

AUDITORS SAY INS IS LAX ON TRACKING OF CRIMINALS ; REPORT FAULTS OFFICERS FOR INACTION AFTER INTERVIEWS ARE SKIPPED

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Body

Immigration officials do little to track down foreigners with **criminal** histories who **skip** mandatory follow-up **interviews** once they enter the United States, government **auditors** disclosed Tuesday.

One **criminal** who failed to show up was later convicted of raping a child, the Justice Department inspector general **reported**.

The internal **report faulted** Immigration and Naturalization Service officials for failing to locate questionable foreigners who **skipped** the **interviews**.

"We found that the **INS** took little or no follow-up action on the no-shows," the **report says**. It **says** that "individuals who do not appear for their inspection do so with virtual impunity."

The vast majority of the 75 million people who pass through airport inspections are admitted **after** an initial screening with immigration officials.

Those with immigration problems or **criminal** backgrounds are turned over to a second inspector who decides whether the foreigner should be turned away or allowed to enter with a chance to clear up problems at a follow-up inspection at an **INS** district office.

The government has cracked down on immigration policies since the suicide hijackings of Sept. 11. **INS** officials **said** Tuesday that inspectors were being more careful about deferring **interviews**.

The agency agreed to carry out the **report's** recommendations that it fingerprint foreigners and hold on to travel documents for those with **criminal** backgrounds who were admitted pending inspections. Some also will be required to post bond.

Investigators looked at 725 cases of deferred inspections at nine unidentified airports from July 1998 through August 1999. **In** 11 percent, of the cases, foreigners failed to show up.

Foreigners with **criminal** backgrounds or those whose names are on watch lists are more likely to **skip** the follow-up **interview**, the **report said**, noting that 42 of the 79 no-shows were identified as having **criminal** records or immigration violations.

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Five of the no-shows were later arrested and convicted of aggravated felonies.

The **report says** inspectors lack up-to-date information on convictions or sentences of foreigners. Sometimes they admit foreigners on the premise that they will later present court records showing how their cases were resolved, the **report says**.

Officials have previously disclosed that one of the Sept. 11 Mohamed Atta, underwent such a deferred **interview** and was permitted into the country.

Notes

AMERICA RESPONDS

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