

Put Terrorism in Perspective

Fix Immigration with a Moratorium

BY DONALD A. COLLINS

Wonderful advice for Americans was offered in the form of two articles in the Saturday-Sunday, January 9 and 10, 2010 weekend edition of the *Wall Street Journal*, one entitled “Undressing the Terrorist Threat,” by Paul Campos, a University of Colorado professor, and the other, “Crunching the Risk Numbers,” by Nate Silver, a political forecaster.

Here’s how they introduce the present probabilities of anyone in the U.S. dying from a terrorist attack.

I’m not much of a basketball player. Middle-age, with a shaky set shot and a bad knee, I can’t hold my own in a YMCA pickup game, let alone against more organized competition. But I could definitely beat LeBron James in a game of one-on-one. The game just needs to feature two special rules: It lasts until I score, and when I score, I win.

We might have to play for a few days, and Mr. James’s point total could well be creeping toward five figures before the contest ended, but eventually the gritty gutsy competitor with a lunch-bucket work ethic (me) would subject the world’s greatest basketball player to a humiliating defeat.

Donald A. Collins is a freelance writer living in Washington, D.C., and is Co-Chair of the Federation for American Immigration Reform’s (FAIR) National Advisory Board. His views are his own.

The authors then make a telling connection with the likely incidence of terrorism:

The world’s greatest nation seems bent on subjecting itself to a similarly humiliating defeat, by playing a game that could be called Terrorball. The first two rules of Terrorball are:

- (1) The game lasts as long as there are terrorists who want to harm Americans; and
- (2) If terrorists should manage to kill or injure or seriously frighten any of us, they win.

These rules help explain the otherwise inexplicable wave of hysteria that has swept over our government in the wake of the failed attempt by a rather pathetic aspiring terrorist to blow up a plane on Christmas Day. For two weeks now, this mildly troubling but essentially minor incident has dominated headlines and airwaves, and sent politicians from the president on down scurrying to outdo each other with statements that such incidents are “unacceptable,” and that all sorts of new and better procedures will be implemented to make sure nothing like this ever happens again.

Of course if you were that brave Dutch film maker who leaped on the accused bomber, Nigerian national Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, 23, on Christmas Day as Northwest Airlines Flight 253 approached Detroit Metropolitan Airport from Amsterdam, you might not regard this as a “mildly troubling but essentially minor incident,” but the authors are absolutely correct to put this incident and, in fact, 9/11 into statistical perspective.

In his “Crunching” piece, Silver says “in the

decade of the 2000s, only about one passenger for every 25 million was killed in a terrorist attack aboard an American commercial airliner (all of the fatalities were on 9/11). By contrast, a person has about a one in 500,000 chance each year of being struck by lightning.”

While many Americans “know” the relative safety of air travel over riding in the family car, the concept of playing even a remotely dangerous game of Russian roulette still frightens most of us inordinately. Well, these authors say, in effect, “Get over it.” And I agree.

How lethal is terrorism? Silver’s “Crunching” piece sums up:

Overall, academic and governmental databases report, terrorist attacks killed a total of about 5,300 people in the most highly developed nations since the end of the Cold War

in 1991, a rate of about 300 per year. The chance of a Westerner being killed by a terrorist is exceedingly low: about one in three million each year, or the same chance an American will be killed by a tornado.

Yes, folks, these powerful pieces argue very correctly with statistics that we will be terrorized by terrorism only if we let it. Campos and Silver make a credible case designed to allay fears and encourage backbone among Americans.

To the end of suggesting more American backbone about risks including terrorism, I say, “Bravo.” After learning last summer that my alma mater’s publishing arm, the Yale University Press, cancelled the scheduled publication of an academic work because among other cartoons the book contained 12 cartoons spoofing Mohammed that appeared in a Danish newspaper four years ago. I was truly disgusted at my alma mater’s weak-spined behavior.

Apparently, Yale’s pantywaist decision, which also affects any future pictures of Mohammed, came after consultations with Muslim clerics, dip-

lomats, and counter-terrorism officials. (*New Criterion* editor Roger Kimball wrote that it may also have been made out of fear of Saudi donors.) As you recall, after the initial appearance of the cartoons, which are available on the Internet, violent Muslim protests resulted in widespread riots and more than a hundred deaths.

Even so, the authors of “Undressed” and “Crunching” might dismiss more than a hundred deaths as statistically insignificant in measuring terrorist impact. After all, they note “consider traffic accidents. All sorts of measures could be taken to reduce the current rate of automotive carnage from 120 fatalities a day—from lowering speed limits, to requiring mechanisms that make it impossible to start a car while drunk, to even more restrictive measures. Some of these

measures may well be worth taking. But the point is that at present we seem to consider 43,000 traffic deaths per year an acceptable cost to pay for driving big fast cars.” From all causes, they report that 6,700 people die daily in the U.S.

What truly was not apparent in their calculations was the growing migrations of Muslims into Europe and the U.S., which bring not only potential terrorists but also a religion which simply does not in any way square with our predominant culture. Again these authors could dismiss the raw Muslim numbers as low, compared to the killings committed by drug lords both here and in Mexico. However, just the sheer immensity of overall immigration in numbers of people of all races and creeds both legal and illegal into the U.S. represents a major source of true concern.

Bottom line: We need an immediate moratorium on all immigration until real immigration reform can be enacted, certainly not another amnesty for illegal aliens now here like the Gutierrez bill.



Freelance writer Donald A. Collins

On the subject of the War on Drugs, these “Undressed” authors make a lot of sense to me:

Yet not treating Americans as adults has costs. For instance, it became the official policy of our federal government to try to make America ‘a drug-free nation’ 25 years ago. After spending hundreds of billions of dollars and imprisoning millions of people, it’s slowly beginning to become possible for some politicians to admit that fighting a necessarily endless drug war in pursuit of an impossible goal might be a bad idea. How long will it take to admit that an endless war on terror, dedicated to making America a terror-free nation, is equally nonsensical?

fanatic criminals need not grant them the attention they crave. Continuing to play Terrorball, on the other hand, guarantees that the terrorists will always win, since it places the bar for what counts as success for them practically on the ground.

I have earlier argued (in my recent VDARE.com National ID card piece) that the better use of technology to screen folks entering our places of public transport would help. However, for example, if explosives can be strapped onto a person in an NYC apartment, that suicide bomber can go out undetected into the street and board a bus and blow it and its passengers to smithereens. The same thing could be repeated again and again.

The ultimate irony in our present preoccupation with terrorism may be its potential positive effect on the urgent need for immigration reform. The huge wave of immigration which has swept 50 million or more immigrants and their offspring into the U.S. since the major change in U.S. immigration law in 1965 has provided no measurable benefits and increased our cost of living by every dimension.

In the face of utterly destructive new attempts at new legislation before the Democratic Congress to

legalize 12 million or more aliens here illegally, we constantly fail to assess real opportunities such as withdrawing from dangerous wars which create more terrorists.

Our national leaders have bad perception problems. In a January 11 NewsMax story, 2008 presidential candidate and former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani declared that

[T]he Fort Hood shootings and the Christmas Day bombing incident show Obama and his advisers have been “fundamentally wrong” in their approach to the war on terror. Giuliani, who was New York’s



We really need to fix this stupid situation, also gaining tax revenues in the process.

So what should we do about this threat, which clearly has been manifested in many terrorist acts in Europe, the U.S., and elsewhere with the prospect of many more to come? The “Undressed” authors again persuasively argue that

A little intelligence and a few drops of courage remind us that life is full of risk, and that of all the risks we confront in America every day, terrorism is a very minor one. Taking prudent steps to reasonably minimize the tiny threat we face from a few

mayor when terrorists struck on Sept. 11, 2001, told MSNBC's "Morning Joe" viewers that the president has tried to let "political correctness trump reality." Giuliani said the Obama administration came into power with the belief that President George W. Bush's response to the 9/11 attacks was unnecessarily severe, and had alienated America's potential allies abroad.

"They'd gone too far, Bush had overreacted, we make the war on terror worse if we emphasize it too much — this is what they truly believed," Giuliani said. "But they were fundamentally wrong.

I wish he would turn his attention to real immigration reform.

While great danger from the terrorists (and with drug lords) lies in our preoccupation and fear which these authors suggest, a greater threat keeps moving relentlessly forward on the backs of the

businesses and others whose greedy rush for cheap labor keeps logic, fairness, and indeed the welfare of our nation hostage to real reform of our broken immigration system.

What better time to initiate an immigration reform than this prolonged economic crisis, which many see as lasting for years? We have always needed to carefully select entrants of all races and countries before they are allowed to become citizens, but based on national need, not done as we have since 1965. Sadly we stopped doing that long ago. Now, we need a full-stop moratorium on immigration. More pitiful, in this great nation, the alleged No. 1 Super Power, with the leadership we now have, the chances of enacting this needed time-out are slight.

If immigration laws that truly benefit our country had long ago been passed by a Congress not bought and paid for by our military industrial complex (how about in 1986?), perhaps we would not be in such desperate straits, economically, environmentally, and with our national security. ■

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