

BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

RADIO 4

TRANSCRIPT OF "FILE ON 4" – "BORDER AGENCY"

CURRENT AFFAIRS GROUP

TRANSMISSION: Tuesday 12th July 2011 2000 - 2040

REPEAT: Sunday 17th July 2011 1700 - 1740

REPORTER: Morland Sanders

PRODUCER: David Lewis

EDITOR: David Ross

PROGRAMME NUMBER: 11VQ5005LHO

THE ATTACHED TRANSCRIPT WAS TYPED FROM A RECORDING AND NOT COPIED FROM AN ORIGINAL SCRIPT. BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF MISHEARING AND THE DIFFICULTY IN SOME CASES OF IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL SPEAKERS, THE BBC CANNOT VOUCH FOR ITS COMPLETE ACCURACY.

“FILE ON 4”

Transmission: Tuesday 12th July 2011

Repeat: Sunday 17th July 2011

Producer: David Lewis

Reporter: Morland Sanders

Editor: David Ross

ACTUALITY IN HOUSE OF COMMONS

MAY: I am, of course, concerned about the fact that an individual who was excluded then subsequently entered the country. That is why I have asked for an investigation to take place ...

SANDERS: Last week, Home Secretary Theresa May launched an investigation into how a banned Arab-Israeli activist turned up in the UK.

MAY: If I sign an exclusion order, that the expectation is that that individual will not be able to enter the United Kingdom. In terms ...

SANDERS: It is the job of the United Kingdom Border Agency to police who is allowed into the country and who is kept out but, according to one leading politician, the Agency is still not up to that job.

VAZ: They are not, at the moment, fit for the purpose that the Government intends of them and our job in Parliament is to warn the Government that they need to take steps to secure the work of the Agency.

SANDERS: Ministers insist the organisation is improving and claim they're dealing with a chaotic situation inherited from the previous Government. But, as the Agency talks about cutting five thousand jobs and partially filling the void with technology, we speak to insiders who say the supposedly leading-edge systems are riddled with problems.

MAN: We are running on a very antiquated system. Software doesn't integrate between the various departments. I can tell you that a lot of the names we're looking for we actually never find.

SANDERS: On Tonight's File on 4, we hear that immigration officers at Heathrow are having to rely on bits of paper to spot suspects of national importance, and we expose what many say is Britain's unlocked back door.

SIGNATURE TUNE

ACTUALITY OF LORRY BEING STOPPED

OFFICER: Hello there. I'd like you to step down with your passport and CMR please.

SANDERS: Staff from the UK Border Agency are searching lorries destined for the UK. In a large metal shed in Calais, cargo is inspected and drivers questioned.

OFFICER: Lovely. Thank you very much. If you'd just like to stand over there for me.

ACTUALITY – SOUND OF SNIFFER DOG

SANDERS: Sniffer dogs hunt for illegal immigrants who could be hiding in any of the two and a half million trucks that make their way between Britain and mainland Europe every year.

ACTUALITY AS DOG RUMMAGES THROUGH LORRY

SANDERS: One of the dogs has picked up on a scent. Officers from the UK Border agency have opened the doors of a French lorry. Probes to measure the mix of carbon dioxide – and therefore signs of life – are inserted into the truck. Heartbeat monitors are attached to the trailer to listen for the faintest cardio rhythm. In amongst tightly packed containers, they've found something – or rather someone.

ACTUALITY WITH STOWAWAY

MAN: He's the person we've encountered first but there could be more obviously under the boxes, so we're going to have to search it properly.

SANDERS: Another immigration case is now in the hands of British authorities. The Government claims a 70% decrease in the numbers attempting to cross the UK-French border illegally, and Immigration Minister Damian Green says it's further evidence of a Border Agency now growing in confidence and ability.

GREEN: It's quite clear that the immigration system that this Government inherited just over a year ago was in complete chaos. The UKBA is getting better in every way in terms of ... take asylum, that on average 60% of asylum decisions now receive a decision within thirty days. That would've been an impossible target a few years ago. Asylum removals are getting faster – 21% of asylum seekers are now removed within twelve months compared to 12% only a year ago. In terms of enforcement, between July and September, the UKBA launched four hundred operations which resulted in eight hundred arrests.

SANDERS: However, the Agency, like so many other Government departments, is being hit by spending cuts. And unions claim this is already having an impact on the front line in Northern France. They've told File on 4 that since May of this year, UKBA staff dedicated to freight checks in Calais have been halved, from approximately 160 to around eighty. And that at times, trucks will simply pass through the UKBA freight shed unchecked.

FRIEND: My members tell me that freight searching has been suspended at various times, and once this is known, you know, it does not take very much for a Mr Facilitator, who is sitting outside the docks in Calais, to notice that searching isn't going on on a particular day, and they will then take the chance of getting their people into the backs of the lorries.

SANDERS: Andy Friend, chairman of the Immigration Services Union.

FRIEND: I mean, there are finds nearly most days, finds of people in lorries most days. So if you are not doing it for part of the day or you're not doing it at all for one day, there's a fair chance someone's got through.

SANDERS: And that happens, that for a whole day the UKBA will not be checking lorries?

FRIEND: It has happened on occasions. I have to say they are rare occasions, but it has happened. But it has definitely happened more often for periods of the day when it is not covered, anything ranging from three hours it might stop for one day to seventeen hours. But it is happening and it is happening now. I think it's a massive security risk.

ACTUALITY – TRUCK NOISE

SANDERS: That's something those queuing up with cargo at channel ports buy into. Dave Taylor from Manchester says despite what the Home Secretary says, illegals are still a big problem.

TAYLOR: They cut the cords on the side of the trailers, they will undo the buckles, get inside. They ruin your load, because they have got to go to the toilet in there, so the load is normally condemned. They can break the back doors trying to get in at the top, they can slip the curtains, they can get in through the roofs and things.

SANDERS: The Government, via the UK Border Agency, they say they've got a handle on this problem.

TAYLOR: No. Not a chance. I mean, I was sat in Rugby services a few months ago, driver came up, parked up, next thing you know the back doors are open and about fifteen of them just ran off. The driver just stood there – what was going on – and there were fifteen of them just off and gone. There's more coming in than what they realise.

SANDERS: In a statement, the United Kingdom Border Agency told us:

READER IN STUDIO: The UK Border Agency Calais freight search operation is targeted to risk periods and traffic. On occasions, UKBA resources only are diverted from the search area to higher priority areas with the authority of senior managers. UKBA contractors will still inspect a proportion of the traffic at the berths and lanes within the UK controls, and the Calais Chamber of Commerce port security screen 100% of freight traffic before it even reaches the UK controls.

SANDERS: But while the Government says it is effectively controlling immigration between Calais and Dover, File on 4 has been uncovering evidence of an unlocked back door into Britain.

ACTUALITY AT CHERBOURG

SANDERS: A 500 kilometre drive west of Calais is the Normandy port of Cherbourg. Here there is no UKBA presence and a small camp of would-be illegal immigrants has become a permanent fixture. Brigitte Le Coutour is the President of local charity, Itinerance, that cares for the young men squatting on the council sports ground.

ACTUALITY IN CAMP

LE COUTOUR: This camp is lent by the town. It has been lent for several years and this is a place where the refugees come and live.

SANDERS: I noticed as soon as I walked through the gate, I could see their bathroom here, which is two plastic chairs, some razors hanging from the wire fence and a heavily cracked mirror. But it's serving its purpose for them.

LE COUTOUR: Yes, it is. This is a tap of cold water and they can do a bit of washing up, because you see two pans, and sometimes at night they cook rice or beans and they can wash a bit.

SANDERS: The camp is temporary home to about thirty-five Afghans. I meet someone who looks like a very young man. Tonight, like every night, he will try to breach security and smuggle himself north on the final leg of his five thousand mile journey.

BOY: Tonight we go – five person, six person. If we find a truck, we go under the truck.

SANDERS: You hide under the trailer of the truck?

BOY: Yes.

SANDERS: How many times have you tried to leave the port?

BOY: We try every day, every night.

SANDERS: Every day, every night?

BOY: We try. I hope to go to England. I hope one day I will succeed. I hope but I don't know when I will succeed. A lot of my family is in England – my father and my brother is in England.

SANDERS: How old are you?

BOY: I'm fourteen.

SANDERS: I'm walking along the beach at the port of Stranraer in western Scotland. Let me try and set the scene for you. It is a beautiful day, and at the edge of the loch, I can see the Isle of Arran slightly shrouded in the mist. But coming down the loch head is a large white fast ferry, and maybe two to three miles away from here I can see another ferry in a different port. You would think there was nothing untoward on these boats, perhaps lorries and caravans at this time of year. However, there is a criminal underbelly to these routes and some have described these very ports as the unlocked back door to Britain.

EDWARDS: It's the busiest maritime environment in Scotland passenger-wise and one of the busiest in the United Kingdom. On average we're looking at probably 1.7 million to 1.8 million passengers a year, roughly 650,000 vehicle movements per year, and we cover on a daily basis in total 28 sailings between the two ports.

ACTUALITY – FERRY NOISES

SANDERS: Graham Edwards, Head of the Port Police in Stranraer, watches the high speed ferry pull into the dock after a two hour dash from Belfast. Passengers filter through the arrivals hall and any suspects are pulled out for interview by police officers.

EDWARDS: One of the things people forget and sometimes need to realise is that Stranraer Cairnryan to Belfast Larne is unique. They almost act as a virtual border because it's the first checkpoint from Northern Ireland with its connection to Dublin, so it takes us away from holidaymakers and just lorry drivers, it also takes us into the world of national security for international terrorism and Irish-related terrorism, and also serious and organised crime groups.

SANDERS: And are you checking freight and passengers here every day, and if so, how often are you finding something untoward?

EDWARDS: The operations here are a full 24/7 operation, 364 days a year, because the only day the ferries don't sail is Christmas Day. We're checking foot passengers, we're checking freight and we're also checking the vehicles that travel through, and every day we come across something. As we speak, just now in this morning's

EDWARDS cont: operations, as an offshoot beyond our normal work we've picked up two immigration cases that staff are having to deal with just now.

SANDERS: Immigration cases? That's the UK Border Agency's department, isn't it?

EDWARDS: That's correct, but our colleagues from the UKBA don't have a presence here at the ports, so although we're here with a core function of dealing with national security, if we pick up immigration we have a statutory obligation to arrest and deal because there is no UKBA presence.

SANDERS: The Border Agency used to pay for three police officers in the Stranraer team, who could then be tasked with immigration cases. Late last year, that funding was removed, despite appeals by Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary. They believe their officers should be looking out for terrorists and weapons, not people without a visa. According to Graham Edwards, the route is now a well-trodden path for illegal immigrants.

EDWARDS: More people are using the route to come through and we have examples of people being instructed and receiving direction by people that are in the business of facilitating, identifying this as a potential way into mainland UK.

SANDERS: You think it's now on the radar, people realise this is the unlocked back door to Britain?

EDWARDS: It would naive to think that people aren't picking up on the fact that there's maybe a weak point that can be used.

SANDERS: What's the knock-on impact of a police officer getting tied up with an immigration case?

EDWARDS: The police officer is here for a specific function, and if he's dealing with an immigration case, he's not dealing with his core responsibilities, because he's been detracted away to that immigration case. An immigration case, depending on the

EDWARDS cont: circumstances, with initial checks, somebody arriving through and then following through the process, that can range from an hour, sometimes it can range up to five, six, seven hours, even longer. But equally, if we have immigration crime being committed – ie facilitation, illegal immigration – and that becomes an inquiry, then that could be a whole day, it could be two days. Our core function is to national security and protecting the portal area, so we have to look at the deployment of the resources and ensure that they are in place, and hopefully that there isn't too much of an impact. But as we see numbers increasing in immigration cases, it is a worry.

SANDERS: The UKBA told us:

READER IN STUDIO: The identification of illegal immigrants using the Galloway ports has moved to Northern Ireland, where UK Border Agency staff replicate the work that they already do at the airports in the province. We have a more substantial resource there which is better located to service the ports and enable the agency to be more operationally effective. Early indications are that the measures introduced have been highly effective.

SANDERS: The effectiveness of the new approach is debated by the Port Police in Scotland, who say if the UKBA security at the Northern Ireland end is so good, how come they're seeing more immigration offenders show up in Stranraer? The acute problems in Northern Ireland and Scotland dominated the pages of a critical report by the independent Chief Inspector of the UK Border Agency, John Vine. Mr Vine spoke of poor intelligence, of a need to improve co-operation with the police and for a more effective targeting process.

VINE: What I did urge was that both the local constabulary and the UK Border Agency repair the relationship and make sure that taking an intelligence-led approach they can try and fill that gap in some way. I mean, I'm more concerned with the impact it's having on ensuring that we control immigration into the UK, that we have a port that's effectively policed and that obviously we stop as much of that illegal activity as we can, and that's why I made the recommendations I did.

SANDERS: I've recently been in Cherbourg talking to some Afghan migrants. Would it surprise you to know that half of them are planning to travel to Ireland?

VINE: It wouldn't surprise me and certainly the feedback we got from the Border Agency's own staff when we were on the ground and inspection and from speaking to other stakeholders would indicate that that sort of activity is fairly routine.

SANDERS: It's what happens to those immigration offenders apprehended by the police that is perhaps of even greater concern to some. If they are deemed to be a serious risk, they'll be detained. But File on 4 has discovered that in Stranraer and across the UK many immigration cases have their details taken and then are released, allowing them to continue their journey into Britain. They are given a card asking them and trusting them to turn up at a UKBA reporting centre. Often this can be at Glasgow, Manchester or London. Dumfries and Galloway MP Russell Brown was staggered when he first heard of this policy and he believes it is fundamentally flawed.

BROWN: I have to say, that is putting a great deal of trust in these individuals and, quite honestly, if these people are illegal in any case, then who's to say they're going to turn up? I'm aware of one occasion where someone was actually stopped in Northern Ireland previously and they were actually told to go to UKBA offices in the north. A short while later they were actually caught coming off the ferry in Stranraer, so that trust broke down immediately. It's an example of what is happening and I really do think that UK Border Agency need to convince me and others that they have a robust system.

SANDERS: It seems very tempting to just disappear into the shadows once you've been released.

BROWN: Well, some of these people will have got into perhaps Southern Ireland and then travelled on into the North. These people may have got here through some very dubious means, may well be afraid, they've escaped from somewhere else probably and therefore they won't wish to be in the hands of the authorities to merely be sent back to where they came from.

SANDERS: Mr Brown has been pushing the Government to reveal how many of those told to attend a reporting centre bother to show up. He says he has had no fruitful response to his Freedom Of Information requests so far and he's not convinced the UKBA has any comprehensive system of following up on the no-shows.

BROWN: If an appointment is being made and the people at UKBA are determining what that appointment date and time is, then they should know if that person is turning up, and I'm beginning to get seriously worried about are they keeping records or are they not?

SANDERS: And when you put these FOI requests in, what is the response?

BROWN: I'm actually now having to refine my FOI requests even more. I think the record keeping by UKBA is just wholly inadequate, that they're not able to tell me. I think Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary are quite surprised at the situation as well, and what I'm being is, to try and trace or track any individual through the system is financially prohibitive.

SANDERS: Police, politicians, independent Chief Inspectors are all flummoxed by the lack of figures on this. In John Vine's report into Scotland and Northern Ireland, he said:

READER IN STUDIO: We found it concerning that the UKBA were unable to analyse the depth of immigration abuse to a sufficient level to determine the true scale of the problem. Of offenders given temporary release, the UKBA was unable to tell us how many subsequently reported at the reporting centre as instructed. We were told that this information is not analysed, and therefore those who fail to report are not necessarily being recorded as absconders. Failure to record offenders as absconders means that they are unlikely to be identified as immigration offenders in the future.

SANDERS: Critics say it's a crucial hole in the system. Immigration offenders being sent on their way and then no system of counting them or locating them. Damian Green is the Immigration Minister.

SANDERS cont: Some would say it's a naive policy to release people and then to entrust them to turn up at a reporting centre.

GREEN: Well it's a matter of practicality, that we can either detain everyone at every stage of the process, and that would be hugely expensive – not just in terms of detention costs but obviously in legal fees since we may or may not have the legal powers to detain certain people.

SANDERS: Those people who are released and then entrusted to go and sign on at a reporting centre, what system do you have to cross-reference and ensure they do that?

GREEN: The details of individuals who are required to report are obviously passed to the relevant reporting centre, where compliance is monitored as part of the overall management controls, and if they fail to report then we take action, as we do against any absconder.

SANDERS: So that cross-referencing system, that would presumably tell us how many people who have been released don't hand themselves into that reporting centre?

GREEN: Well, I mean, it's a fluid situation literally from day to day.

SANDERS: The cuts at Stranraer total three funded police officers, but that's nothing compared to the huge changes the Border Agency is expected to go through over the next few years.

ACTUALITY AT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE MEETING

HOMER: The UK Border Agency is taking cuts of about 20%. We are approaching our spending target by looking first of all at reductions we can make in our support services

SANDERS: Former Chief Exec of the UKBA, Lin Homer, appearing before a Parliamentary Committee and admitting that thousands of jobs will be lost.

HOMER: ... and then, in relation to our front line cuts, we are expecting to take about 20% out ...

SANDERS: If some are already claiming the Border Agency isn't capable of keeping the UK safe, how will it cope when nearly a quarter of its workforce have clocked off for good? Well, the Agency is hoping the void may be partially filled with new technology. Airports like Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester now boast E-gates at immigration. This allows a modern passport containing a chip to be placed on an entry point at a terminal. Data is checked between a camera at the gate and the details on the passport. If the computer says yes, you're into the country. The idea, when introduced, is that the system would speed up immigration and make the UK more secure. That's far from the truth, according to one insider we spoke to. He asked us to disguise his voice.

MAN: They regularly break down, they're regularly down for days on end. When they do work, they don't function as they should. People are rejected that shouldn't be rejected, people get through that shouldn't get through, and overall it's perceived as a bit of a joke by immigration officers, that we are putting the future of the control in the hands of machines which don't do the job, they are not fit for purpose.

SANDERS: The most alarming thing you said there is that they let people through who shouldn't get through.

MAN: That's correct. People have been known to get through, wives using husbands' passports, brothers and sisters using each other's passports. It's even been known that people can push through the control. I believe that they have been already and certainly I wouldn't, from personal experience of forgery abuse, sitting on the control and dealing with passports, have any faith that new technology would be protected from abuse, and I don't believe the chip passport is any different to any other piece of new technology.

SANDERS: The UKBA claims that the microchip passports and E-gates are secure, despite widely reported claims they can be read and modified with high street PCs and free software. But microchip passports aren't the only concern when it comes to the new tech being rolled out by the Border Agency. The billion pound E-borders programme encourages airlines to provide the passenger manifest to the destination country before the plane departs. That information is then fed through to something called the NBTC.

ACTUALITY IN BUSINESS PARK

SANDERS: And that stands for the National Borders Targeting Centre, and it's a name that's decidedly grander than the building. I'm here in a South Manchester business park on the edge of Manchester Airport, and there is a brick built two-storey unit that, well, could be home to an insurance company or a call centre. Instead though, it houses hugely powerful computers processing millions of names – among them those who should not be let into this country. However, we have discovered there's evidence that the crucial intelligence that leaves this building isn't always making it to officers on the front line, and that could mean immigration offenders, terrorists, people the Home Secretary has said should not be allowed to cross our borders being waved through.

ACTUALITY OF PLANE LANDING AT HEATHROW

SANDERS: Heathrow, the busiest airport in Britain, is busier than ever. More than 65 million passengers used the facility last year and immigration officers say they're now under pressure like never before. E-borders should mean that those requiring special attention can be quickly identified and prevented from entering the country. It should mean that. Yet according to one staff member working at Heathrow, the highly sensitive information gathered by the airlines and then processed in Manchester isn't always electronically available to all UKBA staff. We've used an actor to voice his words.

READER IN STUDIO: They're going through the manifest, looking at names of interest and patterns of travel.

SANDERS: And that information, that pops up on your computer screen?

READER IN STUDIO: It should pop up onto your computer screen, but sadly 90% of the time a chief immigration or a duty officer from the back office will come out with slips of paper – nothing more technical than an A4 sheet spliced into twenty or thirty slips, finger width and pinky width across your desk for you to look at this individual because they're not on the system.

SANDERS: Why is that information not inputted into a database and when the passport is swiped, therefore it says 'alert, stop' rather than a piece of paper?

READER IN STUDIO: We don't have a system where that can be done. The software doesn't integrate between the various departments. We have no joined-up thinking in our system. It's as simple as E-borders will phone, say to the duty office, 'This is what we're looking for.' They can't just sit there and instantaneously put it on. You would think in this world it would be so simple. We're running on a very antiquated system.

SANDERS: It gets worse. What that means, according to our source, is that suspects on the stop list can sometimes go missing.

READER IN STUDIO: I can tell you that a lot of the names that we're looking for we actually never find. I can't say how high a percentage that is, but we know that they haven't come through because people are still running up and down asking you, 'Has anybody seen this name today?' and they're looking at these pieces of paper.

SANDERS: But is it 2% or 3% or is it more 60% or 70%?

READER IN STUDIO: I'd say it's 50-50 as to what you find and what you don't find. We don't get them.

SANDERS: And our insider went on to tell us that he believes that criminals are now one step ahead of the E-borders system.

READER IN STUDIO: It's so simple to just take an internal flight within the UK. You can book a ticket when you arrive. These people have internet phones, they just go on and book a ticket. They walk up to a security personnel – they're not looking for them.

READER IN STUDIO cont: It's immigration looking for them. You then just present your itinerary, which is on your phone, to the security man. He says, 'You're going to Terminal 1,' off you go on a shuttle bus. You're never seen again.

SANDERS: But has nobody from the UKBA checked them?

READER IN STUDIO: No. They go to flight connections in Terminal 1, but if Terminal 1 isn't looking for that individual because they were deemed to be flying into Terminal 3 or Terminal 4 or Terminal 5

SANDERS: But don't you know which flight they'll be on?

READER IN STUDIO: We know which flight they're coming in on, but then you come into a crowded immigration hall. The whole flight doesn't come in one go, you're mixed in with various other flights. They'll have multiple passports in their bag, they'll make a decision which name they're going to present themselves to immigration.

SANDERS: So here we have an E-borders programme that is ultimately expected to cost the taxpayer £1.2 billion and yet the delivery method for this crucial information, to the people who need it most, appears to be scraps of paper - a point I was put to the Immigration Minister, Damian Green.
Do you know how a front line immigration officer receives the information, say at Heathrow Airport, from the National Borders Targeting Centre? We've been told by a number of individuals that the information is provided to them on a scrap of paper and they have to try and look out for that name and correlate it to that scrap of paper. Have you heard of that?

GREEN: I haven't, but if people want to produce evidence to me, obviously I will look at it.

SANDERS: How would you define a £1.2 billion project – that's the estimated cost - that delivers its confidential, crucial information to the person who needs it most on a scrap of paper?

GREEN: Well, you are saying as though that's the norm. I have not had that information, so I can't comment on what you're saying has been told to you by some anonymous people.

SANDERS: If that is the case, what would you say to it?

GREEN: Well, if somebody brings me the evidence I will look at it.

SANDERS: In a statement, the UKBA told us:

READER IN STUDIO: Anyone listed on a watch list should be flagged on entering the UK and questioned or refused as necessary. We are aware of a few instances where this has not happened and these have been investigated and lessons learnt are taken forward.

EXTRACT FROM NEWS ARCHIVE

KEARNEY: The World at One. This is Martha Kearney with thirty minutes of news and comment. The Home Secretary has ordered an investigation into how Raed Salah, a prominent Palestinian activist was able to enter the UK despite being banned.

SANDERS: The case of Sheikh Raed Salah has renewed allegations of weaknesses in our E-borders system. The Arab-Israeli activist had been banned from Britain by the Home Secretary, but suddenly showed up at a public meeting in Leicestershire. Sources tell File on 4 that he was picked up by E-borders on a flight from Tel Aviv, but the slips of paper were delivered to staff working at Heathrow's Terminal 1. Sheikh Raed Salah touched down safely in Terminal 5. As the stop information wasn't available to the immigration officer in that terminal, Sheikh Salah strolled right through and picked up his bags, despite a ban by the Home Secretary. However, the pieces of paper with suspects' names on may not be the worst of it for the E-borders project. Every year 30 million people arrive in the UK by boat or train, yet these passengers do not have to provide personal details, and therefore the UKBA cannot carry out intelligence checks prior to their arrival. The EU also announced recently that if certain nationalities travelling via air didn't want to provide

VAZ cont: It is therefore the responsibility of the agent dealing with securing the borders to make sure that those borders are in fact secure, and unfortunately they don't have the IT capacity to do this, they don't have the personnel to do this and our job in Parliament is to warn the Government that they need to take steps to secure the work of the Agency.

SANDERS: We've heard evidence of the back door to Britain being left ajar, of a man the Home Secretary has banned from the UK getting into the country, and a lack of information on how many immigration offenders trusted to hand themselves in bother to do so. And the question: is this crucial Agency up to the job? Yes, says Immigration Minister, Damian Green. The Agency is a work in progress, but he claims that progress is tangible.

With cuts of five thousand jobs, with budget changes, with allegations the technology isn't up to scratch, is the Government in danger of sending the UKBA into a perfect storm?

GREEN: No. The UKBA, it's a hugely complex business. Everything it does is very sensitive and mistakes are still made, but it's getting better on any possible measure of what you want a Border Agency to do in terms of checking people through the borders faster, in terms of enforcing action against illegal workers and sham marriages and so on, in terms of removing those who have no right to remain. The UKBA is performing better than it was a couple of years ago.

SANDERS: Keith Vaz says little has changed apart from the name. It is still not fit for purpose.

GREEN: I disagree with Keith Vaz. This is an organisation which of course still has faults but which is getting better.

SIGNATURE TUNE