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Legal immigration rises 27 percent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nearly a million foreigners were granted legal permanent residency in the United States last year, a 27 percent increase over the number given green cards the year before.

Some 915,900 people legally immigrated here in 1996, up from 720,461 in 1995, the Immigration and Naturalization Service said Tuesday.

Pro-immigration and anti-immigration groups alike pounced on the statistics to buttress their arguments.

"We don't need increasing numbers of immigrants," said Dan Stein, head of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, which favors a moratorium on most immigration. "The whole system is out of control, and what we need is an immigration timeout ... to allow Congress to rework the system so that it protects America's long-term interests."

But a pro-immigration coalition pronounced the 1996 increase a temporary surge, noting that INS projections show rates declining in the next year or two.

"Legal immigration is a highly regulated and tightly controlled system that we believe serves the national interest," said Jeanne Butterfield, executive director of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

While the 1996 numbers mark a reversal of a four-year decline, legal immigration rates remain well below the highs posted at the turn of the century, when waves of immigrants flocked to Ellis Island.

Newcomers account for four of every 1,000 residents now — down from 12 per 1,000 in 1910, said Stephen Moore of the Cato Institute, which favors higher rates of legal immigration than permitted now.

Last year's increase is due in part to a 1986 law that provided amnesty to nearly 3 million illegal immigrants. As those immigrants became citizens after five years of legal residency, they in turn have been bringing spouses, children and parents to the United States.

Other reasons for the increase include delays in processing applications in 1995, which pushed many into 1996, and a one-time gain in family preference visas in 1996.

"While this is neither a surprise nor particularly big news, given how easy it is to distort this debate over immigration, we thought it important to put it in context," said Frank Sharry, head of the National Immigration Forum, which opposes limits on legal immigration rates.

The debate focuses on whether immigration provides economic, social and cultural benefits to the United States — or is a drain on society.

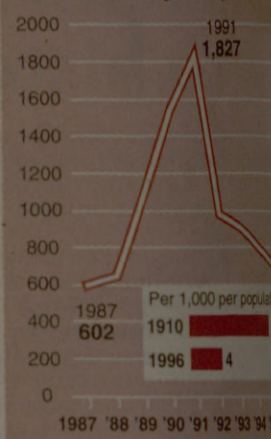
"Immigrants are not just mouths to feed. They are productive hands and fertile minds," said the Cato Institute's Moore.

But Chairman Lamar Smith, R-Texas, chairman of the House Judiciary's immigration subcommittee, questioned the nation's immigration policies.

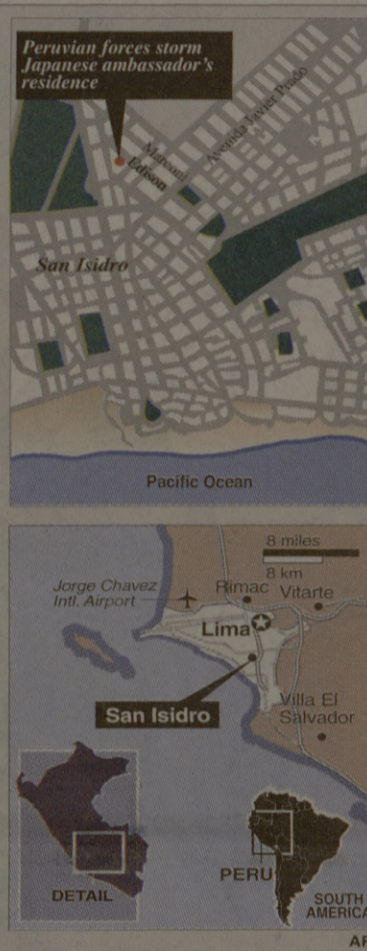
Legal immigration

Total number of legal immigrants enter the U.S.:

Thousands of immigrants, figures rounded



Source: Cato Institute; Census Bureau



HOSTAGES

Continued from Page 1

It ended quickly. As smoke billowed over the residence, triumphant soldiers hauled down the guerrillas' flag, and ex-hostages and rescuers cheered and jubilantly sang the Peruvian national anthem. A large pool of blood could be seen at the bottom of a stairway. The dead rebels included at least two teen-age girls.

The relatively low casualty toll among hostages was surprising to some. An armed forces assessment early in the 126-day siege estimated such an assault would cost the lives of 70 percent of those in the compound.

The hostages, all male, were mostly Peruvians, but also included 24 Japanese — 12 businessmen and 12 diplomats, including Japan's ambassador, Morihisa Aoki, who suffered a slight elbow injury during the rescue. There were no Americans among the hostages.

Less than an hour after the raid, Fujimori strapped on a bulletproof vest and victoriously entered the compound. He shook ex-hostages' hands and joined with them and soldiers in singing the national anthem.

'Extensive evidence' reveals possible justice obstruction

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) — Whitewater prosecutors today disclosed they have gathered "extensive evidence" of possible obstruction of justice and asked a judge to extend the investigating grand jury's term by six months.

The office of independent counsel Kenneth Starr cited the obstruction probe as well as substantial new information from James McDougal, a former business partner of President and Mrs. Clinton, in requesting that the grand jury's term be extended to Nov. 7.

The panel is set to expire May 7. McDougal began cooperating last year after his conviction.

"This grand jury has also heard extensive evidence of possible obstruction of the administration of justice," said the court papers filed with U.S. District Judge Susan Webber Wright. The papers said Starr wants to examine possible "concealment and destruction of evidence and intimidation of witnesses."

"There have been efforts by some persons and entities to challenge subpoenas and there have been assertions of privilege."

Prosecutors told the court they still wanted the testimony from Mc-

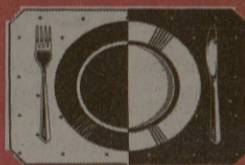
Dougal's ex-wife, Susan, who was convicted with her husband of fraud charges last year. She has refused to testify before the Whitewater grand jury in Little Rock and is jailed for contempt of court.

Investigations include: — Payments to Whitewater business Webster Hubbell arranged by longtime friends of the president. The investigation centers on whether the payments were designed to discourage Hubbell from giving prosecutors information about the president and first lady.

— Whether the president, in sworn testimony last year, was denying any knowledge of a fraudulent \$300,000 Federal Reserve-backed loan to Mrs. Clinton. Part of the loan was used to pay up the Clintons' failing Whitewater real estate venture. The \$300,000 was never repaid.

— The disappearance and subsequent reappearance of Mrs. Clinton's law firm billing records, lining her work for McDougal, failing savings and loans in Arkansas. The records were turned up in the White House more than two years after investigators subpoenaed them.

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