



## **PolitiFact: Fact-checking the GOP presidential debate**

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The Republican presidential candidates tangled over their approaches to defeating terrorism at home and abroad during the Las Vegas debate.

Sens. Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz and Rand Paul argued about the national security risks in each candidate's plan to fix the immigration system, and former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush pushed back against Donald Trump's proposed Muslim ban.

Several statements missed the mark on accuracy.

Cruz and Paul targeted Rubio as soft on amnesty and the border during an intense and wonky immigration spat.

"He thinks he wants to be this 'Oh, I am great and strong on national defense,' " Paul said, "but he is the weakest of all the candidates on immigration. He is the one for an open border that is leaving us defenseless."

His suggestion that Rubio is "for an open border" is ridiculous and inaccurate. In other words, it rates Pants on Fire.

An open border allows people to travel freely or with very few restrictions between two countries. Rubio wasn't for an open border in 2013, nor does he support it this year while running for president.

Rubio co-authored a 2013 bill as part of the "Gang of Eight" that included billions of dollars for border enforcement and more border agents. He has frequently called for more border security since the bill died.

"If Sen. Rubio was really for open borders, the Gang of Eight bill wouldn't have been 1,198 pages long while doubling the size of border patrol," said Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration expert at the libertarian Cato Institute.

In another juicy scene from the immigration showdown, Rubio tried to portray Cruz as being more willing to bend on undocumented immigrants than he lets on, which Cruz dismissed.

"Ted, you support legalizing people who are in this country illegally," Rubio said.

That claim rates Mostly False.

Cruz proposed an amendment in 2013 to the immigration bill that would have stripped the citizenship provision. But it would have kept intact the language in the Senate bill that allowed illegal immigrants to still apply for the Registered Provisional Immigrant program in the overall bill, which would have resulted in a work permit and 10 years later application for permanent residency.

Still, it's a stretch for Rubio to label Cruz as a supporter of legalization when he was an ardent critic of the overall bill and voted against it.

### **Define carpet bombing**

Moderator Wolf Blitzer tried to pin Cruz down on his "carpet bombing" proposal to deal with ISIS, asking Cruz if he wants to "carpet bomb" the civilian-heavy ISIS capital of Raqqa, Syria.

Cruz went on to describe a strategy for "carpet bombing" that actually means the opposite of that phrase.

"You would carpet bomb where ISIS is — not a city, but the location of the troops," Cruz said. "You use air power directed — and you have embedded special forces to direction the air power. But the object isn't to level a city. The object is to kill the ISIS terrorists."

What Cruz described isn't carpet bombing, so we rated his explanation False.

The defining characteristic of carpet bombing is that it's indiscriminate and not targeted. The first use of the term dates to around World War II, when Allied strikes during and after the invasion of Normandy killed an estimated 40,000 French civilians. Later in the war, a three-day, joint U.S.-British attack on Dresden, Germany, stirred up monumental fires that killed more than 125,000 people. And in Tokyo, a March 1945 attack using 6 tons of incendiary bombs burned almost 16 square miles and killed more than 80,000 people. Other examples from the Korean War and the Vietnam War are sometimes cited.

Today's precision-guided "smart" bombs and delivery systems provide better targeting.

### **Fiorina and generals**

Former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina hit both President Barack Obama and her Republican rivals in one answer on how she would defeat ISIS.

"One of the things I would immediately do, in addition to defeating them here at home," Fiorina said, "is bring back the warrior class — Petraeus, McChrystal, Mattis, Keane, Flynn. Every

single one of these generals I know. Every one was retired early because they told President Obama things that he didn't want to hear."

Fiorina was on solid ground with two of her examples: Gen. James Mattis and Lt. Gen Flynn. But she's off the mark with the others, so her claim rates Mostly False.

Gen. John Keane, who capped a 37-year career to become vice chief of staff for the Army, resigned in 2003, six years before Obama took office.

Gen. Stanley McChrystal and the Obama administration may have clashed over policy, but McChrystal was removed from his post after he and his staff were quoted making disparaging remarks about Vice President Joe Biden and others in *Rolling Stone*.

Gen. David Petraeus' resignation had nothing to do with policy. He shared classified documents with a woman with whom he was having an affair.

### **Bush attacks Trump**

Bush sparred with Trump often, calling the billionaire "a chaos candidate." At one point, Bush ridiculed Trump's proposal to go after the families of terrorists as an unserious idea, further evidence, in Bush's view, that Trump would make an incapable commander in chief.

"Look, two months ago Donald Trump said, 'ISIS was not our fight,' " Bush said.

Right away, Trump denied that he said such a thing. But Bush's claim rates Mostly True.

The comments Bush had in mind came Sept. 28, when Trump appeared to suggest to CNN's Erin Burnett that Russia and Syria should be the countries to primarily fight ISIS.

"Let Syria and ISIS fight. Why do we care?" Trump said. "And let Russia, they're in Syria already, let them fight ISIS."

Trump made comments closer to what Bush said five months earlier, in a July 8 interview with CNN's Anderson Cooper.

"That's not our fight," he said. "That's other people's fight. That's revolutions, that's whatever you want to call it, religious wars."

### **The FBI and refugees**

Cruz didn't condemn Trump's Muslim ban as strongly as the other candidates, saying, "everyone understands why Donald has suggested what he has," given Obama's response to the attacks in California and Paris.

"President Obama and Hillary Clinton are proposing bringing tens of thousands of Syrian refugees to this country, when the head of the FBI has told Congress they cannot vet those refugees," Cruz said.

Cruz's description of FBI director James Comey's comments distorts what he has said, so we rated the claim Mostly False.

In his testimony, Comey said he could not *personally* vet every refugee admitted to the United States (which would be required under a bill put forward by House Republicans). But he never said that the government cannot vet refugees.