# British Border Force rescues migrants after French warship fails to act in Channel waters



A recent incident in the Channel migrant crisis has raised fresh concerns about the handling of asylum seekers attempting to cross from France to the UK. On Tuesday, a British Border Force vessel had to intervene to rescue a dinghy carrying dozens of migrants that had broken down within French territorial waters, according to witnesses.

The dinghy reportedly slowed down and eventually came to a stop approximately half a mile to a mile inside French waters, with some passengers signalling distress. However, a French warship that had been shadowing the dinghy did not take action despite these signals, leading to criticism of French authorities for failing to uphold their responsibility under bilateral agreements. The agreement mandates that French rescue vessels are responsible for migrants in distress in French waters, including returning them to the French shore.

The Border Force vessel, named Ranger, moved into French waters to carry out the rescue. After assisting the stranded dinghy, Ranger continued further into French waters to collect more migrants attempting to make the crossing that morning. A witness described the situation as a "farce," highlighting that the UK had invested around £490 million to curb migrant crossings, yet the French response appeared inadequate.

A conversation between the vessels was captured on audio by the Daily Express. The French warship asked Ranger about its intentions with the dinghy, to which the Border Force replied it would hand the migrants over to the UK Coastguard. The French vessel responded with thanks for the cooperation.

The incident has sparked condemnation from UK political figures. Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp told the Daily Express that it was a scandal for British vessels to be rescuing migrants in French waters, a task that should fall to the French authorities. He asserted that French forces should intercept migrant boats and return them to France. Philp also suggested that migrants arriving in the UK should be swiftly relocated to countries like Rwanda to deter illegal crossings.

Nigel Farage, leader of Reform UK, echoed these sentiments, criticising the French navy for escorting migrant boats close to the UK border only for British authorities to then pick them up. Farage described the current situation as "outrageous," emphasising that only his party would stop the migrant crossings.

Kevin Saunders, former Chief Immigration Officer for Border Force at Calais, explained that the established protocol is for French authorities to operate on their side of the Channel while Border Force manages the UK side. Over time, he said, it has become common for the French to escort migrant boats to the mid-Channel point, where they are transferred to British vessels or the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI). He expressed surprise at the latest development where Border Force Ranger was requested to enter French territorial waters for rescue operations, indicating a regression in French enforcement.

This event comes amid ongoing tension and scrutiny over the management of the Channel migrant crisis, which has seen nearly 11,000 migrants cross so far this year. The effectiveness of joint UK-French efforts remains under question, with debates continuing on the best approach to control the crossings and manage asylum processing.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c2lk950y1gpo> - This report details the rescue operation where the Border Force Ranger saved 13 people from a sinking boat in French waters, marking the first time a British vessel returned migrants to France.
3. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/07/18/border-force-takes-migrants-back-france-channel-rescue/?utmsource=email> - This article discusses the joint Anglo-French operation where the Border Force Ranger assisted in rescuing migrants in French waters and returned them to Calais, emphasizing the cooperation between the UK and France.
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5. <https://www.apnews.com/article/bf7161771b61116a726d2209066ac192> - This article reports on a tragic incident where at least three migrants drowned while attempting to cross the English Channel, underscoring the dangers of overcrowded boats and the challenges faced by authorities.
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7. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/2048887/Migrants-France-UK-asylum-boats-dinghies> - Please view link - unable to able to access data