

SAMPLE OP-ED ARTICLE 'A'

Time for Real Border Security

America's wide open borders and loose immigration laws gave the terrorists who carried out the deadly attacks of Sept. 11 the freedom they needed to enter the U.S., rent property, enroll in flight training schools, and carry out their plans for mass murder of innocent American men, women, and children.

It is time our immigration policy is changed to meet the needs of our national security.

If not, any war against international terrorism is bound to fail as long as terrorists can simply slip inside the U.S., legally or illegally, and remain free to come and go as they please.

We now know that all 19 of the terrorists responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks entered the country with legal visas issued under an immigration system that is so loose, persons known to be dangerous can get in. The government, for example, issued several visitor's visas to convicted terrorist Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, who is now serving a life sentence for his role in the 1993 plot to blow up the World Trade Center. He had a long history of radical, anti-American activity and associations with criminals and terrorists, but the government let him in the country anyway.

The political asylum process is also full of holes. Murderer Mir Aimal Kasi, a Pakistani national now on death row for his 1993 shooting rampage at CIA headquarters in Virginia, had received a one-year work permit from the Immigration and Naturalization Service after applying for political asylum.

U.S. News and World Report says that the U.S. has given student visas to nearly 11,000 "students" who are from countries that support terrorism. And nearly half of the immigrants who arrive with legal visas overstay or violate the terms of the visa and do not leave the country — that's about 4.5 million foreigners whose whereabouts and activities are unknown to the authorities.

Thanks to lax enforcement of visa rules and the absence of adequate border security, 8 million to 11 million illegal aliens are already inside the U.S. No one knows how many of them are merely job thieves or dedicated terrorists bent on murder and destruction.

Woefully undermanned, demoralized, and underpaid, the Border Patrol can't stop them. That's because the federal government won't hire enough new agents or raise the pay to attract them. Except in scattered high-profile areas like Tucson, San Diego, and some parts of Texas where border security has been beefed up as part of an INS public relations campaign, the nation's borders are easily and relentlessly violated because most of them are virtually undefended.

Using outdated equipment, earning low pay, and receiving little support from Congress or the patrol's parent agency, the INS, border agents are quitting the service at the rate of one per day.

The U.S. has a nuclear arsenal, air force, navy, and a huge standing army, but all the nation's military assets are guarding the borders of other countries like Kuwait, Japan, Bosnia and Macedonia. None are protecting America's borders.

Instead, the U.S. with 285 million people relies on just 8,038 Border Patrol agents to protect them. That is less than half the entire police force of Chicago.

A recent University of Texas study found that the INS needs at least 16,000 agents just to patrol the Southwest border alone, not including the border with Canada. The Association of Chief Patrol Agents says the whole U.S. border needs at least 20,000 agents. It's like "having two referees for the entire National Football League, or hiring one ticket-taker for all of the Michigan stadium," observed one critic.

Currently, some 7,000 agents guard the 2,000 mile border with Mexico, but only 289 agents patrol the much longer 4,000 mile border with Canada, where illegals are now beginning to enter in massive numbers.

The immigration problems have been known to authorities as far back as the 1980's. At the time, President Ronald Reagan warned that "this country has lost control of its borders."

The U.S. admits so many immigrants -- more than 1 million each year -- that the INS simply cannot handle the load.

Doris Meissner, a former immigration commissioner, told United Press International in a recent interview that the pressure to process this unprecedented flow of immigrants makes it "impossible" for INS examiners to fully investigate the background of immigrants.

Because of open borders and loose immigration laws, the U.S. is extremely vulnerable to terrorism. It's time to put American troops out to guard our borders and start imposing some sensible restrictions on immigration.