



# TERRORIST SCREENING CENTER



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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **WHAT IS THE TERRORIST SCREENING CENTER AND WHAT DOES IT DO?**

The Terrorist Screening Center was established in 2003, pursuant to Presidential Directive, by the Attorney General and is administered by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Terrorist Screening Center personnel come from various U.S. Government departments/agencies and are responsible for law enforcement, homeland security, and intelligence operations. The Terrorist Screening Center maintains the Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB), the U.S. Government's consolidated database of identity information about individuals known or reasonably suspected to be or have been engaged in terrorism or terrorist activities.

- **WHAT IS THE TERRORIST SCREENING DATABASE AND HOW IS IT USED?**

The Terrorist Screening Database (TSDB) is the U.S. Government's consolidated database containing the identity information of known or suspected terrorists. The Terrorist Screening Center shares, as appropriate, information from the Terrorist Screening Database with government agencies that conduct terrorism screening and serves as a bridge between the law enforcement, homeland security, and the intelligence communities, as well as select international partners.

- **WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TERRORIST SCREENING CENTER AND THE NATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM CENTER?**

The Terrorist Screening Center is responsible for maintaining the Terrorist Screening Database and has primary U.S. Government responsibilities for watchlisting known or suspected terrorists, screening, and information sharing. The Terrorist Screening Center is also responsible for sharing information from the Terrorist Screening Database with local, state, federal, tribal, and international partners. The National Counterterrorism Center maintains the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment which is the U.S. Government's classified central and shared repository for all known or suspected international terrorists and their networks of contacts and support. Certain identities from the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment are provided to the Terrorist Screening Center for inclusion in the Terrorist Screening Database.

- **WHY DO WE HAVE THE TERRORIST SCREENING DATABASE?**

The 9/11 Commission Report found that agencies neither shared terrorism information in an effective and timely manner, nor appropriately watchlisted terrorists. Through the Terrorist Screening Database, however, the Terrorist Screening Center ensures the timely dissemination

of terrorist identity information to its partners who conduct terrorist screening, such as the Department of State, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and the Transportation Security Administration.

- **HOW ARE PEOPLE ADDED TO THE TERRORIST SCREENING DATABASE?**

The procedures for submitting terrorist identity information for inclusion in the Terrorist Screening Database are known as the watchlist nomination process. U.S. Government agencies nominate individuals who may qualify for inclusion as a known or suspected terrorist based on credible information and intelligence developed by law enforcement, homeland security, and intelligence community agencies, as well as U.S. Embassies and Consulates.

- **WHAT IS THE STANDARD FOR INCLUDING INFORMATION IN THE TERRORIST SCREENING DATABASE?**

An individual is included in the Terrorist Screening Database when there is a reasonable suspicion that the person is a known or suspected terrorist. To meet the reasonable suspicion standard, nominating agencies must rely upon articulable intelligence or information which, taken together with rational inferences from those facts, reasonably warrants a determination that an individual is known or suspected to be or have been knowingly engaged in conduct constituting, in preparation for, in aid of, or related to terrorism or terrorist activities. Based on the totality of the circumstances, a nominating agency must provide an objective *factual* basis to believe an individual is a known or suspected terrorist.

- **WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF A KNOWN OR SUSPECTED TERRORIST?**

A “known terrorist” is an individual whom the U.S. Government knows is engaged, has been engaged, or who intends to engage in terrorism and/or terrorist activity, including an individual (a) who has been charged, arrested, indicted, or convicted for a crime related to terrorism by U.S. Government or foreign government authorities; or (b) identified as a terrorist or member of a designated foreign terrorist organization pursuant to statute, Executive Order or international legal obligation pursuant to a United Nations Security Council Resolution.

A “suspected terrorist” is an individual who is reasonably suspected to be, or has been, engaged in conduct constituting, in preparation for, in aid of, or related to terrorism and/or terrorist activities based on an articulable and reasonable suspicion.

- **WHO MAKES THE DECISION TO INCLUDE NAMES IN THE TERRORIST SCREENING DATABASE?**

Several layers of review by various U.S. Government agencies occur before a name is added to the Terrorist Screening Database by the Terrorist Screening Center. Agencies submit nominations to the National Counterterrorism Center, which reviews the derogatory information to determine if the provided intelligence forms a sufficient factual basis to reasonably suspect that the person is a known or suspected terrorist. If it does, and if sufficient

identifying information is available, the nomination is entered into the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment (TIDE) and the identifying information is passed to the Terrorist Screening Center for inclusion in the Terrorist Screening Database. The Terrorist Screening Center conducts another review of the nomination and the provided intelligence to verify that the reasonable suspicion standard is met before accepting the record into the Terrorist Screening Database.

- **WHAT IS DONE TO ENSURE THE INFORMATION IN THE TERRORIST SCREENING DATABASE IS ACCURATE?**

A range of quality control measures are used to ensure that the Terrorist Screening Database contains accurate and timely information. This includes regular reviews, periodic audits, and post-encounter reviews conducted by the Terrorist Screening Center and the agencies that nominated the record to ensure the information continues to satisfy the applicable criteria for inclusion.

- **WHICH AGENCIES IN THE UNITED STATES HAVE ACCESS TO THE INFORMATION IN THE TERRORIST SCREENING DATABASE?**

Agencies and officials who are authorized to conduct terrorist screening in the course of their official duties have access to the information contained in the Terrorist Screening Database to support diplomatic, military, intelligence, law enforcement, immigration, visa, and protective processes. The five major U.S. Government agencies that screen with information from the Terrorist Screening Database are: the Department of State's consular officers for passport and visa screening; the Transportation Security Administration for aviation security screening (No Fly and Selectee Lists); the FBI's National Crime and Information Center for domestic law enforcement screening; the U.S. Customs and Border Protection for border and port of entry screening, and the Department of Defense for base access screening. All screening functions are subject to U.S. laws and regulations protecting privacy and civil liberties.

- **WHAT IS THE NO FLY LIST?**

The No Fly List is a subset of the Terrorist Screening Database. Inclusion on the No Fly List prohibits an individual who may present a threat to civil aviation or national security from boarding a commercial aircraft that will fly into, out of, over, or within United States airspace; this also includes point-to-point international flights operated by U.S. carriers. Before an individual may be placed on the No Fly List, there must be credible information that demonstrates the individual poses a threat of committing a violent act of terrorism with respect to civil aviation, the homeland, United States interests located abroad, or is operationally capable of doing so.

- **WHAT IS AN “ENCOUNTER”?**

An encounter is an event where an individual is identified during a screening process as someone who is a potential match to an identity in the Terrorist Screening Database. For example, an encounter can occur when an individual attempts to board an aircraft, applies for a passport or visa, presents at an U.S. port of entry, or has an interaction with law enforcement.

- **HOW ARE PRIVACY AND CIVIL LIBERTIES SAFEGUARDED?**

Nominations to the Terrorist Screening Database are not accepted if they are based solely on race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, or First Amendment-protected activities, such as free speech, the exercise of religion, freedom of the press, freedom of peaceful assembly, or petitioning the government for redress of grievances. In addition, Terrorist Screening Database nominations undergo several layers of quality assurance reviews and audits by nominating agencies, the National Counterterrorism Center or FBI (as appropriate), and the Terrorist Screening Center on a regular basis to ensure compliance with interagency standards. A dedicated privacy and civil liberties attorney at the Terrorist Screening Center supports this effort to confirm adherence to process and guidelines.

The overall watchlisting and screening enterprise is also regularly reviewed by departments and agencies’ Inspectors General, along with the U.S. Government Accountability Office. Lastly, the U.S. Congress provides oversight through several of its committees.

- **IF A PERSON HAS AN ADVERSE EXPERIENCE THAT THEY BELIEVE IS RELATED TO THE TERRORIST SCREENING DATABASE, HOW CAN THEY SEEK RECORDS CORRECTION? HOW CAN A PERSON SEEK TO HAVE HIS OR HER NAME REMOVED FROM THE TERRORIST SCREENING DATABASE?**

Anyone, regardless of citizenship, can contact the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (DHS TRIP) to resolve issues related to difficulties experienced during travel screening at transportation hubs, such as airports, seaports, train stations, or U.S. border crossings. This includes being delayed or denied boarding on an aircraft, or being identified for additional screening when entering or exiting the country.

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