

**Griswold, D. T. (2001, October 23 ). Don't blame immigrants for terrorism. *The Cato Institute*.**

In the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, the U.S. government must strengthen its efforts to stop terrorists or potential terrorists from entering the country. But those efforts should not result in a wider effort to close our borders to immigrants.

Obviously, any government has a right and a duty to "control its borders" to keep out dangerous goods and dangerous people. The U.S. federal government should implement whatever procedures are necessary to deny entry to anyone with terrorist connections, a criminal record, or any other ties that would indicate a potential to commit terrorist acts.

This will require expanding and upgrading facilities at U.S. entry points so that customs agents and immigration officials can be notified in a timely manner of persons who should not be allowed into the country. Communications must be improved between law enforcement, intelligence agencies and border patrol personnel. Computer systems must be upgraded to allow effective screening without causing intolerable delays at the border. A more effective border patrol will also require closer cooperation from Mexico and Canada to prevent potential terrorists from entering those countries first in an attempt to then slip across our long land borders into the United States.

### **Immigration Versus Border Control**

Long-time skeptics of immigration, including Pat Buchanan and the Federation for American Immigration Reform, have tried in recent days to turn those legitimate concerns about security into a general argument against openness to immigration. But immigration and border control are two distinct issues. Border control is about who we allow to enter the country, whether on a temporary or permanent basis; immigration is about whom we allow to stay and settle permanently. Immigrants are only a small subset of the total number of foreigners who enter the United States every year. According to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), 351 million aliens were admitted through INS ports of entry in fiscal year 2000—nearly a million entries a day. That total includes individuals who make multiple entries for example, tourists and business travelers with temporary visas, and aliens who hold border-crossing cards that allow them to commute back and forth each week from Canada and Mexico.

The majority of aliens who enter the United States return to their homeland after a few days, weeks, or months. Reducing the number of people we allow to reside permanently in the United States would do nothing to protect us from terrorists who do not come here to settle but to plot and commit violent acts. And closing our borders to those who come here temporarily would cause a huge economic disruption by denying entry to millions of people who come to the United States each year for lawful, peaceful (and temporary) purposes.

It would be a national shame if, in the name of security, we were to close the door to immigrants who come here to work and build a better life for themselves and their families. Like the Statue of Liberty, the World Trade Center towers stood as monuments to America's openness to immigration. Workers from more than 80 different nations lost their lives in the terrorist attacks. According to the *Washington Post*, "The hardest hit among foreign countries appears to be Britain, which is estimating about 300 deaths . . . Chile has reported about 250 people missing, Colombia nearly 200, Turkey about 130, the Philippines about 115, Israel about 113, and Canada between 45 and 70. Germany has reported 170 people unaccounted for, but expects casualties to be around 100." Those people were not the cause of terrorism but its victims.

### **Keep the American Dream Alive**

The problem is not that we are letting too many people into the United States but that the government is not keeping out the wrong people. An analogy to trade might be helpful: We can

pursue a policy of open trade, with all its economic benefits, yet still exclude goods harmful to public health and safety, such as diseased meat and fruits, explosives, child pornography, and other contraband materials. In the same way, we should keep our borders open to the free flow of people, but at the same time strengthen our ability to keep out those few who would menace the public.

Immigrants come here to realize the American dream; terrorists come to destroy it. We should not allow America's tradition of welcoming immigrants to become yet another casualty of September 11.