

Trump administration prepares mass deportations

By Patrick Martin
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The Trump administration is preparing to step up its attacks on immigrant workers, drafting new guidelines under which the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) would authorize “expedited removals” of hundreds of thousands of undocumented workers without any court proceedings.

The *Washington Post* published a report Sunday based on a 13-page internal DHS memorandum leaked to the newspaper. The proposal would expand the authority of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to deport immigrants who cannot prove they have lived in the United States continuously for the past 90 days.

Until 2004, expedited removals were limited to the US border area and amounted to summarily deporting immigrants detained in the act of entering the US from Mexico. Under George W. Bush, the scope of expedited removals was expanded to areas within 100 miles of the US border and to individuals who had been inside the US less than 14 days.

The Obama administration maintained these guidelines but greatly expanded their enforcement, with the result that the number of immigrants subject to expedited removal nearly quadrupled, from 50,000 when the effort began in 2004 to 193,000 in 2013.

The Trump draft guidelines would further expand the geographic area for expedited removal to include the entire United States. Any immigrant picked up anywhere in the country who is unable to prove residence in the US for the past 90 days could be summarily deported.

Given that many immigrants have little or no paper record of their stay in this country, or may have nothing in their possession when they are accosted by ICE agents, the number affected by the new procedure is likely to be limited only by the number of ICE agents

available to carry out enforcement.

The only limitation under the new guidelines, according to the *Post*, is that unaccompanied minors would not be subject to expedited deportation, regardless of where they are detained.

The expansion of summary deportation is only one in a series of attacks on immigrants being implemented under the Trump administration with little media attention and virtually no public protest by Democratic Party politicians, who falsely claim to oppose Trump’s rampage against democratic rights.

According to the investigative journalism group Pro Publica, the top official of the Enforcement and Removal Operations Division (ERO) of ICE, Matthew Albence, has told the 5,700 agents involved in deportations to stop prioritizing immigrants for detention based on the guidelines laid down by the Bush and Obama administrations, which targeted those convicted of violent felony offenses.

In an internal memo, he ordered “effective immediately, ERO officers will take enforcement action against all removable aliens encountered in the course of their duties.” During its first four months, the Trump administration each day arrested an average of 108 undocumented immigrants who had no criminal record, an increase of 150 percent from the previous year.

The administration is also pushing ahead with the enforcement of its executive actions banning travel from six Muslim-majority countries and effectively halting most refugee admissions to the United States. The executive order targeting Muslims was upheld by the US Supreme Court last month after it had been struck down as unconstitutional by several lower courts.

The State Department announced last week that on

Wednesday, July 12, refugee admissions reached the 50,000-person cap set in the executive order. Refugees scheduled to enter the country that day were admitted, but admissions will now slow to a crawl. Under the guidelines set by the Supreme Court, once the 50,000 limit has been reached, only refugees with “a bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States” will be admitted.

Press reports indicate that another 50,000 refugees are at some stage in the process of being admitted to the US, but are currently outside the country. Only those who qualify under the “bona fide relationship” provision will now be admitted. The Trump administration has given an extremely narrow definition of “relationship,” including spouses, fiancés, children and siblings, but excluding grandparents and other more distant relatives.

A legal challenge to the relationship definition is going on in Honolulu, where US District Judge Derrick Watson ruled Thursday that grandparents, aunts, uncles and other relatives must also qualify. The federal Department of Justice immediately appealed this ruling to the Supreme Court, which gave the state of Hawaii until Tuesday to respond.

The DHS is also proceeding with an expansion of the geographic scope of the travel ban, sending a report to the White House last week listing 17 countries that have failed a preliminary assessment of their willingness and ability to share background information on their citizens seeking to travel to the United States.

The level of cooperation with US intelligence and police agencies required by the DHS is so extensive that many more countries are expected either to refuse to go along with the US diktat or prove unable to comply. The result could be a virtual shutdown of issuance of US entry visas in dozens of countries, mainly in the poorest regions of the world.

These actions come in the wake of the warning given by DHS Secretary John F. Kelly, a former Marine general, who told a group of Hispanic congressmen Wednesday that the administration did not plan to challenge the legal effort by 11 states, all with Republican attorneys general, which are suing to force the rescinding of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.

DACA is an executive order issued by Obama in

2012, under which nearly one million undocumented young people, who arrived in the US as children, have been issued Social Security numbers and given permits to work or study without risk of deportation.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, the ultra-right Republican who is spearheading the anti-DACA campaign, has set September 5 as a deadline for suing the federal government to force an end to DACA if Trump does not rescind the executive order by then. Paxton has sought a Trump order to phase out DACA by refusing to renew the two-year permits issued under it.

Other anti-immigrant measures are being discussed, according to press reports, many of them directed at legal immigrants:

The DHS is considering requiring foreign students to reapply for permission to stay in the US each year and pay an annual fee, instead of the present system that entails a one-time fee for permission that is open-ended, as long as the student is enrolled and making progress. About one million students would be affected, 77 percent of them from Asia.

Two Republican senators, Tom Cotton of Arkansas and David Perdue of Georgia, are drafting legislation that would cut the number of legal immigrants to the United States by 50 percent, from about one million per year to only 500,000. The bill, known as the RAISE Act, has Trump’s personal support.

White House policy adviser Stephen Miller has reportedly drafted a plan to move the State Department’s Bureau of Consular Affairs and Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration over to the Department of Homeland Security, shifting the focus of refugee policy from foreign affairs to internal policing.

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