

*Zero Tolerance or Zero Thought?
How Our Obsession with Safety
Threatens Individual Liberty*

Christopher A. Preble
Cato Institute

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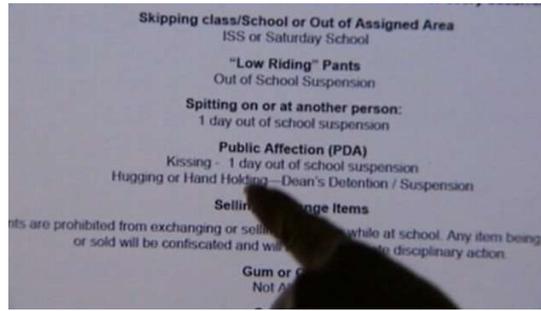
“It’s a fork. It’s a spoon. It’s a...weapon?”

6-year old Zachary Christie, suspended for “Taking a camping utensil that can serve as a knife, fork and spoon to school....School officials concluded that he had violated their zero-tolerance policy on weapons.”



“Strict no-hugging policy.”

14-year old Nick Martinez was suspended for violating his Florida school’s prohibition on public displays of affection



“Put in detention for sharing his school lunch.”

Kyle Bradford, 13, shared his chicken burrito with a friend who didn’t like the cheese sandwich he was given by the cafeteria...



What do these have in common?

- They take an unreasonable approach to an actual problem
- They are all dealing with children

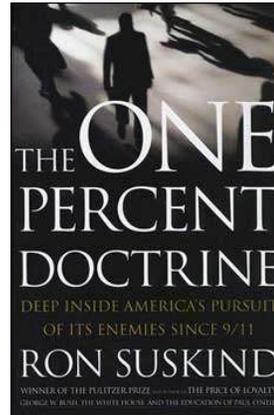
What does zero tolerance do, generally?

- It is unreasonable
- It treats adults as children

What Does This Have to Do with Terrorism?

In *The One Percent Doctrine*, author Ron Suskind quoted Vice President Dick Cheney:

- “If there's a 1% chance that Pakistani scientists are helping al-Qaeda build or develop a nuclear weapon, we have to treat it as a certainty...”
- It has since been expanded to all terrorism risk

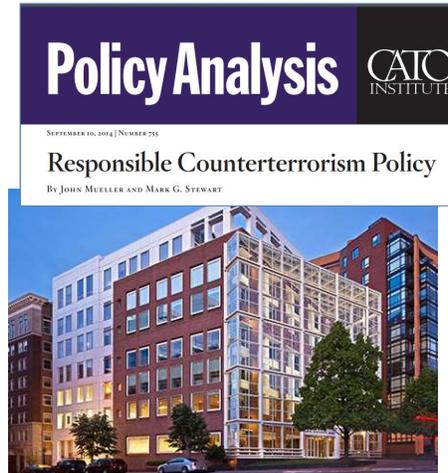


What Does This Have to Do with Terrorism?

- Apply this concept of “zero-tolerance” to counterterrorism screening at airports and for refugees fleeing to the West from war zones
- Would it not be prudent to run hardheaded risk/cost analysis when assessing the efficacy of these specific homeland security policies?

“Responsible Counterterrorism Policy”

- John Mueller and Mark Stewart write: “Terrorism is a hazard to human life, and it should be dealt with in a manner similar to that applied to other hazards...”
- What is the threat level, and what do we spend on efforts attempting to negate it?



Mueller and Stewart

- The U.S. spends roughly \$100 billion annually to deter and disrupt domestic terror (\$10 billion on airline security alone)
- Since 9/11, Islamist-related terrorism has killed roughly 6 Americans per year, a figure dwarfed by the roughly 400 Americans killed annually by bathtubs

“How much should we be willing to pay for a small reduction in probabilities that are already extremely low?”

- “In general, risks are deemed unacceptable if the annual fatality risk is higher than 1 in 10,000...They are deemed acceptable if the annual fatality risk is lower than 1 in 700,000...”
- The risk of an individual perishing on an airliner is about 1 in 90 million

“How much should we be willing to pay for a small reduction in probabilities that are already extremely low?”

- In fact, the risk of a person getting cancer from a security scanner at an airport is higher (1 in 60 million) than the risk of a plane being downed by a terrorist
- “...diverting a few percent of the nearly \$10 billion per year spent on airline security could save many lives at a fraction of the cost if it were spent instead on bicycle helmets for children...”

What about the risk that refugees will commit terrorist acts?

- From a study by Cato's Alex Nowrasteh: The chance of an American being killed by a refugee in a terrorist attack comes in at an astronomical 1 in 3.64 billion from 1975-2015



Refugees as terrorists?

- “Of the 3,252,493 refugees admitted [to the U.S.] from 1975-2015, 20 were terrorists... 0.00062 percent of the total.”
- Of these 20 terrorists, 3 were successful
- Their attacks killed a total of 3 people

Risk/Cost Assessment

- Considering the costs associated with an immigration moratorium, such a ban would have to prevent 15,267 deaths per year in order to break even.
- “That number is 3,294 times as great as the average annual number of terrorists deaths caused by immigrants (excluding tourists) and more than five times as great as all of the murders committed by all foreign-born terrorists (including tourists) from 1975-2015.”

Is the Risk Higher in Europe?

- In Belgium, France, Sweden, Germany, and the United Kingdom, combined, the odds of dying in a terrorist attack from 2001-2017 were approximately 1 in 8.3 million per year
- Germany and Sweden, despite each letting in large numbers of refugees, had the two lowest risks of terror deaths from 2001-2017 at 1 in 47,429,484 and 1 in 15,858,016, respectively
- Furthermore, many of Europe’s deadliest attacks were perpetrated by Europeans

Paris, November 2015

- Of the 11 men directly involved in the atrocities, 9 were born and raised in either Belgium or France



<http://www.bfmtv.com/mediaplayer/video/operation-a-molenbeek-salah-abdeslam-a-ete-arrete-12-778609.html>

Brussels, March 2016

- Linked with the Paris attacks; the same small ISIS/Daesh “cell” was responsible for both. Every individual involved hailed from Belgium.



Manchester, May 2017

- Salman Abedi, the sole suicide bomber responsible for the atrocity, was born and raised in Manchester



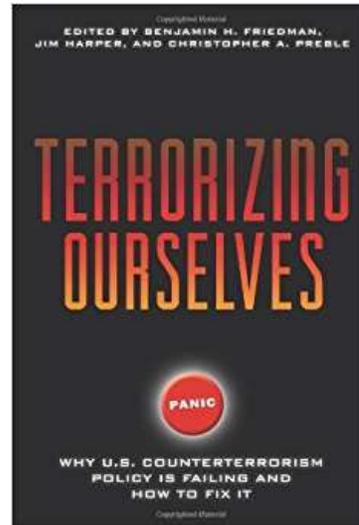
And in the United States... Orlando, June 2016

- Omar Mateen was not a refugee or an immigrant. He was born and raised in the United States



Terrorizing Ourselves

- Terrorism poses a relatively miniscule, and manageable, threat to advanced societies
- Inflating or overreacting to the threat projects strength on jihadists that they don't have
- Yet Western policy-makers have been prone to overreaction



Overreaction

Overreactions can include the following:

- trying to kill suspected terrorists in large-scale, open-ended military engagements,
- eroding valuable civil liberties at home; and
- indefinite troop deployments in many major European cities



Toward a Prudent Policy

- Develop a coordinated approach to fighting terrorism by first placing the threat in its proper context
- Cease predominantly military campaigns that often produce more harm than benefits
- Rely on military force in rare instances when the threat is imminent and collateral damage can be limited
- Continue to monitor and disrupt plots through legal means
- Delegitimize extremists' propaganda by upholding Western values of tolerance, pluralism, and respect for individual liberty

FBI Uncovers Al-Qaeda Plot To Just Sit Back And Enjoy Collapse Of United States

NEWS · Terrorism · World · Government · Terror · Al-Qaeda · News · ISSUE 50-15 · Apr 15, 2014



A recent al-Qaeda video shows a militant training to carry out his mission of lying back and watching America's status as a superpower erode.

To Conclude

- “All that we have to do is to send two mujahedeen to the furthest point east to raise a piece of cloth on which is written ‘al Qaeda,’ in order to make generals race there to cause America to suffer human, economic, and political losses.”
- Osama Bin Laden describing his desire to bleed America to the point of bankruptcy

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To Conclude

- “Proclaiming “this was ISIS!”—when it was just punks inspired by the group—grafts the perception of worldwide power onto the organization, making it seem stronger than it actually is, which markets it as even more attractive to young Muslims seeking adventure and attention.”
- From *Newsweek* “Jihadi Cool”

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Zero Tolerance for Stupid Policy

- Terrorism poses a threat to human life
- It is not an existential threat to all life on earth, or portend an end to civilization
- We should act like adults, and differentiate serious threats from marginal ones
- We should develop policies that mitigate the actual danger, not overreactions that do the terrorists' work for them

Thank You

Christopher A. Preble
Cato Institute
cpreble@cato.org
@capreble