



January 29, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D.C., 20050

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing on behalf of approximately 2000 veterans of the U.S. armed forces who have banded together to continue to serve our nation by standing up for the ideals that motivated us to serve in uniform in the first place. Our nonpartisan group is called Veterans for American Ideals and we believe that honor, courage, commitment, inclusion, diversity, justice, and freedom in all its forms are not just words, but values worth defending. Especially given the global challenges the United States faces today, arbitrary religious tests and policies that scapegoat refugees undermine our nation's moral authority and national security.

As individuals who pledged to fight for the United States, we agree wholeheartedly with the stated intention of the Executive Order you signed on Friday, January 27th. "Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States" is an essential mission. We have, however, been greatly disturbed to see your order implemented over the past two days. Stories of refugees and others being detained or denied entry into the United States at airports across the country seem unjust, arbitrary, and cruel.

In particular, we are concerned that Friday's order suspends priority resettlement and special immigrant visas (SIVs) for Iraqis who risked their lives to work with the American military, government, or other American entities as translators, engineers, security guards, embassy clerks, logisticians, and cultural advisors. Leaving our allies behind when they are in grave danger will have devastating consequences for our global reputation and our goals in the Middle East. More personally, many veterans can point to a moment when one of our foreign allies saved our lives – often by taking up arms against our common enemies. They acted because they believed in America, in our mission, and in the promise that was given.

Now, with a court-ordered stay on deportations in place but refugees still being blocked from travelling to the United States, we urge you to pause and reconsider your order. Our group's leadership would very much appreciate a moment of your time to discuss a better way forward. We are confident that the United States can protect both its security and vulnerable refugees. We can and must keep our promises to those whose lives are at risk because they saved ours.

Sincerely,
Scott Cooper
Founder, Veterans for American Ideals &
Director, Human Rights First