



America's Voices on Border Security

Experts Agree that Border Security “is a matter of considerable importance” on our Northern Border

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- K. Jack Riley, Director, Homeland Security Center,
RAND Corporation

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The House Committee on Homeland Security’s Subcommittee on Economic Security, Infrastructure Protection, and Cybersecurity and the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Science, and Technology held a hearing yesterday taking a look at the United States’ northern border. The hearing allowed Members to evaluate the risk of potential terrorists infiltrating the United States from Canada, and assessed the proper response for securing our borders against such a threat without damaging the flow of commerce.

At the hearing, members heard from two panels of experts. Excerpts from some of the panel members’ testimonies are below:

K. Jack Riley

**Director, Homeland Security Center
RAND Corporation**

“There are few homeland security challenges as daunting—and urgent—as securing the nation’s borders. Every day, nearly 20,000 cargo containers enter U.S. ports and every year, nearly 90 million passengers land at the more than 100 international airports scattered across the country. Add to the sea and air borders the thousands of miles of land borders shared with Canada and Mexico and the importance of those land borders to trade and tourism, and the magnitude of the challenge becomes abundantly clear.”

“On December 14, 1999, Ahmed Ressam was captured near the U.S.-Canadian border by sharp-eyed border security personnel. Ressam, trained in terrorist attack methods, was headed to Los Angeles with plans to detonate multiple bombs simultaneously at Los Angeles International Airport. His intent to conduct the attack on New Year’s Eve 1999 earned him the sobriquet “the millennium bomber.” As lessons in border security go, it is hard to point to one that more clearly illustrates the complexities of border control than the Ahmed Ressam case.”

“Where Ahmed Ressam failed to exploit the borders in his disrupted effort of 1999, the 9/11 terrorists succeeded. The 9/11 hijackers exploited many of the same vulnerabilities that Ressam attempted to exploit, including use of fraudulent travel documents and capitalizing on the laxity in our detention and deportation capabilities.”

“As documented by the 9/11 Commission, all of the 9/11 terrorists had at least one form of acceptable identification, such as a passport issued by a foreign country or a U.S. driver’s license. In many cases, these documents were obtained fraudulently. Nevertheless, their possession of these documents facilitated their travel into and out of the United States and facilitated their movement around the United States. Their ability to acquire fraudulent documents made it more difficult to locate and deport those 9/11 hijackers who had overstayed their visas. Indeed, at any given moment, more than 400,000 individuals in the United States are living here in violation of lawful deportation orders. In addition to the roughly half-million individuals lawfully adjudicated for deportation, an estimated 10 million simply entered the United States illegally without any paperwork. . . . The high volume of illegal overstays in and illegal entries into the United States constitutes a substantial security risk in several ways.”

Ambassador Martin Collacott

Senior Fellow

The Fraser Institute

“Canada has the highest rate of immigration in the world in relation to the size of its population –more than twice that of the United States.”

“According to Statistics Canada, the number of [minority neighborhoods consisting largely of recent immigrants] increased from six in 1981 to 254 in 2001. Such a milieu can, in some cases, provide a relatively benign environment for

individuals with extremist views to meet and form terrorist cells – as happened in the case of the millennium bomber, Ahmed Ressam, who had no difficulty making connections with others who held radical views among the concentrations of recent arrivals in Montreal from North African and Middle Eastern countries.”

“The very rapid increase in size of the Canadian Muslim population – from 100,000 in 1980 to 750,000 in 2005 combined with the importation of large numbers of radical mosque leaders from abroad also presents challenges.”

“In the case of Canada, in my opinion, there has been a tendency – although with some notable exceptions - to give priority to the rights of individuals over national security considerations. In 2003, for example, it was revealed that Ottawa had lost track of 59 war criminals who were under deportation orders (a number that subsequently rose to 125). When security authorities asked that they be provided with names, pictures, and birthdates to facilitate the apprehension of these individuals, the federal minister of immigration declined to release details on the basis, that according to Canada’s privacy act, such a release would infringe on the right to privacy of those being sought.”

“Another example of our perhaps going too far in protecting the rights of individuals is illustrated by the case of Mohammad Issa Mohammad. Mohammad was ordered deported from Canada in 1988 after it was discovered that he was a convicted terrorist who had been admitted under a false identity. In order to delay removal, he lodged a claim to remain in Canada as a refugee. While it was rejected, his status as a failed refugee claimant entitled him to lodge various appeals and ask for reviews of his case. He is now in his eighteenth year of appeals and reviews and is arguing before a federal court that sending him back to his country of origin would constitute “cruel and unusual” punishment since public health care facilities there were not as good as those to which he has access in Canada.”

“I realize that you in the United States have very strong concerns about security in the face of threats from terrorism – probably stronger than in Canada – which is hardly surprising given that you were the targets of 9/11 as well as a good many other major attacks in various parts of the world. I should mention in this regard that convincing Canadians that it is important to strengthen our borders – primarily to strengthen our own security but also to reassure the United States that it is not threatened by individuals from our side – can at times be made more difficult when skeptics in Canada ask why Americans are so concerned

about security along our border when many Americans appear to be ambivalent about bringing an end to the massive flow of illegals across your southern border. It would, therefore, help people like myself, who are trying to convey the message to Canadians that border security is a matter of considerable importance, if the United States demonstrated clearly its determination to exercise full control over its border with Mexico.”

David B. Harris

**Director, International and Terrorist Intelligence Program
INSIGNIS Strategic Research Inc.**

“My previous pre- and post-9/11 statements before Congressional bodies cautioned that much would have to be done to fight Canada’s drift into terror-haven status. “

“Since coming to power in January 2006, the minority Conservative Government of Stephen Harper has committed itself to confronting those who would impose terrorist warfare and subversion upon Canadian democracy and Canada’s liberal-pluralist allies.”

“(T)he eighteenth person was last week detained in connection with an alleged largely-homegrown Toronto-area Islamic terrorist ring accused of preparing mass-casualty attacks. Accusations claim that those concerned – all of them Canadian residents, and most of them Canadian citizens – sought to use three times the explosives detonated in Timothy McVeigh’s 1995 Oklahoma City outrage. Meanwhile, Crown prosecutors prepare their case for the unrelated January 2007 trial of Momin Khawaja, a young Canadian Muslim who worked for a time with our Department of Foreign Affairs, and is now claimed to have had a role in British terror-cell preparations.”

“The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) director some years ago first alerted us to the presence of fifty terror organizations in Canada, the second-highest number in any country after the United States, itself. In June, the Deputy Director Operations of Canada’s intelligence service warned a Canadian Senate subcommittee that Canadian residents include those who are “graduates of terrorist training camps and campaigns, including experienced combatants from conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya and elsewhere.” He offered that “Canadian citizens or residents have been implicated in terrorist attacks and conspiracies elsewhere in the world,” some having “been involved in plots

against targets in the United States, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Singapore, Pakistan and other countries.””

“In conclusion, let me say that Canada appears not to be altogether the same country that it was at the end of 2005. Recent developments suggest that the new Canadian administration, despite its minority status, has been firm in deciding that North American security and a principled foreign policy are among its highest priorities.”

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