

Controlling irrational fears after 9 11



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The premise for the author's argument is that America's high level of panic after 9/11 was actually excessive in relation to the number of deaths. The conclusion is that Americans actually aided the success of the terrorists by giving in to their desire to shake us up so badly. The author's second premise is that our country's misguided response to 9/11 was to start throwing money around in the hope of preventing further attacks. The conclusion is that the random and inefficient way in which we spent would have little effect in the war against terror. 1. The first argument's premises do validate the conclusion.

The author supports his claim with the statistics on other types of causes of death, and by commenting on the milder way we react to them. The author has a difficult time supporting, and ultimately doesn't prove, his second argument. To support the argument he only focuses on general opinions and anecdotes instead of the many details he provided for the first argument. He discusses how annoying the new antiterrorism procedures are and how much money we've wasted on them, but can't document that they are really useless. 2. The first argument is inductively strong. The author's contention is true: if we agree that America overreacted to 9/11, then it probable that, unfortunately, we did help the terrorists succeed in frightening us to an irrational level.

The second argument is much flimsier than the author's first, and is invalid and weak. No statistics or explanations are given to prove that the money spent right after 9/11 s has not helped prevent further attacks. Actually the argument would be almost impossible to prove, for anyone, because it's so difficult to prove that just because you lock the door of your house, that's the

reason you are never robbed. It might be that the money you spent on a good lock helps, or it could be that your neighborhood watch prevents thefts, or that a robber lives next door and wouldn't want to draw attention by robbing someone close to home! 3. The author's premise in the first argument is plausibly true if you're willing to concede that the description of being excessively panicked is something that can be judged. One way to do this is to compare the level of panic to the another significant event, as the author does with Pearl Harbor. One error the author does make though is trying to 'prove' we overreacted by saying that because more people die in car crashes, we should be more afraid of that.

Actually, the reason 9/11 felt worse than other types of tragedies was because it was intentionally inflicted on us which makes it much more horrific than any accidental death. The author's second premise, that we spend money irrationally and ineffectively to prevent further 9/11 style attacks is difficult to prove, especially since the author doesn't do anything to actually substantiate the claim, which is a major weakness of the article. Although it's easy to show that America was shaken by 9/11, to actually prove that money spent on antiterrorism was a waste would be almost impossible.