• Names and dates of birth for all current and former spouses, or civil or domestic partners;
• Social media platforms and identifiers, also known as handles, used during the last five years; and
• Phone numbers and email addresses used during the last five years.

Regarding travel history, applicants may be requested to provide details of their international or domestic (within their country of nationality) travel, if it appears to the consular officer that the applicant has been in an area while the area was under the operational control of a terrorist organization as defined in section 212(a)(3)(B)(vi) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(3)(B)(vi). Applicants may be asked to recount or explain the details of their travel, and when possible, provide supporting documentation.

This information collection continues implementation of the directive of the President, in the Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Homeland Security of March 6, 2017, to implement additional protocols and procedures focused on “ensur[ing] the proper collection of all information necessary to rigorously evaluate all grounds of inadmissibility or deportability, or grounds for the denial of other immigration benefits.” In substance, this proposed collection is the same as the collection that was requested through the emergency procedures in May 2017. The emergency approval limited the collection to a temporary six month approval, and these materials seek to extend that approval for three years. Consular posts worldwide regularly engage with U.S. law enforcement and partners in the U.S. intelligence community to identify characteristics of applicant populations warranting increased scrutiny. The additional information collected will facilitate consular officer efforts to apply more rigorous evaluation of these applicants for visa ineligibilities. In accordance with existing authorities, visas may not be denied on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, political views, gender, or sexual orientation.

Based upon the data since this collection began implementation in May 2017, the Department estimates that 70,500 applicants annually will be requested to respond to this collection. The Department bases this estimate on the fact that consular officers worldwide asked an approximately 25,000 applicants questions contained in this information collection between May 2017 and October 2, 2017.

Failure to provide requested information will not necessarily result in visa denial, if the consular officer determines the applicant has provided a credible explanation why he or she cannot answer a question or provide requested supporting documentation, such that the consular officer is able to conclude that the applicant has provided adequate information to determine the applicant’s eligibility to receive the visa. The collection of social media platforms and identifiers will not be used to deny visas based on applicants’ race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, political views, gender, or sexual orientation.

Methodology

Department of State consular officers at visa-adjudicating posts worldwide will ask the proposed additional questions to resolve questions about an applicant’s identity or to vet for terrorism, national security-related, or other visa ineligibilities when the consular officer determines that the circumstances of a visa applicant, a review of a visa application, or responses in a visa interview indicate a need for greater scrutiny. The additional questions may be sent electronically to the applicant or be presented orally or in writing at the time of the interview. Consular officers will be mindful that, unlike some other forms of personal information required from visa applicants, social media identifiers may afford the user anonymity. Posts will assess their respective operating environments and collect the social media identifier information from applicants in a manner that best safeguards its transmission from applicant to post. In furtherance of this collection, consular officers are directed not to request user passwords; engage or interact with individual visa applicants on or through social media when conducting assessments of visa eligibility; not to violate or attempt to violate individual privacy settings or controls; and not to use social media or assess an individual’s social media presence beyond established Department guidance. Consular staff are also directed in connection with this collection to take particular care to avoid collection of third-party information when conducting any social media reviews.

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