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“FILE ON 4”

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#### ACTUALITY OF PASSENGER BAG CHECK

MAN: Can you open your bag for me, please?

NORTHAM: A routine stop and search for a passenger arriving at one of Britain's 120 commercial ports.

MAN: Are you carrying any weapons, firearms, anything of that nature?

MAN 2: No.

NORTHAM: As concern over international terrorism continues, the authorities need to know who's coming into the country and what they've brought with them. The authorities - being the police Special Branch, Immigration and Customs. Keeping watch on seaports and what are now fifty airports in the UK is a mammoth task. The annual number of passengers has rocketed to three times the national population - almost 200 million people. So how thoroughly are they and their possessions checked? File on 4 has found disturbing evidence that the rapid expansion of travel has left officials at many air- and seaports struggling to cope with the task of ensuring national security.

MACKINLAY: I cannot understand why we have such a lax attitude to the security and integrity of our national borders. And if we don't put this right I think we are absolutely mad and we need to do it with some expedition.

#### SIGNATURE TUNE

#### ACTUALITY OF SHIP ARRIVING

NORTHAM: It's midday in the familiar cold, driving rain here at the port of Holyhead in Anglesey, and a ferry-load of people and vehicles has just pulled in from Dublin. Once the boat is tied up, the foot passengers make their way to buses to take them to the arrivals hall, and a stream of lorries, coaches and cars roll off and wind their way towards the exit. As they crawl along, they pass through the police checkpoint, where Detective Constable David Leech and his colleagues in Special Branch select candidates for closer scrutiny.

#### ACTUALITY OF VEHICLE CHECK

POLICEMAN: Hello sir, good morning. I was just wondering where you are travelling to today.

MAN: Travelling to Stoke on Trent.

POLICEMAN: And could I ask you if you have got any identification, please, either a passport or a driving licence.

MAN: Yes, I have my driving licence.

POLICEMAN: Can I see it please, sir? Thank you.

NORTHAM: DC Leech takes the passenger's documents and runs their details through a computerised database. They come up clear. The officer in charge of the team today, Detective Sergeant Warren Hughes, repeatedly stresses the need for vigilance.

HUGHES: We are basically a Special Branch unit here at Holyhead port. Our primary role is one of intelligence-gathering really, in relation to countering the threat to national security.

NORTHAM: Do you get incidents where passengers come through and you are very suspicious of them and you have to detain them?

HUGHES: Absolutely, yes, that happens reasonably regularly. Under the legislation we can keep people here while we look further at them. More often than not though, people, after a short period of time, they continue their journey.

NORTHAM: And your number one priority is anti-terrorism?

HUGHES: Absolutely yes. We're intelligence gatherers basically.

#### ACTUALITY OF VEHICLE CHECK

POLICEMAN: Thank you very much for your time and have a safe journey.

MAN: Okay, thank you.

POLICEMAN: Goodbye then.

NORTHAM: The emphasis the Government places on measures to combat terrorism led some in North Wales to anticipate an increase in watchfulness at Holyhead. Instead, the Home Office has just made a cut in the budget for policing at the port. Anglesey's representative on the Police Authority, Councillor Eifion Jones is at a loss to comprehend this.

JONES: We are just at the point of setting our annual budget in North Wales Police Authority, and we were stunned a few weeks ago to find out that we were actually, in real terms, having a cut of 8% to our budget. This is a ring fenced grant



NORTHAM: Can you tell me that the public will be at greater risk because of this cut?

WOLFENDALE: We are determined to ensure that the level of protection afforded to North Wales and to the mainland in general will not be jeopardised by this cut. But I think what the Government and the public must understand is the enormous pressure that places on a police force such as North Wales to meet that challenge. There is only so far one can go with efficiencies and restructuring. At the end of the day, if we are determined to protect our borders, we have to pay for it.

NORTHAM: Historically, the main threat coming through Holyhead was from terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland. As this has fallen, Clive Wolfendale sees a dramatic rise in the port's attraction to other potential attackers.

WOLFENDALE: Actually, the threat posed by new issues of terrorism, new threats to our borders is more than compensating for that reduction. Holyhead is probably the third busiest port in the UK. The volume of traffic increases greatly every year. This is a major route across Europe and increasingly we are seeing foreign drivers using the strategic route as their preferred option for getting to the republic. On top of that, whilst there have been significant increases to levels of security in some of the southern ports, the same hasn't happened elsewhere in the UK, and we are increasingly finding that people, for various reasons, not just terrorism, but to circumvent measures elsewhere can use a route through France into Ireland and then into the British mainland that way. So ...

NORTHAM: Holyhead is seen as a softer target, do you mean?

WOLFENDALE: Well we hope it isn't a soft target, because we are desperately trying to make sure that it is well protected. But there's no doubt that determined individuals will seek the easiest option. And if that's Holyhead, they certainly wouldn't think twice about it.

**NORTHAM:** File on 4 wanted to ask the Home Office how it explains the cut in Holyhead's policing budget. Two weeks ago, we asked for an interview with the relevant Minister, and we kept asking, only to be finally told that nobody would be available. In a statement, the Home Office emphasises that funds for counter-terrorist policing outside London will almost double and says that police have a robust, resilient and effective capability. Police at ports of entry don't just check passengers and vehicles. Many other aspects of national security depend on their presence. Immigration staff and airport private security staff rely on the police to deal with serious dangers. If a passenger appears armed or threatening, or tries to abscond from passport control, instructions are that staff should not put themselves at risk, but call the police. Which is fine – if the police are there.

#### ACTUALITY AT AIRPORT

**NORTHAM:** The high, brightly-lit showpiece terminal of Bristol International Airport is set in the beautiful surroundings of the Mendips to the south of the city. Like many regional airports, Bristol is enjoying remarkable growth. It's almost trebled activity since the millennium. Over five million passengers a year now pass through here, and they can fly in from well over thirty cities in Europe, America and Africa. You might expect that police officers would be on duty here as long as flights are arriving or departing. But a significant gap was uncovered just before Christmas, when a couple of holidaymakers, Bridget and Chris Wilkinson, came back from a visit to The Gambia.

**BRIDGET WILKINSON:** When we got to the luggage carousel at around 2.30 am on December the 3<sup>rd</sup> and most of the bags looked as though they had been gone through, they were opened, my alarm bells went off. It wasn't just one insecure bag, it looked like luggage that had been gone through.

**NORTHAM:** Mr and Mrs Wilkinson looked for a police officer and couldn't see one. They went to the Information Desk, where a supervisor was called, who said the police weren't on duty. They found that hard to believe. So Chris Wilkinson made his way back into Customs, where he was told that police left the airport at 11pm. But Chris knew that a number of flights, including overseas departures and arrivals, are scheduled for much later than that.

CHRIS WILKINSON: I was really shocked, because we'd flown in from a West African airport that took aircraft coming into it from all of the trouble spots that you hear about on the news, and there are places where there are terrorists, there are bombs, there are guns, and anything could have happened.

BRIDGET WILKINSON: I think now that we are not as safe as we like to think we are. We're not as safe as the Government say we are. At a very big major level we go unprotected. People are going to get in, not through the back door at all, but walk bold as brass in through the front door. If the police are walking round, people are far less likely to chance their luck. I think they're going to be looking for an unprotected point of entry and there seem to be an awful lot of those at the moment.

NORTHAM: File on 4 wanted to ask the owners of Bristol International Airport about the level of policing. Nobody was available. The local police force, Avon & Somerset, has had to face the embarrassment of replying to the Wilkinsons' complaint and dealing with their MP over the issue. The police airport Commander, Inspector Chris Ware, acknowledges that there were indeed no officers at the airport after 11pm.

WARE: There are always officers available to respond to incidents at the airport, but on that particular night that the Wilkinsons came back into the airport, none of the dedicated officers who are embedded and work from the airport were actually on duty at that time. Not unusual, but also not the general rule. There would have been officers available to actually deal with their concerns.

NORTHAM: But not on site?

WARE: Not on site. Bristol Airport is actually situated in quite a rural community and the officers that police the surrounding area routinely go into the airport and deal with incidents in the airport if my dedicated officers aren't there.

NORTHAM: They say that this raised, in their mind, a national security vulnerability, that the airport was left unguarded by police.

WARE: There were obviously security personnel on at the airport and there would have been, throughout the night, visits from police officers. The fact that they weren't there at that particular moment when the Wilkinsons actually turned up is not to say that we didn't have a capability and a response to actually deal if there had actually been a serious incident.

NORTHAM: Security officers can't replace a police officer.

WARE: No, the security officers are about the integrity of the business of aviation, the airport. The police officers that are there do carry out primarily this core role of policing, but you know, we can't be everywhere all the time, and this was one of those nights when it did happen.

NORTHAM: Since all this came out, Avon & Somerset Police have taken steps to increase cover at the airport, which Inspector Ware insists was already under discussion way before the Wilkinsons returned from Africa in December. Can you assure me that there won't be a future incident in which people arrive from abroad late at night at Bristol Airport and find that there's no police officer available?

WARE: I can't assure you that they will not be able to speak directly to a police officer, because if the police officers have arrested somebody and have gone away to the local custody unit or whatever, then there may be occasions whereby people will arrive at Bristol Airport and will not be able to immediately speak to a police officer.

NORTHAM: You make it sound as if there could still be an occasion where people fly in and find no police officer actually at the airport.

WARE: I believe that that could be the case. I say, it is less likely, but it is possible that that could be the case. There are huge demands on the policing within our environment and at times priorities may take us away from the arrivals hall in the airport.

NORTHAM: Bristol International isn't the only busy airport which lacks permanent police cover. The national rules governing the level of police presence date back more than thirty years. Out of the dozens of airports now operating, they designate just nine for full armed police patrols. They include, as you would expect, the three major London airports ... and Birmingham and Manchester and four airports in Scotland. The most vocal MP on this subject is Labour's Andrew Mackinlay of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

MACKINLAY: There are nine which are called designated, and this is where the Chief Constable of the area can set the level of policing and he can demand that the operators of the airport pay for it. That is a good system, but it ignores the other airports which have, in recent years, become quite big, who do not pay for their policing. The local Chief Constable has to find the police officers to police the airport out of his limited resources. And in my view this is unsatisfactory. He has got other obligations in his county area. There should be a common regime for deciding what is the adequate level of policing in all our airports and aerodromes, and in my view it shouldn't be any different from quite small aerodromes in Sussex or Surrey as there is for Heathrow Airport.

NORTHAM: Does this mean that you think currently a number of smaller regional airports are going under-policed?

MACKINLAY: I am certain that a number of small airports are terribly under-policed. I mean, I'm really worried about them, because they're so often where cargo flights come in. There are some big name airports which are not designated. The Chief Constable is forever juggling, and it's this disparity which is unacceptable, it's ludicrous and leaves us very vulnerable in the United Kingdom, particularly in the small airports or aerodromes.

NORTHAM: This antique arrangement is currently under review at the Department for Transport, and an announcement is expected in the next few weeks, pending which no Minister was available for interview. It's not only the numbers of police officers deployed at airports which troubles experts. There's also concern over the timeliness of information received about passengers arriving on incoming flights. Lord Carlile reviews the operation of the Terrorism Act for the Government. This takes



NORTHAM cont: of Security at Heathrow and then for the whole British Airports Authority. He maintains that a similar arrangement could and should apply for the UK.

SHANKS: There are very few places now that do not use electronic boarding processes. At the gate the security staff and the airline staff should check your passport details against your boarding card, they'll then run the boarding card through an automated ticket reader. Now that information is then stored electronically within the airline database, and at any stage during that process that information can be transmitted to any part of the world through the internet media.

NORTHAM: So is there any technological reason why a list of passengers should not be available in Britain for all flights coming into the country before they take off?

SHANKS: None that I'm aware of. I think it's simply a matter of lack of will. The lack of Government saying, 'We require this to be presented to us.' The US introduced this some time ago, there was a great deal of unease, some concern that people would stop flying to the US. I don't think that's happened. We could easily do the same, people are not going to stop coming in to London or to the UK.

NORTHAM: And in your view, what ought the Government to do then?

SHANKS: I think in this case the Government should - and I don't say this very often - but it should follow the US and say we now require the same thing, because we have the same risk from the same type of terrorist. The advantage for national security would be, we would catch the person at the first point of opportunity rather than giving them the opportunity of losing themselves within the terminal areas.

NORTHAM: And at the moment we're not doing this?

SHANKS: At the moment we're not doing this.

NORTHAM: We wanted to ask the Home Office why, but no Minister was available for interview. In its statement, the Home Office says that Immigration officers already have the power to request passenger information in advance. If this information isn't arriving in good time, the checks at Passport Control become even more important. But we've learned that Lord Carlile, the Government's expert, is also concerned about the scarcity of Immigration officers to make such checks on incoming passengers. This is a problem which was highlighted last year at one busy regional airport.

#### ACTUALITY AT BAGGAGE CAROUSELS

VOICE OVER LOUDSPEAKER: All passengers are advised to keep all their baggage with them at all times. Any bags left unattended will be removed and disposed of.

NORTHAM: The passengers waiting here by the baggage carousels have just flown in from Rome and they've arrived at Liverpool John Lennon Airport. Passenger numbers here have grown tenfold over the past decade, and Immigration cover seems to have struggled to keep up. A few minutes ago, as they got off their plane, these travellers walked a few yards to the terminal building and then came through Passport Control, where the Home Office hasn't given us permission to record. And that's the area which was seriously short of staff, according to an email from Liverpool's Chief Immigration Officer, which was leaked to a local MP last year. It revealed in candid terms a serious shortage.

READER IN STUDIO: Immigration control at Liverpool John Lennon Airport is woefully equipped to deal with the task in hand.

NORTHAM: The problem which emerged was that passengers were able to abscond from Passport Control, either by simply running away behind the back of a busy officer, or by an extraordinary arrangement where they were sent to a local hotel and told to come back to Immigration the following day – needless to say, many didn't come back and simply disappeared into the country. In one month, the Chief Immigration Officer reported, there were fifteen absconders ... in another month, seventeen.

READER IN STUDIO: Recent intelligence illustrates that no-frills airlines are being targeted. Liverpool John Lennon Airport is no exception and, as word gets around about our shortcomings, the caseload will only increase.

NORTHAM: These emails detailing poor Immigration cover at the airport were leaked to the Southport MP, Dr John Pugh of the Liberal Democrats.

PUGH: The staff were working under a great deal of pressure, the integrity of control was under threat, and there was a lack of detention facilities all of which were very worrying signs, and that meant - according to the people who sent me the email - that their control had been, as they put it, compromised on many occasions. The people who came in up to no good often came in late at night, during that time the shift pattern was very stretched and often the person detaining a character or an individual who shouldn't have been there then had to go on to deal with another flight that would arrive soon afterwards.

NORTHAM: So the immigration officer would say what? – ‘You wait there for a moment while I deal with these other people?’

PUGH: That's more or less it, and not unexpectedly, when he went back having seen to another flight, the person he expected to find there had taken his chance and gone, and this happened on a fairly repeated basis.

NORTHAM: Seventeen in one month, fifteen in another month?

PUGH: Exactly, the number by itself is worrying, particularly as in the case of many of those individuals we simply don't know who they are, what they were here for, what their purposes were or what their history was.

NORTHAM: These revelations came as unwelcome publicity to the airport authorities, who were at pains to point out that security at the airport itself – the personal and baggage checks before boarding for example – weren't implicated. Immigration was a matter of Passport Control for incoming flights, and that fell to the Home Office. But did the Director of Airport Operations, Andy Gower, realise that there was a substantial shortage of staffing at Immigration?

GOWER: We were aware that the airport was under massive growth. Clearly that is going to probably stretch resources more than probably we would have liked and possible Immigration would have liked.

NORTHAM: What has happened to the level of Immigration here since those stories in the press?

GOWER: Well Immigration at Liverpool John Lennon Airport has been growing in line with growth at the airport anyway. Some people may think it's as a direct result of the stories, some may think it's as a direct result of the growth.

NORTHAM: There are now more Immigration staff working here, are there?

GOWER: Yes.

NORTHAM: Are there enough?

GOWER: If you happen to be in the queue that's wanting to get through that area, you would always argue no there aren't enough, but again it's about supply and demand. Nine times out of ten there are enough Immigration officers, yes.

NORTHAM: Are passengers still able to abscond from this airport?

GOWER: When you refer to meeting an Immigration officer and then abscond from the airport, I am not aware of any particular incident.

NORTHAM: Do you ever have times now when there are simply no Immigration staff meeting flights coming in from abroad?

GOWER: No.

NORTHAM: Never happens?

GOWER: No.

NORTHAM: When the shortage of Immigration officers at Liverpool was raised in the Commons last year, the MP John Pugh warned that once Liverpool was properly staffed, the attention of those up to no good would simply shift to another vulnerable port of entry. He mentioned in particular the nearby airport at Blackpool. Sure enough, last month Dr Pugh received information from another email correspondent, which seems to confirm his worst fears. It describes an experience arriving at the airport six weeks ago.

READER IN STUDIO: I travelled back from Spain into my local airport – Blackpool. I had my passport ready and guess what - there were no Immigration officers to be seen. I was waiting for my bags and heard a man asking where he could get his passport stamped. A young woman said that, because of the awful conditions and work going on, for health and safety reasons officers could not work there. She said she did not blame the Immigration staff. She added they did not even have computers. I think this is a scandal - you should investigate it and get some answers.

NORTHAM: The MP who received this email, Dr John Pugh, is once again having to bring complaints of poor Immigration cover to the attention of the Home Office.

PUGH: I was taken aback by that, because I would not have suspected that you'd put yourself in a position to receive international flights and not have any sort of arrangements for vigilance in control of who gets off those flights. After all, as one policeman said to me relatively recently, you don't know who's getting off a flight and one day it'll be somebody not just up to no good, but possibly with an item upon their person that's explosive.

NORTHAM: And Blackpool, you're telling me, is a soft target?

PUGH: A senior security source said to me that Blackpool is wide open. In other words, it doesn't have all the security paraphernalia we'd expect to have at Manchester or at any of the London airports or major airports and that is a concern.

NORTHAM: Once again, we wanted to put these points to the Home Office. In the absence of a Minister to interview, a statement acknowledges that there are no Immigration officers based at Blackpool. It says the airport is covered by staff travelling up from Manchester Airport, and that they ensure that all arriving flights are assessed and appropriately handled. There's no doubt that there was a particular temporary problem at Blackpool, to which Dr Pugh's correspondent referred, while new terminal facilities were under construction ... a problem which ended with their official opening last week. But there's a more systematic absence of Immigration officers, not only at Blackpool, but at other sea- and airports around the country. Staff are deployed to cover what are thought to be the greatest risks. This means that at some ports of entry there may be no officers at all on duty at certain times, even while passengers are coming in from abroad. To the Immigration Service Union, this is a substantial problem which, according to the Vice-Chairman, John Tincey, leaves significant gaps in our national defences.

TINCEY: Immigration Service staff have not expanded enough to cope with the problems raised by the new terrorist situation.

NORTHAM: Does that mean that it's credible that when a plane arrives from Spain at Blackpool Airport there should be no Immigration staff on duty to deal with it?

TINCEY: It's possible that there are, in a number of the very small airports around the country, flights arriving when Immigration staff are not available, but that is because they are deployed at other locations, meeting other aircraft where the risk is considered to be greater. There are a number of smaller airports around the country which have, over the last couple of years, begun for the first time to operate flights to other parts of Europe and to places outside Europe. Many of those smaller ports don't have Immigration officers based there fulltime.

NORTHAM: Do you think the public understand that that's the position or do you think people will be surprised by that?

TINCEY: I think people will be surprised that all flights aren't being met, it's not a situation that I'm happy with, it's not a situation that any Immigration officer is happy with. But the fact of the matter is that at all airports there are only so many Immigration officers and they can only cope with a certain number of people at one time.

NORTHAM: The same gaps in Immigration cover can also be found at seaports. In a Parliamentary answer last December, the Home Office said that only a small minority of ports - just sixteen of them - are fully staffed round the clock. The rest get the attention of officers only when it's thought to be merited by a risk assessment. A similar principle applies to Customs officers, who are also deployed on a so-called intelligence-led basis. This means that they too may at times be completely absent from particular ports of entry. We have learned that this situation may be compounded by changes underway at Her Majesty's Customs. PCS, the Public and Commercial Services union, which represents Customs officers, tells us that changes in intelligence-gathering and analysis are under consideration. The union's National Officer for Customs, Frank Campbell, fears that Customs management are looking for cuts.

CAMPBELL: There are some discussions going on with our officials in the relevant areas. It would seem to me to be a backward development if we are looking to reduce numbers of staff in the intelligence area.

NORTHAM: Have proposals actually been put to you from the management of Revenue and Customs?

CAMPBELL: I think there are some discussions coming up for some of our local reps at the present time. There are managers in their particular locations who are looking to reduce the number of people employed in intelligence in those particular ports. It's a nonsense to say that you can use intelligence-led information and that by cutting those numbers it makes your intelligence-led evidence better. If the proposals come to us, as they no doubt will do, we will resist those particular proposals.

NORTHAM: When do you expect to get proposals of that kind?

CAMPBELL: Within a very short period, within a matter of days, I would think.

NORTHAM: The occasion for re-organisation at Customs is the merger that's in progress with the Inland Revenue to form HMRC, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. The Director of Detection, Martin Peach, sees scope for reform as the two intelligence divisions are combined into one.

PEACH: There's quite a bit of flux at the moment and organisational change and refocusing of effort that could well mean that there are going to be some changes within particular locations in the country.

NORTHAM: Does the word changes mean cuts?

PEACH: But overall, let me emphasise that there is going to be no reduction in our intelligence capability. I can't rule out that there will be a move of resource from one location to another. Overall, within HMRC, there will be no reduction in our intelligence capability.

NORTHAM: But you just told me that in some places there may be cuts in the number of people doing intelligence for Customs.

PEACH: In some places, there could well be some redirection of resource from one particular subject area to another, that's coming out of this transition, as I've said.

NORTHAM: Even without a suggestion of future cuts, the current paucity of Customs and Immigration cover in many ports of entry fits a pattern which worries the Government's expert, Lord Carlile. What he sees is disturbing: he has no doubt about the commitment and expertise of the officers he meets, but the problem is there just aren't enough of them.

CARLILE: You will not find at every port of entry Immigration, and you will not find Customs at every port of entry either. Indeed, at some ports, including some quite large seaports, Customs are a rarity and Immigration perhaps a bit less of a rarity, but they're certainly not always there. At some ports a Customs officer is an occasional and prized sight. There is an issue as to whether there are enough Custom officers and enough Immigration Service officers to protect this country fully, as fully as I would wish against terrorism incidents.

NORTHAM: Because the Immigration and the Customs staffing is as patchy as it is?

CARLILE: Well I think that the services are just spread a little thinly. We need to have a Immigration Control Service taking the whole broad picture, which is sufficiently secure against terrorism to scare off terrorists. They have to feel therefore that they're likely to be caught. Now I think in most cases actually that is so, I think most terrorists are likely to be caught, but nobody could put their hand on their heart at the moment and say they feel totally confident that all terrorists are likely to be caught coming in from abroad.

NORTHAM: At Customs, the Director of Detection, Martin Peach, sees this differently. The intelligence-led approach, he argues, doesn't necessarily require officers actually present at a port of entry in order to be effective.

PEACH: Just because we are not there physically doesn't mean to say that we have not actually looked at the risk that's associated with that port or airport on that particular day and that we have made an assessment and prioritised where we should be in order that for the greater impact we can have the best possible response on the ground. So ...

NORTHAM: Lord Carlile clearly thinks you are not there often enough.

PEACH: What Lord Carlile said is that we're thinly-spread. As I've said, you know, our tactic and our strategy is actually to bring resource to places in line with risk. Where it's flexible, mobile and unpredictable and intelligence-based.

NORTHAM: But the fact is that Lord Carlile still questions whether there are enough Customs officers to protect the country fully against terrorism. That's a very serious point.

PEACH: It is a very serious point, and my response is that we have, with the Home Office, a plan of campaign and a strategy so that Customs can play its full role in countering potential terrorism activity through imports into the United Kingdom, and we are meeting that objective.

NORTHAM: We would have liked to put Lord Carlile's criticism of the Immigration Service to a Home Office Minister, but no-one was available for interview. Instead, a statement says: 'The security of our borders is a priority and it is imperative that effective controls are in place'.

SIGNATURE TUNE