

United States: a French researcher was turned away for having expressed “a personal opinion about the policies pursued by the Trump Administration”¹

[Today, on] Wednesday 19 March, the French government deplored the ban on entry to the United States and then the expulsion of a French researcher who’d come to attend a conference, because he had expressed a “personal opinion” about American policies concerning research.

“I have learned with concern that a French researcher,” on an assignment from the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS),² “who had come to attend a conference near Houston, [Texas] was prohibited from entering the United States and then expelled,” the Minister of Higher Education and Research, Philippe Baptiste, stated in a declaration sent to the Agence France-Presse (AFP). “This measure was taken by the American authorities because the telephone of the researcher contained exchanges with colleagues and friends in which he expressed a personal opinion about the policies pursued by the Trump Administration in matters of [scientific] research,” he added.

According to a diplomatic source, the incident took place on 9 March [2025]. The space technology researcher was subjected to a random check upon his arrival, during the course of which his work computer and personal telephone were searched. This same source reported that messages concerning the treatment of scientists by the Trump Administration had been found. The researcher was accused of messages “that reflect a hatred of Trump and could be described as terrorism.” His professional and personal equipment was confiscated and he was sent back to Europe the next day.

According to another source familiar with the matter, American authorities accused the French researcher of having sent “messages of hatred and conspiracy.” The researcher was informed that there would be an investigation by the FBI, but, according to this source, “the charges were dropped.”

“Freedom of opinion, free [unobstructed] research and academic freedom are values that we will continue to proudly uphold. I will defend the right of all French researchers to be faithful to them, while respecting the law,” the Minister for Higher Education and Research declared. The United States Embassy in Paris, contacted by the AFP, referred the matter to Customs officials. When contacted, American Customs officials did not immediately respond.

For its part, the Minister of Foreign Affairs pointed out that the United States has “sovereignty” in matters concerning the entry and staying of foreign nationals on its territory and made it clear that the French consular services had been “informed of this situation.” Nevertheless, the Minister of Foreign Affairs “deplores this situation” and reiterated his “desire to promote freedom of expression” as well as the commitment of the French government “to academic and scientific cooperation.”

¹ “Etats-Unis : un chercheur français refoulé pour avoir exprimé ‘une opinion personnelle sur la politique menée par l’administration Trump,’” *Le Monde* with the AFP (Agence France-Presse), 19 March 2025. Translated by Bill Brown.

² Centre national de la recherche scientifique (National Center for Scientific Research).

This incident comes at a time when, ever since his return to the White House, Donald Trump has made a series of shocking statements targeting the scientific community (brutal budgetary cuts, censorship of certain topics in subsidized research, etc.).