

The National Vetting Center

On February 6, 2018, the White House announced the President's intention to establish a National Vetting Center (NVC), led by the Department of Homeland Security. The NVC will centralize vetting operations supporting those charged with ensuring the safety, security, and prosperity of the United States. The establishment of the NVC is a result of President Donald J. Trump's memorandum (NSPM-9) directing federal departments and agencies to improve their coordination and use of intelligence and other information in connection with immigration and travel-related determinations to identify potential threats to national security, border security, homeland security, and public safety.

- The safety and security of the American people is the highest priority for this administration.
- Conducting vetting activities in connection with immigration and travel-related determinations to identify individuals who present a potential threat to national security, border security, homeland security, and public safety supports this priority.
- Currently, the vetting of individuals seeking to transit the borders of the United States or obtain benefits under our immigration laws is undertaken by multiple agencies and takes place in a decentralized manner. President Trump has directed federal departments and agencies to improve their coordination and use of intelligence and other information to identify potential threats to national security, border security, homeland security, and public safety.
- As part of these efforts, the administration established a National Vetting Center led by the Department of Homeland Security to coordinate support to vetting efforts throughout the federal government and apply an integrated approach that utilizes data holdings across national security components.
- The National Vetting Center improves the identification of terrorists, criminals, and other nefarious actors among the millions of individuals who seek a visa, visa waiver, immigration benefit, or protected status; attempt to enter the United States; are under immigration removal proceedings; or in support of other border security activities.
- The National Vetting Center will operate subject to the oversight and guidance of a National Vetting Governance Board, which established a legal working group and separate privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties working group to ensure compliance with applicable law and appropriate protection of individuals' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.

The National Vetting Center (NVC) will provide a clearer picture of threats that may be posed by individuals seeking to immigrate to or transit the borders of the United States. The NVC will strengthen, simplify, and streamline the complex way that intelligence is used to inform vetting decisions and allow each vetting partner to contribute its unique information, ensuring that adjudications of border security- and immigration-related benefits and protections are informed by all appropriate information available to the U.S. Government in accordance with law and in a manner that maintains robust privacy, civil rights, and civil liberty protections.”

Frequent questions:

What is the National Vetting Center (NVC)?

The NVC is a collaborative interagency effort to more efficiently identify individuals who present a threat to national security, border security, homeland security, or public safety and seek to transit our borders or exploit our immigration system. The NVC is the next step in realizing the 9/11 Commission's recommendations regarding the need for interagency collaboration to make more informed decisions.

Why is a National Vetting Center needed? A. The NVC fills a critical need by improving the manner by which federal officials identify individuals who may present a threat to national security, border security, homeland security, or public safety. Over time, the U.S. Government has developed multiple, unconnected processes to bring together threat information already lawfully held by the government about individuals seeking to enter the United States or obtain benefits under our immigration laws. The NVC is centralizing and improving these processes to more efficiently and effectively inform department and agency vetting. Relevant, appropriate information will be accessible in a consolidated and timely manner to the departments and agencies leveraging the NVC's process and technology.

How does the NVC protect privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties?

In NSPM-9, the President directed the creation of the NVGB to oversee the activities of the NVC with the support of a Legal Working Group and separate P-CRCL Working Group. These working groups are directed in the NSPM to review all activities of the NVC to ensure they comply with applicable law and policy and protect individuals' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties. Additionally, the NVC is supported by dedicated legal counsel and a P-CRCL Officer who advises the NVC Director on privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties considerations.

What information will intelligence agencies collect about Americans or foreigners?

NSPM-9 does not provide any collection authority for the NVC or any new authorities for participating federal departments or agencies to collect information. Any data collected on individuals for travel authorization, benefits under our immigration laws, or other applications that informs adjudications by departments and agencies through the NVC must be authorized and permitted by law and policy, including, with respect to intelligence community elements, Executive Order 12333. Overseen by the NVGB and the NVGB's Legal and P-CRCL Working Groups, the NVC will act at all times in compliance with law and policy and protect individuals'.

Where is the NVC located? Does it require a new facility?

The NVC is located inside an already operational CBP facility. There are no plans for a new NVC facility at this time.

What will the NVC cost

The NVC is consolidating existing resources and co-locating existing personnel, as necessary, to fulfill its immediate needs. The NVGB will determine future funding requirements, which will be submitted through existing resource decision processes.

Will the NVC spy on American citizens?

Absolutely not! The NVC does not have any collection authorities and is designed to facilitate the sharing of information already lawfully held by the U.S. Government to inform vetting and adjudications. NSPM-9 authorizes the NVC to support adjudicating agencies that require access to relevant biographic, biometric, and related derogatory information already being collected to the extent permitted by and consistent with law and policy.

How will the NVC use social media information in the vetting process?

The NVC coordinates the sharing of information already lawfully held by national security components across the U.S. Government in support of vetting activities that are themselves authorized by law and policy. It does not collect, retain, analyze, or use social media information itself. Federal departments and agencies with adjudicative responsibilities will continue to analyze all available and appropriate information authorized by law

and policy, including, where relevant and appropriate, social media information, to make decisions to protect national security, border security, homeland security, and public safety.

Is any legislative action required by Congress?

No. The NVC operates using existing authorities.

What impact will the inclusion of ESTA vetting in the NVC have on travelers?

The use of the NVC's process and technology to enhance ESTA vetting should have little, if any, effect on ESTA applicants who pose no threat to national security, border security, homeland security, or public safety provided they submit their completed applications in a timely manner. CBP has generally advised all ESTA applicants that they should submit their completed applications no later than 72 hours prior to travel. Some ESTA applications that might have been granted previously in the absence of timely, responsive intelligence, law enforcement, or other information held by national security partners may now be denied due to the efficiencies created by the NVC.