

**From:** SMART Core  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 18, 2025 1:47 PM  
**Cc:**

**Subject:** Action Request: Expanding Screening and Vetting for FMJ Applicants

**UNCLASSIFIED**

SBU



**Action Office:**

**Info Office:** ALDACS

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**MRN:** [25 STATE 59756](#) [Reply](#)  
**Date/DTG:** Jun 18, 2025 / 181737Z JUN 25  
**From:** SECSTATE WASHDC  
**Action:** ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE *Immediate*  
**E.O:** 13526  
**TAGS:** CMGT, CVIS, KFRD  
**Captions:** SENSITIVE  
**Reference:** A) [25 STATE 5914](#)  
B) [25 STATE 26168](#)  
C) [25 STATE 50220](#)  
**Subject:** Action Request: Expanding Screening and Vetting for FMJ Applicants

1. (U) This is an action request. See paras. 26-29.

## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

2. (SBU) In ref A, the Department directed consular officers to maintain extra vigilance and to comprehensively review and screen every visa applicant for potential security and non-security related ineligibilities including to assess whether the applicant poses a threat to U.S. national security. In ref B, consular officers were instructed to conduct expanded social media screening and vetting for certain F, M, and J nonimmigrant visa (FMJ) applicants. In ref C, the Department directed consular sections to temporarily suspend scheduling FMJ cases pending further guidance on FMJ vetting. This guidance supersedes ref B, which was limited to social media vetting for certain FMJ applicants.

3. (SBU) This updated guidance requires consular officers to conduct a comprehensive and thorough vetting of all FMJ applicants, including online presence, to identify applicants who bear hostile attitudes toward our citizens, culture, government, institutions, or founding principles; who advocate for, aid, or support designated foreign terrorists and other threats to U.S. national security; or who perpetrate unlawful antisemitic harassment or violence. Consular sections should resume scheduling FMJ appointments but should consider the effect of this guidance on workload and schedule accordingly. **Posts should prioritize expedited FMJ appointment requests as described in para 29.** Posts should implement these vetting procedures within five business days.

## **WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?**

4. (U) E.O. 14161, Protecting the United States from Foreign Terrorists and Other National Security and Public Safety Threats, directs us to ensure that foreign nationals admitted to the United States do not bear hostile attitudes toward the citizens, culture, government, institutions, or founding principles of the United States, and that they do not advocate for, aid, or support designated foreign terrorists and other threats to U.S. national security. E.O. 14188, Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism, establishes U.S. policy to combat antisemitism vigorously, using all available legal tools to hold to account perpetrators of unlawful antisemitic harassment and violence, including on university campuses.

5. (U) Removing foreign nationals from the United States, even when they have clearly violated our laws, is a lengthy, expensive, and difficult process. Therefore, we must be vigilant during the visa issuance process. We must ensure that aliens seeking admission

to the United States are screened and vetted to the maximum extent possible and that they will respect the terms of their admission to the United States. As Secretary Rubio said, “a visa is a privilege, not a right.”

6. (SBU) Such pre-admission vetting is particularly important for long-stay NIV holders, and acutely for FMJ cases. The FBI has long warned that foreign powers seek access to American higher education institutions to, among other things, steal technical information, exploit U.S. research and development, and spread false information for political or other reasons. In addition, a recent CA/FPP study suggested that almost half of international students seek to remain in the United States, whether legally or illegally.

#### **WHICH CASES ARE COVERED?**

7. (SBU) This guidance for consular officers covers **all FMJ applicants, new or returning**. This updated guidance supersedes that in ref B, which was limited to social media vetting for certain FMJ applicants.

#### **HOW DO I HANDLE THESE CASES?**

8. (SBU) Post should conduct intake and interviews in accordance with standard procedures. Once you determine an FMJ applicant is otherwise eligible for the requested nonimmigrant status, you must refuse the case under INA 221(g). Inform the applicant that his case is refused and requires additional administrative processing to establish his eligibility for the visa. Request that the applicant set all of his social media accounts to “public” and remind the applicant that limited access to, or visibility of, online presence could be construed as an effort to evade or hide certain activity.

#### **WHO DOES THE VETTING?**

9. (SBU) The same consular officer who interviews the applicant should perform the vetting described below. This “caseworker” approach is a best practice that allows a single decisionmaker to consider the whole applicant and the totality of facts surrounding the application. It also permits better detection of potentially derogatory information and inconsistencies. Other consular staff may perform discrete portions of the vetting that cannot be performed by the interviewing officer. For example, if only FPU staff have access to LexisNexis, FPU staff may conduct that check and return the results to the interviewing consular officer.

10. (SBU) **Vetting is not a fraud assessment.** Do not refer a case to post FPU for vetting or for any portion of the vetting. However, you might discover information during vetting that leads to an FPU referral. Posts should handle such cases according to their FPU referral SOPs and 7 FAH-1 H-940, Overseas FPU Responsibilities.

11. (SBU) To promote thorough vetting of visa applicants, and to promote quality decision-making generally, consular managers shall not maintain or establish any formal or informal production or processing quotas or targets for consular officers or those involved in administrative processing of visa cases. Rather consular officers shall take the time necessary to satisfy themselves that visa applicants qualify for the visas they seek, and personnel involved in back-office processing shall take the time necessary to perform their tasks thoroughly.

## **WHERE DO I LOOK?**

12. (SBU) You must conduct a comprehensive and thorough vetting of each FMJ applicant who is otherwise issuable (i.e. overcomes 214(b)). Vetting means examining all aspects of the case, including the application, supporting evidence, and information you gather during the interview. You should review these in light of your personal knowledge, your expertise, and all sources of information available to you. It should include a review of the applicant’s entire online presence -- not just social media activity -- using any appropriate search engines or other online resources. It also should include a check of any databases to which the consular section has access (e.g., LexisNexis or local equivalents).

13. (SBU) Consular sections may consult LE staff and Public Diplomacy sections to understand the social media environment at post and which search engines and techniques are best for comprehensively exploring an applicant’s online presence. LE

staff can help provide context, including when assessing the credibility of applicants who apparently lack any online presence or who did not provide social media identifiers.

14. (SBU) If it is necessary to sign in to an account to view all of an applicant's activity on a particular social media platform (e.g., Instagram), you must do so using an official account that is publicly attributable to the Department. Consular sections may create such accounts in accordance with the platform's Terms of Service. Do not use accounts that are used for public communication. Follow the guidance on social media use in 7 FAH-1 H-945.4, Social Media Rules of Conduct in Fraud Assessments, but recall that **vetting is not a fraud assessment**, so you should not track such vetting activities in ECAS.

15. (SBU) If you are unable to review any aspect of an applicant's online presence because social media accounts are set to "private" or otherwise limited, you should treat the case as any other where an applicant fails to provide certain information on request. **You must consider whether such failure reflects evasiveness or otherwise calls into question the applicant's credibility.**

## WHAT AM I LOOKING FOR?

16. (U) During the vetting, you simply are looking for any potentially derogatory information about the applicant. You must review any such information to ensure it does not indicate an ineligibility under INA 212(a) or 214(b). For example, during an online presence search, you might discover in local media that an applicant had been arrested and charged with a serious crime, a possible 2A1 ineligibility, that he did not disclose on his application. In such a case, you could request additional information from the applicant to help you determine whether he is ineligible.

17. (U) You should consider as potentially derogatory any indications of hostility toward the citizens, culture, government, institutions, or founding principles of the United States; of advocacy for, aid, or support for designated foreign terrorists and other threats to U.S. national security; or of support for unlawful antisemitic harassment or

violence. You must review any such indicators to ensure they do not indicate an ineligibility under INA 212(a). For example, during an online presence search, you might discover on social media that an applicant endorsed Hamas or its activities, a possible 3B ineligibility, that he did not disclose on this application.

18. (SBU) You also should be alert to any inconsistencies between what you discover during vetting and how the applicant presented himself in his application, in his supporting evidence, or during the interview. You must explore all such inconsistencies to ensure they do not indicate visa ineligibilities. **Even when such inconsistencies do not point to an INA 212(a) ineligibility, they can call into question the applicant's credibility.**

19. (U) You must document the results of your vetting in detailed case notes, including all potentially derogatory information and inconsistencies. If you find any relevant information online, take screenshots to preserve the record against possible later alteration or loss of the information and upload those screenshots to the applicant's case record in the CCD.

### **DOES THE APPLICANT STILL OVERCOME INA 214(B)?**

20. (U) INA 214(b) requires an applicant to show credibly that all activities in which he is expected to engage in while in the United States are consistent with the specific requirements of his visa classification. That is, **if you are not completely satisfied (1) that the applicant is credible and (2) that, during his time in the United States, the applicant will engage only in activities consistent with his nonimmigrant visa status, you should refuse the visa under INA 214(b).** That is true even in cases where the applicant has convinced you that he is not an intending immigrant, and even in cases where the applicant is also ineligible under another section of the law.

21. (SBU) Even if inconsistencies or potentially derogatory information you uncover during vetting do not rise to the level of an INA 212(a) ineligibility, you must consider whether they undermine the applicant's credibility or suggest that the applicant will not

respect the terms of his admission to the United States. For example, while vetting applicants, many posts have discovered evidence online that those applicants had worked illegally while in the United States previously, thus seriously undermining their credibility in subsequent visa applications.

22. (SBU) In the same way, indications of hostility toward the citizens, culture, government, institutions, or founding principles of the United States; of advocacy for, aid, or support for designated foreign terrorists and other threats to U.S. national security; or of support for unlawful anti-Semitic harassment or violence might not lead to an INA 212(a) ineligibility. However, you must consider whether applicants who express such strong animus are likely to respect the terms of their admission to the United States, including respecting all of its laws.

23. (SBU) Likewise, for applicants who demonstrate a history of political activism, especially when it is associated with violence or with the views and activities described above, you must consider the likelihood they would continue such activity in the United States and, if so, whether such activity is consistent with the nonimmigrant visa classification they seek. As Secretary Rubio has said, we do not seek to import activists who will disrupt and undermine scholarly activity at U.S. universities.

### **IS THE APPLICANT INELIGIBLE UNDER INA 212(a)(3)?**

24. (SBU) If you uncover information that might lead to an INA 212(a)(3) ineligibility, you should follow the instructions in 9 FAM 304.2 to request an SAO. This includes but is not limited to ineligibilities under:

- INA 212(a)(3)(A)(ii), where an applicant is traveling solely, principally, or incidentally to engage in any unlawful activity (9 FAM 302.5-4).
- INA 212(a)(3)(A)(iii), where an applicant seeks to engage solely, principally, or incidentally in any activity, a purpose of which is the opposition to, or the control or overthrow of, the U.S. government by force, violence, or other unlawful means (9 FAM 302.5-5).
- INA 212(a)(3)(B), where an applicant engages in certain terrorist activities, including espousing such activities, or has provided any form of material support to a terrorist organization (9 FAM 302.6).

25. (SBU) In any case where an applicant:

- expresses hostile attitudes toward the citizens, culture, government, institutions, or founding principles of the United States;
- **OR** advocates for, aids, or supports designated foreign terrorists and other threats to U.S. national security;
- **OR** expresses support for or perpetrates unlawful anti-Semitic harassment or violence;
- **AND** overcomes INA 214(b);
- **AND** is not ineligible under any other provision of INA 212(a)(3);
- **THEN** you should pursue a finding that the applicant is ineligible under INA 212(a)(3)(C), where an applicant's entry or proposed activities would have potentially serious foreign policy consequences or compromise a compelling U.S. foreign policy interest. Only the Secretary can make such a finding, which requires an SAO. See 9 FAM 302.14-2 for details.

## ACTION REQUESTS

26. (U) Posts should implement these vetting procedures within five business days.

27. (U) In addition, posts should work with their Public Diplomacy Sections on any public announcements for appropriate social media platforms and/or in local press. Cleared social media content for posts to translate for this purpose will be available on the [Consular Affairs Outreach Hub](#), and cleared press guidance will be available on [CAWeb](#). The GSS Program Team will instruct vendors to update GSS websites.

## RESUMING FMJ SCHEDULING

28. (U) Posts should resume regular scheduling of FMJ visa applications once these actions requests are implemented. However, posts should consider overall scheduling volume and the resource demands of appropriate vetting; posts might need to schedule fewer FMJ cases than they did previously.

29. (SBU) Posts may resume processing of FMJ Referrals and Priority Appointment Requests (PARs), as well as FMJ expedited appointment requests. However, among expedited appointment requests for FMJs, posts should prioritize the following groups:



- J-1 physicians
- F-1 students seeking to study at a U.S. university where international students constitute 15 percent or less of the total student population, according to the U.S. Department of Education. CA will post a list of such schools on [CAWeb](#).

## **APPLICATION PROCESS CONSIDERATIONS**

30. (U) For FMJ cases currently in “open” status that have not yet been interviewed or, in the case of interview waiver cases, otherwise adjudicated, posts should request that applicants make their social media accounts “public,” then conduct the vetting described in this cable. If no potentially derogatory information is found, post can adjudicate the case to completion. If potentially derogatory information is found, post should refuse the case under the appropriate refusal code; or, if needed, post should call the applicant back for a follow-up interview.

31. (U) For FMJ cases that were interviewed before the release of ref C and are otherwise approvable but currently in INA 221(g) status, posts should request that applicants make their social media accounts “public,” then conduct the vetting described in this cable. If no potentially derogatory information is found, post can adjudicate the case to completion. If potentially derogatory information is found, post should refuse the case under the appropriate refusal code; or, if needed, post should call the applicant back for a follow-up interview.

