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More jail time won't stop aboriginal gang growth, says expert

Aboriginal gangs spreading across Canada

By **JOAN DELANEY**
Epoch Times Staff

The explosive growth of aboriginal gangs across the country will continue unless the deplorable conditions behind the trend are addressed, says a gang expert.

Dr. Mark Totten, a sociologist and an expert on Canadian street gangs, says that while the federal government's get tough approach on crime has its place, that alone will do nothing to stem the proliferation of native gangs that are largely a result of the intense poverty in some First Nations communities.

"We just can't imprison our way out of this. The answer is not building more jail cells," says Totten.

"It gets the bad guys off the street for a little bit, but the bad guys still continue to do bad things when they're in prison because prisons are such a violent place. They're also gang-infested, and just because you lock up a gang leader doesn't mean they're going to stop running their gang.

"One of the better ways to run a gang is to be sentenced to a prison or a jail in this country."

For every gang member taken off the street, he says, "a couple more are going to take his or her place." In addition, those who are not members of a gang when first imprisoned most likely will be by the time they are released. Because of the violence, many prisoners need the protection of a gang to survive.

Adding to the problem, says Totten, is that aboriginal birth rates

are rapidly increasing. He estimates that in the next five to ten years, many big urban centres as well as smaller cities will have very high aboriginal populations.

"If we don't radically change how we deal with these issues, then we're going to have double the number of gang members, double the number of homicides and suicides, double the number of aboriginal people locked up in facilities," he says.

"So this really should be a wake-up call to policy makers and government and concerned citizens in Canada that things are bad now, but you ain't seen nothing yet."

The government recently announced the need to expand its budget for federal prisons by 36 percent by 2013. The Liberals say the spending is the cost of the Conservatives' tough-on-crime agenda that has seen longer sentences handed down for some offences.

Totten, who collaborates with groups in Ontario and Western Canada in the development and evaluation of gang prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies, says the desperate poverty in some First Nations communities fuels gang growth.

"A lot of kids and young adults will say, 'The gang is my job. The gang is my family. Nobody worked in my reserve or in my neighbourhood, it was impossible to get real job that paid OK. I can make quick money in a gang. I can deal meth or I can deal crack or I can let girls work the street, and it's really quick money.'"

PLEASE SEE **ABORIGINAL** ON P3



BIOMASS-DERIVED FUEL: U.S. President Barack Obama walks from the stage to have a look at an F/A-18 "Green" Hornet after speaking about energy security at Joint Base Andrews Naval Air Facility Washington in Washington March 31, 2010. The fighter will be the first plane ever to fly faster than the speed of sound on a fuel mix that is half biomass. REUTERS/KEVIN LAMARQUE

Obama opens offshore drilling

By **NICHOLAS ZIFCAK**
Epoch Times Staff

WASHINGTON, D.C.—President Barack Obama paved the way for offshore drilling of oil and gas as part of a new energy security strategy announced Wednesday. To highlight the military's commitment in improving the security of the country's energy resources, the president made the announcement at Joint Base Andrews

Naval Air Facility Washington in Maryland.

Obama emphasized that opening up the continental shelf of the United States for offshore drilling is part of a larger strategy to transition the country from dependence on foreign fossil fuels to clean energy and homegrown fuels. He said the decision is something he has considered over the last year and not one he "made lightly." "We will protect areas that are

vital to tourism, the environment, and our national security," Obama said, noting that Alaska's Bristol Bay will be off limits to drilling and exploration.

Congress banned drilling for oil off America's coasts in 1980, which resulted in a moratorium in offshore oil drilling for the past 30 years. That ban expired in September 2008. Since then, areas in the Western and Central Gulf of Mexico have been open for

lease. Now, regions off the coast of Virginia and the Carolinas in the South and Mid-Atlantic regions will be open for development, as well as parts of the Eastern Gulf of Mexico, according to the Department of the Interior.

However, Ben Lieberman, senior policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation, says there is a lot less to Obama's announcement "than meets the eye."

PLEASE SEE **OBAMA** ON P5

States challenge new U.S. health care law

Three pass health care 'Freedom Acts,' more consider proposals

By **JIM FOGARTY**
Epoch Times Staff

Governors of three states have signed "Freedom Acts" prohibiting implementation of federal health care reform legislation as resistance to the Health Care Reform Act surfaces in state governments.

Utah Gov. Gary Herbert signed H.B. 67 into law last week, which "prohibits an individual in this state from being required to purchase health insurance," and authorizes the state legislature to approve or

deny federal reform legislation.

Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell signed similar legislation—the Virginia Health Care Freedom Act—in Richmond on March 24, and Idaho's Gov. Otter signed the Idaho Health Freedom Act on March 17.

Otter stated that the people of Idaho "won't be subject to another federal mandate or turn over another part of their life to government control," according to a March 17 news release posted on his Web site.

PLEASE SEE **HEALTH CARE** ON P4



PRECIOUS TUSKS: An elephant uses its trunk to reach the upper branches of a tree over the dry brush as it searches for food at the Tsavo West National Park in southern Kenya in August 2009. China has been accused of causing a higher rate of ivory poaching in East Africa. ROBERTO SCHMIDT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

China fuels elephant poaching in East Africa

By **DAMIAN ROBIN**
Epoch Times Staff

China's influence in East Africa is fueling an upsurge in elephant poaching, gunrunning, and corruption, according to a report on U.K. television Friday.

A Channel 4 reporter spoke to people in villages and cities, wildlife managers, rangers, government officials, and illegal ivory sellers in Kenya and Tanzania—all of whom said China is the main buyer of banned ivory.

PLEASE SEE **ELEPHANT** ON P5

Kidnapping proves lucrative for Pakistani militants

By **STEPHEN JONES**
Epoch Times Staff

Sahil Saeed was snatched at gunpoint outside his grandmother's home by kidnapers who threatened to kill him unless his family paid US\$150,000 in ransom money.

However, less than two weeks later, the five-year-old boy was found unharmed, wandering barefoot in a field in the Punjab region of Pakistan, near where he was originally taken.

Following a meticulously planned police operation, the ransom money was recovered in Spain and suspected agents working for the kidnapping gang were arrested.

While the welfare of Sahil—a British citizen—may have occupied the attention of the most senior investigators in Europe, he is but one of thousands of people who go missing in Pakistan every year, many of whom do not make it back alive.

Just this month, a Sikh man was beheaded by kidnapers in an

area near the Khyber Pass after his family could not raise the ransom demanded.

Kidnapping has become a big business in Pakistan in recent years, which analysts attribute to the breakdown of the country's economy.

Some say that there are around a dozen kidnappings every day across the country, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for Taliban and other militant organizations operating in the lawless border region with Afghanistan.

The kidnapping of Sahil Saeed has shone a spotlight on a phenomenon that has been growing in Pakistan since the Taliban regime was toppled in 2001.

"Most of the families of children and adults who have been missing for far longer than Sahil have neither diplomatic support nor pledges of assistance," an editorial in the Pakistani newspaper Dawn noted. "They deserve similar attention from the government and law enforcement authorities."

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