

FINAL WORD ↪ BY MARNI SOUPCOFF

Trump Takes ‘A Pause’

On January 27th, new President Donald Trump issued an order to, as he put it, “protect the American people from terrorist attacks by foreign nationals admitted to the United States.” Foreign nationals were behind the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, the order reminded us, and so the president was now banning—for 90 days—immigration from seven majority-Muslim countries, not to mention banning entry for virtually all refugees for several months, in order for the U.S. government to establish new “extreme vetting” procedures.

Somehow left unsaid—by the order; commentators were all over it—was the fact that *not one* of the 9/11 hijackers was a refugee or came from one of the seven countries singled out by the order. Most of the terrorists came from Saudi Arabia. The rest were from Egypt, Lebanon, or the United Arab Emirates. All of them would be just as free to enter the United States today as they were before the order.

In fact, no radicalized Muslim from any of the countries on the order’s list has taken an American life after September 11, 2001, either. It’s almost as if the order has been magically protecting Americans for years *before it was issued*. Like a tremendous time-traveling talisman! Either that or what the United States was already doing to screen immigrants from those countries was working fine. It’s hard to say.

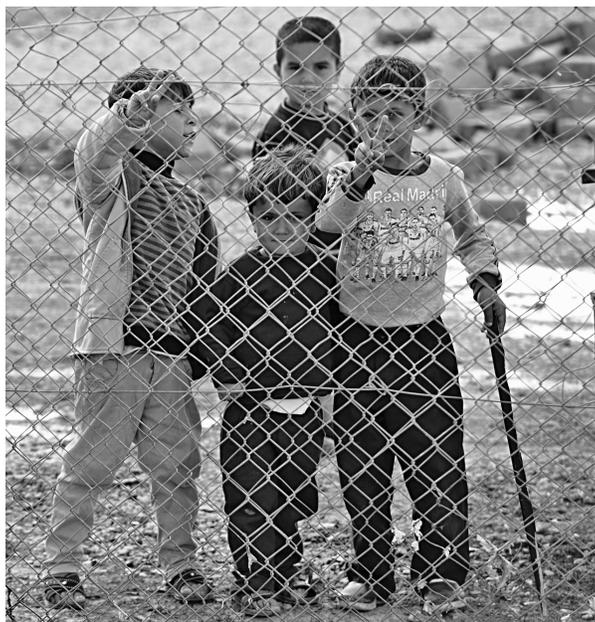
Either way, I should probably mention here that the countries whose nationals the order banned from entering the United States were Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Iran, Somalia, Libya, and Yemen. You should thank me for this information because it took a little detec-

tive work, a lot of chaos, and a fact sheet from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security before the countries in question became clear. You see, the order didn’t actually identify the countries, but instead indicated they were countries subject to Section 217(a)(12) of the Immigration and Naturalization Act (INA). Perhaps President Trump did this purposely to inflict on terrorists the peculiarly exquisite torture of reading through pages of U.S. civil code. Or maybe he just wanted to keep the fake media guessing.

Whatever its motivation, the order has had some problems.

It doesn’t go into details about what kind of extra scrutiny people seeking asylum in the United States should undergo. (This is, of course, presuming that persecuted people whose lives are in grave danger in their homelands will actually be allowed to enter the United States at some point in the future, which may be optimistic.)

The order calls upon the secretary of state, secretary of homeland security, and the director of national intelligence to get together and figure out “what additional procedures should be taken to ensure that those approved for refugee admission do not pose a threat to the security and welfare of the United States.”



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Having three people take on this task may seem like overkill. But then, inventing new procedures isn’t as easy as it sounds. Refugees trying to settle in the United States already go through a seven-step vetting process that can take a couple years and involves screening by—among others—the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the National Counterterrorism Center, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Terrorist Screening Center. Beyond requiring the refugees to also satisfy an El Al Airlines check-in counter attendant that they’re safe enough to board a flight, I’m not sure what else can be done.

Foreign nationals, it turns out, can be murderous terrorists no matter where they come from and what their religion. And sometimes all the screening in the world won’t be able to predict it. Worse, since being a murderous terrorist has no citizenship requirements, Americans themselves are, sadly, perfectly capable of killing and intimidating other Americans in the pursuit of a political aim. So it’s unclear how this order will make the United States safer.

Ironically, as the Cato Institute’s David Bier has pointed out, the order could make the nation *more vulnerable* to attack. It will strand would-be refugees in majority Muslim countries, where they can be more easily radicalized and/or extorted by the Islamic State, instead of allowing them to settle in the United States, where there’s a greater chance they will adopt and spread a moderate, liberal Islam (to the extent they are religious at all).

Of course, to expect the United States to solve all of the world’s problems would be naive and unrealistic. America is not Superman. But to expect the nation to offer shelter to people being violently and brutally persecuted in their home nations—to keep the doors open to such people (albeit with suitable screens) rather than slamming them shut—well, that doesn’t seem guileless. It seems like the human thing to do. R