

## FACT SHEET: REFUGEES AND THE RISK OF TERRORISM

-- From Sept. 11, 2001, until now, not a single American has been killed in a terrorist act on American soil by anyone who entered the United States as a refugee.

-- Of 12 persons who carried out lethal terror attacks after 9/11, seven were native-born U.S. citizens. None of the five foreign-born attackers was a refugee and none was from any of the seven countries named in President Trump's original travel ban. Of 94 people who died in those attacks, 83 were killed by U.S.-born terrorists (one acting with his Pakistan-born wife).

-- Syrian refugees were subject to the most severe restrictions under Trump's original order, suggesting they are a riskier category. But despite that implication, not one of 18,000 Syrian refugees admitted to this country has been implicated in any terror event, lethal or otherwise. This was confirmed in a Department of Homeland Security document prepared *after* the executive order.

-- Statistics on refugee involvement in post-9/11 terror incidents vary somewhat because different studies use different definitions. But those analyses have consistently found very few cases, typically fewer than 20, involving refugees. A significant number of those perpetrators entered the United States as children, or were in the country for many years and were radicalized here. Few if any cases indicate that dangerous people might have slipped through security vetting while being screened for refugee status.

-- A large majority of terrorist acts in the United States were committed by U.S. citizens, more than half native-born. A compilation by New America (previously the New America Foundation) found 396 people who were "charged with or died engaging in jihadist terrorism or related activities inside the United States, and Americans accused of such activity abroad." More than two-thirds were citizens, 191 U.S.-born and 84 naturalized. Another 46 were legal permanent residents. Other studies showed similar findings.

-- The United States has admitted nearly 800,000 refugees since 9/11. By available evidence perhaps 20 have been involved in terrorism, but most (those who came as children, e.g.) would not have been detected by "extreme" or even perfect vetting. If better screening would have kept out 15 (almost certainly an overestimate), that's one dangerous person for every 50,000-plus legitimate refugees. Extrapolating from that experience, the president's action to lower the 2017 cap on refugee admissions from 110,000 to 50,000 (that's in the executive order, though it has gotten little attention compared to other provisions) will keep out at most *one* potential terrorist during the year even if the screening process is unchanged, and that one would be statistically unlikely to commit a violent act in the United States.

-- Subjecting large Muslim populations to surveillance and more intense screening has been tried and has not worked. In 2002-2003 NSEERS (National Security Entry-Exit Registration System) registered more than 83,000 men from 24 predominantly Muslim countries plus North Korea. More than 13,000 were ordered deported for immigration violations, but as far as can be determined, NSEERS did not lead to any terrorism-related convictions. Six years of spying by the New York Police Department on mosques, Muslim student organizations, and other Muslim targets did not turn up any terrorists either. Similar programs had the same lack of result. Successful terrorism

investigations, by contrast, often resulted from tips and cooperation from within the Muslim community.

Compiled by Arnold R. Isaacs, author, *From Troubled Lands: Listening to Pakistani Americans and Afghan Americans in Post-9/11 America*; online at [www.fromtroubledlands.net](http://www.fromtroubledlands.net)

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