

Lawsuit: No-fly list has left Muslim Air Force veteran detained in Turkey

By **Matt Zapotosky** December 11

A U.S. Air Force veteran living abroad is alleging in a lawsuit filed Friday that he has been unjustly detained in Turkey because of his inclusion on the U.S. no-fly list and that his plight demonstrates that the list is unconstitutional.

[Saadiq Long](#), 46, who was born in Oklahoma but considers Qatar his home, alleges that he was detained by Turkish authorities in October because he was on the list and his passport was flagged. He has not, according to the suit, been charged in Turkey with any crimes.

The episode was not Long's first encounter with the no-fly list. In 2012, according to the suit, he was prevented from flying to the United States to visit his sick mother, and after he was eventually allowed to do so, he had to take a bus to Mexico to fly out. And while Long's suit seeks specifically to have him removed from the no-fly list so that he can leave Turkey, it is broadly critical of the way the United States uses terror watch lists to strip citizens, especially American Muslims, such as him, of their rights.

"Through extra-judicial and secret means, the federal government is ensnaring individuals into an invisible web of consequences that are imposed indefinitely and without recourse as a result of the shockingly large federal watch lists that now include hundreds of thousands of individuals," the lawsuit alleges.

The suit comes as the no-fly list is at the center of a curious national debate. President Obama and other Democrats are pushing to have it expanded to gun buyers, while [some in the Republican Party are resistant to that idea](#). The lawsuit alleges that inclusion on the no-fly list can have consequences for those on it beyond denying them the ability to board a commercial airliner. It notes that Connecticut's governor has said he [intends to issue an executive order banning gun sales to those on federal terror watch lists](#).

The suit was filed in federal court in Alexandria, Va., where a judge this year ruled that the way the United States implemented its [no-fly list was unconstitutional](#) years ago, when it was used to detain a Virginia teenager in Kuwait. That decision wasn't especially groundbreaking — a federal judge in Oregon had declared as much — but Gadeir Abbas, who represented the Virginia teen and is now representing Long, said Long's lawsuit could have more-far-reaching ramifications.

That is because Long’s lawsuit challenges the no-fly list more directly, asserting that putting him on it violated his right to “substantive due process,” Abbas said.

The suit names U.S. Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch, FBI Director James B. Comey and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson, among others, as defendants. A Justice Department spokeswoman said officials had just received the suit and were reviewing it.

Julia Mason, a State Department spokeswoman, wrote in an email that officials there were “aware of reports that a U.S. citizen was arrested in Turkey” but declined to provide other details, citing “privacy considerations.”

“The protection of U.S. citizens overseas is one of the Department of State’s highest priorities,” Mason wrote. “The department stands ready to provide all appropriate consular assistance.”

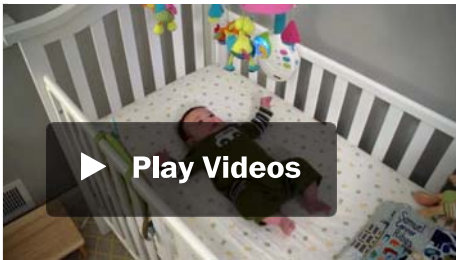
Long’s suit says that he went to Turkey to explore work opportunities and see the country where he was stationed while in the U.S. Air Force. The suit alleges that the United States “has indicated that it will issue a one-time waiver for” Long and his family to fly from there to the United States.

The suit notes, though, that would not remove Long from the no-fly list and asserts he and his family “cannot make a responsible decision about whether to return to the United States by plane without knowing that they will be able to later leave the United States by plane.”

Matt Zapotosky covers the federal district courthouse in Alexandria, where he tries to break news from a windowless office in which he is not allowed to bring his cell phone.

Your Three.

Video curated for you.



Sleep advice you won't find
in baby books



Learn to make this
twice-baked
cookie

1:12



Here's why you
hate the sound of
your own voice

1:08

Show Me More