

Trump administration to begin continuous police-state surveillance of 55 million US visa holders

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On Thursday, the State Department confirmed that it will subject all 55 million US visa holders to what it calls “continuous immigration vetting.” Behind this bureaucratic phrase lies the creation of permanent police-state surveillance.

The Associated Press reported that the government reviews will include social media accounts, law enforcement and immigration records in visa holders’ home countries, and any “actionable” violations of US law committed while in the United States. The new guidelines also make it mandatory that privacy switches on phones and apps be turned off during visa interviews, stripping immigrants and applicants of even the nominal protections of the Fourth Amendment, which bans government searches without a judicial warrant. Vast quantities of personal data will now be continuously stored and monitored, with the aim of purging from the United States anyone whose views conflict with the demands of US imperialism.

Visa holders and travelers to the US are already subjected to invasive searches by border police, including of cell phones, laptops and other electronic devices at airports and other ports of entry. Now this digital spying will occur at all times and places, including outside the country.

No human team could oversee 55 million social media profiles in real time. The State Department’s new vetting regime almost certainly relies on AI-driven platforms to evaluate alleged “anti-American” and “terrorist” behavior. ICE has already agreed to a \$30 million contract with Palantir to develop ImmigrationOS, to facilitate the mass deportation operation.

This surveillance is global in scope. Information from

foreign governments will be incorporated into reviews. Thus, if someone arrested at a protest in support of Palestine Action in Britain applies for a US visa, their political activity could be cited as “supporting terrorism.”

AP reported that the Trump administration claimed earlier this week it has already revoked more than 6,000 student visas, including approximately 200 to 300 visas for alleged “terrorism-related issues.”

While there is no question visa holders who evince support for Palestine or opposition to Zionism will be targeted and denied visas under the fraudulent banner of combating “antisemitism,” this digital dragnet is aimed at all those who espouse anti-capitalist ideologies.

Earlier this week, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) updated its guidelines to ban entry to those allegedly holding “anti-American ideologies,” which include advocating for the “economic, international, and governmental doctrines of world communism.”

The State Department visa initiative comes as President Donald Trump celebrated his unprecedented military-police takeover of Washington DC with a visit Thursday afternoon to the headquarters of the National Park Police, one of at least a dozen agencies and military units that have flooded the city with armed personnel since August 11.

Trump spoke to an audience of police and uniformed soldiers, praising them, praising himself (the bulk of his remarks), and praising top aides like Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem and Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum. “We’re not playing games,” he said, referring to the occupation of the US capital.

“We’re going to make it safe, and we’re going to then go on to other places, but we’re going to stay here for a while.”

Earlier in the day, in an interview with a right-wing radio talkshow host based in Tennessee, Trump said that Memphis was one of the cities being considered as the next target for federal intervention on the pretext of “fighting crime.” While Trump boasts about making Washington DC safe, the main target of the repression in the capital, to this point, has been immigrant workers. Nearly half of all the arrests since August 11 have been for immigration violations, not suspected crimes.

The same week these policies were being unveiled, the government officially opened the largest immigrant concentration camp in US history at the Fort Bliss military base in Texas. Built at a cost of over \$1.2 billion, the facility is designed to hold 5,000 detainees.

Fort Bliss was used during the Second World War to imprison Japanese Americans as well as German and Italian immigrants under Democratic president Franklin Roosevelt. In a statement to the Huffington Post, Ann Burroughs, president of the Japanese American National Museum, warned: “It is inconceivable that the United States is once again building concentration camps, denying the lessons learned 80 years ago.”

Conditions at Fort Bliss are already infamous. Under the Biden administration, more than 1,000 unaccompanied children were imprisoned there for weeks and even months at a time. Reports from the ACLU described children with only one change of clothes for over 40 days, widespread sexual assaults, and levels of distress so acute that officials banned pencils, pens, nail clippers and toothbrushes to prevent suicide attempts. Both the ACLU and Congresswoman Veronica Escobar, who represents El Paso, were at times denied access to the facility, underscoring its secretive and lawless character.

Now the camp is again being filled. In a joint statement issued on August 21, attorneys Eric Lee, James Hollis and Chris Godshall-Bennett confirmed that Venezuelan immigrant Luis Manuel Rivas Velásquez, who previously suffered a severe medical emergency when denied care at the Florida Everglades camp, had been transferred to Fort Bliss in the last week.

For more than five days he has been held without

access to his lawyers. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has ignored all lawful requests for contact, permitted only one-minute phone calls with no or little notice, and denied Rivas Velásquez his prescribed blood pressure and anxiety medication. He has not been allowed to change his clothes in five days.

In the August 21 statement, Lee, Hollis and Goodshall-Bennett wrote that Rivas Velásquez’s treatment by DHS and ICE “constitutes an enforced disappearance under international law.”

They cited Article 2 of the United Nations’ International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (2006), which defines the practice as the “arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State... followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law.”

The lawyers appeal to the “American people to stand up and stop this government from disappearing people on US soil.”

Notably, Escobar herself was also denied entry to Fort Bliss this week, a repeat of the practice under Biden.

The continuous surveillance dragnet and the concentration camp system are two sides of the same coin. The government is preparing a framework for mass repression, targeting immigrants first but aimed at the working class as a whole. By branding opposition to war, genocide and inequality as “terrorism” or “anti-American ideology,” the Trump administration is criminalizing dissent internationally while laying the foundations for enforced disappearances and mass arrests inside the United States.



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