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# Americans Held After Crossing Bering Strait on Jet Skis

By Ken Martinez

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A picture from the jet ski team's Facebook page showing members after their landing on a Chukotka beach.

Six Americans who crossed the Bering Strait on jet skis as part of a television reality show are being held by Chukotka authorities for purportedly lacking valid travel documents.

"We want to leave. They won't let us leave," expedition leader Steven Moll said in a video posted on YouTube.

"They're trying to take us around town and show us museums and other little things, but all we really want to do is get some fuel and head back to the United States," a frustrated-sounding Moll said. "This is ridiculous. This is Third-World [expletive]. But we're safe, and hopefully we'll be home in the United States soon."

The jet ski crew was detained on the first leg of a nearly 10,000-kilometer journey from

Nome, Alaska to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, via Russia. But after arriving at the Chukotka coast Friday, the men were greeted at the shoreline by tanks and armed guards, Moll's wife, Annette, told the Sacramento Bee newspaper in Monday's issue.

The men have been able to communicate through several text messages, videos and phone calls, saying they were in good health but being shuffled from building to building in the Chukotka town of Lavrentiya.

"He sounds scared," Moll's wife was quoted as saying. "I know he's trying to make us not so worried here because it's been such an emotional time. But I can tell he's kind of scared."

The jet ski expedition had crossed the strait while filming a reality series called "Dangerous Waters," founded and produced by Moll.

The group made a successful 7,250-kilometer journey from Seattle across the strait to Russia last year for a first-season trip that hasn't been broadcast yet, according to the show's Facebook page.

With that experience, it was able to attract additional sponsors and mount the more ambitious trek to Vietnam.

Attempts to contact Moll and his team via Facebook were unsuccessful Monday.

Moll's wife said that the men were being kept in a "gymlike area" and had been allowed to keep their phones, but that authorities had taken their documents. The men said a guard has been stationed to protect their jet skis, and they have been allowed to check on them and make repairs. But they are being kept under close watch and cannot leave.

"The weather is great to cross the Bering Strait again. The whole crew is nervous about crossing the Bering Strait again, because that's a body of water that can just kill you," Moll said in the video message, which is dated Saturday.

The group sounded more upbeat in a handful of Twitter messages after their detention Friday.

"Russian Military is helping the team at this point, we are being finger printed and charged with entering a military facility. All good," one tweet said.

The last tweet was dated Sunday.

Annette Moll said her husband was waiting to appear before a judge and could face prosecution or fines.

She added that she was suspicious about authorities' claims that the men did not have the proper documentation, saying they had taken extra precautions for the trip, though it is unclear whether the men were aware that special permission is required in addition to a Russian visa to enter the Chukotka region.

Chukotka officials could not be immediately reached for comment late Monday afternoon Moscow time, which is early Tuesday in the Far East region.

The State Department said it is aware of the situation and is monitoring it, the Sacramento Bee reported.

Moll is not the first adventurer to find himself in trouble in Chukotka. In 2006, a Chukotka court ruled to deport British adventurer Karl Bushby and his American travel companion for violating border regulations after they walked across the frozen Bering Strait from the United States.

Bushby was later allowed back into Russia to attempt to complete his multi-year mission to walk around the world, though he still has not completed the journey.

In some cases, deportees can be barred from re-entering the country for five years.

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