

Customs and Border Agent Holds Boy Scout at Gunpoint, Troop Leader Demands Answers

A Boy Scout troop from the nation's heartland is demanding answers, and a U.S. senator is expressing outrage after a group of scouts was detained by U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents, with one youth allegedly held at gunpoint.

Jim Fox, leader of the Mid-Iowa Boy Scout Troop 111, said the incident occurred earlier this month at a checkpoint along the Alaska-Canada border. The scouts and their leaders were on a 21-day trek from Iowa to Alaska—a trip that had been in the planning stages for three years.

As their vans were moving through a checkpoint into the United States, one of the scouts snapped a photograph. Agents stopped the van and ordered all the passengers to get out. They told the underage photographer that he had committed a federal crime. It was unclear which agency with the Department of Homeland Security's CBP agency was involved in the incident.

"The agent immediately confiscated his camera, informed him he would be arrested, fined possibly \$10,000 and 10 years in prison," Fox told Des Moines television station KCCI.

During the search, one of the scouts tried to retrieve a bag from the roof carrier. When he turned around, Fox said an agent had a loaded pistol pointed at the boy.

"He heard a snap of the holster, turns around, and here's this agent, both hands on a loaded pistol, pointing at the young man's head," Fox told the television station.

The scoutmaster wrote a detailed account of the incident on his Facebook page. He said he tried to watch the agents search

the van but was ordered to return to his vehicle. An agent followed him and told the youngsters "that the next one to leave the van would be handcuffed and detained."

"The agent in charge informed me of the potential charges against (the) scout and informed me it is a violation of federal law for any American to take a picture of a federal agent or any federal building," Fox wrote.

Fox said he and another member of the troop were interrogated by agents--forced to answer questions about their background.

They also wanted to know why the Boy Scouts were hauling "excessive amounts of lighters, matches and knives," Fox said. After a lengthy delay, the Scouts were released without any charges being filed.

"The boys were unnecessarily frightened and intimidated," Fox wrote. "When do we Americans decide enough is enough? The TSA and border guards are a valuable asset to the safety of this country, but to have such Gestapo tactics against a teenage scout is uncalled for."

Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, agrees.

"It's outrageous that a border patrol agent would point a gun at a boy scout just for taking a picture," he told the television station. "It just doesn't make sense."

The senator's office said they are looking into the matter.

Robert Hooper, the scout executive for the Mid-Iowa Council of the BSA, told me they, too, are upset and disturbed by the allegations.

"The guys were in scout uniforms," he said. "I would like to know what caused this to happen. It does sound pretty extreme."

Indeed it does. It's not like they were attempting to cross

into the United States illegally.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection said they've had a chance to investigate, and they can't find anything out of the ordinary.

"CBP takes any allegations of wrongdoing very seriously," read their official statement. "CBP's review of this group's inspection, including video footage review indicates that our officer did not un-holster or handle his weapon as stated in the allegation. The review revealed nothing out of the ordinary. We have reached out to the Boy Scout troop for additional information in reference to the allegation. The video footage has been referred to CBP Internal Affairs for further review."

So, what we have here is an old-fashioned case of he said, he said—or to be more accurate—the Boy Scouts said, the feds said.

In cases like this, the quickest way to determine who is being truthful is to look at the video. So I emailed U.S. Customs and Border Protection and officially requested a copy of the video.

My request was denied.

I also asked for a copy of the statute that criminalizes Photography 101. I've yet to receive a reply.

Fox is still fired up over how his scouts were treated, and I can't say I blame him.

"This was an illegal search and intimidation of Americans returning to their home country," he said.

So let's review, good readers.

While hordes of illegal immigrants are stampeding across our southern border unimpeded, federal agents along our northern

border detained and harassed a group of law-abiding American Boy Scouts.

I wonder what kind of merit badge they'll get for that?

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