



Distasteful Refugee Rhetoric

What everyone's saying about Donald Trump Jr.'s tweet likening Syrian refugees to Skittles candy.

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Donald Trump Jr. ignited a controversy Monday night with a tweet of an image comparing Syrian refugees to poisoned Skittles candy. The image included his father Donald Trump's presidential campaign logo, and read, "If I had a bowl of skittles and I told you just three would kill you. Would you take a handful? That's our Syrian refugee problem."

The timing of the younger Trump's tweet was significant, given that President Barack Obama was scheduled to deliver a speech focused on refugees at the United Nations on Tuesday. The Republican nominee, who at one point proposed banning Muslims from entering the U.S. and supports "extreme vetting" for immigrants, has been extremely critical of Obama's push for the U.S. to accept more Syrian refugees. Jon Favreau, Obama's former chief speechwriter, condemned the tweet with one of his own.

Skittles parent company Wm. Wrigley Chewing Gum Co. also released a statement against the tweet's comparison.

Alex Nowrasteh at the Cato Institute examines Trump Jr.'s claims from a numerical perspective. In light of statistics on refugees and terrorism in the United States, he explains, "The Trump Jr. terrorism-Skittles meme is useful to understand terrorism risk – it just requires a picture of a bowl large enough to fit about 7,200 pounds of Skittles."

Philip Bump of The Washington Post also references the recent Cato Institute study to challenge Trump Jr.'s assertions about the risks posed by refugees and then takes on the broader message of his comparison. Bump writes, "The other big problem with Trump's analogy should be obvious by now. We've gone along with it, but depicting refugees fleeing war as inanimate candies is at best disconcerting and at worst offensive."

Putting the controversy into the context of the presidential election, Josh Marshall, editor and publisher of Talking Points Memo, tweeted, "Skittles is embodiment of whole Trump campaign: simultaneously hateful ugly and comical stupid."

The Atlantic's David A. Graham finds that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree in the Trump family. Graham says, "[Trump Jr.] is increasingly emerging as his father's id – or perhaps simply his father's emissary to the alt-right."