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# National Security Threats—Chain Migration and the Visa Lottery System

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Our current immigration system jeopardizes our national security and puts American communities at risk. That's why President Donald J. Trump has repeatedly called for common sense, mainstream immigration reforms such as ending chain migration and eliminating the visa lottery.

## Chain Migration

### Chain Migration (chain·mi·gra·tion) *n.*

1. The process by which foreign nationals permanently resettle within the U.S. and subsequently bring over their foreign relatives, who then have the opportunity to bring over their foreign relatives, and so on, until entire extended families are resettled within the country. ▶ *Chain Migration is a process that can continue without limit.*

Under our current immigration system, around 70 percent of legal immigrants admitted to the United States every year do so based on family ties rather than merit. Because most immigrants are selected on the basis of their family connections—rather than real selection criteria, like the skills they bring to our economy or their likelihood of assimilation into our society—our current family-based immigration system does not meet the needs of the modern United States economy and is incompatible with preserving our national security.

A recent joint report from the Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security found that roughly three in four individuals convicted of international terrorism-related charges since September 11, 2001, were foreign-born. As the report outlines, a number of these terrorists were able to enter the United States on the basis of family ties and extended-family chain migration.

## Visa Lottery

Each year, the diversity visa lottery program randomly selects up to 50,000 foreign nationals to apply for permanent residence (green cards) in the United States. Many of them have absolutely no ties to the United States, and are not required to have special skills or much education.

Randomly selecting foreign nationals from around the globe, including from state sponsors of terrorism, and admitting them into the United States invites large amounts of fraud and does not serve the national interest.

In 2004, the State Department's Deputy Inspector General warned that the visa lottery "contains significant threats to national security as hostile intelligence officers, criminals, and terrorists attempt to use it to enter the United States as permanent residents." In 2013, the Inspector General recorded with alarm that the visa lottery was subject to "pervasive and sophisticated fraud" perpetrated by "organized fraud rings."

In the last decade, the United States issued nearly 30,000 immigrant visas through the visa lottery program to randomly selected nationals from countries designated as "State Sponsors of Terrorism" by the State Department. In addition, tens of thousands of immigrants admitted from these countries have been admitted permanently into the United States through other immigration categories (such as family-sponsored immigrants, as well as asylees, refugees, and others).

## National Security Threats

Below are just a few examples of terrorists and criminals who entered the United States through chain migration or the visa lottery program:

### Chain Migration

- **Akayed Ullah**, a Bangladeshi national, entered the United States in 2011 through chain migration. Ullah was allowed to enter the country as the family member of a visa lottery winner. On December 12, 2017, Ullah allegedly attempted to detonate a homemade pipe bomb in the New York City Port Authority Bus Terminal. The failed explosion injured himself and four bystanders.
- **Ahmed Amin El-Mofty**, an Egyptian national, entered the United States through a distant relative (chain migration) and became a United States citizen after arriving. Last month, El-Mofty was killed during a shootout after allegedly opening fire and targeting police at multiple locations in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.
- **Zoobia Shahnaz**, a national of Pakistan, entered the United States through chain migration as the distant relative of a United States citizen. On December 14, 2017, Shahnaz was indicted by the Department of Justice for allegedly laundering bitcoin and wiring funds to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).
- **Mahmoud Amin Mohamed Elhassan**, a national of Sudan, was admitted to the United States in 2012 as a family member of a lawful permanent resident from Sudan. In 2016, he pleaded guilty to attempting to provide material support to ISIS, and in 2017 was subsequently sentenced to 11 years in prison.
- **Khaleel Ahmed**, a national of India, was admitted to the United States in 1998 as a family member of a naturalized United States citizen from India. In 2010, he was sentenced to more than eight years in prison for conspiring to provide material support to terrorists.
- **Mufid Elfgeeh**, a national of Yemen, was admitted to the United States in 1997 as a family member of a naturalized United States citizen from Yemen. Elfgeeh subsequently became a United States citizen through naturalization. In 2016, Elfgeeh was sentenced to more than 22 years in prison for attempting to recruit fighters for ISIS.
- **Uzair Paracha**, a national of Pakistan, was admitted to the United States in 1980 through chain migration. In 2006, he was sentenced to 30 years in Federal prison for providing material support to al Qaeda.
- **Mohamad Saeed Kodaimati**, a national of Syria, was admitted to the United States in 2001 as a family member of a lawful permanent resident from Syria. Kodaimati entered the United States with the family member. That family member was previously admitted as the unmarried son or daughter of a lawful permanent resident, who earlier received status as the parent of a United States citizen. In 2016, Kodaimati was sentenced to 96 months in prison for making false statements in a terrorism investigation.

## Visa Lottery

- **Sayfullo Saipov**, a national of Uzbekistan, entered the United States in 2010 through the visa lottery program. On October 31, 2017, Saipov was arrested after he allegedly used a truck to run down numerous pedestrians on a bike lane on the west side of Manhattan, killing eight individuals.
- **Abdurasaul Hasanovich Juraboev**, a national of Uzbekistan, was admitted to the United States as a visa lottery recipient in 2011. In 2015, he pleaded guilty to conspiring to support ISIS, and in 2017 was sentenced to 15 years in prison.
- **Ali Shukri Amin**, a national of Sudan, was admitted to the United States in 1999 as the child of a visa-lottery recipient, and subsequently obtained United States citizenship through naturalization. In 2015, he was sentenced to more than 11 years in prison for conspiring to provide material support and resources to ISIS.
- **Hesham Mohamed Ali Hedayet**, a national of Egypt, was able to claim Lawful Permanent Resident status through a family member who received their status via visa lottery in 1997. In July 2002, Hedayet opened fire at the El Al Airlines ticket counter at LAX airport, murdering two ticket agents and wounding three others.
- **Imran Mandhai**, a national of Pakistan, was able to immigrate to the United States because he was the child of visa lottery winners. Mandhai pled guilty in August 2002 to conspiring to bomb a National Guard Armory and electrical power substations near Miami.
- **Syed Haris Ahmed**, a national of Pakistan, entered the United States as a visa lottery winner. Ahmed was convicted in 2009 of terrorism-related activities in the United States and abroad.
- **Mousa Mohammed Abu Marzook**, alleged United States Hamas leader, received his green card through a predecessor program to the visa lottery. Marzook was deported in 1997 for terrorist activities.



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