

Refugee claims totalled 14,068, board reports

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OTTAWA — A record number of claims for refugee status were referred to its refugee-determination division in the first three months of 1993, the Immigration and Refugee Board reported yesterday.

The board reported 14,068 claims. Of 6,798 claimants whose cases were completed, 3,435 were granted refugee status while 2,678 were rejected and 685 withdrew or abandoned their claims.

As in 1992, most refugee claimants came from Sri Lanka, the Confederation of Independent States (the former Soviet Union) and Somalia, the board reported.

The high numbers follow the transfer of claims from the Immigration Department after an amendment to the Immigration Act eliminated an initial hearing stage.

Acceptance rates declined from 1992 figures for all but two of the 10 countries accounting for the most claims heard to completion. The fact that all refugee claims that might have been rejected at the initial hearing are now heard will lower acceptance rates, the board said.