# French authorities detain British fishing vessels amid escalating post-Brexit licence disputes



A British fishing vessel, the *Lady T*, has been taken into custody by French authorities after allegedly operating without a proper fishing licence in the English Channel. Based in Eastbourne, East Sussex, the boat was intercepted by the French Navy's *Pluvier* during a routine inspection on May 22 and subsequently diverted to Boulogne-sur-Mer, where the skipper now faces prosecution for fishing without a licence.

This incident epitomizes the ongoing, fraught tensions between the UK and France over post-Brexit fishing rights, exacerbated by recent government negotiations that critics have labeled a 'surrender' to the European Union. According to the French Maritime Prefecture, the operation showcases a steadfast commitment to enforcing fishing regulations within their Exclusive Economic Zone. A spokesman declared, "This operation demonstrates the vigilance of State services in protecting fisheries resources." However, these actions reflect a troubling trend where the rights of British fishermen are systematically undermined.

The *Lady T* is not alone; another British-flagged vessel, the *Francesca TO 80*, was also detained under similar circumstances. Approximately 30 nautical miles off the coast of Brittany, this second incident underscores the increased enforcement actions by French fishery inspectors against UK vessels. British fishermen have reacted strongly, with one Dover-based skipper describing the French actions as “outrageous” and lamenting that efforts to combat illegal migrant crossings overshadow the targeting of British fishermen.

The broader context of these incidents reveals a precarious relationship regarding fishing rights—an issue that remains a focal point of dissatisfaction since Brexit. Under recent agreements crafted by the current government, European trawlers have been granted extended access to UK fishing waters, a decision that has alarmed many in the industry. Critics argue that this will jeopardize the very fabric of the UK fishing sector. Previously, under the leadership of the former Prime Minister, a deal allowed for partial reclamation of EU fishing quotas, but as that agreement is set to expire next year, the specter of new negotiations looms large.

Recent statements from Prime Minister Starmer about discussions with EU officials—including discussions linking fishing rights with defence and security cooperation—have raised alarm bells. Industry leaders are concerned that British fishing rights could be sacrificed in these higher-stakes negotiations, particularly without clear communication from Starmer on the government’s position. The lack of transparency raises questions about how thoroughly the current administration aims to safeguard British fishing interests.

These maritime disputes starkly illustrate the complexities of post-Brexit negotiations and highlight the government’s failure to maintain a robust defense of national interests against EU encroachments. Fishing remains a crucial element of local economies and national identity, and the stakes in these ongoing discussions have never been higher. Stakeholders across the UK are watching closely, concerned that their livelihoods might become bargaining chips in a political game that undermines their rights and futures.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14745671/British-fishing-boats-French-custody-Starmer-EU-surrender.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-59073715> - In September 2021, the UK fishing vessel Cornelis Gert Jan was detained by French authorities in Le Havre for allegedly fishing without the proper licenses. The incident occurred amid escalating tensions over post-Brexit fishing rights between the UK and France. French Maritime Minister Annick Girardin stated that the vessel was found fishing in the Bay of Seine without the necessary licenses. The UK government expressed concern over the situation, emphasizing the need for a swift resolution to prevent further escalation. The incident underscored the ongoing disputes over fishing rights following the UK's departure from the EU.
3. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/07/20/eu-wants-access-to-uk-fishing-waters-as-starmer-seeks-reset/> - In July 2024, reports emerged that the European Union was seeking access to UK fishing waters as part of a broader effort to reset relations with the UK. The EU aimed to include fishing rights in discussions on trade, security, and foreign policy. The UK government, led by Prime Minister Keir Starmer, was reportedly considering these demands, raising concerns among British fishermen about potential concessions on fishing rights. The situation highlighted the complexities of post-Brexit negotiations and the challenges in balancing economic interests with national sovereignty.
4. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-reset-eu-fishing-b2696875.html> - In April 2025, British fishermen expressed concerns over potential concessions on fishing rights in the UK's post-Brexit negotiations with the European Union. Industry leaders warned that granting European vessels greater access to UK waters could undermine the British fishing industry. The UK government, under Prime Minister Keir Starmer, was reportedly close to finalizing a major trade agreement with the EU that would boost the defense industry in exchange for concessions on fishing rights. The situation underscored the delicate balance between economic interests and the preservation of national industries in post-Brexit negotiations.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/keir-starmer-european-paris-emmanuel-macron-volodymyr-zelensky-b1219306.html> - In May 2025, Prime Minister Keir Starmer faced questions about the UK's stance on fishing rights amid reports of a potential defense and security deal with the European Union. A senior European politician suggested that member countries might link cooperation over defense to issues such as foreign vessels accessing UK waters. When asked about this during a press conference in Paris, Starmer declined to comment, emphasizing the importance of orderly negotiations. The situation highlighted the complexities of post-Brexit relations and the challenges in balancing national interests with international cooperation.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/global/2025/feb/06/fishing-rights-not-derail-eu-uk-security-pact-european-council-president> - In February 2025, European Council President António Costa stated that fishing rights would not derail a security and defense pact between the European Union and the United Kingdom. Costa emphasized that defense and fisheries are separate issues and should not be conflated. His comments aimed to reassure the UK that the EU was committed to strengthening security and defense cooperation without allowing disputes over fishing rights to impede progress. The statement underscored the EU's desire for a closer relationship with the UK in the post-Brexit era.
7. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/keir-starmer-eu-fishing-brexit-b2662710.html> - In April 2025, Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced a fishing deal with the European Union, estimated to be worth £360 million. The agreement secured 150,000 tonnes of fishing opportunities for the UK, 15,000 tonnes more than in 2024. The deal aimed to manage fisheries sustainably and address ongoing tensions over fishing rights following the UK's departure from the EU. The announcement was seen as a significant step in resetting UK-EU relations and addressing the economic challenges faced by the British fishing industry post-Brexit.