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BC suspends professor after arrest in Canada

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JULY 24, 2012

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A Boston College assistant professor faces charges in Canada after he allegedly threatened to bomb ore mines this month during a geological research trip with five students near the remote Quebec-Labrador border, officials said.

Dominic Papineau also faces charges of possessing a hunting rifle without proper permits and possessing a “small quantity” of marijuana, Quebec authorities said.

BC has suspended Papineau, 35, pending the outcome of the criminal proceedings, BC spokesman Jack Dunn said.

Papineau said Monday that he is sure he will be exonerated.

“It’s totally bogus,” he said. “The idea of blowing up the mine, I was saying that as a joke. I was kidding. Someone misinterpreted what I said. . . . I said a bad thing at the wrong time.”

Papineau said that the gun was for protection from wildlife and that he had not realized the permits required to carry guns in Canada have changed since he last lived there more than a decade ago.

Papineau, a native of Quebec who joined BC’s earth and environmental sciences department in January 2011, was traveling with four BC students and a student from another school to the McGill University Subarctic Research Station in northern Quebec, Dunn said Monday.

On July 3, during the multiday field expedition, Papineau was arrested by the Quebec Provincial Police, said Rene Verret, spokesman for the provincial prosecutor. He said Papineau was among a group protesting a government-led project called Plan Nord, which calls for investing \$80 billion of public and private funds to develop natural resources in the area over the next 25 years.

The research station where Papineau and the students were staying is in Schefferville, a town established in the mid-1950s by mining companies.

Papineau’s research work includes collecting geological samples that contain carbon remains, such as iron ore, Dunn said.

The students with Papineau became worried by his behavior, Verret said, citing police and court documents. “He is accused of threatening to bomb or damage mines in northern Quebec.”

Papineau had an initial court appearance July 4 and is scheduled to appear again on Sept. 5 to enter a plea.

According to Papineau’s website, he has done field research in Canada and other parts of the world. He has previously worked as a visiting scientist, research associate, and postdoctoral fellow at the Carnegie Institution of Washington Geophysical Laboratory, according to BC’s website.

He also worked as a research assistant at the University of Colorado Boulder, where he received a doctoral degree, the website said. He earned a bachelor’s from McGill.

Papineau has no prior criminal record in Canada, officials in that country said.

Dunn said that the professor took BC students on a similar trip to Canada last summer that went “without incident.”

“By all accounts, his erratic behavior is uncharacteristic of him,” he said.

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