

## **Study finds few terrorism-related deportation cases Private group notes that immigration agencies list their primary purpose as anti-terrorism.**

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### **Body**

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U.S. immigration agencies say anti-terrorism is their primary mission, but they tried to deport only 12 people on terrorism-related charges from 2004 through 2006, according to a private research study released Sunday.

That group of 12 represents a tiny fraction of the 814,073 people the government tried to remove from the country during those three years. The study's authors acknowledge that the figure understates the anti-terrorism effort by the Homeland Security Department's immigration agencies.

In addition, because no one knows how many terrorists are in the United States or tried to get in, there is no way to say whether the figure of 12 is too low, too high or about right.

"The right number is unknowable," study co-author David Burnham said in an interview. "But the budget and powers of this agency are influenced by all their talk and rhetoric about terrorism and criminals, and if that isn't what they are doing, it should be considered by Congress and the public."

Homeland Security spokesman Russ Knocke said the study failed to appreciate record-setting enforcement totals. "They seem not to grasp that immigration laws are a powerful authority in preventing security risks from setting foot on our soil," Knocke said.

A former New York Times reporter, Burnham is co-director of the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse. The private research group at Syracuse University analyzed the work of two Homeland Security agencies - Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection.

The group analyzed records of the more than 200 immigration court judges employed by the Justice Department back through 1992 and the department's records of criminal cases brought in U.S. district courts. The records were acquired under the Freedom of Information Act.

Researchers also found that a separate, broader category of national security charges were brought to try to deport 114 more people during the three years. Criminal charges such as human trafficking, drug dealing and other traditional crimes were used against 106,878, or 13 percent of those the government tried to deport.

The overwhelming majority of deportation cases - 86.5 percent - were based on traditional immigration violations such as sneaking past border inspections or not having a valid visa, the group said.

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Homeland Security agencies were credited during the period with producing or assisting on only 31 of 620 criminal prosecutions in district courts against defendants whom prosecutors labeled international terrorists, domestic terrorists or terrorism financiers, the study found.

Last month, Assistant Secretary Julie Myers, who heads Immigration and Customs Enforcement, said, "Our mission remains clear - to protect the United States and uphold public safety by targeting the people, money and materials that support terrorists and criminal activities."

The study says deportations and prosecutions are not the full measure of the agencies' anti-terrorism efforts, which also include patrolling borders and inspecting cargo. The study also says some people suspected of terrorism may be charged only with lesser infractions because those are easier to prove and the maximum penalty for either charge in immigration court is removal from the country.

Defending the performance, government officials note the absence of major terrorist attacks in this country since Sept. 11, 2001.

## Graphic

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GRAPHIC

GRAPHIC - IMMIGRATION CHARGES BY THE CASELOAD | AP

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