

Canadian businessmen caught in U.A.E. visa flap now back home

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Two Canadian businessmen who were caught up in the deepening diplomatic spat between Ottawa and the U.A.E. are back home in Toronto.

Darius Mosun and his business partner were stuck at the Abu Dhabi airport for almost 20 hours after confusion over new visa requirements left them unable to enter the Arab country.

"It feels good to be home, I missed my children and my wife," an exhausted Mosun told The Canadian Press as he waited for his bags at Toronto's Pearson Airport Saturday evening.

The U.A.E.'s new visa rules were enforced in January, a few months after Canada denied extended landing rights to the Persian Gulf country's two major airlines.

The U.A.E. also evicted Canada from Camp Mirage, which had been an important staging ground for the military mission in Afghanistan.

Mosun and his colleague were initially able to enter the U.A.E. last week with a visa acquired in Canada, but were stopped when trying to re-enter the country after a side trip to Saudi Arabia.

U.A.E. officials told the pair their visas were only valid for a single entry, even though that rule wasn't written on the document itself.

Mosun, who lost a meeting with an important client due to the visa mix-up, said he'd like to see Ottawa take steps to protect Canadian businesses caught in the diplomatic fray.

"I hope that our government is doing all it can to rebuild it's good faith and its relationship with our friends in the U.A.E."

The 42-year-old, who runs an architectural fabrication and design business, plans to reach out to officials in Ottawa next week to urge politicians to strengthen their relations with the Arab country.

Mosun, who made trips to the U.A.E. before the new visa rules took effect, also said Canadians were now being singled out at the Emirati airport for secondary screening which included retina-scans.

"It's kind of embarrassing, kind of demoralizing," he said.

The Ottawa-U.A.E. spat made headlines last week when the Gulf News newspaper reported that relations between the two countries were at an "all time low" following comments Prime Minister Stephen Harper made questioning the reliability of the Arab country as an ally.

The article quoted an unnamed U.A.E. government official who said the U.A.E. deserved an apology from Canada for its "vitriolic attack."

The U.A.E. is Canada's 12th largest investor at \$4.4 billion.



Toronto businessman Darius Mosun ended up spending the night at the Abu Dhabi airport after running afoul of the United Arab Emirates' new visa requirements for Canadians.

Colin McConnell/TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO