vocativ

Trump's Immigrant Ban Does Little To Address Foreign Terror Threats

Since 9/11, there have been no deaths caused by Muslim-American extremists with backgrounds from the president's list of banned countries

Leeron Hoory

January 28, 2017

Migrants from Iraq and Yemen are reportedly being detained at airports less than 24 hours after President Donald Trump signed an executive order that placed an indefinite ban on Syrian refugees and for 90 days bars immigrants from Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Libya, Yemen, and Somalia from entering the United States.

"We are establishing new vetting measures, to keep radical Islamic terrorists out of the United States of America," Trump said on Friday during a visit to the Department of Defense. "We don't want them here. We want to ensure we aren't admitting into our country the very threats that our men and women are fighting overseas."

Trump's order makes good on a campaign promise to secure America's borders and to stem the flow of immigrants who are perceived as a terror threat to the country, but it also brings into sharp relief data that indicates that there have been no fatalities in the U.S. caused by extremists with backgrounds from Trump's list of affected countries. In a <u>report issued on Friday by the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security</u>, author and University of North Carolina sociology professor Charles Kurzman laid out the numbers of Muslim-Americans associated with violent extremism since 9/11.

Twenty percent of the 46 Muslim-American linked to violent extremism in 2016 had family backgrounds in the countries on Trump's list. That rate jumps to 23 percent if we count every Muslim-American linked to violent extremist plots since 9/11.
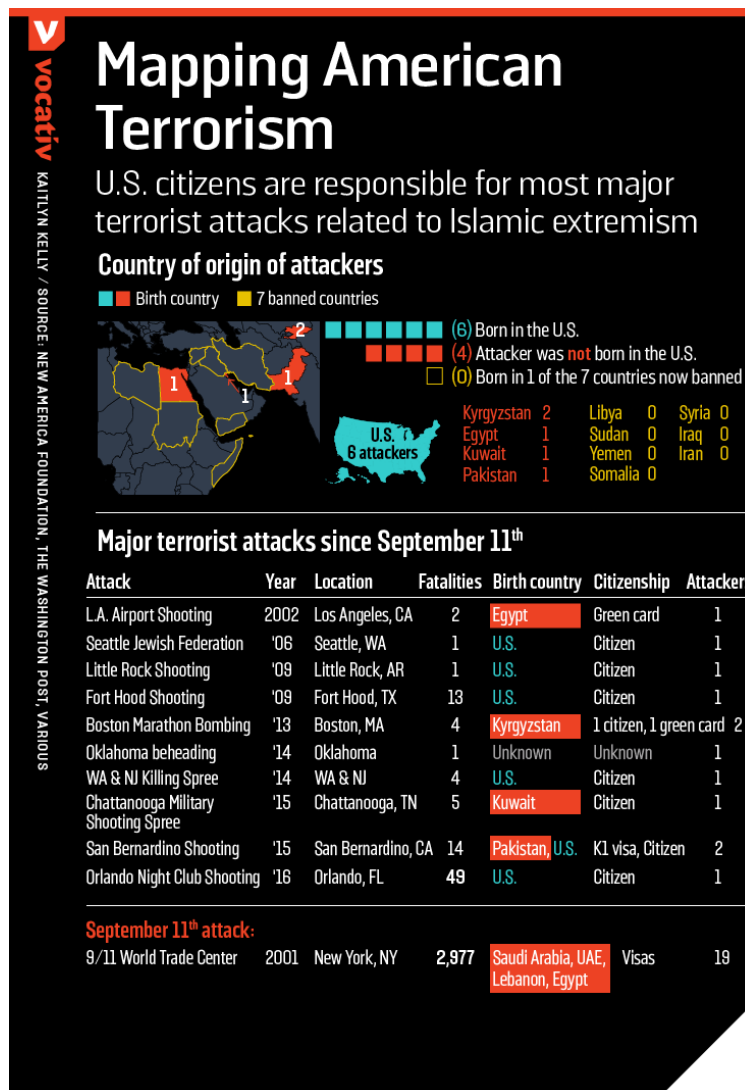
"We've absolutely exaggerated the threat presented to the United States by Islamist terrorists," John Mueller, a professor of political science at Ohio State University told Vocativ on Friday. "9/11 is an extreme case. There's scarcely any attacks by terrorists of any sort in any place in the world, including in war zones before or after 9/11, that inflicted even 10 percent as much damage. So it's obviously a very important issue, but it's very much an outlier."

Lawyers filed a legal challenge on Saturday after two Iraqi refugees were detained at New York City's JFK airport. In addition to seeking their clients' release, the lawyers also filed a motion for a class certification to "represent all refugees and immigrants who they said were being unlawfully detained at ports of entry," according to the <u>New York Times who first reported on</u>

the refugees' detention. Five Iraqi passengers and one Yemeni were reportedly stopped from boarding a JFK-bound EgyptAir flight in Cairo, according to airport officials who spoke to Reuters.

The justification for the draconian actions is laid out in Section 1 of the executive order, which was made public on Friday.

"In order to protect Americans, the United States must ensure that those admitted to this country do not bear hostile attitudes toward it and its founding principles," the executive order, entitled *Protection Of The Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into The United States,* states. "The United States cannot, and should not, admit those who do not support the Constitution, or those who would place violent ideologies over American law."

In the post 9/11 era, the U.S. has stuck to the conventional wisdom that it is under the constant and existential threat of radical Islamic terrorism, which Trump vowed in his inauguration speech last week to "eradicate from the face of the Earth." Yet, an analysis on all of the terrorist attacks since 9/11 shows this foreign threat might be over exaggerated. A staggering 83 percent

of all the terrorist attacks after 9/11 came from U.S. citizens and permanent residents, according to a report from the New America Foundation, which makes the U.S. the biggest terrorist threat to the U.S.

"Far from being foreign infiltrators, the large majority of jihadist terrorists in the United States have been American citizens or legal residents," the New American Foundation wrote in its _Terrorism in America After 9/11_ report. "Moreover, while a range of citizenship statuses are represented, every jihadist who conducted a lethal attack inside the United States since 9/11 was a citizen or legal resident."

The nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida, last year was executed by a New York-born American citizen and Florida resident of Afghan descent. The 2015 mass shooting in a San Bernardino community center was committed by a Syed Rizwan Farook, an American citizen born in the U.S., and his wife Tashfeen Malik, who was born in Pakistan and raised in Saudi Arabia. Of the 19 hijackers from the September 11 attacks, fifteen were from Saudi Arabia, two were from the United Arab Emirates, one from Lebanon, and was one from Egypt.

More than 240,000 Americans were murdered since September, 11 2001. Of that total, only 123 fatalities were caused by Muslim-American extremist, with 54 deaths in 2016. Last year alone, 188 Americans died in mass shootings, a number that does not include plots carried out by Muslim-American extremists, according to Kurzman's report.

"Islamist terrorism in the United States has killed an average of six people per year since 9/11," Mueller said. "The number of people that died from being killed by deer on the highway is about 150 per year. So one of the basic things is, are we getting hysterical about something that really doesn't do that much damage? Obviously the only number people would really be happy about is zero, but six is a very small number."

According to Mueller, an American's chance of being killed in a terrorist attack is one in four million per year, or one in 62 million per year if you include all the years since 9/11.