

## Ontario calls for hard line on migrants

### Jail or expulsion for those without papers: Runciman

**Adrian Humphreys, with files from Bill Curry**

National Post, with files from news services

Thursday, January 02, 2003

Ontario's security minister is calling on the federal government to send all undocumented immigrants home or lock them up until an investigation declares they pose no threat to Canada or the United States.

Bob Runciman said the manhunt for five men who apparently entered the United States illegally, reportedly from the north, highlights the need for Canada to protect its borders.

"We've been advised that there's a significant amount of people, on a daily basis, who the government continues to allow into the country to walk free, if you will, undocumented," said Mr. Runciman, Ontario's Minister of Public Safety and Security. "Our view is they should either be turned around and sent back from whence they came, or they should be incarcerated until such time as we can assure ourselves that they pose no risk to this continent."

Mr. Runciman's proposal, which would be a dramatic departure from Canada's current system, comes as the FBI widens its anti-terrorism probe into men believed to have crossed from Canada into the United States over the Christmas holidays. It is not clear how long they had been in Canada, if in fact they were in Canada.

Today, the FBI is expected to release the names and photographs of at least six and perhaps 14 more wanted, foreign-born men, who, like the five men of Middle Eastern descent named on Sunday, are believed to have slipped across the border from Canada.

An FBI spokeswoman said the names are all connected to the same probe.

All of the names first came from Canadian authorities who interrogated a man arrested in connection with a human smuggling operation, according to reports.

An RCMP spokesman yesterday confirmed the force knew about the men before the FBI issued its warning.

"We are co-operating with the FBI in this search for these individuals," RCMP Staff-Sergeant Andre Guertin said yesterday from the force's Ottawa headquarters. "Obviously, we knew about these individuals before this information became public."

Staff-Sgt. Guertin would not disclose any further details and questioned reports that the five entered New York state from Canada.

"If the FBI sought the assistance of police agencies worldwide to, first, learn the whereabouts of these men and, second, learn their real names and citizenship, it



**CREDIT: The Associated Press**

**Mohammed Asghar, a Pakistani jeweller, was photographed yesterday at his shop in the eastern city of Lahore. Asghar, who says he has never been to the United States, has no idea how ...**



**CREDIT: The Associated Press**

means they aren't sure themselves," he said. "It's all speculation."

**...his picture came to be on an FBI wanted poster.**

U.S. officials said it is believed a professional human smuggler brought the men from Pakistan into the United States via Britain and then Canada using false British passports.

A Pakistani jeweller, however, said yesterday his picture is among those of the five suspects. Mohammed Asghar, of Lahore, said he has never visited the United States and has no idea how his likeness ended up on the FBI's wanted poster.

Mr. Asghar said the FBI photo of Mustafa Khan Owasi in fact appears to be his own image.

CBC Television reported last night that the information about the five came after the arrest last October of a man charged in a major passport smuggling ring.

Michael John Hamdani and another man were charged with fraud after police in Brampton discovered false passports and other documents as well as \$600,000 in forged travellers' cheques.

Detectives found fake Pakistani drivers' licences, stacks of passport photographs, counterfeits of Canada's new permanent resident cards and printing machinery. Fake Indian and Canadian passports were also seized.

Police later learned Mr. Hamdani is wanted in New York by the FBI on forgery-related charges from the 1990s. His wife has applied for refugee status in Canada.

The FBI has said it will seek his extradition after the fraud charges were dealt with in Canada.

Mr. Runciman said the manhunt "reinforces the need" for a tougher immigration policy, but "there doesn't seem to be the will on the federal level."

Denis Coderre, the federal Immigration Minister, was not available for comment yesterday.

Inky Mark, a Progressive Conservative MP and his party's immigration critic, said incarcerating all undocumented refugees would only raise new problems.

"I guess there's value to what Mr. Runciman is saying, but there's also a lot of pitfalls. Having studied this for three years now, everything isn't so black and white," Mr. Mark said. "The problem is, if you do this, where do you put them all?"

Mr. Mark pointed to Australia, where such a plan led to an overburdened prison system.

Sergio Karas, a Toronto immigration lawyer, said he understands Mr. Runciman's frustration with the Liberal government.

"The federal government's policies have been ill-conceived and haphazard at best," he said. "We need to take measures that are perhaps unpalatable in political circles, but very much necessary in the post-9/11 world. We have to abandon our naïveté and begin dealing with the problem in a matter that is consistent with the threat."

Mr. Karas said he supports the idea of incarcerating undocumented refugees but cautions it would likely be too expensive.

David Matas, a Winnipeg-based immigration lawyer and past president of the Canadian Council for Refugees, however, blasted Mr. Runciman's comments as disguising xenophobia as security concerns.

"I don't think it is a realistic way of dealing with the security threat. You have to target people who you have reasonable grounds to believe are likely to pose a security risk. You can't take a whole group and



arbitrarily say that group, whether by nationality or legal status, is a particular risk," Mr. Matas said.

The FBI has so far identified five men, cautioning that their names and ages might be false, as Abid Noraiz Ali, 25; Iftikhar Khozmai Ali, 21; Mr. Owasi, 33; Adil Pervez, 19; and Akbar Jamal, 28.

ahumphreys@nationalpost.com

© Copyright 2003 National Post

CLOSE WINDOW

---

Copyright © 2003 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest Global Communications Corp.](#) All rights reserved.  
Optimized for browser versions 4.0 and higher.

canada.com

