EXHIBIT D

EXCLUSIVE

NATIONAL SECURITY

Inside the DHS task force scouring foreign students' social media

A critic called the review a return to "McCarthyism," a reference to tactics used to identify alleged communists during the Cold War.



The Department of Homeland Security headquarters in 2018.

Andrew Harrer / Bloomberg via Getty Images file

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By Julia Ainsley

A recently created Department of Homeland Security task force is using data analytic tools to scour the social media histories of the estimated 1.5 million foreign students studying in the

United States for potential grounds to revoke their visas, three sources familiar with the operation told NBC News. They said records are also being searched for charges or criminal convictions of the student visa holders.

DHS officials also announced Wednesday that the department would begin considering what it deems to be antisemitic activity on social media and "physical harassment of Jewish individuals" as grounds to revoke or deny immigration benefits.

"This will immediately affect aliens applying for lawful permanent resident status, foreign students and aliens affiliated with educational institutions linked to antisemitic activity," the announcement said.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations, a Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, said the new policy was a return to "McCarthyism," referring to the tactics used to identify alleged communists in the Cold War that violated privacy rights.

"The spirit of Joseph McCarthy is alive and well in the Trump administration, which has spent months dishonestly mischaracterizing legitimate criticism of the Israeli government's war crimes in Gaza as antisemitic, pursuing witch hunts into American colleges, and threatening the free speech rights of immigrants," CAIR National Deputy Director Edward Ahmed Mitchell said in a statement Wednesday.

The data analytic tools now being used to scour social media were enhanced during the Biden administration, a former Biden administration DHS official said. But to use them to search social media of nonviolent students, the official said, is different from what the previous administration intended.

"We were not targeting political activity or speech. We would only review them if they were inciting violence," the former Biden administration official said.

The tools the DHS task force is using are run by Customs and Border Protection's National Targeting Center and National Vetting Center, both of which are typically tasked with using software and data to keep potential security threats from entering the United States. Any potential red flags about a student are shared with Citizenship and Immigration Services, which in turn asks the State Department to make a determination about whether the student's visa should be revoked.

If the State Department decides it should be revoked, the task force informs Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in local field offices to arrest and deport the student, the sources said.

Before the task force was created, much of the investigative work would have been done at the field office level and shared with local ICE officers, the sources said. Now, according to the sources, agents are taking orders from people they may not know from the task force in Washington about whom to arrest without clear guidance about why they are being targeted.

Over the last month, nearly 300 international students have been stripped of their visas, according to media reports and universities that have reviewed their systems.

ICE, which is part of DHS, runs the Student and Exchange Visitor Program, which oversees foreign students on visas to study at U.S. academic institutions.

ICE's critic

ICE Chief of Staff Jon Feere had been a vocal critic of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program before he joined the Trump administration this year.

Feere wrote dozens of articles for the Center for Immigration Studies, an organization that advocates for reduced immigration into the United States, many of which pointed to cases of fraud he alleged was rampant in the Student and Exchange Visitor Program.

“Blatant, widespread fraud has become a central part of America’s foreign student program, and the government agencies responsible for putting an end to it have been asleep at the wheel for far too long,” Feere said in an article he published with the Center for Immigration Studies in August.

DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement: “There is no room in the United States for the rest of the world’s terrorist sympathizers, and we are under no obligation to admit them or let them stay here. Secretary [Kristi] Noem has made it clear that anyone who thinks they can come to America and hide behind the First Amendment to advocate for anti-Semitic violence and terrorism – think again. You are not welcome here.”



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