

Visas to western nations for a price who can afford.

- It was Dutch Consulate in Sri Lanka in 1999.
- It was French Embassy in Sofia-Bulgaria in 2001-2002.
- It was also at the British Embassy in Nigeria in the late 1990's.

and...

- Belgian original passports were available for about \$1500 US.

US Visas Said Sold on Mexican Street for \$1500

MONTERREY, Mexico () - U.S. Consulate staff in the Mexican border city of Nuevo Laredo who have been charged with conspiracy to commit visa fraud sold visas on the sidewalk at up to \$1,500 a time, according to a court document seen on Thursday. An affidavit by an investigator in the case said that for four months, four employees -- one U.S. citizen and three Mexicans -- drummed up business on the street outside one of the busiest consulates on the U.S.-Mexico border. The accused sold non-immigrant visas for fees many times their actual \$100 cost.

Last week, the State Department shut down the consulate's visa unit and agents of the diplomatic security service interviewed consulate employees. The four have appeared in a federal court in Texas where they have not yet entered a plea.

Bond was set at \$150,000 for Miguel Security has been a priority along the 2,000-mile border since Sept. 11, Across the border from Laredo, Texas, the consulate received more than 300,000 applications for non-immigrant visas from tourists, students, scholars and border residents during 2001.

Prosecutors Call Tyson Smuggling Trial a Case of 'Corporate Greed' NY Times (registration req'd) (Feb 6, 2003)

Opinion & Editorials. Tyson, the food chain-store-giant was implicated for smuggling (across the border) cheap labor.

Criminal Prosecution for Visa Fraud ?

False Identities

U.S. Battles Visa and Passport Fraud

Jan. 21 - The recent arrests of more than a few suspected terrorists caught crossing U.S. and allied borders is drawing official attention to a thorny problem: the ease of obtaining false visas and passports. Last month, U.S. authorities arrested an Algerian man they say was carrying a fraudulent Canadian passport and trying to smuggle bomb-making materials into United States. Officials say Ahmed Ressam, who was indicted Thursday on charges of conspiracy to commit international terrorism, had used a French passport issued under an assumed name to enter Canada back in 1994. Two suspected associates, a Canadian woman and an Algerian man

carrying a doctored passport, were later arrested in Vermont after crossing the border. Authorities have linked them and Ressay to a third Algerian suspect who was caught in Canada last year with a Bosnian passport.

Creative Deception

One way to enter illegally is by using forged or altered visas or passports. Producing such papers has become big business, with some immigrant-smuggling operations charging as much as \$5,000 for expertly altered passports, according to the State Department.

Some outfits even provide specialized training for their “clients” to help them impersonate the legal bearer.

‘Impostors’ on the Rise

And with the advent of more sophisticated passport technology in many Western countries, immigration officials say they are increasingly encountering “impostors” - people trying to gain entry using un-doctored but often stolen or wrongfully issued documentation that might not catch the eye of an immigration inspector.

□ *“Right now, probably our biggest problem is impostors,” says an INS official.*

Catching impostors is particularly difficult when they present a passport from one of the 29 or so countries - major industrialized nations such as the United Kingdom, Germany and France - for which the United States does not require a visa. Travellers from those countries are not screened by the State Department and might receive less scrutiny at checkpoints than from other countries.

‘Breeder Documents’ Most Useful

Some impostors have obtained fake papers by presenting a false birth certificate, called a “breeder document” because it can be used to obtain other fake identification, a fairly effective means of committing fraud. This is how Ressay obtained his passport, authorities say.

state agencies improve birth certificate security, but say the effort could take years and cost a great deal.

Afghanistan:

Suspected terrorist ringleader Osama bin Laden, believed to be based in Afghanistan, and his associates are suspected by U.S. authorities of attempting to produce counterfeit passports of various countries, and to have obtained official passports from the government of the Sudan.

Bosnia:

In the first half of the 1990s, Bosnian authorities reportedly provided Islamic radicals who supported Bosnian Muslims in their conflict against the Serbs with Bosnian passports.

Canada:

In December 1999, U.S. authorities arrested an Algerian man named Ahmed Ressay as he was driving bomb-making materials into United States. Authorities say he was carrying a fraudulent Canadian passport obtained in Quebec using a false birth certificate. Ressay also used a false French passport to reach Canada for the first time in 1994.

China:

A common method identified for smuggling Chinese into the United States is by using "collapsible corporations." Small sham companies are set up in the United States and China, often consisting of nothing more than a P.O. box, an abandoned building and a single telephone number. The corporations request temporary U.S. work visas for their supposed "employees" - illegal immigrants.

India:

One operation allegedly smuggled 300 Indian nationals into the United States every month for at least three years before the Immigration and Naturalization Service shut it down. The smugglers charged \$20,000 per alien.

South Korea:

An Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms agent, an attorney, and two immigration brokers were indicted in March 1998 for allegedly attempting to bribe an INS officer with \$82,100 to obtain U.S. resident alien cards. Thirty-five South Korean families paid a total of \$350,000 to purchase the cards.

Sri Lanka:

In February 1999, INS personnel interviewed 190 Sri Lankans detained in the West African nation of Guinea who claimed to have paid between \$4,000 and \$15,000 to be smuggled into the United States and Canada.

USA

Los Angeles:

In November 1998, INS agents seized more than 2 million counterfeit identification documents found in two storage facilities, including alien cards, Social Security cards, and driver's licenses from nine states.

Texas:

Before he surrendered to authorities last year, suspected Mexican serial killer Angel Reyes-Resendiz was held by the Immigration and Naturalization Service at least twice in 15 years after allegedly trying to pass himself off as a U.S. citizen. In 1988, he was arrested carrying three social security cards and a false passport

Visa Fraud

State Dept. Workers Suspected of Illegally Selling U.S. Travel Documents

WASHINGTON, July 10 - Two State Department workers are suspected of selling U.S. visas to dozens of Middle Eastern nationals, including men who roomed with two Sept. 11 hijackers, ABCNEWS has learned.

The investigation is focused on two former employees of the U.S. Embassy in Doha, Qatar, in the Persian Gulf region, where, U.S. government sources say, at least 70 Middle Eastern nationals illegally obtained U.S. visas in exchange for bribes of as much as \$13,000.

Diplomatic security agents on Monday confronted one of the two employees who processed visa applications in Qatar from April 2000 to July 2001, sources said. He is a U.S. citizen now residing in Virginia. The employee has hired a lawyer and is not talking.

Report Says Terrorists Exploit Canada's Immigration System

Police search an apartment in the east end of Montreal on Dec. 21. The home is believed to be connected with Ahmed Rassam, an Algerian man who was arrested on charges of trying to enter the United States with bomb-making materials.

Jan. 14 - International terrorist groups are exploiting Canada's immigration system, using the country as a safe haven and a base to raise money for activities abroad, according to a confidential report by the country's intelligence service.

"Canada's immigration system, because it is both open and accessible, is vulnerable to exploitation and abuse," says the Canadian Security Intelligence Service report, which was written in July 1999 and obtained by ABCNEWS.com via a freedom of information request. "This is of chief concern for Canada's national security."

Among the more than 50 terrorist groups believed to be operating in Canada are the Algerian Armed Islamic Group, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the Tamil Tigers, Sikh extremists, the Kurdistan Workers Party, Hezbollah and extremist Irish groups, according to the report.

Terrorists Are 'Free and Easy'

Canada is well-known among terrorists around the world as one of the easiest countries to enter undetected, says Alan Bell, president of Globe Risk Holdings, an international security consulting firm based in Toronto. The Immigration Department is understaffed and thus unable to thoroughly background every potential immigrant and refugee, Bell says. Moreover, the naturalization process is so long that it often takes years to complete. During that time, Bell said, terrorists simply stop reporting to immigration officials and disappear.

"Then they're free and easy, they're in Canada, and they can do what the hell they like," Bell says. "Once a bad guy has dropped out of the immigration system or the refugee system, the chances of picking this guy up are very slim, unless they do something very stupid or wrong."

"So you've effectively got someone who's in the country, who's not being monitored, and after a year or two he starts doing what he was originally sent here to do in the first place, which is either collect financing for a terrorist organization in his home country; act as a halfway house;

do training and operational planning; or become a mule for terrorist groups to move equipment and weapons and manpower in and out of the U.S.”

Eight Terrorists Caught

Vermont Arrests

Couple Indicted in Vermont: Woman Linked to Ressam Faces Immigration Charges
Prosecutors Link Border Arrests: Canadian Woman Has Ties to Wash. Bomb Suspect, 2
Algerian Terrorist Groups
Terrorist Ties? Woman Arrested at Canadian Border: Linked to Possible Terrorist Group

Canada's 'Porous' Border

The arrest of Ahmed Ressam has put a new focus on the great expanse of the U.S.-Canada border, and the potential for illegal immigration and other activities. That's how some U.S. authorities on the Canadian border may feel, after Customs agents last week stopped and then arrested Ahmed Ressam, an Algerian national accused of trying to bring bomb-making materials into the United States.

From Both Sides, Now

Dec. 21 - Canadian officials with the embassy in Washington and at the CSIS - the Canadian equivalent of the CIA - say that there are as many, if not more, individuals who enter Canada illegally from the United States than the other way around. They particularly point out the case of Hani el-Sayegh, who is wanted in the United States for questioning about the bombing of Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, which killed 19 people. He entered the United States through Boston's Logan airport and then fled to Canada, from where he was eventually extradited.

Yet, in January, the Canadian senate's special committee on security and intelligence found that the country's current immigration policy inadvertently rewards people who arrive in Canada illegally. "The majority of refugee claimants make their claim upon arrival in Canada and remain in Canada while their claim is being processed," it concluded in a report released earlier this year. "It is a means by which terrorists may circumvent our vetting process abroad and enter Canada in search of a temporary or permanent haven. "Once here, they may conduct fund-raising or other activities in Canada or, in a very few cases, to organize acts of violence in Canada or against other countries." "The vast majority of people who arrive in Canada and claim refugee status are not detained, but are allowed to circulate freely in Canadian society pending a decision on their status."