

Border Security and Immigration: Our Deal for Delivery in 2008

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Check against delivery.

- I want to open my remarks today very simply.
- With a very big thank you.
- A very big well done to everyone in BIA who has worked so hard this last year.
- You have once again delivered on the most important priorities you were set to protect our country's borders.
- Despite the huge reforms we have thought about, talked about, debated and planned last year, despite the huge job of work building the foundations for the change that is to come this year, you have delivered on the key promises we made to the British public.
- This morning I can confirm for the first time that in 2007, we not only met the Prime Minister's target to deport 4,000 foreign national prisoners, we beat it.

- Deporting over 4,200 of those who abused our laws.
- We did this at a time of great change:
- Putting in place fingerprint checks for visas around the world. We have already delivered 1.1 million sets of finger-scans generating over 11,000 hits. In the last quarter there were 467 cases of identity swaps.
- Testing electronic screening of travellers' details. 18,000 alerts and more than 1,500 arrests.
- Enrolling nearly 160,000 people on IRIS - a quick and secure way for trusted travellers to clear UK immigration.
- Record removals of failed asylum seekers in 2006 - one every 8 minutes - and continued high levels throughout the first 9 months in 2007.
- And around the country, new fast-track teams in place to consider asylum cases. Over 40% of cases now are concluded within 6 months or less - compared to 1997 when it took an average of 22 months.

The Public Expects

- But the immigration debate remains the top concern of many of our fellow citizens.
- In some polls, it is the number one issue of concern, higher than crime/law and order (39%).
- Two thirds of UK adults feel that laws on immigration should be much tougher.
- Nearly half say their biggest concern is pressure on public services and jobs.
- That puts us in the spotlight, and with these fears British people are not alone. Migration globally has doubled, and with that change has come new concerns.
- In America right now, immigration reform is topping the list of issues for Republican voters.
- In France last year immigration was a key theme for President Sarkozy.

- That says to us that the work of reform goes on.
What the public is saying is simple. They want big changes to Britain's immigration system.
- Britain is not anti-foreigner. I said before Christmas, we are not a nation of Alf Garnetts. Britain is a country that is comfortable with diversity and a nation that enjoys difference.
- But we want change. The public wants stronger borders.
- The public want us to prevent illegal immigration by attacking its causes.
- The public wants us to hold newcomers to account when they break the rules, deporting rule breakers where necessary.
- But they also want a compassionate system, which makes - and enforces - decisions fast and lets those we need make the contribution they can as long as they speak English, pay tax and obey the law.
- We have got the message.

- Over the last 12 months we have drawn up plans for the biggest ever shake-up of Britain's border security.
- This year we make the change.
- By Christmas, the system will look and feel different. Throughout the year the public will be able to see progress on our ten point plan for 2008.
- What the public needs to know is that we have listened. We have. And we will act.
- But this plan of action is not just the work of me, or the Home Secretary or the Prime Minister.
- It is what the frontline staff of BIA - the people who came into this business to keep Britain safe - advise on how best to act.
- In 2006, I travelled 3,200 miles around BIA. I talked with over 2,000 staff about what they thought we needed to change.
- Staff were blunt. But they were ambitious too. To work for an organisation that helps this country

prosper, but keeps this country safe in a new era of global movement.

- In 2007, I set out that agenda to deliver change.
- New cross-Government strategy to enforce the rules and strengthen our borders:
- New powers to detect, detain and deport rule breakers.
- New money from higher visa charges - in fact to double our resources for enforcing the rules.
- New technology like tracking and identity systems.
- New international alliances to manage what is a global issue.
- Today, those foundations are in place. The work of the last few years allows us in 2008 to do something big. To deliver the biggest shake-up to our border protection and immigration system for forty years.

- My goal therefore in 2008 is as ambitious as it is urgent. There are 4 themes to our work. Protection, prevention, accountability and compassion:
- To deliver a sweeping programme of border protection, learning from the world's most advanced nations like the US, we will;
 - Check fingerprints before we issue a visa
 - Screen all travellers against watch-lists before they land
 - Introduce a single border force to guard our ports and airports
 - Introduce police-like powers for frontline staff
 - And crucially, we will reintroduce the checks to count foreign nationals in and out of the country.
- To prevent illegal immigration we will make changes too.
- Change that is needed because prevention is always cheaper, and safer and fairer - than the cure.
- And because we have obligations, not just to the British public, but to the potential victims of human

trafficking and smuggling, the vulnerable victims of a global 21st century slave trade.

- So we will introduce:
 - A points system to help British business recruit legally the skills it needs from abroad so we are a global hub of global talent.
 - Once again learning from the most effective systems in the world, in this case Australia.
 - But a system designed to prevent illegal immigration and attack the causes of illegal immigration.
- So we will:
 - Introduce big fines for employers who don't make the checks.
 - And we will introduce compulsory ID cards for foreign nationals so those checks are 10 times easier than they are today.
 - We will welcome those newcomers who promise to work hard and play by the rules, and enrich this

country culturally and economically, as many have before them.

- But we will hold newcomers to account for their actions if they break the rules - whether that is overstaying their visa or breaking the law.
- That means automatic deportation for those who commit a serious offence. This year we will deport more foreign prisoners than last year - and I am afraid we will build more detention centres to lift the numbers we remove.
- But I believe one thing more. That we will fail if we do not reform our system so that it is more humane in its nature. So that it is compassionate.
- So we will ensure that we honour our traditions of providing humanitarian protection to those who need our help - like the Iraqi interpreters who served shoulder to shoulder with British forces in a war-zone.
- In the asylum system, fairer decisions are often faster decisions. So we will for the first time, conclude - either granting or removing -the majority of cases within 6 months.

- And we will be most sensitive to the children in our care and the victims of human trafficking.
- There are our goals. But what the public wants to see is us delivering on those goals.
- So each and every month in 2008, the British public will hear us not talking about change. They will see us delivering it.
- Today I want to set out our deal for delivery in 2008.
- Because border protection is so crucial, I am pleased to be able to announce today, **day 14 of 2008**, that we will no longer issue visas abroad without checking fingerprints first.
- We have delivered global roll out of fingerprint visas 3 months early and several million pounds under budget.
- By **day 60** we will introduce big on the spot fines for employers who don't make the right checks and employ illegal immigrants

- By **day 80**, we will commence the introduction of our points system, so that only those (? individuals or migrants) Britain needs can come here to work or study.
- By **day 100**, we will introduce a single border force and introduce our new powers for frontline staff.
- By **day 180** I will confirm that we are on track to deport more foreign national prisoners than last year, and by **day 200**, give or take a fortnight, we will activate powers for the automatic deportation of foreign national prisoners.
- By **day 300**, we will have expanded our detention capacity to boost to the number of spaces at the disposal of Agency enforcement teams, including building a new centre at Gatwick Airport.
- By **day 330**, we will be issuing compulsory ID cards to foreign nationals.
- By **Christmas**, we will be counting in and out of Britain, the majority of foreign nationals and introducing compulsory watch-list checks on

travellers from high risk places *before* they land -
indeed in some cases, before they take off

- Finally, by the **end of the year** we will for the first time resolve - either removing or granting - the majority of new asylum claimants inside 6 months with alternatives to detention available for children and new action on trafficking.

- Putting our values centre-stage
- The entirety of this agenda can sound harsh. Yes, it reflects what the British public demands and expects, but it is the precondition for the preservation of the greatest British tradition of tolerance.
- Over the last few months, I've been travelling across the UK seeking a good old fashioned bit of British common sense asking what are the things we expect migrants to sign up to? How do we expect to see this sign-up on show? And how do we support newcomers on this fascinating journey?
- You get a sense of what we hold dear by asking about what we would miss if they left. The NHS is mentioned over and over again. So is the monarchy. So are our values of tolerance and fairness, of a healthy disrespect for authority yet a keen sense of order.
- But what emerges from the debate is British reason at its finest. Sophisticated, intelligent views and a profound sense of fairness and tolerance for a Britain in which we live and let live and actually try a bit

harder to be a bit more welcoming, and a bit less shy about saying hello.

- But the deal we want to put on the table is not unconditional.
- On the contrary.
- The rules are unambiguous: speak the language; obey the law; and make sure you're paying your taxes like the rest of us. It is a very British tough-minded fairness.
- And there is a sense in the public mind that the sooner newcomers start on the type of journey we have in mind, the better.
- This is the basis of a new agenda in British immigration policy. Where we all, as the Home Secretary said before Christmas, enjoy shared protections and shared values. And where the benefits of migration - benefits that we all share in - are underpinned by the robustness of the systems that we have in place to regulate it, and by the expectations we have of those who come to Britain to work, to live, and to build a better life for themselves.

- So there is much we will deliver this year. There are new directions of reform that we must explore.
- But this is our contract for delivery for 2008 - a year of radical change and real action. It is nothing less than what the British public wants to see. It is nothing short of the ambition of those who serve this agency with such distinction.