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Casino-Mogul Trump Going Against the Odds With 'Muslim Ban'

By Todd Stauffer

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A story at Business Insider caught my eye yesterday—under the banner "Science," the story delves into the odds that Americans will be killed by a terrorist, at least based on historical numbers that include the 9/11/01 attacks.

President Trump's recent immigrant ban is designed to protect the U.S. from a terrorist threat, according to quotes from Administration officials.

Based on the odds of terrorism actually taking place (as calculated by the right-leaning Cato Institute) a blanket ban on immigrants (much less people actually holding a green card or visa waiver) coming into the country tackles a "problem" that presents a very small threat to most Americans.

The odds of an American dying as a victim of any terrorist attack (including domestic terrorism, which isn't addressed by Trump's ban) are 1 in 45,808, according to the piece.

Odds of being the victim of a refugee terrorist are 1 in 46,192,893; odds of dying at the hands of an illegal immigrant are 1 in 138,324,873.

By contrast, odds of an American being killed by gun violence are 1 in 358; odds of being killed by the police are 1 in 8,359. In fact, you're more likely to die from a heat wave (1 in 10,785) or an animal attack (1 in 30,167). (See the full chart here.)

The point of the piece isn't to say that it's impossible that another terrorist attack could happen on American soil or that Americans couldn't die here or abroad. That is, of course, a very real possibility, and, clearly, the measures we've been taking to enhance our security have affected the the number of Americans killed since 9/11. (Exactly how effective and appropriate previous measures have been would be open to debate and would require more data, although there's evidence that we've over-policed the problem and burdened ourselves with security regulations somewhat unnecessarily already.)

But it's certainly interesting information to have when you decide how much time you're going to spend fearing such an eventuality, and how much money, time, inconvenience or international bad will you're willing to spend or create in an effort to head off a reasonably unlikely attack.

And, politically, I'd suggest that thinking about these numbers should also encourage you to think about whose rhetoric you're going to hold in highest esteem.

Ask yourself... why would, for instance, the Trump Administration want us so scared of something—terrorism—that's (a.) reasonably unlikely to happen and (b.) is called "terrorism" because the terrorists have succeeded when we become so frightened of the shadowy possibility that they might strike anytime that we unravel our institutions and change our way of life.

In my opinion, a stronger leader calls on citizens to confront the fear, not give into it—especially when overreacting is both irrational and what the country's enemies want us to do.

But, in either case, you've got the numbers right there to formulate your own opinion on the new administration's priorities.