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Study: Terrorism-related prosecutions often fizzle

By Curt Anderson
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Justice Department has sharply increased prosecution of terrorism-related cases since the Sept. 11 attacks but many fizzled and few produced significant prison time, a study released Sunday finds.

About 6,400 people were referred by investigators for criminal charges involving terror in the two years after the attacks, but fewer than one-third actually were charged and only 879 were convicted, according to government records reviewed by Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse.

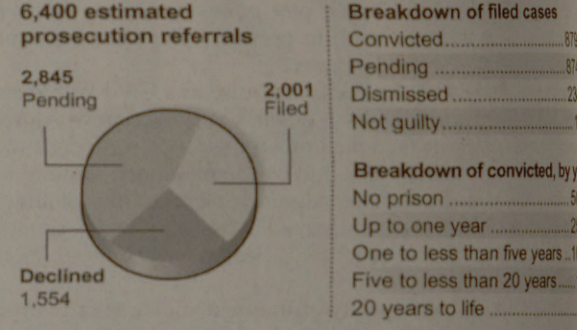
The median prison sentence was just 14 days, according to a study by clearinghouse co-directors David Burnham and Susan P. Long. Only five people were sentenced to 20 years or more.

Critics seized on the numbers to question whether Attorney General John Ashcroft and other top law enforcement officials have been overstating the success of their anti-terrorism efforts. Nearly every time Ashcroft talks about the subject, he reads a long list of statistics on arrests and convictions to buttress his contention that great progress is being made.

Sen. Charles Grassley, a senior member of the Senate Judiciary Committee with oversight of the FBI and Justice Department, said the report "raises questions about the accuracy of the department's claims about terrorism

879 terrorists convicted

An independent study of federal terrorism prosecutions shows that of 2,001 cases filed since Sept. 11, 2001, only five individuals have been sentenced to 20 years or more in prison.



SOURCE: Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse

enforcement." "This report shows that despite the focus on terrorism-related crimes, most of the people accused of terrorism involvement are getting little jail time, if at all," said Grassley, R-Iowa.

Justice Department and FBI officials said the study is rooted in past conceptions of crime and punishment and does not reflect the reality that would-be terrorists seek to blend into society until they are ready to strike.

Lack of lengthy prison terms in many cases can be explained by the effort by prosecutors to stop would-be terrorists long before they are ready to attack, often charging them with lesser offenses, such as identity theft, document fraud and immigration violations.

Prosecutors feel it is better to get suspects off the streets and press them for information than wait for events that could produce harsher penalties. They also said

Filtering is effective, he said, but it is not foolproof.

"I use two different accounts," Van Fickell said. "That helps control the amount of spam in my personal account."

Jocelyn Marlatt, a senior psychology major, said she clears out her junk mail folder six or seven times a day.

"I despise it (spam) with a passion," Marlatt said. "It's kind of a nuisance or it interferes with what I'm looking for."

Emily Gruninger, a freshman education major, agreed.

"I think it's very distracting and just not useful," Gruninger said. "I don't think anyone clicks on them."

Frustrations such as these could be alleviated in the near future, if the FTC's no-spam registry is put into effect.

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- What experience do you have that relates to the position for which you are applying? (include classes, seminars, etc.)
- What changes do you feel would improve the quality of *The Battalion*? Give special attention to the section for which you're applying.

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- ___ Radio Producer
- ___ Web Editor

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- ___ News Reporter
- ___ Sci|Tech Writer
- ___ Feature/Entertainment Writer
- ___ Sports Writer
- ___ Radio Reporter
- ___ Web Reporter
- ___ Opinion Columnist
- ___ Copy Editor
- ___ Page Designer
- ___ Photographer
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- ___ Cartoonist

DEADLINE: 5 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 11, for editor positions and Monday, Dec. 15, for staff positions. Turn in applications at 014 (basement) Reed McDonald Bldg. Interviews will begin immediately after application deadline.

Spam

Continued from page 1A

violate users' free speech rights. "It's also our choice as an institution to honor (students') academic freedom," Putnam said.

He said other universities have chosen to institute anti-spam measures, but there are concerns that people have different ideas or definitions of what constitutes spam.

"The problem, other than the volume (of spam sent), is that the definition of spam is sticky from an institutional position," Putnam said.

Jason Van Fickell, a senior computer engineering major, said the new legislation could help, but he also has concerns about offshore Internet interests.

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