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## Trends. The Naked and the Dead: Kosovar Statistics

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An assertion by United States Senator Robert C. Byrd that a 78-day air assault by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization halted Serbian attacks on Kosovar Albanians is incorrect--at least according to author Norman Mailer. Instead, Mr. Mailer claims that the assault initiated the attacks.

Mr. Mailer bases his opinion on the rationale that 25,000 Kosovar Albanians were coerced across adjacent borders in the two years before the assault, while 75,000 more were coerced across after the assault began. Mr. Mailer even derives differential rates of coercion of 40 Kosovar Albanians per day before the assault began and 9,000 per day after the assault began.

What Mr. Mailer does not address is whether the Kosovar Albanians would have been coerced to cross borders anyway, at faster, slower, or similar rates. He also does not address the basic issue of the relationship between statistical correlation and causality.

It seems as if Mr. Mailer eschews the power of narrative thinking for the acontextual perspective of the political polemicist--a naked ploy that disrespects the dead. (See Byrd, R. C. (March 20, 2000). Europe's turn to keep the peace. *The New York Times*, p. A24; Hilton, D.J. (1998). Causal judgment and explanation. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 15, 22-34; Mailer, N. (March 22, 2000). Unresolved in Kosovo, a year later. *The New York Times*, p. A28; Weber, E. (1998). The practical functions and epistemology of causal beliefs. *Communication & Cognition*, 31, 297-324; White, P.S. (1999). Toward a causal realist account of causal understanding. *American Journal of Psychology*, 112, 605-642.) (Keywords: Albania, Attacks, Kosovo, NATO, Norman Mailer, Robert C. Byrd, Serbia.)