

# Newsweek

## The Port Authority Bomber Is No Reason To Alter Green Card Policy

Alex Nowrasteh

December 14, 2017

On December 11, Bangladesh-born Akayed Ullah attempted a suicide bombing in New York City. Fortunately, he only injured a few people and severely burned his own torso.

Ullah entered the United States on an F4 green card for the brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens.

Some are using Ullah's failed terrorist attack to call for further restricting family-based immigration and the green card lottery.

After hearing about the failed terrorist attack, President Trump argued that "Today's terror suspect entered our country through extended-family chain migration, which is incompatible with national security ... Congress must end chain migration."

Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-VA), Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, also argued for ending chain immigration and the visa lottery program. He said ending those green card programs "would make us safer."

Neither President Trump nor Rep. Goodlatte indicated how much safer ending chain immigration or the diversity visa would make us. Since September 2016, I have been updating information on the number of people killed in a terrorist attack on U.S. soil by foreign-born terrorists according to the visa they initially used to enter the United States.

From 1975 through December 11, 2017, foreign-born terrorists who entered on a green card murdered 16 people in terrorist attacks on U.S. soil. Assuming all of those green cards were issued in the family reunification categories or through the diversity visa lottery, the chance of being murdered in a terrorist attack committed by a chain immigrant or a diversity visa recipient was about 1 in 723 million per year.

The chance of being murdered in a non-terrorist homicide during that time is about 1 in 14,394 per year.

In other words, your annual chance of being murdered in a normal homicide is about 50,220 times greater than being killed in a terrorist attack by a chain immigrant or an immigrant who entered through the diversity visa lottery.

At least six of those victims were Argentinians here on a tourist visa, leaving 10 Americans as victims.

If we take American nationalists at their word and only consider the harm of foreign-born terrorist attacks on U.S. citizens, then we would have to exclude those six victims of terrorist attacks by chain immigrants and diversity visa winners.

This crazy nationalist calculus means that the annual chance of an American or a resident of the United States being murdered in a terrorist attack on U.S. soil committed by a chain immigrant or diversity visa winner is about 1 in 1.2 *billion* per year.

Your annual chance of being murdered in a normal homicide is about 80,352 *times* greater than your chance being killed in a terrorist attack by a chain immigrant or an immigrant who entered through the diversity visa lottery.

Of the 3,037 people murdered in terrorist attacks on U.S. soil during that time, about 98 percent perished in the 9/11 attacks.

Foreign-born terrorists who entered on tourist and student visas account for 99 percent of all murders committed by foreign-born terrorists on U.S. soil since 1975. The annual chance of being murdered by any foreign-born terrorist during that time is about 1 in 3.8 million per year.

The 1 in 723 million chance a year of being murdered by a foreign-born terrorist who came in as a chain immigrant or on a diversity visa is the greatest possible risk, as I assume that all terrorists who entered on green cards did so through one of those two paths.

These numbers could change in the future and perhaps chain immigrants or those who entered on the diversity visa will become especially dangerous at some future date.

That, however, is thin support for Trump's policy proposal to remove about 400,000 green cards annually. Whatever other merits could accrue from reforming chain immigration or the diversity visa, security is not a serious one as the danger is already so low.

*Alex Nowrasteh is an immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity. He is a coauthor of the booklet Open Immigration: Yea and Nay (Encounter Broadside, 2014).*