



THE OKLAHOMAN

Downplaying the threat of terrorism is a mistake

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President Trump's temporary ban on immigration from seven countries may have been badly implemented, but most people understand its basic logic: People from poorly governed areas known to produce terrorists require an extra level of scrutiny.

Yet many on the political left not only oppose Trump's ban, but also act as though any concern regarding terrorism is irrational.

That attitude was highlighted in a recent New York Times column by Nicholas Kristof. Trump included Somalia, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya and Sudan in his executive order implementing the temporary ban. Citing research conducted by the libertarian Cato Institute, Kristof argues no terrorists born in those seven countries have killed anyone in an attack in America in the past four decades.

During that same period, he notes, there were 1.34 million gun-related deaths in the United States.

Kristof sums up his argument, “The bottom line is that most years in the U.S., ladders kill far more Americans than Muslim terrorists do. Same with bathtubs. Ditto for stairs. And lightning.”

A similar argument has been touted by former President Obama. In 2016, The Atlantic reported, Obama “frequently reminds his staff that terrorism takes far fewer lives in America than handguns, car accidents, and falls in bathtubs do.”

Those on the left use such statistics to advocate for greater government focus on imposing additional gun control restrictions on U.S. citizens and less on anti-terrorism efforts.

Yet Trump has talked openly about the need to combat crime, particularly in areas like Chicago. And he has strongly supported police use of “stop and frisk” policies, a form of gun control that targets criminals. Democrats have responded with harsh criticism. So it seems Democrats think

Trump and the American public should focus more on domestic crime than on terrorism — right until the moment someone focuses on domestic crime.

Nonetheless, those who argue Americans should fear bathtubs or gun crime more than terrorism also insult citizens' intelligence. No one thinks terrorism is more likely to occur on any given day than a routine accident or a gun crime in a bad part of town. Instead, what most people understand is that terrorists, when given the chance, seek to generate mass casualties.

Kristof concedes some Muslim terrorists “have carried out deadly terrorism in America,” but downplays that issue by adding, “There have been 123 such murders since the 9/11 attacks — and 230,000 other murders.”

Ignoring 9/11 in a discussion of terrorist deaths on U.S. soil is like saying Oklahoma City residents have no reason for concern over domestic radicals if you don't count April 19, 1995.

Furthermore, the Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates for greatly reduced immigration at all levels, recently reviewed information compiled by a Senate committee in 2016 and found 72 individuals from the seven countries covered in Trump's executive order “have been convicted in terror cases since the 9/11 attacks.”

In 2001, Americans learned just how much death and destruction can be caused by a handful of radicals. When a small group of people can generate outsized destruction, a heightened level of security is justifiable.