

News story: Tougher laser misuse laws come into force

- new penalties for those targeting lasers at vehicle operators come into force today
- laws seek to protect passengers and operators from growing concern of lasers
- 5 years in prison and unlimited fines now an option for worst offenders

New laws introducing tough penalties for people who target vehicles including train, planes, cars and boats with lasers come into force today (10 July 2018).

The Laser Misuse (Vehicles) Act means that offenders will face much tougher penalties of up to 5 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both.

The act also expands the law to protect air traffic controllers carrying out important flight navigation work to keep people safe.

And police and law enforcement now have more powers to catch and prosecute offenders as there is no longer a need to prove intention to endanger a vehicle.

Baroness Sugg, Aviation Minister, said:

Lasers, used recklessly, can have very serious, potentially fatal consequences. This government has toughened up the law to crack down on this dangerous behaviour.

These new laws offer greater protection for operators and passengers alike against irresponsible and reckless laser use.

The tough new legislation was introduced in December and latest figures show the number of laser aviation incidents fell in March to the lowest levels since 2009.

Head of Flight Safety at BALPA, Dr Rob Hunter said:

The public needs to recognise that lasers are not toys and shining one at an aircraft endangers all those on board and anyone on the ground.

The police now have greater powers, and anyone caught could face 5 years in jail.

This legislation removes the need for police officers to establish proof of intention to endanger so people will find it much harder

to hide behind the claim they 'did it by accident'.

If you have bought a laser for your kids or have one that you don't really need, we suggest you take the batteries out and throw it away.

It's not worth you, or someone close to you, getting a criminal record for the sake of what is mistakenly believed to be a toy.

[Press release: Prime Minister's meeting with Chancellor Kurz of Austria: 9 July 2018](#)

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister welcomed Chancellor Kurz of Austria for dinner at Downing Street this evening.

Their warm and constructive conversation touched on the Chancellor's priorities for Austria's presidency of the EU, Brexit negotiations, migration and the NATO summit.

The Prime Minister gave an update on the UK's Brexit negotiating position and advised that the UK would be publishing a white paper on the UK's future relationship with the EU on Thursday. She urged the EU to give this serious consideration.

Chancellor Kurz noted that a good UK-EU relationship was in the interests of both sides.

On wider issues, the leaders also agreed it was important to work together to tackle illegal migration to Europe. Chancellor Kurz advised that this would be a focus of the informal EU Council which he would host in Salzburg in September. The two leaders also touched on NATO ahead of the Summit in Brussels on Wednesday and on the importance of building ties between the UK and Austria in the digital field.

They closed the dinner by looking ahead to the Western Balkans Summit that the Prime Minister will host with EU and Western Balkan leaders tomorrow. They agreed that the stability and prosperity of the region was a shared priority for the UK and Austria.

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[Press release: PM reveals package of measures to promote a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic Western Balkans](#)

Prime Minister Theresa May today announces a package of measures to help the Western Balkans prosper by improving the collective security and economic

stability of the region.

The Prime Minister will welcome the six Western Balkan leaders to London today, alongside other European figures such as German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and the Polish Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, for the 5th annual Western Balkans Summit under the Berlin Process.

The Berlin Process, established in 2014, has already achieved a great deal in the region – advancing the economic integration, building energy and transport links, and forging connections between civil society and young people.

The package announced today will complement this progress, helping build a more peaceful, prosperous and democratic Western Balkans.

It will help the region to address complex security challenges, particularly around serious and organised crime and drug smuggling, which in turn will help prevent illicit activity on the streets in the UK.

Organised Crime Groups from the Western Balkans have a significant nationwide presence in the UK. UK cooperation with the region and European partners has previously delivered positive results, including bringing down a crime network which was estimated to have imported an average of more than 8,000kg of cocaine a year into the UK, with an estimated street value of £800m.

Encouraged by these results and recognising the importance of the Western Balkans, the Prime Minister wants to go further to strengthen the security and economic integrity of the region.

Prime Minister, Theresa May said:

I am proud to host this year's Western Balkans Summit, bringing together leaders from across the region with European partners to look at how we can ensure the economic stability and collective security of the Western Balkans.

For history shows that a stable and secure Western Balkans region means a more stable and secure Europe. We are leaving the EU next March, but we remain fully committed to improving the prosperity and security of the Western Balkans, and Europe, both now and in the years to come.

The package that I have announced today will help the Western Balkans tackle threats to their progress, such as serious and organised crime, drug trafficking and terrorism, while also having a positive effect in the UK by cutting off criminal activity at the source and helping prevent crime from reaching British streets.

The new package, which demonstrates the government's enduring commitment to the region, includes:

- increasing UK funding to the region by over 95% from £41 million in 18/19 to £80 million in 20/21 from the Conflict, Security and Stability Fund
- doubling the number of UK staff working in the region on the security issues affecting the UK and the Western Balkans. These experts will help stop crime reaching UK streets and also help strengthen the region's own response to serious and organised crime, terrorism and violent extremism, corruption and money laundering
- launching the Balkans Organised Crime Observatory, jointly with the Austrian and Norwegian governments which will enable civil society to play a more effective role in tackling organised crime and corruption. Led by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime, this will serve as a virtual network for key civil society actors to work together to monitor, report on and expose Serious and Organised Crime and corruption, share research and good practice and improve strategic and operational coordination
- improving the region's cyber capability through a £1m investment in training and advisory activities. This includes direct support to Computer Emergency Response Teams in Serbia and Montenegro, launching a Security Fellowships course on cyber security, and providing strategic support to Governments across the region, and establishing a UK-Western Balkans Security Discourse on Cyber Security to enhance UK bilateral and regional relationships and information sharing among senior cyber officials
- agreeing a Joint Declaration on the Principles of Information-Exchange in the Field of Law Enforcement that will help law enforcement agencies in the region share information more easily in the fight against serious and organised crime and terrorism. Countries will also commit to concrete actions to tackle corruption
- chairing a senior-level Security Commitments Steering Group to push for better exchange of information and best practice, including through establishing regional forums, the first of which for customs officers. These will meet regularly at senior and operational level to discuss strategic approaches and complex transnational financial criminal investigation
- extending the Pan Balkans Strategic Reserve Force (SRF) for another year which is held at readiness in the UK to move into the Western Balkans if the security situation deteriorates or the UK needs to support stability in the region. The current UK commitment to maintain the SRF ends on 31st December. We are extending this for another year as a demonstration of our commitment to maintain security and stability in the Western Balkans
- committing £10 million to help build digital skills and employment prospects for young people in the Western Balkans. The British Council will provide training to children in over 4,500 schools, to bolster digital literacy and core skills across the region. By providing access to a digital education, this funding will help foster the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs
- providing an additional £1million to help the region address difficult legacy issues, including supporting the organisations working to find and identify the 12,000 victims still missing from the conflicts of the

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