


Police chief study effects of ethnic violence



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Thomas News Service

Ottawa - Canada's organized-crime experts are warning Canadians that urban violence and crime may increase in centres where Asian populations are growing.

In its latest report on organized crime activities, the Canadian

Association of Chiefs of Police says membership in the violent Triad gangs that prey on ethnic Asian communities is on the increase. And the report expresses concern at several points that growth in the gangs will accelerate with increasing immigration from Hong Kong and mainland China.

The Triads - first encountered by the British in Hong Kong in 1842 - are well established in Canada and heavily involved in armed robberies, extortion, assaults, murder, gambling, fraud and drugs, the report states. Police say there were 15 Triads and associated crime groups operating in Canada in 1988, and a handful of the more powerful maintain strong links with branches elsewhere in the world.

The report, prepared for the

chiefs by the RCMP-administered Criminal Intelligence Service Canada, notes a sharp increase in immigration from Hong Kong. Just over 7,300 emigrated from the British Crown colony to Canada in 1985. By 1988, the level of immigration had increased to more than 22,800.

The increases, the report says, will likely continue until 1997 when Britain will return the colony to China. A major concern is that Hong Kong Triad members may be among immigrants seeking sanctuary in Canada.

Ottawa Police Staff Inspector Alain Methot said Triad membership has increased in the past with immigration, but a former national president of the Chinese Canadian National Council fears the police claim will create an

undesireable impression of Hong Kong immigrants.

"It should be made clear that it's a very small group that's involved in organized crime," said Ed Lam. "The incidence of crime in the Chinese community is very low compared to others."

Both Lam and the current president of the CCNC's Ottawa chapter, Frank Ing, said they are not aware of Triad activities.

"Police see it as a problem, and I'm sure there is an organized crime threat, but I don't know how serious it is," Lam commented.

"It's very hard to substantiate these things," Ing said.

VIOLENCE

The report on organized crime also discusses the activities of Mafia organized-crime groups and outlaw motorcycle gangs but em-

phasizes the Triads' "propensity for violence and intimidation." They are portrayed by police as malicious and unscrupulous, and quite willing to use firearms in their activities. In 1987, a gang member held a loaded revolver to the chest of a police officer who interrupted the robbery of a gambling operation. The same year, a number of bystanders were endangered when two rival gangs staged a shootout in a Vancouver restaurant.

Triads appear to be busiest in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario. But they have also been found operating in Manitoba and Quebec. They have not been detected in any of the Atlantic provinces.



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