

Sikh extremism on the rise in Canada, says terrorism expert

By JOAN DELANEY
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A terrorism expert says Facebook threats directed at Liberal MP Ujjal Dosanjh come as no surprise because both the nature and number of threats by Sikh extremists is increasing in Canada.

"We are facing a more sophisticated series of groups determined to undermine the institutions of the Government of Canada while advancing their own cause and doing extensive fundraising at the same time," says Tom Quiggin, a senior researcher with the Canadian Centre of Intelligence and Security Studies at Carleton University.

Quiggin, a court expert on terrorism and intelligence sourcing, says that while Sikh extremism died down after the 1985 Air India bombing that killed 329 people, most of them Canadian, it has gained momentum in recent years.

A Facebook group called "Ujjal Dosanjh is a Sikh Traitor" said the former B.C. premier is a "rat in our midst" and threatened to "pierce him with bullets." One posting urged, "Someone shoot him ASAP."

The RCMP is investigating. The threats appeared days after a

Sikh parade in the Vancouver suburb of Surrey on April 18, which included a float displaying images of the leaders of banned terrorist organizations—something Dosanjh had criticized.

Controversy around the parade heightened when Dosanjh, an outspoken opponent of Sikh extremism, and provincial MLA Dave Hayer were told by an organizer that if they wanted to attend the event they would have to bring their own security.

The veiled threat sparked outrage and Dosanjh and Hayer—both Sikhs—along with Surrey Mayor Dianne Watts lodged complaints with the RCMP. B.C. Premier Gordon Campbell and Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff boycotted the event, said to be the largest Vaisikhi celebration outside India.

"The targeting of Mr. Dosanjh is not accidental. Besides being an outspoken individual, he is also a public figure," Quiggin says.

Dosanjh has been threatened multiple times—always after speaking out against extremism. He was badly beaten in 1985 and has also had his property attacked.

Canadian Sikh journalist Tara Singh Hayer was crippled in a vicious attack and then later murdered in Vancouver in 1997 for speaking out against Sikh radicals.



Sikhs at the 2007 Khalsa Day parade in Toronto. A recent Sikh parade in the Vancouver suburb of Surrey included a float displaying images of the leaders of banned terrorist organizations. A terrorism expert says extremism is increasing in Canada. REUTERS/J.P. MOCZULSKI

"Those who organized his murder have never been caught and still walk freely amongst us. They are beyond the reach of the law," Quiggin says, adding that Canada has not been very effective in curbing the activity of extremist groups.

The International Sikh Youth Federation is a banned terrorist organization in Canada, yet continues to operate freely, he says. Others such as Babbar Khalsa International, the Khalistan Commando Force, and the Khalistan Zindabad Force remain active.

"Up to the last few years, Canada has done little to confront such organizations," Quiggin says.

Since the Facebook threats, Dosanjh has said that the rise of ex-

trémism can be blamed in part on political correctness and Canada's polite brand of multiculturalism that tacitly allows it.

"I think what we are doing to this country is that this idea of multiculturalism has been completely distorted, turned on its head to essentially claim that anything anyone believes—no matter how ridiculous and outrageous it might be—is okay and acceptable in the name of diversity," he told the Globe and Mail.

The issue of growing support by Canadian Sikhs for militants in Punjab was raised when Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Prime Minister Stephen Harper met at last month's nuclear

summit in Washington, D.C.

Singh, a Sikh, told Harper that India had "continuing concerns" over the activities of terrorist organizations. Harper is taking the issue seriously, according to the Globe.

Quiggin says Ottawa needs to develop a made-in-Canada solution to the issue of foreign groups who establish themselves in the country "with the intent of undermining Canadian values and using these organizations to shape Canadian policy."

He hopes this and related concerns will come up for discussion when the Air India report is released in June—the 25th anniversary of the Air India bombing.

Star Trek's Nimoy beams into Vulcan

By HELENA ZHU
Epoch Times Staff

It seemed quite logical that Leonard Nimoy, also known as Mr. Spock of Star Trek fame, would one day visit Vulcan, Alberta, the "official Star Trek capital of Canada."

Vulcan residents greeted Nimoy as one of their own as he led a parade through the town last Friday. More than 1,000 people—many dressed in Star Trek costumes or wearing pointy Vulcan ears—gathered to greet the 79-year-old star.

"I've been a Vulcan for 44 years. It's about time I came home," Nimoy said to cheers from the crowd. "I've never had an experience quite as touching as this and I appreciate it. Thank you."

He delighted the faithful with Spock's signature salute: "May each and every one of you live long and prosper."

'I've been a Vulcan for 44 years. It's about time I came home.' -- Leonard Nimoy

After the parade, Nimoy unveiled a bronze bust of Spock that was commissioned by the town. Mayor Tom Grant then presented him with the key and transporter co-ordinates to Vulcan.

"Wait till Bill Shatner hears about this," Grant said, referring to Nimoy's Canadian co-star.

As a gesture to his "hometown," Nimoy is lending the Vulcan Tourism & Trek Station, for a year, the Spock ears he wore during filming and an autographed lithograph of the original cast.

Nimoy's public appearance in Vulcan is likely to be among his last. He announced recently that he is retiring from acting—one of the reasons Michael Black brought his 10-year-old son Nick to see the star.

"Especially since this is going to be his retirement party, as it were, I thought what a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to show my boy the kind of stuff I used to love when I was his age," Black told CBC News.

"He's brought so much to us, to this town, he shows up in the least-expected places—Vulcan, Alberta, of all places," said Black, who was clad in a yellow Starfleet tunic while his son wore Vulcan ears.

"What an honour to be around him and to be part of his legacy."

Nimoy was invited to Vulcan, located 130 km south of Calgary, after he supported a failed bid March 2009 to host the world's premiere of Star Trek XI in the town.

When seeking to boost tourism in the early 1990s, the town of about 1,900 capitalized on its name which coincidentally matched that of the planet in Star Trek. Vulcan now sports a large replica of the USS Enterprise, a Star Trek museum, and visitors are greeted by a welcome plaque in English, Vulcan, and Klingon.

Nimoy has also lent his support to a Facebook campaign to have Shatner, who played Capt. James T. Kirk in Star Trek, appointed as Canada's next governor general.

"I hope it happens," he told CBC. "It would be a very healthy thing for him to get out of the house and find something to do with his time, don't you think?"

Parliament looking at how to tackle organized crime

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And while police and prosecutors are strictly confined by the letter of the law, criminal groups operate with no such restriction.

But one thing criminals won't be able to count on is partisan differences to keep MPs from coming up with recommendations likely to get all-party support, said senior members of the committee.

Conservative MP Ed Fast, chair of the justice committee, says

'The impact of crime in Canada is huge and organized crime is perhaps the biggest perpetrator of serious and violent crime in Canada.'

—MP Ed Fast

while some differences over minimum sentences and gun registration divide the parties, all MPs on the justice committee agree on the vast majority of what needs to be done. His comments were echoed by Liberal vice-chair Brian Murphy.

Both agreed that with such a variety of organized crime in Canada, the problem will need to be tackled on several levels, from funding social programs to keep young people from getting involved in crime groups, to making it easier for law enforcement to gather intelligence and—perhaps most importantly—attacking the profits of criminal activity, something the committee heard from several witnesses.

"We've definitely heard a lot about taking the financial incentive out of organized crime. That's going to involve a number of strategies including beefing up our forfeiture laws and ensuring that we can go out after some of the hard-core assets that some of these organizations accumulate over years of crime," Fast said.

That goal is made more difficult by the efforts of more estab-

lished criminal groups to diversify away from street-level crime and invest the proceeds of drug sales and human trafficking into mainstream businesses.

"I think it just makes the challenges that much greater because actually every criminal organization has its goal to attain some level of legitimacy, because what you're trying to do is hide your illegal activities behind the guise of operating legitimate businesses, and the Mafia is certainly one example of that. The biker-gangs of course use surrogates to do much of their business," Fast said.

Those surrogates are often lower level street gangs. The Mafia in Montreal has charted the same course, leading to speculation that they have lost control of the street and are now being challenged by the very gangs they once employed. The slaying last December of Nick Rizzuto Jr., the eldest son of reputed Canadian mob boss Vito Rizzuto, is an example of this says Antonio Nicaso, a journalist and internationally recognized expert on organized crime. Nicaso testified before the committee in March.

Hiding behind lawyers and chartered accountants, some criminal groups are making every effort to gain influence over the very institutions designed to suppress them, including the judicial system. Some witnesses testifying before the committee talked about threats, intimidation, and home invasions being carried out against Crown attorneys; but it could get worse if something isn't done, said Fast.

"Once you get infiltration to the higher levels of government it's almost impossible to turn the tide on it, which is why this organized crime study we're conducting is so important. We're hoping it's going to provide at least a partial roadmap to our federal government on how to move forward in ensuring that organized crime is not something that we accept as an ongoing reality in our free, democratic society."

That is one of Nicaso's greatest concerns. While action to attack the kind of street-level crime like drug trafficking and extortion can be effective, Nicaso said the people that commit those crimes are easily replaced. Referring spe-



Police officers remove a sign from the Hell's Angels' clubhouse in Toronto. Police raided clubhouses across the country in April 2007 arresting 30 people. REUTERS/SAUL PORTO

cifically to the networks employed by highly organized crime groups like the Mafia, he said the only way to really attack these organizations is to target the grey area where the criminal world meets the corporate.

"If we cannot dismantle the grey area, we will never do anything," he said.

While some provinces have legislation that targets the proceeds of crime, it is rarely used outside Quebec. Nicaso said such laws in Ontario have been almost entirely ignored.

"So what we should do is start using those pieces of legislation, but most importantly we should focus on the right side, the corporate side of legislation."

Brian Murphy, the Liberal vice-chair of the justice committee, said one possible way to address this problem is to remove the anonymity that helps organized criminal groups hide themselves in the corporate world.

He said ownership issues are a major challenge because criminal groups can incorporate a company through a lawyer and never have the names of the actual equity holders appear on any record.

"It doesn't get you to the real owner of the actual physical property, which is what people in this business are converting their drug sales into," Murphy said.

He suggested a high priority for premiers across the country would be to change provincial incorporation laws to eliminate this anonymity and make it easier to track the proceeds of crime.

Nicaso said that kind of legislation would be a step in the right direction—the kind of move needed if Canada is going to keep organized crime from becoming further entrenched.

And entrenched it is. Recent reports have uncovered prolific organized criminal activity in Quebec where the Mafia has possibly siphoned billions from infrastructure spending by controlling the construction companies bidding on public projects, and driving costs up by as much as 35 percent, said Radio Canada.

Gang violence swept Vancouver last year when cocaine prices skyrocketed due to drug wars in Mexico, making the business more profitable and leading to turf wars as new entrants battled for a piece of the market. Besides several

gangland slayings, innocent victims have also died, such Ed Schellenberg and Christopher Mohan who were shot when a Vancouver gang executed four members of a rival group.

A 2008 RCMP investigation uncovered that dozens of criminal groups had infiltrated Canada's airports. The investigation concluded that hundreds of people, including close to 300 current or former airline employees, were involved in smuggling operations.

With the costs of organized crime reaching as high as \$80 billion for everything from medical costs to insurance claims and policing, organized crime can no longer be ignored, said Fast.

"The impact of crime in Canada is huge and organized crime is perhaps the biggest perpetrator of serious and violent crime in Canada. So yes, Canadians do need to take notice."

CORRECTION

Last week's article "Jaffer grilled by MPs over lobbying scandal" incorrectly identified Pat Martin as a Liberal member of Parliament. He is in fact a member for the New Democratic Party.