

Paul Knott Moscow

From: Nick Latta
Sent: 02 December 2006 16:33
To: Paul Knott Moscow - CONF
Cc: Sian MacLeod Moscow - CONF; Simon Smith; Andrew Page; Damion Potter; Damian Thwaites; Mark Patterson; Alan Beckwith
Subject: REST: Transaero aircraft, GDS and the Met Police

Paul,

We spoke

Investigation of Transaero flights for Contamination

You should be aware that the plane HPA checked yesterday in London was found to have traces of Polonium 210 (8Bq cm²). This is a level considered not to be a threat to public health but is contrary to the line Tarranets & Onischenko gave you yesterday.

As concerns the second plane which did not fly, the Police are giving further thought as to whether they want to detain the plane for the purposes of their investigation. The HPA do not feel that they can recommend detention of the plane on public health grounds. We should therefore hold back from talking further to Transaero or the Russian transport authorities about detention of the plane.

Government Decontamination Service Away Team

GDS raised a number of issues at today's pre-COBR meeting:

Arrival: Firstly, the 3-person team will be on the 12.25 BA flight departing London on Monday. GDS advise that they spoke to Tony last night to ask that Embassy representatives meet them off the flight and escort them through. The team will be carrying all their equipment as hand luggage and we are concerned that this very expensive kit might have problems clearing customs.

We spoke about handling of the MFA following Simon Smith's letter yesterday. You agreed that you would try to intercept the letter before the MFA forwarded it to the Prosecutor General's Office, or, failing that, that you would stand the Prosecutor General's Office down by explaining that the team was only looking to work in the Embassy and not on planes.

There will be a further challenge involved on the return leg. BA's duty manager at Heathrow will ensure that on the outward-bound leg they have no problems (escorting through security etc). Can you speak to BA's local manager to see if they can set up similar informal arrangements to enable the kit to get back, please?

There was also concern that the GDS team will be arriving at the same time as the Metropolitan Police investigation team and might be confused as forming part of that (indeed, Ambassador Fedotov has already made that mistake to us). It would be good to treat these as 2 visibly separate teams, EG met separately at the airport.

Disposal of Contaminated material: GDS explained that the Embassy will need to consider urgently how it would dispose of radioactive material which the Away Team might gather. The team itself is currently only tasked to monitor the contamination not to clear it up. Monitoring may, however, produce some radioactive waste, if the contamination proves real. If the contamination rate is significant you will, I imagine, want the GDS Team's scope of work to be expanded to include clean up. This would produce rather more radioactive waste.

GDS costs: In addition to travel and subs, the contractors will cost £2,000 per person per day. The monitoring contract is envisaged to last 2 days (total: £8,000 + travel). This will probably increase if there is a clean up operation needed as well.

Nick

04/12/2006

INQ019202

Nick Latta
Health & Transport Issues
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-----Original Message-----

From: Paul Knott Moscow - CONF
Sent: 02 December 2006 10:00
To: Paul Knott Moscow - CONF; Nick Latta
Cc: Sian MacLeod Moscow - CONF; Nik Duke Moscow - CONF; Patrick Haughey Moscow - CONF; Simon Smith; Damion Potter; George Howe
Subject: RE: Transaero aircraft- suspected contamination - RESTR
Importance: High

Nick,

A potential problem - the Ministry of Transport duty officer just called back to say that the plane did not leave Moscow this morning and the flight has now been cancelled. He had spoken to Transaero and they had explained the cancellation was due to the disruption to their scheduling arrangements caused by the detention of their plane in London yesterday. They now expected this first plane to take off from London at 12:25 UK time.

Let me know if you need me to do any further follow-up. Nik Duke will be back on the duty phone shortly. If I am not still in the office, you can reach me at home on [REDACTED] 417 or mobile [REDACTED] 908.

Paul

-----Original Message-----

From: Paul Knott Moscow - CONF
Sent: 02 December 2006 12:22
To: Nick Latta
Cc: Sian MacLeod Moscow - CONF; Nik Duke Moscow - CONF; Patrick Haughey Moscow - CONF; Simon Smith; Damion Potter; George Howe
Subject: RE: Transaero aircraft- suspected contamination - RESTR

Nick,

I have finally managed to contact the Russian Ministry of Transport (at 09:10 UK time) and informed them about DFT plans to delay Transaero plane EIDDK. The MFA have also been informed.

Paul

-----Original Message-----

From: Nick Latta
Sent: 01 December 2006 22:00
To: Paul Knott Moscow - CONF
Cc: Sian MacLeod Moscow - CONF; Nik Duke Moscow - CONF; Patrick Haughey Moscow - CONF; Simon Smith; Damion Potter; George Howe
Subject: FW: Transaero aircraft- suspected contamination - RESTR
Importance: High

Paul,

We spoke earlier. Post will need to advise the Russian Ministry for Transport of DFT plans to detain the second Transaero plane (EIDDK) when it lands at

04/12/2006

INQ019203

Heathrow on Public Health grounds. Grateful if you could confirm when this has happened. If done at the weekend, please confirm to me and George Howe as well as Simon Smith, and Damion Potter (we are covering the weekend in various permutations).

Nick

-----Original Message-----

From: Paul Knott Moscow - CONF

Sent: 01 December 2006 07:02

To: Paul Knott Moscow - CONF; Simon Smith

Cc: Damian Thwaites; Sian MacLeod Moscow - CONF; Andrew Levi Moscow - CONF;

Shirley Cameron Moscow - CONF

Subject: RE: Transaero aircraft- suspected contamination - RESTR - URGENT

Dear Simon,

Just to confirm - Onishchenko's office have told me that the information in the press is correct. The two planes were checked yesterday and no contamination was found.

Paul

-----Original Message-----

From: Paul Knott Moscow - CONF

Sent: 01 December 2006 09:44

To: Simon Smith

Cc: Damian Thwaites; Sian MacLeod Moscow - CONF; Andrew Levi Moscow - CONF; Shirley Cameron Moscow - CONF

Subject: RE: Transaero aircraft- suspected contamination - RESTR - URGENT

Dear Simon,

I spoke Mr Tarranets, Transaero Deputy Security Director, this morning (01/12). He said the two aircraft, tailfin IDs ~~E10NM~~ and ~~E10DN~~ had been checked on 30 November and found to be completely contamination free. Further checks carried out under the authority of Gennady Onishchenko, Chief Public Health Officer (i.e., the nearest Russian equivalent to the Head of the CPA) had confirmed these findings.

I am trying to double-check this with Mr Onishchenko's office but have not been able to reach them yet. But I should note that Onishchenko has been quoted in the press this morning as saying that the two planes (plus one from Aeroflot) were checked yesterday, along with various parts of Sheremetyevo and Domodedovo airports. All were found to be clean. He also said monitoring of planes arriving from the UK would continue.

Best Regards,

Paul

Paul Knott
2nd Secretary Political (External)
British Embassy Moscow

telno:

04/12/2006

INQ019204

-----Original Message-----

From: Simon Smith
Sent: 01 December 2006 01:19
To: Paul Knott Moscow - CONF
Cc: Damian Thwaites; Sian MacLeod Moscow - CONF; Andrew Levi Moscow - CONF; Shirley Cameron Moscow - CONF
Subject: Transaero aircraft- suspected contamination - RESTR - URGENT
Importance: High

Dear Paul

Our public health authorities remain concerned about the status of two Transaero aircraft which have been identified as having ben used by possibly contaminated individuals on flight between London and Moscow in October.

The tailfin IDs of the aircraft are ~~2601~~ (seat numbers 26F and 26E), and ~~EIDOK~~ (seat nos 16F and 16E)

We have not received precise information about the schedule plans for either aircraft. But it is thought that one may fly on December 1 and one on December 2.

The HPA and Department of Transport remain concerned that we should draw to the attention of Transaero and the Russian public health authorities the possibility that these aircraft may be contaminated. Their advice would be that the aircraft should be tested for contamination before they next fly. If contamination is found, rapid action needs to be taken to establish where else they have flown - and similar action to that undertaken by BA with passengers should be taken.

One element of confusion may arise. It appears (although we have not received precise details) that although these two tailfin numbers were notified to Transaero by Nik Duke in the early hours of 30 November, one was taken to refer to an aircraft which arrived in London at 1115 on 30 November, but was subsequently found NOT to have been one of the 2 aircraft thought to be contaminated. (When it arrived, it turned out to have a different tailfinnumber). The Department of Transport have confirmed to us that the tailfin numbers now listed ARE the aircraft in question, and it is hoped that the precise seat number references will help ensure that contamination monitoring - if this was not already done as a result of the previous notification - can be efficient and targetted.

In view of the likelihood that one of these aircraft may fly tomorrow, early contact with Transaero on the morning of December 1 is advised. Given that the tailfin numbers have been previously notified to Transaero, it is reasonable to assume that checks may already have been carried out. If so, it would be useful to know when, and what the findings were.

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INQ019205

For ease of reference, I have repeated below the details of the contacts made with Transaero by Nik Duke early on 30 November.

Deputy Director for Security: Aleksandr Tarranets -

Chief Immigration Officer (1st shift): Vasily Solonor -

The Director for Security -

Lady at Heathrow: Victoria - 021

He also obtained the following contact details but we do not think he used them:

Comercial Director: Aleksandr Krinchansky -

Handling Director: Sergei Piliponsky -

All the best

Simon

Simon Smith

Director, Russia, S Caucasus & C Asia

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04/12/2006

INQ019206

Knott Moscow - CONF

From: Nick Latta
Sent: 02 December 2006 22:40
To: Paul Knott Moscow - **CONF**
Cc: Andrew Page; Simon Smith; Damion Potter; 'jonathan.moor@dft.gsi.gov.uk'; 'stephen.thomas@gds.gsi.gov.uk'
Subject: GDS Handling & Transaero

Importance: High

Paul,

You will have seen my egram today updating on the state of play in transport. One thing not discussed in that egram is the fate of the second Transaero flight (EI-DDK). We heard this morning from Fedotov that Transaero would refuse to allow the UK authorities to detain the plane in frustration about the detention of their first plane (EI-DNM) on Friday. Currently there is an AWE and DfT team on standby at Heathrow in case Transaero send EI-DDK to UK. This is an expensive option. However, given that UK air traffic control only becomes aware that a particular plane is entering UK airspace 30 minutes before it lands, this appears to be the only way of ensuring a team is available when the plane lands

One thought we have had here is that it might be worth approaching Transaero and explaining that:

- A) We do not want to ban this plane from UK airspace BUT if it does fly to the UK we will need to detain it on public health grounds.
- B) The Russian test of the planes did not identify any contamination, but the UK's tests on the first plane did identify trace amounts. As EI-DDK was the inbound flight (rather than the return leg) it is more likely to be a risk (a point we have also made to Fedotov).
- C) Transaero may wish to consider whether they would like to take the opportunity of the presence of the GDS team in Moscow to allow them access to the plane to test it there. Time on the ground in Domodedovo will cost Transaero significantly less than time on the ground at Heathrow.

I should be grateful for your thoughts and those of copy addressees. The immediate issues I can see with this approach are:

- The cost of the GDS trip is currently being met from FCO funds, while this extra task will need to be met from other sources.
- We would need to check whether the Commission Rogatoire would allow the Police to gather any evidence from the plane if it was found to be contaminated.

Nick Latta
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