**Maine man jailed for floating to New Brunswick on air mattress**

**John Bennett, 25, had been denied entry into Canada because of mischief charges**

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Motorists from St. Stephen, N.B., wait to go through U.S. Customs at Calais, Maine in this 2006 file photo. Officials say a 25-year-old American man denied entry to Canada at this border crossing later tried a different route: using an air mattress to float across the nearby St. Croix River. (Robert F. Bukaty/Associated Press)

A young U.S. resident, driven by what he said was a desire to protect his Canadian girlfriend, used an air mattress to float across the St. Croix River in southeastern Maine and illegally enter New Brunswick late Wednesday, a Crown prosecutor says.

Twenty-five-year-old John Bennett told police he had earlier tried to cross the border at Calais, Maine, but customs officers denied him entry because he was facing mischief charges in the U.S., lawyer Peter Thorn said Thursday.

"He was told by the officer that until he got those cleared up, he wouldn't be admitted into Canada," the prosecutor said.

Bennett was sentenced Thursday to two months in jail.

Thorn said the provincial court in Saint John, N.B., was told Bennett purchased an air mattress at the local Walmart, inflated it and later used a wooden board to paddle across to an area near Ledge Road, southeast of St. Stephen, N.B.

However, a local resident spotted the man, and he was later arrested by the RCMP and charged with failing to appear at the border crossing as required by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

"He was wet and carrying his boots ... [and] walking towards the town," said Thorn, a lawyer representing the federal Public Prosecution Service of Canada.

Before Bennett pleaded guilty to the charge Thursday, he told police he had to reach his pregnant girlfriend in Canada because he was worried for her safety, Thorn said.

"He said she had an ex-boyfriend who was threatening her, but that hasn't been confirmed by the other party," he said.

Bennett has no fixed address but is believed to live in Calais, Maine.

The prosecutor said he had heard of people swimming across the river before, but he said the air mattress method was a novel approach.

As for the judge hearing the case, Thorn said he told the accused: "Pardon the pun, but it seems to me you wanted to get there, come hell or high water."

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:**

1. What law did John Bennett actually break, according to this article?
2. John Bennett received two months in jail for this crime. What are the dangers of people crossing borders illegally? List as many as you can below.
3. How might any of these dangers affect YOU, personally? Explain yourself clearly.