

# Outside the Beltway

## Syrian Refugees: Separating The Truth And The Facts From Myth, Paranoia, Fear, And Xenophobia

Doug Mataconis

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I've said repeatedly in the last several days that the Obama Administration, and others, need to do a better job of providing real information as part of the ongoing debate over American policy toward refugees from Syria, and our entire refugee and asylum policy actually work **in the wake of last week's attacks in Paris**. Now that the refugees have become a political football and politicians on both sides of the political aisle, although admittedly mostly Republicans, are calling for the American refugee program to be suspended if not halted altogether, that's finally starting to happen.

First, **Alex Nowrasten from the Cato Institute has a detailed discussion of how this entire process works**. There are differences, for example, in the way that people who arrive in the United States claiming asylum under the law are treated, and the manner in which people located overseas who are applying for admission to the United States are treated before they are even allowed to come to the Continental United States. In short, Nowrasten makes it clear that the process that overseas refugee applicants go through is far more rigorous, and last longer, before the applicant(s) are brought to the United States. Nowrasten also discusses how the overseas refugee application works generally in more detail than I've seen to date, along with debunking the claim that these refugees pose a risk of being security risks to the extent Republican Presidential candidates, and the group of mostly Republican Governors opposing the Administration's plans, have claimed.

Second, Virginia political blogger Brian Schoeneman has a post at Bearing Drift, one of Virginia's top political blogs, **examining, and debunking**, many of the myths that have been spread about both the Syrian refugees and about American refugees in particular.

**A third piece can be found at The Guardian**, and the predominantly British newspaper does a very good job of going through the basics of the process that these refugees have gone through since we began processing refugee requests from Syria several years ago.

Finally, *Talking Points Memo* has **an Associated Press piece** that goes through the basics of the American program and seeks to answer many of the concerns that people have expressed over the past week, as well as long before the Paris attacks themselves.

Both pieces link to source material and other sources that provide factual support for their arguments, which is far more than can be said for the largely paranoid rants of the opponents of the Administration policy. If you have any questions or concerns about refugee policy in general,

and how it is being applied to Syrian refugees in particular, all of these posts are well worth reading, and sharing with anyone who is concerned about an issue that has quickly **become a political football here in the United States.** Also, I encourage readers to post links to other material they have run across on this issue that has proven helpful in understanding what's going on. The more information there is out there, the better. I'll try to keep up with the comments and add at least some of the suggested pieces in an update as we go along.