

US Border Patrol Agents Stopping And Boarding Canadian Vessels Near Machias Seal Island

GRAND MANAN, N.B.: At least 10 Canadian fishing boats from New Brunswick have been intercepted by U.S. Border Patrol agents since last week while fishing in waters around a spokesman for the fishermen says.

Laurence Cook, chairman of the advisory board for Lobster Fishing Area 38, said Wednesday that some Canadian vessels were boarded by American agents who asked about possible illegal immigrants.

"There's been a bit of a misunderstanding there somewhere," Cook said in an interview. "They're in international waters, so border patrol shouldn't be boarding Canadian vessels."

Machias Seal Island, which is about 19 kilometres southwest of Grand Manan Island and east of Maine, is in a disputed area known as the Grey Zone, where lobster fishermen from both Canada and the United States have long fished side by side.

However, both Canada and the

United States claim sovereign jurisdiction over the island and the surrounding waters at the mouth of the Bay of Fundy. It's a cross-border dispute that dates back to the American Revolution in the late 1700s.

As lucrative lobster catches have increased in the zone, competition between fishermen has intensified.

"Neither country accepts that there is a Grey Zone," said Stephen Kelly, a research scholar at Duke University in Durham, N.C., and a former American diplomat who served in Canada. "That's created more tension in the area over the last decade."

Kelly said both countries have done very little to assert their claims. "Sometimes doing nothing is better," he said. "But in this case, just because it looks like it's not broken can be very deceiving — especially with our new president in the United States. The last thing Canada wants is for Donald Trump to seize on this as an ex-



Visitors head to Machias Seal Island. The tiny island in the Bay of Fundy is home to the Atlantic puffin as well as Razorbill auk and Common and Arctic terns. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Andrew Vaughan

ample of U.S. sovereignty being challenged."

On Grand Manan, local residents are speaking out about the U.S. intervention, said Cook.

"I guess the comment on the street would be: 'Typical American bullies,'" he said. "They're not happy about it, and they don't think (the Americans) have any

also talking with U.S. agencies, though he did not provide details about the fishermen's allegations or Ottawa's response.

"Canada's sovereignty over the Machias Seal Island and the surrounding waters is long standing and has a strong foundation in international law," Babcock said.

"Until the matter of the boundary is resolved, we will continue to take practical steps with the U.S. to ensure that the area is well managed."

The Grand Manan Fishermen's Association suggested the actions of the U.S. agents may have been routine. "We understand that a few Grand Manan fishermen were approached by the United State Border Services during the month of June. Our understanding is that this was a part of a regular exercise being conducted along the U.S. marine border."

The association said it has enjoyed a respectful and cordial relationship with its U.S. counterparts.

Ontario Says Ottawa Should Pay Afghan Sikhs, Hindus For Border Crossers 'Mess'

TORONTO — The Ontario government says Ottawa is to blame for a housing crisis caused by people crossing the border illegally and should pay 100 per cent of the cost.

A spokesman for Premier Doug Ford says the federal government is encouraging people to cross into Canada illegally and is responsible for the "mess" that has caused. The comments come as Ford prepares to meet with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at the Ontario legislature.

The federal government recently pledged to give Ontario,

Quebec and Manitoba \$50 million to help offset some of the costs incurred due to the influx of asylum seekers illegally crossing the Canada-U.S. border.

Federal Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen has said the money is meant to help address some of the immediate temporary housing needs in those provinces.

Ontario signed an immigration agreement with Ottawa in November of last year.

Last week, Toronto Mayor John Tory said the city can no longer accommodate new waves of refugees and asylum seekers in

its shelter system and needs federal and provincial help dealing with the situation. Tory asked for financial and housing assistance, saying he detailed his requests in an "urgent" letter sent to Ottawa this week.

The number of refugees and asylum claimants using the shelter system in Toronto went from 459 in 2016 — accounting for 11.2 per cent of the total system — to 3,209 as of June 20, 2018 — 45.8 per cent of the system. Some of those people are being housed in hotels and some in college dormitories.

Continued from page 3

Anil Shah, the National Convenor of Canada India Foundation, said, "Our hearts and minds are with the families of the victims, and we hope and pray that they will have the forbearance to face this calamity with equanimity."

The Canadian government should proactively work with the persecuted religious minorities in Afghanistan to prevent any further mass killings of people merely because they have a different belief system, Mr. Shah observed.

WASHINGTON: The United States is calling for "sustained and decisive steps" by Pakistan to bring Taliban leaders to the negotiating table with the Afghan

government.

The militant group has resumed attacks after respecting a brief cease-fire last month.

The top diplomat for South Asia, Alice Wells, has just returned from talks with leaders in both countries. She met Pakistan's powerful army chief Tuesday. She welcomed positive steps by Pakistan and Afghanistan to improve ties, but said Pakistan needs to take political initiatives to help drive an Afghan peace process.

She urged Pakistan to expel Taliban leaders and press them to negotiate with Kabul.

Wells spoke to reporters in Washington Thursday.

Muslim Body And CCLA Obtain Stay Against Quebec 'Burqa' Bill



OTTAWA: The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) have successfully obtained a further stay of section 10 of Quebec's religious neutrality law, commonly known as Bill 62.

Last December, the Quebec Superior Court granted the NCCM and CCLA an interim stay until July 1, 2018, pending the Quebec government's release of official guidelines governing how the restriction on face coverings when giving or receiving public services would work in practice, including the process for granting exemptions for religious reasons.

Following the release of the official guidelines in May, the NCCM and CCLA returned to court last week to argue that the guidelines were inadequate for preventing serious and irreparable harm to Muslim women who choose to veil their faces on the basis of their sincerely-held religious beliefs.

In the judgement granting the stay order, Quebec Superior Court Justice Marc-André Blanchard noted that the section 10 of the law that relates face coverings appeared to be a "violation" of the Canadian and Quebec Charters, which "provide for freedom of conscience and religion".

The stay will remain in effect until such a time as the constitutionality of the law itself has been decided by the Court.

"We welcome the decision to grant a further stay against this law as a victory for religious freedom and human rights in Quebec, and in Canada. Although the constitutional legal challenge is not yet complete, the significance of this decision is not lost on Quebec Muslims, specifically the small number of Muslim women choose to wear the niqab in accordance with their sincerely-held religious belief, and whose everyday activities would have been impacted had this law gone into effect on July 1," says NCCM Executive Director Ihsaan Gardee.

"During this legal challenge, we've exposed this unconstitutional law for what it is and this stay order is a recognition of that reality. We look forward to a full hearing on the merits of case and we welcome the Court's decision which recognizes this law's damaging and irreparable harm to an already vulnerable minority of Muslim women," says CCLA Executive Director Michael Bryant.

The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) is a an advocacy organization that is a leading voice for Muslim civic engagement.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) is a national non-partisan, non-profit organization that works to protect the rights and freedoms of all people in Canada.

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