



## **THE CORNWALL SITUATION: FACT-SHEET**

### **Facts Relating to the Closing of the Cornwall Border-Crossing**

- The Officers did not flee or even indicate they wanted to leave the port on their own initiative, in fact they had lots of food and were fully prepared to bunker-in had the Agency's decision been to stay.
- It was the Agency who took the decision to close the border-crossing at 11:20 that Sunday night (May 31<sup>st</sup>); and with the reality of moves undertaken by the Mohawk Community at that point, there was no other logical decision that could have been taken.
- It is fascinating how others such as Minister Van Loan are being blamed for the situation when in fact it is the following events which led to the office closing.
- The intimidation tactics had, at that point (May 31<sup>st</sup>), escalated from Mohawks (and supporters) gathering around the office and walking in to stare-down the Officers (this went on during the weeks leading up to May 31<sup>st</sup>), to four (4) bonfires burning around the CBSA compound and about 200 Mohawks gathered around the office, many dressed in camouflage with scarves covering their faces, with a bulldozer ready to go. By then the Warriors had made threats through the media that they would swarm the office and disarm the Officers themselves should the Agency proceed with the arming. Ten minutes prior to closing the office, at around 11:10pm on May 31<sup>st</sup>, Chief Thomson, Chief King, and the Chief of the Akwesasne Police had together come into the CBSA building to announce that they could, from this point, no longer ensure the safety of those who would choose to stay.
- Given the situation was now on a certain path of violence, the only rational decision that could have been made was taken; to shut down the office. Agency management informed the staff that they were to get ready to leave, pack their things and shut systems down as though they were never coming back.
- The Officers had to leave by the US-side, meaning they had to go home to their families via a friendly third country that night, having been subjected to what can only be described as a concerted act of terrorism.
- As the Office was shutting-down, yells of victory erupted from the gathered native crowd which was followed by a pow-wow style celebration that included rising the Mohawk flag up the CBSA flag pole. But then silence settled-in with the realization that this so called "victory" meant that they had effectively and indefinitely interrupted the service allowing the free-flow of traffic between Canada and the United-States.

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**Other Important Facts:**

- Non-native law-enforcement officers have been working on reserves with the protection of a side-arm for decades; the side-arm training currently being used by the CBSA is the highest in the country (RCMP Standard).
- Arming Canada's Front-Line Customs & Immigration Officers is a decision that was responsibly taken subsequent to many independent risk-assessment and risk management experts as well as a Parliamentary Committee all concluding that arming was now a needed requirement. That the Conservative Government chose to do so prior to there being a body count at the border is something that should, if anything, be applauded.

*Note: The most predominant of the abovementioned independent risk-assessment reports, "The Northgate Report", can be found at:*

<http://www.ciu-sdi.ca/english/publications/reports/Other/Northgate.pdf>

*The Parliamentary Report being referred to is entitled "Borderline Insecure" and it can be found at:*

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/38/1/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/defe-e/rep-e/repintjun05-e.htm>

- It is completely untrue that the CBSA's side-arm initiative comes with additional search powers or authorities which would see the number of personal searches increase in any way shape or form. The initiative's only goal and extremely important purpose is that if an Officer was ever subjected to a level of violence that would justify defending himself or herself with their side-arm, for example if someone were to open fire on them, they would at least have a chance of making it back home to their families at the end of that particular shift.
- It is important to underscore the fact that the very high-end majority of Akwesasne residents get along extremely well with CBSA staff; these residents understanding that the Officers have a job they must perform and that they (the Officers) have nothing to do and don't even have influence over the issues which the community may have with governments such as land-claims or sovereignty matters. That being said, there are some members of this native community who make it their mission to be abusive with the Officers by being verbally aggressive and repeatedly reminding them that they are on Mohawk land. These individuals will usually not comply with the Officer's questioning (point-of-entry questioning is the same for every traveler entering Canada and is solely aimed at determining admissibility); these are of course the situations which tend to degenerate.
- It must also be said that the Cornwall border-crossing is by far the one which has seen the most community/Officer tensions over the decades. It has been the stage of the most dangerous situations which include it being shot at numerous times (it was in fact accordingly fitted with bullet-proof glass); it has been the scene of a hostage taking by Mohawks, it's officers have had red long-arm scope lasers pointed at them while working nights, and the list goes on.

- Believing that the residents of Akwesasne ever had a chance of winning this stand-off implies that Canadians would be prepared to accept that the country's smuggling epicentre would have the only un-armed law-enforcement Officers in the country working there as a result of an appeal from that community.
  
- While the closing of the Cornwall border-crossing is currently generating most of the attention, it's important not to lose sight of what Cornwall is usually and notoriously known for: the smuggling. All intelligence reports of the recent years conclude with the same caution which is that the majority of smuggling corridors which are currently being used for people, gun, drug, and tobacco smuggling, could also easily accommodate smuggling requests from terrorist groups. In fact, given scruple levels tend to be non-existent amidst those who assume these types of organized-crime operations, such requests would usually be accommodated without any form of hesitation or question.
  
- Akwesasne's Cornwall border-crossing used to handle an average of between 3000 and 4000 travelers a day with the majority (about 70%) being residents of the reserve itself; the crossing also used to handle an average of between 200 and 300 trucks per day.