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## Trump's Claim About Foreign Terrorists Is Way Off

Research shows that Trump's assessment of foreigners as the main source of terrorism in the U.S. is a great exaggeration

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“According to data provided by the Department of Justice, the vast majority of individuals convicted for terrorism-related offenses since 9/11 came here from outside of our country,” said President Donald Trump in his first speech to a joint session of Congress Tuesday. “We have seen the attacks at home — from Boston to San Bernardino to the Pentagon and yes, even the World Trade Center.”

While it's not clear which Department of Justice data Trump was referring to, the most recent government data points to the exact opposite conclusion: that the majority of terrorists in the United States have American citizenship or are American-born.

Those include the perpetrators of both the Boston bombing and the San Bernardino attack. Together with his brother, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev a Kyrgyzstan-born, naturalized American citizen, planted bombs at the Boston marathon in 2013 that killed three people and injured more than 280 others. Syed Rizwan Farook, who with his Pakistani wife, killed 14 people in the 2015 attack in San Bernardino, California, was born in Chicago.

Homeland Security Department research revealed last week showed that of 82 terrorists inspired by international terror networks, just over half were native-born citizens, the Associated Press [reported](#).

Trump's first few weeks of presidency have been characterized by chaos after he passed an executive order [banning visas to people coming from seven Muslim-majority countries](#). A report by Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration expert at the libertarian Cato Institute, has [found](#) that people from the seven countries singled out in Trump's travel ban have not been responsible for any deaths or terrorist attacks on U.S. soil between 1975 and 2015.

Trump's ban was "a response to a phantom menace," wrote Nowrasteh. "The annual chance of an American dying in a terrorist attack committed by a refugee is one in 3.6 billion."

That is not to say that a terror attack directed from abroad is out of the question. In 2009, a Christmas Day bomb plot by Umar Farouk Abdulmuttalab, trained and directed by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, failed because the explosive did not go off. The 2010 Times Square bomb plot by Faizal Shahzad, who'd trained with Pakistani Taliban, also failed because of a technical glitch.

Data gathered by the New America Foundation, a U.S.-based think tank, found that more than 80 percent of the 330 cases examined since September 11, involved American citizens.

"Despite these cases, the most likely threat continues to be lone individuals or pairs inspired by jihadist ideology without the type of extensive plotting, communication, or travel activity that would tip off the layered counterterrorism defense system," said the report by New America.

Trump's current accusation dates back to American policy in the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001, when the FBI's primary concern was with terrorists from overseas feared to be plotting attacks in the United States.

But researchers who have analyzed cases since assert that 9/11, carried out by terrorists originating mostly from Saudi Arabia – a country that was not included in Trump's visa ban – characterize the attack as an outlier. Since 2001, in fact, right-wing Americans have topped the list of perpetrators.

Of the 28 deadly homegrown terrorist attacks studied by the New America Foundation, only 10 were connected with Islamic extremism, and 18 were carried out by right-wing extremists. In Kansas on February 24, a 51-year-old white man shot to death an Indian man in an alleged hate crime after allegedly telling him: "get out of my country."

Trump finally acknowledged last week's shooting during his address to Congress on Tuesday, saying that along with a recent rise in anti-Semitic attacks, the Kansas incident "remind[s] us that while we may be a nation divided on policies, we are a country that stands united in condemning hate and evil in all its forms."

FBI and the Justice Department are presently focused on homegrown violent extremism inspired by the calls to violence from ISIS. The Justice Department has prosecuted scores of ISIS-related cases since 2014, and many of the defendants are American citizens.

But in a speech that featured ambitious promises of security with very little detail, Trump focused less on Americans and more on immigrants and the threat he believes they present. His job, as he described it on Tuesday "is not to represent the world. My job is to represent the United States of America."