

# Drug Smuggling, Illegal Immigration, Terrorism

Statement by Lamar Smith

*[Lamar Smith (R-TX) gave this statement on April 14, 1999 to begin hearings on the issues of drug smuggling, illegal immigration and terrorism as they impact the northern border of the United States. He chairs the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims of the House Judiciary Committee.]*

In recent years, there have been an increasing number of reports highlighting the lack of federal resources on the Northern Border and the resulting threat to U.S. national security and community safety.

Three threats need to be addressed — drug smuggling, illegal immigration, and terrorism. All these threats are exacerbated by the lack of resources on the Northern Border. The Border Patrol currently has only 289 agents along the 3,500 mile Northern Border.

It is obvious that if we don't know who comes into our country, we don't know what comes into our country, like illegal drugs. A porous border is open invitation for illegal drug smugglers and for terrorists and their goal of mass destruction.

Drug smuggling at the Northern Border is a significant concern. Numerous articles have documented the alarming rise in the smuggling of a type of highly potent marijuana, grown indoors in British Columbia. This marijuana is five times as potent as regular marijuana and is more likely to increase drug addiction.

A 1998 report from the National Drug Intelligence Center "warned that marijuana exports from Canada to the U.S. are becoming 'a significant problem.'" Also disturbing to Americans and Canadians is that U.S.-Canada drug enforcement officials have reported that drug smugglers in the U.S. are exchanging British Columbia marijuana pound-for-pound for cocaine, which "has begun fueling a fledgling crack cocaine trade north of the border."

U.S. officials believe that the vast majority of drug smugglers make their way into the United States without

detection:

"If we're getting 1 to 2 percent at the border, we're being lucky," said Tom Kelly, who worked as resident agent in charge of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency at Blaine (Washington) until earlier this month. Gene Kerven, port director for U.S. Customs, puts it at less than 5 percent.

There have been reports of drug smuggling at other points along the Northern Border as well. On June 8, 1998, United Press International reported that a joint

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investigation between U.S. and Canadian law enforcement officials culminated in the arrest of 18 individuals (14 Canadians and 4 Americans) and the seizure of \$ 3.7 million worth of drugs.

What about illegal immigration? In Fiscal Year 1998, less than 300 agents apprehended 12,146 aliens attempting illegal entry. The question is, how many did they miss?

So few agents cannot monitor a border thousands of miles long 24 hours every day. The Border Patrol knows that the drug and alien smugglers monitor their shifts and simply wait until they go off duty.

The crackdown on illegal drugs and immigration along our Southern Border has caused illegal aliens to enter from the North. A former Acting Associate Commissioner for Enforcement stated that "as Southwest border enforcement continues to stiffen and the price charged for smuggling escalates, many chose the alternative of illegally entering the U.S. from Canada." Drug and illegal alien smugglers and terrorists are going to enter at the least secure point of entry.

It may surprise many people to learn that Mexican nationals can enter Canada without visas. So it is cheaper

Americans will benefit from better border security. The United States and Canada already have engaged in cooperative efforts to combat alien smuggling and to share intelligence information regarding drug smugglers and terrorists.

Both countries have much to gain by supporting joint and individual efforts to reduce the threats to both Americans and Canadians. **TSC**

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for them to fly to Canada and walk across the Northern Border than to have smugglers bring them across the Southern Border.

The number of Asian nationals being smuggled into the U.S. also is increasing. Regarding third country nationals, Canadians themselves make up the fourth largest group of illegal aliens in the U.S.

One of the most dangerous threats to our national security is the risk of a terrorist crossing our Northern Border undetected. This happened in 1997 when Gazi Ibrahim Abu Mezer crossed the Northern Border and attempted to blow up the New York subway system.

In this case, the terrorist was caught before the crime was carried out. Next time, we may not be so fortunate. Since 1995, there have been at least thirteen other cases of terrorists crossing the border from Canada, two in Blaine, Washington, alone.

In 1998, the Director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) acknowledged the presence of 50 terrorist organizations in Canada and outlined their activities: fund-raising in aid of terrorism; smuggling; providing logistical support for terrorist acts and providing transit to and from the United States, "one of the world's pre-eminent terrorist targets."

Drug smugglers, terrorists and illegal aliens travel both ways across the border. Canadians as well as