

Car Thefts On Rise - Thieves Target Trucks And SUVs

TORONTO: A new report says thieves are setting their sights on older-model Ford trucks and high-end SUVs as the number of automotive thefts rose again last year.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada said on Tuesday in its annual list of the most frequently stolen vehicles that the Ford F250 and F350 trucks dominated the list of most stolen vehicles in 2017.

In Ontario, Chevrolet dominated the list, including older model Tahoes and Silverados. In Quebec, the most stolen vehicle was the 2017 Acura MDX, while in Atlantic Canada the Nissan Maxima was the top pick.

Henry Tso, the board's vice-president of investigative services, said thieves are going after older model trucks because they have less sophisticated security measures.

"Usually you need the card key



information to get the diagnostic to start the car. A lot of the older vehicles, it doesn't have that, so once you have a key cut you can start the vehicle."

Thieves are, however, targeting newer vehicles that have key fobs through a technique known as a relay attack, where they use a de-

vice to remotely pick up the radio signal coming from the fob to unlock and start the car. "Right now it's just trending up right now, it's fairly new," said Tso.

To prevent the relay attack, vehicle owners should consider keeping their fob in what's known as a Faraday sleeve or

pouch, which blocks the radio signals, he said.

Many drivers, however, would do well to simply not leave their keys in their vehicles. In Alberta, about 25 per cent of thefts occurred when the keys were in the car, often to keep the vehicle warm, said Tso.

"It's easily preventable, the 25 per cent, all they have to do is be a little colder in their vehicle."

Alberta also saw the most thefts, making up about 25,000 of the 85,000 vehicles stolen in 2017 for a nationwide increase of about six per cent.

New Brunswick saw the sharpest rise in thefts with a 28 per cent jump, with Ontario seeing a 15 per cent increase.

The board says New Year's Day is the most common time for vehicles to be stolen.

But, it says vehicles are often smuggled outside the country, sold to unsuspecting consumers, scrapped for parts or used to commit another crime with organized crime rings usually involved.

The Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada says crime groups involved in auto thefts operate primarily out of Montreal and Toronto.

No Surge Of Extremists Returning To Canada Says Report

OTTAWA: A federal report says there has been no surge of extremist travellers returning to Canada, despite the overseas setbacks suffered by militant forces in Iraq and Syria.

The annual report on the terrorist threat to Canada says no such wave is expected because many potential returnees lack valid travel documents, find themselves on a no-fly list or fear being arrested on Canadian soil.

Others want to continue helping extremist groups abroad, have been captured or have died.

As members of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant scatter, the Liberal government has come under pressure to explain what it's doing to contain any threat from foreign fighters returning to Canada.

The report says some 190 people with connections to Canada are suspected of terrorist activity abroad and, of these, about 60 have returned - numbers that have remained static for several months.

The activities of these Canadians in various countries could in-

volve front-line fighting, training, logistical support, fundraising or studying at extremist-influenced schools. A "relatively small number" of the 60 people have returned from Turkey, Iraq or Syria, the report says.

The Conservatives have peppered the government with questions in the House of Commons about ensuring the safety of Canadians - accusing the Liberals of welcoming returnees with open arms.

Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale says Canadian security

and intelligence forces are working with their international counterparts to investigate Canadians who travelled overseas to join terrorists. Canada has not seen a related influx in the number of extremist travellers who have returned to Canada, "nor does it expect to," the report says.

The group Families Against Violent Extremism has said the Canadians detained by Kurdish authorities in Syrian territory include nine families and more than 10 children, including some who were taken to Syria at young ages

and others who were born there.

Overall, Canada's national terrorism threat level is medium, meaning a violent act of terrorism "could occur," the report says. That's the third position on a five-point scale and it's unchanged from October 2014.

The principal terrorist threat continues to stem from individuals or groups inspired by violent Sunni Islamist ideology and terrorist groups, it says. "There are also threats posed by those who harbour right-wing extremist views," the report adds.

US Downgrades Pakistan In Religious Freedom Rankings

WASHINGTON - The Trump administration on Tuesday placed Pakistan on its annual list of worst offenders for nations that infringe on religious freedom.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement he added Pakistan to the U.S. list of "countries of particular concern" regarding protection for people to worship according to their beliefs.

Pakistan had previously been on a special watch list for religious freedom. The downgrade means that Pakistan could be hit with U.S. sanctions although such penalties have generally been waived in the past.

Other countries on the blacklist, which calls out nations for "systematic, ongoing and egregious violations of religious freedom," are China, Eritrea, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. All had been so designated in last year's list. Uzbekistan

had previously been named a "country of particular concern," but Pompeo upgraded it to the special watch list. The watch list now also includes the Comoros Islands and Russia.

In addition, Pompeo designated several Islamic militant groups as "entities of particular concern" as they do not meet the definition of countries.

Those are the al-Nusra front in Syria, the Yemen-based al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, al-Qaida, Somalia's al-Shabab, Boko Haram in West Africa, Yemen's Houthi rebels, the Islamic State and the Taliban.

"In far too many places across the globe, individuals continue to face harassment, arrests, or even death for simply living their lives in accordance with their beliefs," Pompeo said. "The United States will not stand by as spectators in the face of such oppression."

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