

Press release: New curbs on bogus holiday sickness claims

The rules will fix the legal costs that can be claimed in package holiday sickness claims, closing a loophole which the travel industry believes has helped fuel a rising number of claims. This claims epidemic, the industry fears, is raising the prospect of higher travel costs for British tourists.

The rules will come into effect in the coming weeks – ensuring the curbs will be in place before the next summer holiday season.

Up to now, legal costs in overseas package travel claims have not been controlled, which has meant costs for tour operators can spiral out of all proportion to the damages claimed. This has led many operators to settle holiday sickness claims out of court, rather than challenge them.

Industry experts believe this has been a major factor in a rise in claims which has sparked concerns that Britain's reputation overseas is being damaged and that British tourists will face higher package holiday prices.

Justice Minister Rory Stewart said:

Claiming compensation for being sick on holiday, when you haven't been, is fraud.

This damages the travel industry and risks driving up costs for holidaymakers.

This behaviour also tarnishes the reputation of British people abroad. That is why we are introducing measures to crack down on those who engage in this dishonest practice.

According to the travel industry, there has been a substantial increase in claims, which some have estimated to be as high as 500% in recent years.

While uncontrolled costs have discouraged tour operators from challenging claims, they have also emboldened claims management companies to encourage tourists to pursue holiday sickness compensation, with touts reportedly operating in European resorts.

To help tackle this, Ministers asked the Civil Procedure Rule Committee, which is responsible for setting rules on legal costs, to look at bringing package holiday claims within the fixed recoverable costs regime. This would mean tour operators would pay prescribed costs depending on the value of the claim and length of proceedings, making defence costs predictable and

assisting tour operators to challenge bogus claims.

The Committee has now agreed to this rule change – the rules will be updated on Monday, and will come into effect shortly. More detail will also be published on the Government's approach, alongside its response to a recent call for evidence.

The Government is committed to tackling the country's compensation culture, and recently introduced a Civil Liability Bill which includes measures to reduce the unacceptably high number of whiplash claims and allow insurers to cut premiums.

Other reforms include the forthcoming ban on cold calling and tougher regulation of claims management companies.

Notes to editors

The Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) reports a 500% increase from around 5,000 claims in 2013 to around 35,000 claims in 2016. This is despite the fact that travel industry data on the global trend for reported incidence of illness in resorts has actually declined in recent years.

Since October 2017, four couples were either sentenced or ordered to pay significant legal costs by the court after making false package holiday sickness claims. These cases were private prosecutions brought by tour operators Thomas Cook, TUI and Red Sea Holidays.

Press release: PM call with President Trump: 12 April 2018

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

"The Prime Minister spoke to President Trump about Syria this evening.

"They agreed that the Assad regime had established a pattern of dangerous behaviour in relation to the use of chemical weapons.

"They agreed it was vital that the use of chemical weapons did not go unchallenged, and on the need to deter the further use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime.

"They agreed to keep working closely together on the international response."

Press release: Cabinet meeting: 12 April 2018

This afternoon Cabinet met and received an update on the attack against innocent civilians in Douma, Syria, on Saturday.

The Prime Minister said it was a shocking and barbaric act which killed up to 75 people, including children, in the most appalling and inhumane way.

Cabinet agreed that the Assad regime has a track record of the use of chemical weapons and it is highly likely that the regime is responsible for Saturday's attack.

The Prime Minister said it was a further example of the erosion of international law in relation to the use of chemical weapons, which was deeply concerning to us all.

Following a discussion in which every member present made a contribution, Cabinet agreed it was vital that the use of chemical weapons did not go unchallenged.

Cabinet agreed on the need to take action to alleviate humanitarian distress and to deter the further use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime.

Cabinet agreed the Prime Minister should continue to work with allies in the United States and France to coordinate an international response.

Speech: We must stand up for an effective non-proliferation regime

Thank you very much Mr President. Many thanks indeed to our Bolivian colleague for his briefing and the work of his Committee. We welcome the new coordinators and may I say at the start that we were very pleased to be paired with Equatorial Guinea in terms of capacity building.

Mr President, 1540 was the first subject I worked on when I came to the Security Council ten years ago, my first time here, so I am very pleased to have opportunity to talk about it today and to be able to say that for the United Kingdom, the 1540 Committee is a vital component of the international order. We need to empower it to fulfil its mandate. We need to support it to the hilt.

Mr President, as a number of us have said this week already, we risk seeing a

situation that the Council should dread: that chemical and biological weapons become a routine part of fighting and regrettably, we have been confronted in very recent times by multiple incidents of the use of weapons of mass destruction by non-state actors. The UN Joint Investigative Mechanism found Da'esh used mustard gas on at least two occasions in Syria. There are multiple instances of mustard gas use by Da'esh in Iraq. In Australia, a planned chemical terrorism attack was thwarted in July last year. These incidents clearly exemplify why the 1540 Committee and its work to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons by non-state actors is so important.

These events, Mr. President, are awful enough. Yet in acts of unbelievable irresponsibility, those risks have been exacerbated by the use of weapons of mass destruction by state actors. The chemical weapons attacks in Douma, the attempted murders in Salisbury are the most recent instances but we also have the assassination of Kim Jong Nam in Malaysia and the horror of Khan Sheikoun a little over a year ago.

Mr President, I take this opportunity to say that in respect of Salisbury and the invitation from this Council to keep members updated, we have requested a Security Council meeting next week where we would like to brief on the outcome of the OPCW findings. It is a worrisome pattern this state use of WMD and it clearly undermines our collective efforts to deter and eradicate the use of these weapons by state and non-state actors alike.

We very strongly support the work to increase states capacity and we are encouraged that there are now only 13 non-reporting states. Any non-reporting is troubling but it is good number is going down. And as I say, we were delighted to be paired with Equatorial Guinea and provide support.

But it is clear that we stand on the cusp of a nightmare –where weapons of mass destruction are used with impunity. Where our citizens live in real fear of an indiscriminate attack at any time and without warning. It is not enough just to condemn this. We need to find a way to take meaningful action and ensure that there are meaningful consequences for perpetrators. We have all benefitted from the international order that has kept us safe since the end of World War II. It behooves all of us, Mr President, to make every effort to uphold this international architecture.

It is clear that not all countries share this view and we have talked about that several times this week so I just want to say that in respect of this particular Committee 1540, there is one Council member who has sought at every opportunity, to slow progress and dilute the substance of every proposal whether this is Programme of Work deadlines, calls to action and efforts to take progress forward, all of these have sadly been consistently been watered down and the Panel of Experts has even been prevented from travelling. Mr President, if we are serious about dealing with the threats that this Committee was set up counter then this state of affairs can't continue.

Since last February the 1540 Committee has met formally only once and the actions agreed in the 2017 Programme of Work have barely made progress. That

means also that the commitments made in the relatively modest Resolution 2325 have not been fulfilled. The new Programme of Work has only just been agreed, two months later than legally mandated and in these two months, the Committee was left without a clear steer of objectives and activities to pursue.

Mr President, I cannot think of any legitimate reason why any country would want to affect the work of the 1540 Committee adversely in this way and I appeal to everybody round the table to redouble efforts so that we have an ambitious programme of work for the Committee. We must stand up for the universal norms and standards we have spent decades building to create an effective and powerful non-proliferation regime whether that deals with state actors or it deals with non-state actors.

Thank you very much Mr President.

Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on attempted missile attack against Saudi Arabia

I was deeply concerned by yesterday's multiple Houthi missile launches and attacks from Yemen at Saudi Arabia, threatening densely populated civilian areas and commercial infrastructure, including in Riyadh, for the fourth time in five months. We will be calling on the United Nations to investigate how ballistic missiles found their way into Yemen in contravention of UN Security Council Resolutions.

Those responsible for launching these missiles – and their backers – must cease these dangerous and provocative actions. A return to political dialogue remains vital to ensuring an end to the conflict in Yemen for the sake of the Yemeni people and regional security. These missile strikes and attacks undermine diplomatic efforts towards peace. We stand shoulder to shoulder with Saudi Arabia in the face of such serious national security threats.