

BOOK REVIEW BY SALLY RAMAGE

SMUGGLING AND TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Edition: HB

Author: Sheldon X Zhang

ISBN: 0275989518

Publishers: Westport, Greenwood, Praeger

Publication Date: 30th July 2007

Publisher's Title Information

This is a book about smuggling and trafficking of people into the United States of America.

There is a distinct difference between smuggling and trafficking of people. Human smuggling is the act of assisting and facilitating, often for a fee, the unauthorised entry of a foreign national into a country. It is important to note that smuggling does not only occur for money because sometimes, people who smuggle others into a country do so because they are related to those they smuggle into a country, making smuggling by friends and relations a purely personal act, whilst smuggling by professional smugglers is usually done for profit.

Trafficking, defined in the United Nations Convention against Trans-national Organised Crime Trafficking Protocol 2000, identifies elements of trafficking as being 'recruitment and facilitated movement of a person within or across national frontiers by means of coercion, threats or deception for the purpose of exploitation'.

This is different to smuggling, which ends when the migrants reach their destination, both relating to the complex causes of illegal/irregular migration. The nine chapters of this book comprise 203 pages and these range from topics of human smuggling through illegal channels, legal channels, counterfeit documents, bribery, and terrorism.

In Chapter 4- on human smuggling through illegal channels, the author discusses smuggling overland, by sea and by air. The author discusses the United States border, which consists of 5,000 miles of border with Canada, 2,000 miles border with Mexico and 93,000 miles of shoreline. Yet the United States only employs 11,300 Patrol Agents for this entire vast border. The author describes the routes which smugglers take, some of these being "treacherous and dangerous". One would think that because of the 93,000 miles of USA shoreline, there would be more smuggling by sea, but this is not so. Smuggling by sea is mostly used by Chinese smuggling organisations and the practice is not what it used to be in 1882 when the United States implemented the Chinese Exclusion Act 1882, the first American immigration law, targeted a particular group of people based on their race.

Smuggling by air can use the method of a visiting delegation, facilitated by legal documents and temporary visas or permits to make transfers in other countries. One such strategy is by entering the country as a business delegation. This strategy is only successful when facilitated by corrupt officials and by switching boarding passes and passports,

Professor Zhang says that there are three basic strategies to the transporting or smuggling of illegal migrants into the United States:

By travel to Mexico and Canada by some means and then illegally crossing into the United States;

By transporting migrants as stowaways in fishing trawlers, freighters, luxury yachts or cargo containers to reach a port or unguarded United States shore;

By flying to the United States either directly or through transit.

Professor Zhang's well-researched book causes deliberation as to border controls. Reading the details in this scholarly work makes one wonder if obvious border controls and ID cards are really the solution, or whether deeper thought should be addressed to this worldwide problem which does not stand alone, but is deeply integrated with other social problems of poverty, inequality and fairness, as everybody wants the opportunities that health, food and money bring. Border controls might not necessarily be the answer. This book gives an unemotional, data-filled account of the problem of smuggling and trafficking as it impacts the United States.

Sally Ramage