definition of close family ties came under immediate fire from advocates.

"How is a sister a 'bona fide' relationship but a grandparent is not? Especially when you're talking about a culture where family relationships are very fluid," said Sirine Shebaya, a senior staff attorney for Muslim Advocates. "A grandmother is sometimes as close as your mother."

Those who want to come for business must show a "formal, documented" relationship with a U.S. entity that was formed in the ordinary course of business and not created for the purpose of evading the travel ban, officials said, echoing the language of the Supreme Court decision.

Examples of acceptable business ties include students admitted to U.S. educational institutions, people who have accepted a job offer in the U.S. or a lecturer invited to address an audience in the U.S. Those examples were spelled out in the court ruling and repeated Thursday by the administration.

Among the six nations, the order's biggest impact is likely to be on Iran, which sends far more people to the U.S. than any of the others. The number of visitors from all six countries has fallen compared with last year, but Iran still sent 1,284 in April, the Department of Homeland Security said earlier this month.

The 90-day period covering the ban on visitors from the six countries began Monday following the high-court action. At the end of it, the administration could decide to extend the existing restrictions, add additional countries to the list or otherwise modify the list. When the Supreme Court hears arguments on the executive order in October, it is possible that the original travel restrictions would have been replaced by new ones, based on the reviews that are now under way. That could give the court an opening to avoid issuing a definitive ruling on the policy now in place.

*– Ian Lovett, Brent Kendall and Felicia Schwartz contributed to this article.*