



'Skittles are candy; refugees are people'

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Donald Trump Jr. ruffled a few feathers Monday with a tweet that compared Syrian refugees to Skittles. "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," an image in the tweet said.

The primary problem with Trump Jr.'s tweet is best said by the Skittles brand itself.

"Skittles are candy. Refugees are people," Denise Young, the vice president of corporate affairs for Wrigley Americas, told the Hollywood Reporter.

The other problem with his analogy is a matter of statistics. If someone handed me a bowl of Skittles and said three of them would kill me, I would indeed decline to take a handful.

But that's not an accurate depiction of the threat (or lack thereof) posed by Syrian refugees. Not even close.

Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration policy analyst at the libertarian Cato Institute, looked at attacks in the United States committed by foreign-born terrorists from 1975-2015 and examined what type of visas the terrorists used to get into the country. His analysis found that three people in that 41-year time period were killed by refugees.

That shouldn't be too surprising: Whatever complaints there are about our system of vetting refugees, it is much more robust than anything we do to vet other candidates for visas or immigration.

Perhaps coincidentally, Trump Jr.'s tweet implied that three of the Skittles in a bowl would kill you. But the number of refugees who have come to the country is more than a bowlful.

It's 3.2 million, from 1975-2015. According to Nowrasteh's calculations, that makes for a one in 3.6 billion chance an American would be killed by a refugee in a terrorist attack per year.

That would have to be an insanely large bowl for three deadly Skittles to accurately reflect the minimal threat posed by refugees.

Perhaps Syrian refugees are more dangerous than the average refugee admitted into the country, one might argue. But there's no evidence to support that argument. Zero Syrian

refugees resettled in the U.S. have been arrested or removed from the country on terrorism charges.

If you offered me a bowl of 3.6 billion Skittles, or even 10,000 Skittles, and said one of the Skittles would kill me, I'd probably take a handful of Skittles. If you told me one of those Skittles would kill me, but the rest of the Skittles would see their living standards and safety vastly improve, and even contribute to our economy and our tax revenues, I would take as many Skittles as I could handle.

Why blame the good Skittles for the actions of a few bad Skittles?