Critics of Prime Minister Stephen Harper often accuse him of using the so-called "politics of fear and division," especially when it comes to immigration and Canada's national security. It is a favorite line of attack against the Conservative government. But is Harper really fear-mongering to attract votes, or is he simply being honest with Canadians about the threats we face? During the recent foreign policy debate, for example, NDP leader Thomas Mulcair criticized the Harper government's refugee policy and took issue with their handling of the MV Sun Sea, the boat that arrived on Canada's west coast in 2010 carrying hundreds of Sri Lankan migrants. Mulcair was appalled and chided Harper because one of his cabinet ministers had said the boat was carrying terrorists. The problem, of course, is that the MV Sun Sea was carrying terrorists. Canada's courts eventually found that 11 of the self-proclaimed refugees onboard were actually members of a Sri Lankan terrorist organization known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Another two were discovered to be wanted war criminals. Despite Mulcair's criticisms, the handling of the MV Sun Sea is actually an immigration security success story. When the boat was spotted off the coast of Vancouver Island during the summer of 2010, Harper ordered a navy ship to escort the rusty freight liner to a nearby base for immigration checks and screening. Many of the nearly 500 individuals on board the Sun Sea were not carrying any form of verification documents or identification paperwork. Canadian immigration officials had a difficult time confirming names and ages, let alone screening for possible terrorist affiliations. To make matters more complicated, the Sri Lankan government stated that the ship was a smuggling operation led by a recently defeated rebel insurgency group, the Liberation Tigers or LTTE. This group is a designated terrorist organization, thanks to its ruthless campaign of violence that terrorized Sri Lanka during a civil war that killed thousands of people. The Harper government was rightly concerned that the MV Sun Sea was harboring terrorists. They, therefore, asked that immigration officials use extra scrutiny to screen and interview these migrants before granting them asylum in Canada. The NDP were perpetually outraged over the Conservative's handling of this situation, but considering the circumstances, the government responded quite well. Canada managed to show incredible compassion by accepting most asylum claimants as legitimate refugees, while also remaining diligent in protecting our national security and the integrity of our immigration system. It may have taken longer than the opposition would have liked, but it demonstrated how Canada can maintain its generosity and also take security concerns seriously. The case of the MV Sun Sea is not the exception when it comes to admitting refugees. It is common for war criminals and terrorists to hide amongst migrants and refugees while fleeing a war zone. Take Dejan Demirovic, who fled Serbia alongside refugees escaping war in the Balkans. Demirovic spent four years living in Ontario and applied for refugee status in Canada. His case was rejected and he was deported to Serbia to face trial for his involvement with a paramilitary organization and a 1999 massacre of Albanian women and children. Canada

also once welcomed Kiemtor Alidu, a leader of Ghana’s “People’s Defence Committee” from 1982 to 1985. Alidu admitted responsibility for rounding up and killing more than 100 people. His bid for refugee protection in Canada was rejected, and yet he has utilized multiple appeals to remain in Canada for over two decades. In 2014, the U.S. Border Patrol arrested Jean Leonard Teganya, a wanted war criminal from Rwanda who had arrived in Canada in 1999 claiming to be a refugee. The Immigration and Refugee Board rejected his bid because he was complicit in a massacre at a Rwandan hospital that left 200 dead. Canada tried to deport Teganya, but he slipped into hiding and his whereabouts were unknown for years until he was caught trying to sneak into the U.S. These are just three of the hundreds of cases clogging up our court systems and utilizing government resources. When allegations of war crimes and terrorism are made against refugees and immigrants, their cases go to hearings before Canada’s immigration courts. According to the latest report from the Canadian Boarder Services Agency, the deportation program in Canada costs taxpayers upwards of $90 million per year. So while critics like to accuse the Harper government of fear mongering over security, Canadians should be grateful the government takes security risks seriously. After all, it’s better to screen out war criminals and terrorists before they arrive, than to chase these criminals through Canada’s court system while taxpayers pick up the bill. Read the original from the Toronto Sun.