

An important influence on the public perception of U.S. immigration policy is the popular notion that newcomers are upstanding and hard-working persons who are simply asking for a chance in the land of opportunity. Unfortunately, borders loosely open to immigrants with benign aspirations are equally open to criminals who have a far different intent. An abridged version of the following essay appears as a chapter in the forthcoming book, The Winds of Change: A New Look at U.S. Immigration Policy, by John Tanton and Wayne Lutton.

Immigration and Crime

By John Tanton and Wayne Lutton

"The hard evidence is that criminal aliens are committing serious crimes, leaving and re-entering the justice system."

— Michael D. Antonovich
Board of Supervisors
Los Angeles County
May 14, 1992

Criminal activities committed by aliens have escalated dramatically. Aliens are crowding local, state, and federal jails across the country. The U.S. Bureau of Prisons reports that more than 20 percent of federal inmates are non-U.S. citizens, from over 120 countries. Half were convicted on drug offenses and most are subject to deportation.

"If we think the 20 percent figure is high, what is worse is that seven out of eight [criminal] aliens are either released or given probation and never serve time in prison," explained Representative Lamar Smith (R-Texas), a member of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law.

For the U.S. population as a whole, the incarceration rate in federal and state prisons is 233 per 100,000 persons. Among illegal aliens, the incarceration rate is three times the U.S. average. Since 1980 there has been a 600 percent increase in alien inmates, principally for drug-related offenses. Over the past five years, an average of more than 72,000 aliens have been arrested annually on drug charges.

These statistics should not imply that all or most immigrants are law-breakers. But under current immigration laws and procedures, frighteningly large numbers of newcomers see crime as their avenue to the American dream.

Foreign Crime Syndicates Target U.S.

The FBI warns that international crime and terrorist organizations have placed America under siege. INS spokesman Gary Renick noted that crime bosses in such places as Colombia, Mexico, Nigeria, South Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong view the U.S. as an especially inviting "land of opportunity."

According to the INS, organized criminals of each nationality seem to specialize: Colombians in cocaine; Mexicans in marijuana, alien smuggling, and auto theft; Nigerians in heroin, student-loan and credit-card fraud [see David Simcox's essay on page 168]; Chinese in heroin, and alien smuggling; South Koreans in prostitution; Russians in drugs and insurance-fraud; Jamaicans in cocaine.

Since the mid-1980s, major crime operations have not only come to be directed by foreign nationals, but staffed by them as well, instead of employing American agents. An INS report titled, *The Newest Criminals: The Emergence of Non-Traditional Organized Ethnic Crime Groups and INS's Role in Combating Them*, says that many of the ethnic criminal organizations exist in their native countries and simply expand into the United States. Said David Leroy, chief of domestic intelligence for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, "Ethnic gangs appear to be the new trend in crime."

Criminal activities in the U.S. run by Third World natives can be traced back to the Immigration Act of 1965 and failure to control illegal immigration. The social effects of the 1965 Act were not felt immediately. Only after a "critical mass" of foreign colonists arrived here, did law enforcement agencies begin to learn about the presence of criminal elements

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among the new immigrants. As *U.S. News & World Report* conceded, "it is startling the degree to which the clout of newer ethnic gangs is reflective of immigration trends."

Asian Criminal Organizations ***The Triads***

The Triads date back to the 17th century, when patriotic Han Chinese founded secret societies to fight the foreign Manchu invaders and restore the Ming dynasty. By the end of the 19th century, many Triads had largely abandoned their political idealism and transformed themselves into sophisticated criminal enterprises. Leading politicians, including Dr. Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, found it expedient to trade favors with the powerful Triads, whose opportunities for profits improved after the Manchus were finally overthrown in 1911.

Triads have been active in Hong Kong since 1842. During World War II, they often cooperated with the Japanese. In time, they came to control the dockyards, and were able to penetrate other labor markets. After Mao-Tse-Tung seized power on the mainland in 1949, other Triads moved to Macao (the Portuguese colony near Hong Kong that comes under the authority of Beijing in 1999), and Taiwan. Today, most Triads are based in Hong Kong and Taiwan, with branches operating in other parts of Asia, Europe, Canada, and the United States. According to the Royal Hong Kong Police Force, approximately 50 Triad societies are active there, with a combined membership of some 300,000. One society, the 14 K Triad, has nearly 40,000 members. The State of California Attorney General's Office reports that the Wo Hop To Triad, which is one of the most active Triads in California, has an active membership of 28,000.

Alien smuggling has become an important part of Triad work. *The Washington Post* reported on Feb. 9, 1993 that more than 60 international routes are used to illegally bring 100,000 Chinese nationals into the U.S. each year [and additional tens of thousands into Canada and Australia as well]. The individuals pay huge fees to the professional smugglers, often ranging from \$25,000 to \$50,000, for this "service." Those who are unable to pay in advance settle the balance of their debt by becoming indentured to Triad-controlled businesses over here, especially garment sweatshops, prostitution rings, gambling operations, and drug dealing.

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Writing in *The Christian Science Monitor*, December 24, 1991, Ann Scott Tyson revealed that, "The Chinese groups tend to specialize in certain kinds of crime in big cities. Fujianese criminals in New York tend to be involved in violent crime. Cantonese from China's Guangdong Province operate vice and extortion rackets in San Francisco, and Taiwanese crime groups are active in money laundering and white collar crime in Los Angeles and Houston."

The Triads' most important source of wealth derives from their control of the major supplies of heroin. The hilly area bordering Burma, Laos, and Thailand, known as the "Golden Triangle," is where over 70 percent of the world's opium is grown. As investigator Gerald Posner points out in his study of the Triads, *Warlords of Crime*, "Without heroin they are just another group of criminals. With heroin they have a potential for profit unmatched in the annals of organized crime."

The FBI reports that Asian youth gangs, notably Vietnamese "refugees" and their American-born offspring, employed as "street muscle" by the Triads, operate in the U.S. through Tongs. (The word "Tong," derived from "Town Hall," describes fronts that often publicly engage in charitable work in Chinese communities). These Asian syndicates pose special problems for law enforcement, since their members are bound to secrecy, and because the almost insurmountable barriers of language, dialect, and culture make prosecution difficult in the extreme — including reading arrestees their Miranda rights, not just in the proper language, but in the correct dialect!

Federal officials say that New York City has become the central hub for Chinese criminal operations that extend to Boston, Philadelphia, Dallas, Houston, and Portland. San Francisco and Los Angeles are their West Coast headquarters.

The forthcoming transfer of control of Hong Kong to Communist China in 1997 has spurred a flight from the colony. Among those seeking refuge elsewhere are the Triads, whose destinations of preference are the United States, Canada, and Australia. Some Triad chiefs, known as "dragon heads," are suspected of trying to take advantage of the new visa category that permits immigration by individuals who promise to invest \$1 million in the U.S.

The Wah Ching

The Wah Ching is a one-time street gang that has evolved into a sophisticated organized crime group. With international ties to Hong Kong and Taiwan Triads, its U.S. base of operations is San Francisco, with powerful factions working out of other California cities, including Monterey Park, Los Angeles, and Oakland.

Like the Triads, the Wah Ching is engaged in gambling, prostitution, extortion, infiltration of

businesses, and drug trafficking. They also own myriad legitimate businesses.

Membership in the Wah Ching is growing, thanks in large part to their active recruitment of Viet Ching gang members. "Viet Ching" are gangs made up of youths who are ethnic Chinese from Vietnam.

In his annual report to the legislature, *Organized Crime in California*, the state Attorney General details Wah Ching activities, including their growing involvement in *pai gow* gambling (*pai gow* is a Chinese high-stakes game played with domino tiles). Through the California-based Productions Entertainment Company, they also play a major role in the Chinese entertainment industry, which includes arranging concert tours to the U.S. of Oriental acts, as well as distributing Chinese video cassettes in this country. Overseas tours are controlled by the San Yee On Triad of Hong Kong. Triads control the worldwide distribution of Chinese videos originating in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

The Yakuza

The *Yakuza* are the Japanese crime syndicates. According to Japan's National Police Agency, they have well over 100,000 members divided among 3,300 "families" and federations. Four years ago, their annual income was estimated to exceed \$10 billion. Among Asian criminals today, they rank second only to the Chinese Triads in power.

In the United States, as elsewhere, they are involved in drug smuggling, gunrunning (to Japan), extortion, money laundering, pornography, and prostitution. The California Attorney General warns that they are reinvesting the proceeds from their criminal activities in legitimate businesses throughout this country. The Securities and Exchange Commission, in July 1991, revealed that President George Bush's brother, Prescott, acted as a consultant for companies controlled by Yakuza godfather Susumu Ishii that were interested in buying small American firms (see *Business Week*, July 8, 1991, p. 29).

Over twenty years ago, Yakuza started "casing" the state of Hawaii. As David Kaplan and Alec Dubro observe in their book, *Yakuza: Japan's Criminal Underworld*, "Given the dollar value of Yakuza-related enterprises, Hawaii is becoming dependent on Yakuza investment. ...The money is now part of the economic structure of the islands. ...It is in Hawaii, perhaps, that the future can best be seen, where a panoply of Eastern and Western gangsters cooperate."

Caribbean Criminals

Jamaican Posses

According to *U.S. News & World Report*, Jamaican criminals are "probably the most active after the Asians among the newer ethnic gangs." Known as *posses*, they got their start smuggling marijuana into the U.S. They moved into cocaine after discovering the huge profits to be made dealing that product. In

many American cities, Jamaicans now dominate the crack market. As Al Lamberti of the Broward (Florida) Sheriff's Department pointed out, "They're moving American blacks off the street corners. And they're ready to use whatever violence is necessary to do the job." James Scott of the Miami-Dade police added, "We've worked with all sorts of ethnic groups involved in the drug trade — Cubans, Colombians, American blacks. But none of these have the weaponry the Jamaicans do."

Over thirty *posses* have been identified by law enforcement agencies. Some of the bigger gangs, such as the "Spangler" and "Shower" *posses*, are now involved in the international gunrunning trade.

Many of these Jamaican gangsters are adherents of the Restafarian religious cult and have been enormously successful, particularly in Brooklyn. Newcomer criminals from Panama have mimicked Rastafarian hair locks and dress as a way of breaking into their drug operations.

Haitians

North America is now home to a Haitian population equalling over one-sixth of Haiti's 6.3 million people. A loosely structured network of Haitian criminals is engaged in drug dealing, car thefts, and armed robberies. A major source of income is prostitution.

In late 1990, as reported in the *Montreal Gazette*, the Montreal, Quebec police broke a notorious cross-border gang that operated in Canada and the United States. Hundreds of Haitians were arrested who had forced into prostitution young Canadian and U.S. women, a number of whom were taken from foster homes. They were subjected to unspeakable treatment. A spokesman for the Haitian community complained that "by targeting a single gang, police risk fueling racist feelings."

It is noteworthy that many of the Haitians who have engaged in crime originally came to the U.S. as refugees, or were recruited by the Quebec Immigration Ministry when it sought to bring in more French-speaking people. On both sides of the border, many Haitian neighborhoods have become violent, crime-ridden slums. French language newspapers have coined a new word to describe the transformation: *se bronxifier* — to become like the Bronx.

Cubans

In the Spring of 1980, Fidel Castro opened the Cuban port of Mariel to those wishing to leave. Among the 125,000 who took advantage of this opportunity to migrate to the United States were thousands of criminals, sex offenders, and mental patients. Police officials and fellow refugees place the number of undesirables at 40,000. The Marielitos brought no records with them. U.S. authorities could not even verify their names.

The Cubans who arrived here in the 1980 boatlift differ dramatically from the first waves of refugees who came over between 1959-1962. The Marielitos were younger, less educated, poorer, included fewer families, and had fewer U.S. ties.

From Miami, Marielito crime has spread across America. According to a report prepared by the Las Vegas Police Department, "a national conspiracy exists" among Cuban "refugee" criminals. They have specialized in such crimes as airline ticket fraud, credit card fraud, and drug dealing.

Local police officials from around the country complain that the federal government has done little to aid them in combatting refugee-related crime. For reasons that remain unclear, the Federal Bureau of Investigation does not collect information on refugee crime. As a spokesman for the FBI, Manuel Marquez, said, "It's just not our problem."

Few of the Marielitos who have committed felonies in the United States have been expelled, as federal law mandates. Over the past twelve years, the government has engaged in largely fruitless negotiations with the Cuban dictator, but only a few felons actually have been returned. Castro has made it clear that he doesn't want them back. And, ethnic lobbyists and civil rights activists have created further impediments to deporting anybody to Cuba. In the meantime, Cuban criminals detained at U.S. prisons staged destructive uprisings in 1987 and 1991.

The results of a poll conducted by Mason-Dixon Opinion Research should come as no surprise: 77 percent of the non-Hispanic whites and 72 percent of the non-Hispanic blacks said the quality of life in Florida has been hurt by emigration from Cuba. Only 1 percent said they believe Florida has been helped by Cuban emigration.

Other Newer Ethnic Gangs **Russian Emigres**

Insight magazine reports that, "among the 200,000 Soviet immigrants in the United States, most of whom are Jewish emigres, the so-called 'Russian mafia' has shown a penchant for get-rich schemes and a ready willingness to use extreme violence to back up their operations."

According to the President's Commission on Organized Crime, Soviet authorities took advantage of special emigration rights granted to Jews and, over the past twenty years, "included a significant number of criminals who were forced to leave Russia." The Presidential Commission suggested that by means of Jewish emigration, "The Soviet Union attempted to empty their prisons and rid their society of undesirables, much as Fidel Castro did several years later during the Mariel boatlift."

Federal authorities estimate that at least a dozen Russian gangs operate out of the greater New York area, with the Brighton Beach section of Brooklyn

serving as their headquarters. Other groups are based in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Dallas, Miami, Chicago, Cleveland, Boston, and Philadelphia.

"[Nigerians] specialize in huge drug deals and major fraud schemes, and are among the most violent of criminals."

Their activities include extortion, loan-sharking, counterfeiting, arson, insurance fraud, burglary, murder-for-hire, and cocaine and heroin dealing. Cooperating with the Italian Mafia, they have become increasingly involved in the bootleg gasoline trade. Distributors deliver gasoline to service stations, but fail to pass on the federal excise taxes collected. In November, 1991, a leading Russian emigre gangster, Oleg Yasko, was convicted in California for skimming 40 cents in unpaid taxes on each gallon of gasoline his company delivered to other wholesalers and retail service stations.

In July 1991, federal authorities broke one of the biggest cases of medical fraud in history, when they arrested the twelve leaders of Michael and David Smushkevichs' emigre ring. Michael traveled around the world with passports from the Soviet Union, Israel, and Mexico. The Smushkevichs used mobile medical clinics to attract patients with promises of free tests, and then billed some 1,400 insurance companies for over \$1 billion in phony claims. "It ranks right up with the Drexel Burnham insider stock trading case," said David Smith, head of the Postal Inspection Service in Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles Times reports that "ill-gotten gains in this country are being shipped back home [to Russia] to some of the estimated 5,000 crime syndicates there so they can get an upper hand economically as the once-communist economies move to a free market." Displaced former members of the KGB are suspected of being involved.

The U.S. Justice Department considers the Russian gangs to be an "emerging crime problem." On April 14, 1992, the newly formed federal task force on Russian emigre crime held its first meeting in Los Angeles. Like other ethnic criminal organizations, Russian gangs have evolved through three major stages: extortion of their own people; expansion into other crimes; and movement into legitimate businesses.

Israelis

Organized crime in Israel reached a peak in the mid-1970s. Vigorous police work encouraged the Israeli crime element to emigrate. Many moved to the United States. In the Northeast, Florida, and on the West Coast, Israeli gangs, "comprised mostly of Sephardic Jews born in Arab countries, are

increasingly active in the U.S. heroin trade," according to *U.S. News & World Report*.

Los Angeles County sheriff Sherman Block told *The Jerusalem Post* that the potent Israeli mafia has spread across America, graduating from extorting money from poor and elderly Jews — many of them former concentration camp inmates — to major drug dealing and fraud schemes against the wealthy. A veteran Drug Enforcement Administration agent testified, "We have seen Israelis buying heroin in Pakistan, Turkey and Thailand. We are now seeing their ability to interact with other criminal groups, including La Cosa Nostra [and] the Chinese." Peter Moses and Carl Pelleck reported in the *New York Post* that while the Israelis currently deal mainly in heroin, they are now moving into cocaine.

Nigerians

Nigerian citizens, many of whom enter on student visas, are part of an international crime syndicate headquartered in Washington, D.C. and now active across the country. They specialize in huge drug deals and major fraud schemes, and are among the most violent of criminals.

The Nigerians have obtained a growing share of the American heroin trade. Much of the contraband enters the U.S. through Customs via Canada into New York and Michigan. In 1990, one of the biggest heroin busts recorded in the Midwest involved Ojo Adighibe, a Nigerian living in Grand Rapids, Michigan, who had heroin stashed in typewriters shipped to his stateside address from his homeland.

Law enforcement authorities admit that Nigerians are difficult to deal with. They tend to organize locally into small "cells" of five to twelve members, each headed by a boss. Members often are relatives or members of the same tribe — frequently Ibo or Yaruba. They like to cooperate with each other. If apprehended, few will inform on their fellow cell members.

Furthermore, federal authorities do not keep track of foreign "students" to see that they remain registered in school and are attending classes. Nigerian students recruited by criminal gangs will often remain in school, but reduce their course load. Others stop attending altogether. Student visas are issued for up to five years and there is no mechanism in place to monitor the holder's compliance with the law.

Nigerians are among the foremost perpetrators of credit card fraud. A California police report on the 'Nigerian mafia' discloses that they are responsible for over \$1 billion in credit card losses every year. An "African church" in Los Angeles fronts as a training school, where Nigerian immigrants are taught the niceties of this trade. One method used to obtain credit card information illegally is to take employment in hospitals, hotels, post offices, and the mail rooms of corporations and apartments. There they can acquire

names, addresses, and social security numbers, which are then used to apply for credit cards or to divert existing accounts by contacting credit card issuers and giving them a new address. Phony letters of credit are also employed to gain access to our financial network.

One ring was broken by Houston, Texas postal authorities in August 1991. Nigerian Ikembe Azikiwe offered letter carriers \$3,000 for each MasterCard or Visa 'Goldcard' they turned over, and 50 percent of the value of any large commercial checks they were able to steal. Azikiwe boasted that a friend of his, engaged in the same work in Chicago, was able to steal enough in one week to pay cash for a new Mercedes. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service, in its *Law Enforcement Report*, Fall 1991, pointed out that, "attempted bribery of postal employees is being conducted on a relatively large scale basis by criminal elements within the Nigerian community."

Even when they are arrested, many Nigerians, like other felons, are released on bond and then fail to show up for trial. Lawyers representing bonding companies sometimes make up false death certificates, reporting that their client has died and asking for bond release.

Costs High for Three Big States

The impact of the new alien crime wave is being felt nationwide, but is acute in states with large alien populations. And the dollar costs do not adequately reflect the burden on society of additional crime. The administration of justice — including bilingual interpreters and court-appointed attorneys — is bogged down by the necessity of dealing with foreign-born criminals.

California

- State and local governments in California spend more than \$500 million a year to arrest, try and imprison illegal aliens who commit serious crimes, according to a California state Senate report issued on March 23, 1993.

- The legal costs of dealing with all types of crimes by illegal aliens could run as high as \$1.5 billion, according to an estimate included in the report.

- The California Attorney General reports that approximately 16,000 illegal alien felons are incarcerated in state prisons. Every year it costs California taxpayers \$350 million to keep these criminal aliens behind bars.

- A study commissioned by the San Diego Association of Governments found that one in four jail inmates acknowledged being in this country illegally. Judges estimate that up to 35 percent of the felony cases in Superior Court involve illegals. A 1990 check in felony disposition court discovered that 41 percent of the defendants had immigration "holds" — on completion of sentence, they would be released to the INS for detention.

- As a test, Orange County Superior Court Judge David O. Carter invited the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) into his courtroom to help identify criminal aliens and develop deportation cases against them. Judge Carter informed the House Judiciary Committee that "the results are staggering. ...My criminal calendar is 36 percent illegal felons. These statistics would be much higher except the INS does not place holds on illegal felons who have started the amnesty process or come from countries where the United States is an adversary and has no extradition authority. Vietnam, Cambodia, Iran and Cuba are some of the most obvious countries which will not accept extradited felons."

- Orange Police Chief Merrill Duncan disclosed during a press conference in April 1992 that the 12 percent increase in crime from the previous year in that city is the result of a "tremendous influx of illegal aliens." He added that, "most crime suspects are illegals."

New York

- Twelve percent of the nearly 58,000 inmates in New York's state correctional system are foreign-born (either illegal aliens or legally admitted aliens who have committed crimes). The Governor's office reports it costs taxpayers \$27,000 per alien, per year, to house these criminals, or about \$183 million annually. Nearly half of the foreign-born inmates in New York come from Caribbean nations.

- On April 27, 1992, the state of New York filed a suit against the Federal Government, demanding that it start taking custody of thousands of illegal aliens currently incarcerated in state prisons. The suit charges that the Federal Government is responsible for taking charge of these inmates and launching deportation proceedings against them. But too often, the U.S. Justice Department fails to do that. Once convicts serve their terms, the state is forced to simply release them onto the streets, where they are often arrested for new crimes.

Texas

- In the Texas state prison system, only 4.3 percent of the inmates are foreign-born. But this is because, as *The Dallas Morning News* pointed out in its February 2, 1992 issue, "the state in effect uses municipal and county jails to house some of its prisoners. In the largest jail on the Texas-Mexico border, the county facility at El Paso, the percentage of criminal aliens ranges from 10 to 15 percent of the inmate population. Of the federal inmates in Texas, 36 percent are foreign-born." How extensively aliens are involved in crime throughout the state is difficult to determine, since many jurisdictions, such as Dallas, keep no statistics on the nationality of criminals.

Street Gangs

As "refugee" communities have sprung up across

the nation, new ethnically based youth gangs have emerged. They are heavily involved in the drug trade and are responsible for a growing portion of the violence that wracks America's metropolitan areas.

This gang culture belies the media-created image of immigrants as "model citizens." For example, in California, as reported by *The New York Times*, "the simmering ethnic stew pot that is Los Angeles seems to favor youth gang activity. Gangs of almost every nationality flourish: Samoan, Filipino, Salvadoran, Mexican, Korean, Vietnamese. Experts estimate there are about 600 gangs..." Law enforcement officials put the current number of members for these gangs at over 100,000. In nearby Long Beach, a war between Cambodian and Hispanic gangs has been raging for over two years.

Gang activity is no longer limited to the traditional areas of immigrant settlement. As new immigrants have migrated to the Midwest, America's heartland has come to experience the ethnic violence that plagues the East and West Coasts, Florida, and the Southwest. In Chicago, the police are doing battle against not only black and Hispanic gangs, but Assyrians, Chinese, Cambodians, Vietnamese, Filipinos, and Greeks.

Symptomatic of the trend, St. Paul, Minnesota law enforcement officials have called for tough measures to combat Asian teen crime in the wake of a rash of major burglaries, including gun shops. Special programs to divert Asian youth from lives of crime have been authorized by the state legislature in an effort to manage the problem.

The western Michigan communities of Holland and Grand Rapids are experiencing a rise in violence attributable to young Asian males. A confidential police memo circulated in 1991 identified several gangs operating locally and regionally, such as "38 Crew," "Oriental Posse," "Crips With an Attitude," and "BBC" (Born Before Christ). Police admit that they have been reluctant to discuss the problem openly. The area has seen a huge increase in its Asian population, "many of them church-sponsored immigrants," the *Grand Rapids Press* reported.

As bad as the situation is now, the problems created in the U.S. by our new immigrant street gangs are bound to become much worse in the future if corrective measures are not quickly enacted and strictly enforced.

Cross-border Auto Theft

Along our border with Mexico, auto theft has become a multi-billion dollar growth industry. Thieves in California and Texas communities, including some Mexican law enforcement officers, charge several hundred dollars to steal cars and zip across the border to Mexico. Teens are favored as drivers, since they face little more than a mild rebuke if they are arrested.

High-priced luxury cars and off-road vehicles,

such as Jeeps and Broncos, are prized. The cars are shipped from Mexico to buyers in Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East. Before the Persian Gulf war, many vehicles were bound for Kuwait.

Because U.S. Customs does not check identification of outgoing cars, it is relatively easy for thieves to cross the Mexican border headed south. "It's almost a license to steal," Lt. Bob Samples of the Los Angeles Police Department remarked.

The War on Drugs

The celebrated U.S. "war on drugs" has been three-pronged: trying to eradicate drugs where they are grown and manufactured, called "going to the source;" a nationwide education effort to discourage drug use by youngsters; stepped up law enforcement. Thus far, the campaign has not been marked by much success. Despite generous increases in foreign aid to countries where cocaine, heroin, and marijuana are produced, production has soared. This is hardly surprising, given that profits generated by the drug trade are far greater than those deriving from other cash crops.

When faced with issues that require decisive action, Americans have come to rely on "education" as the preferred, safe response. While the "Just Say No!" campaign may have heightened public awareness, among those elements of the U.S. population most inclined to use drugs, such education has proved to be a remarkable failure. Drug use is actually growing.

Law enforcement agencies nationwide have been overwhelmed by drug-related crime. Courts are backlogged for years, to the extent that even with special "drug courts," other pressing cases are delayed for months and even years. Many serious crimes are being plea bargained away by local prosecutors, and others are not even taken to court. Our jails and prisons are overflowing with inmates convicted of drug-related offenses.

No matter how much apologists for our promiscuous immigration policy may wish to obfuscate the issue, we cannot separate our illegal drug and immigration problems from one another. Back in 1986, then Attorney General Edwin Meese informed Congress that, "The reality is that immigration is contributing to the drug problem." He pointed out that drug smugglers "get lost in the crowd" of aliens crossing the border and that traffickers regularly use aliens to transport drugs into the U.S.

"...as Florida ... has come under increasing surveillance by law enforcement, our porous border with Mexico has become the path favored by foreign suppliers [of drugs]."

The international dimension of the drug trade in America highlights the failure of past policies to protect the nation's interests. Federal officials concede that foreign nationals not only are responsible for producing virtually all of the drugs consumed in the U.S., but are in charge of nearly all of the distribution.

Cocaine, and its inexpensive, smokeable derivative, *crack*, is produced in the Andes, refined in Colombia and Mexico, and distributed worldwide by Colombian drug lords who cooperate with other foreign nationals, including Panamanians, Nicaraguans, Mexicans, Jamaicans, Dominicans, Haitians, Nigerians, Indians, Pakistanis, and Asians.

Florida remains a major hub for their North American operations. The drug trade has pumped billions of dollars into the Sunshine State's economy. But as Florida, which sits astride the major air and trade routes from South America, has come under increasing surveillance by law enforcement, our porous border with Mexico has become the path favored by foreign suppliers. As one Colombian drug dealer told a Miami-based colleague, "Come to California. It's the promised land."

All along the border, from California through Texas, small communities have sprung up that serve as staging areas for the U.S.-bound shipments. Mexican *burros* smuggle drugs across the border. As Tom McDermott of the U.S. Customs Service explained, "There are a lot of advantages" to using Mexican routes. "They can stage loads in Mexico with little or no risk, and they have a nice interstate highway system to get to their markets."

The drug trade generates billions of dollars in profits, with an increasing portion being reinvested in the U.S. and used to purchase real estate and legitimate businesses.

Although it is viewed as a "friendly" country by many Americans, Mexico remains among the top sources of heroin and marijuana, and the major supply route for cocaine. Mexico City routinely promises to cooperate with U.S.-sponsored anti-drug efforts. William van Raab, customs chief under President Reagan, is among those who charge that official complicity in the international drug trade reaches high levels of the Mexican government (cf., Elaine Shannon in *Desperados: Latin Drug Lords. U.S. Lawmen, and the War America Can't Win*). The White House and State Department have been reluctant to highlight the role played by ranking Mexican political figures in the drug commerce.

Cocaine and marijuana are only two of the most popular drugs being smuggled into the U.S. Heroin continues to generate billions of dollars of profits annually. Since President Nixon declared his own "war on drugs" in 1971, the number of heroin addicts in this country has increased by several hundred thousand. In a number of metropolitan areas, nearly three-quarters of urban crime is committed by heroin

users. The millions of dollars spent on anti-heroin education have done little to discourage heroin usage. Only the deadly disease AIDS has actually reduced the number of junkies. Dealers have now developed a smokeable version of heroin, which they have already introduced to America.

Like cocaine, the burgeoning heroin trade is dominated by aliens. *The New York Times* reported, "As the Mafia's role declines, the multi-billion-dollar heroin trade is increasingly being conducted by criminal organizations that together sound like a United Nations of drug smugglers, including Chinese, Thais, Pakistanis, Indians, Iranians, Afghans, Nigerians, and Israelis." Robert Stutman, a special agent for the FBI, noted that "these groups are posing a major challenge to law enforcement. We now are dealing with languages and cultures that we have no real depth in."

Until the federal government is willing to secure our borders, there is little hope that the 'war on drugs' can be won.

Conclusion

The alien-related crime that plagues this country is one of the consequences of failure to enact and enforce sensible immigration controls. The problem posed by alien criminals is not new. Since the early days of the Republic, foreign criminal elements have viewed this as a "land of opportunity."

In past years, our elected representatives passed laws to try to keep criminals out, and then enforced those statutes. But our current leaders lack the will to deal forthrightly with this issue.

Few communities in America have gone untouched by alien-related crime. As Prof. James O'Kane of Drew University observes in his new book, *The Crooked Ladder* (Transaction, 1992):

Ethnic organized crime among current minority newcomers is flourishing and ever-expanding, with no end in sight. At a time when FBI and Department of Justice offensives against Italian organized crime are beginning to bear fruit, new ethnic mobs appear to fill the vacuum. Police and organized crime task forces scarcely know what to do about these new groups and have their hands full merely trying to describe these activities, let alone control them. With respect to certain groups (e.g. Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Soviet Jews), police even lack undercover agents who speak the same language as the newcomer criminals!

The prognosis for the elimination of ethnic organized crime is indeed grim. Compounding this reality is an equally depressing one: many of the former lower-income ethnic criminals have not necessarily become law-abiding citizens. Many simply have 'moved up' to white-

collar crime, and as such, have blended with the dominant groups in American life...

We constantly delude ourselves that ethnic organized crime is 'on the way out.' ■