

Human trafficking

by BRIAN LOCKHART

This crime has many different names.

It's called human trafficking, human smuggling, child trafficking and a host of other different names depending on who's involved and how the media wants to spin the story.

If it is poor people from a developing country, they are called migrants. If they are climbing a fence, they are called illegal immigrants. There are economic immigrants, and if you're on the move because someone bombed your house, and it could happen again, you're a refugee.

Whenever you have vulnerable people, there are other people who will try to take advantage of them in a lot of different ways.

Of course, this always means someone is going to make money. Whether it's a trafficker who guides people along a certain route, a person who supplies a rickety boat, or a pimp keeping a young girl hostage in a cheap hotel room, criminals make money, while the victims suffer.

You probably remember the photo that caused an international stir in 2017. It was the photo of a three-year-old Syrian boy, lying face down on a Turkish beach. He was smartly dressed in a red shirt, blue shorts, and nice shoes ? except he was dead. His tiny body washed up on shore after the boat he was on capsized and he drowned. The bodies of his mother and brother were found farther down the beach.

The smugglers who promised them safe passage couldn't care less that they were dead. They placed their charges, at a price, into a boat that was not seaworthy. Once the boat was launched, the smugglers left with their money.

Recently, a tractor trailer was located in Texas after smugglers placed over 50 people inside and tried to bring them into the U.S. - at a price of course ? and promised them jobs. When the trailer was located, around 50 of those people were already dead. They died from extreme heat and asphyxiation. Around a dozen people were still alive, but barely.

The same thing happened in Austria in 2015, when up to 50 people died in a truck trailer. They were abandoned with no way to get out. They had been left with no escape, and by the time they were found, they had all been dead for a considerable amount of time.

That incident occurred as Austria hosted a summit on the refugee crisis from Western Balkan nations.

Now the latest case of human cruelty is coming out of Arizona. Smugglers left two children, aged four months, and 18 months, in the desert to die. What kind person is so heartless they would leave helpless infants to die a cruel death, just because as children, they were useless to the smugglers.

It was only because one immigrant who was captured, apparently had a conscience, and told police that he had seen the children abandoned, and this led to a search by authorities. They managed to find the children and they are now okay, but the youngest was already unconscious when found and any more of a delay would have resulted in two needless deaths.

What if that man hadn't been captured? Most likely he would have continued on to his illegal job and kept his mouth shut to avoid prosecution.

Human trafficking, smuggling, whatever you want to call it, does exist in Canada. Every year girls and young woman are coerced into prostitution through several means. While charges are now called ?human trafficking? that phrase is a little too kind for what is

really going on. If they called it for what it really was, people would be shocked.

When people started showing up, undocumented, and walking across the Quebec border a couple of years ago, the federal government smiled and refused to protect the borders, while RCMP officers turned a blind eye.

There was human smuggling of sorts, involved in that situation, no doubt about it, and the government and police did nothing to stop it.

People don't just cross a large country like the U.S., to arrive at the same footpath along an international border, without being guided there by someone who took a fee to get them there.

I actually live in this country, and yet if someone asked me about a way to sneak into the U.S., I would have absolutely no idea where to find a secret crossing other than suggest a canoe and a 40-mile trip across Lake Ontario.

Human trafficking is a terrible crime and culprits who take money, and advantage of other people, should pay a heavy price for their actions.