

# The border: The bygone days of 'Pass friend'

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Landing at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport after a 12-hour flight from Beijing, I saw that there was a connecting flight to Ottawa 45 minutes later. Could I manage US Customs and Border Protection, catch the train from Terminal 5 to 1 and then get past security? The US Airways agent was doubtful. The line for customs was at least 30 minutes and the security wait at Terminal 1 was currently 40 minutes, but if I got off at Terminal 2 it was only a 20-minute wait with a 10-minute hoof through the underground tunnel.

My Nexus card, which lets pre-approved, low-risk travellers cross the United States-Canada border quickly, was registered with the US Global Entry program so I could use an automated kiosk for quick border clearance. It worked, although instead of an iris scan it demanded my fingerprints. I winged my way through customs, managed the train and then at Terminal 2 I ran into a solid line at security. Was there a fast-pass lane, as there is in Ottawa for Nexus card holders?

No such luck. I would 'enjoy' Chicago for another three hours.

Listening to Sam Cooke "twistin' the night away" and consoling myself with a frosted malt at the Johnny Rockets restaurant, I felt a tap on my shoulder.

"These bags—yours, sir?" said the uniformed man.

"Yes, sir."

"Keep them close and your eye on them. Okay?"

"Yes, sir."

It had been nearly a decade since I was last in Chicago. That time, I had been travelling by train to my new assignment as consul general in Los Angeles and I'd spent the afternoon looking at the magnificent Chicago Art Institute, having dumped my bags in the unattended luggage room at Union Station.

Those days are long gone.

When the US Navy Seals took out Osama bin Laden there was a part of me that said "Yes!" I suspect his efforts to disrupt and inconvenience the Western world and travellers everywhere succeeded beyond his wildest imagination.

Those killed on Sept. 11 in the Twin Towers, at the Pentagon and on United Airlines Flight 93 were the immediate victims. The toll has since included innocents in London, Madrid, Moscow, Frankfurt and Bali with near misses in New York and elsewhere as the world has hunkered down to the grim new reality imposed by the global war on terror. Canada is not immune, as we witnessed with the arrest and conviction of most of the Toronto 18 and others who have committed both homegrown and 'imported' terrorism.

If truth is the first casualty in war then trust is a principal victim of the ongoing war on terror. No more 'Pass, friend.' Instead, wait in line and keep your bags within sight.

While all countries have suffered the effects of 9/11, Afghanistan has seen tens of thousands killed and hundreds of thousands have fled the country. Then there are the 2,600 brave warriors of the coalition operations (the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom and NATO's International Security Assistance Force), including more than 150 Canadians, who have died in the Afghan campaign.

Every country has remade its security apparatus and security trumps privacy for travellers. The US Department

of Homeland Security counts almost as many employees as the entire government of Canada. As with the rest of the world, Canada is constantly introducing 'improved' new measures including about 45 airport scanners that offer a 'naked' view of the passenger. They cost \$250,000 each, but as then-transport minister John Baird put it when they were ordered, "We've got to stay ahead of the terrorist elements."

Our ability to detect, prevent and respond to terrorist attacks has been difficult, incomplete and slow. On balance, we are probably safer but at a considerable cost. Tourism from the United States has never recovered, especially since travellers were required to show passports to cross the border, and notwithstanding the exemptions for children and the useful addition of the smart driver's licence there is no easy flow back and forth, especially for day-trippers from the US.

Two professors, John Mueller of Ohio State University and Mark Stewart of the University of Newcastle in New South Wales, Australia, recently concluded that the United States government and private companies have spent a little over a trillion dollars on enhanced homeland security since 9/11.

Ten years on, how do we answer the question that then-defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld asked his advisers on one of the early anniversaries of 9/11: "Are we capturing, killing or deterring and dissuading more terrorists every day than the madrassas and the radical clerics are recruiting, training and deploying against us?"

And what of the quest to enlist the energy and sympathy of the world's 1.3 billion Muslims against the extremist threat? On the sixth anniversary of 9/11, Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, the wise men who directed the 9/11 Commission report, concluded that "we have not been persuasive."

Then there is the border with the United States. In opening the Thousand Islands bridge in August, 1938, Franklin Roosevelt remarked that "It has always seemed to me that the best symbol of common sense was a bridge."

Alas, bridges, like roads and other gateways, are now incorporated into what US Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano says must become a 'real' border. Drones now fly over the 49th parallel and the number of border agents patrolling the northern border has more than tripled. Where once we were foreign but friendly and got the benefit of the doubt, now we are simply foreign. Even the officers in the post 9/11 Canada Border Services Agency now pack a pistol.

"This bridge stands as an open door," observed Roosevelt in Clayton, NY. "There will be no challenge at the border and no guard to ask a countersign. Where the boundary is crossed the only words must be, 'Pass, friend.'"

Will we ever return to those days of 'Pass, friend?'

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