

## From New Delhi by Susan Maitra

### On the terrorists' trail

*Coordinated police work in India and North America has begun cleaning up some Sikh-terrorist networks.*

**E**arly in May, Delhi police busted two travel agents who were engaged in a racket to smuggle Sikhs into Mexico. These police actions demonstrate one side of a new crackdown on the international networks transporting Sikh-separatist terrorists out of India and into the United States. Significantly, the recent stepped-up effort to shut down Sikh extremism in North America, which has received steady press here, has revealed the "Dope, Inc." link in the narco-terrorist chain.

The two young travel agents in Delhi were arrested with forged documents, seals, and other evidence of their trade: forging visas and other travel documents for entry into Mexico (a principal conduit for Sikh terrorists into the United States) for the equivalent of about \$30,000-40,000 per person. Delhi police were tipped off when an international air line reported suspicion about the authenticity of travel documents for certain passengers headed for Mexico.

At the same time, in the United States, an extensive investigation run by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and the Indian government, with participation from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), into illegal smuggling of Sikhs into the United States from Mexico and Canada, was winding up. "Operation Asterone," the largest inquiry of its kind between two countries, has already led to the arrest of 22 individuals, most of them Sikhs who reside on the U.S. West Coast, who are charged with running the

racket to smuggle Sikhs States, then legitimizing their status through fake marriages to Americans.

The U.S. kingpins, two naturalized Sikhs and a lawyer from Washington state, set up operations in 1981, and processed 131 "cases" to the tune of more than \$1 million, INS officials told Indian journalists in Washington, D.C. on June 9.

The smugglers' *modus operandi* was to instruct their Sikh customers to get to a Central American country, such as Guatemala or Mexico, on a tourist visa. From there, they would be assigned guides, who would move them north through a series of safe-houses, infiltrate them across the U.S. border, and up to the Northwest near the U.S.-Canadian border, where they are "stowed away" at one of the smugglers' base camps until a "bride" is located. According to INS officials, there is evidence that the Sikhs who were brought in this way were also kept in bondage, being made to work on Sikh-owned farms in California and other Western states.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the case is the surfacing of fresh evidence of the direct connection between the international terrorist conduit and drug trafficking. Immigration officials reported that the smugglers' clients carried heroin as partial or full payment for their passage.

This confirmed earlier reports, and bears out the contention of the editors of *EIR* in *Derivative Assassination*, a book on the foreign hand in the assassination of Indira Gandhi, that there is

an overlap of the narcotics and terrorist apparatus internationally, an overlap that is apparent in the case of Sikh terrorism as well. As *EIR* pointed out, the Sikh-separatist connection to Ecuador, in the news about a year ago, is characteristic.

The immigration crackdown was just one part of an intensified North American clean-up operation. At the end of May, a week after four terrorists were arrested near Vancouver, B.C. for the attempted assassination of Punjab State Planning Minister Malkiat Singh Sidhu, then visiting Canada, a plot to blow up an Air India jumbo jet was exposed in Canada. Five people were arrested in conjunction with the plot of the Baddar Khalsa terrorist cell in Montreal, which placed a plastic explosive time-bomb on a plane scheduled to carry the Indian foreign and finance ministers and 300 others to India from New York.

The dragnet may prove successful in nabbing Talwinder Singh Parmar, the founder of the Baddar Khalsa, who is wanted for murder in India. Parmar currently resides in Canada, where he was given safe passage in an as-yet-unexplained unilateral action by West German authorities who were negotiating his extradition in 1984. Parmar was arrested by Canadian police last November in connection with the sabotage of the Air India jumbo jet that took more than 300 lives in June 1985, but was released on April 19 for "lack of evidence."

Days earlier, in a New York Federal Court, Gurpratap Singh Birk was sentenced to seven years in prison for plotting to assassinate Rajiv Gandhi and to sabotage industrial installations such as the Bhabha Atomic Research Center in India. Birk had recruited 100 commandos, 30 from Canada and 70 from England, for training. The plan was to smuggle the commandos back into India via Pakistan.