

Review slams CSIS treatment of refugees

Spy agency has too much latitude to brand newcomers as terrorists, committee says

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Ottawa's intelligence watchdog has come down hard on the way Canada's spy agency screens refugees and other newcomers fleeing persecution, saying it is too easy for the agency to brand them as terrorists.

The criticism is made in reports prepared by the Security Intelligence Review Committee on complaints by two Kurds from Turkey and another from Iran, all of whom the Canadian Security Intelligence Service had reason to suspect were members of terrorist organizations.

The reports, copies of which were obtained by The Globe and Mail, say that Toronto residents Sami Durgun and Suleyman Govan, as well as another Kurd identified only as Ahmed, are not terrorists and should be given landed-immigrant status.

'There must be some time limit on these investigations.

Nothing and no one is

are eventually sent to Canada's Immigration Department, which then decides on whether to approve immigration status.

Among its recommendations, the committee says CSIS should keep tapes of the interviews it conducts with individuals and that there needs to be a better definition of what constitutes a terrorist organization as well as a clearer description of membership in such a group. The report also says that CSIS must be held accountable for major delays in immigrant processing and that interviewees be told beforehand that they have the right to have counsel in attendance at an interview.

"We don't want to see CSIS branding the wrong people and this report demonstrates clearly that it has," said Sharryn Aiken, one of the lawyers in the cases. "Immigrants and refugees are being denied essential safeguards."

A spokesman for CSIS said yesterday that the agency is in the process of updating its report on the three men. The government is also reviewing various recommendations on how it might change its interviewing methods.

