



COVID: 10-Year Jail Term For Lying About Where You Travelled From

The police state is getting lots of proving ground out of COVID-19. Great Britain is so paranoid that someone might lie about their travel origin, that you could face a 10 year prison sentence for lying about your country of origin. □ TN Editor

A maximum 10-year jail term for lying about recent travel history has been defended by the government.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said the British public “would expect pretty strong action” and the maximum sentence reflects the seriousness of the crime.

It was criticised by former Supreme Court judge Lord Sumption who said lower tariffs exist for sex offences.

From Monday, people arriving in England from “red list” countries must isolate for 10 days in hotels, costing £1,750.

It follows concerns that existing vaccines being rolled out in the UK may

struggle to control new virus variants identified around the world.

Meanwhile, Mr Shapps said people should not be booking holidays either in the UK or abroad, and that it was “too soon” for sun-seekers to plan getaways.

“People shouldn’t be booking holidays right now - not domestically or internationally,” he told the Today programme, prompting the travel industry to warn of another lost summer.

It comes as Prime Minister Boris Johnson told MPs the public would need to “get used to the idea of vaccinating and then re-vaccinating in the autumn” due to new variants.

And, speaking at Prime Minister’s Questions, he said the hotel quarantine plan was “measured” and “proportionate”.

- Who has to self-isolate and for how long?
- The new test and quarantine rules for travellers
- Why Australia’s quarantine system has seen breaches

Writing in the Daily Telegraph, Lord Sumption accused Health Secretary Matt Hancock - who announced the latest measures - of losing his connection with reality.

“Ten years is the maximum sentence for threats to kill, non-fatal poisoning or indecent assault,” he wrote.

“Does Mr Hancock really think that non-disclosure of a visit to Portugal is worse than the large number of violent firearms offences or sexual offences involving minors, for which the maximum is seven years?”

Former Tory MP and ex-attorney general Dominic Grieve said the 10-year penalty was “a mistake”, “exaggerated” and “entirely disproportionate”.

He told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme: “The reality is that nobody would get such a sentence anyway, the courts are simply not going to impose it.

“Now I recognise that the government has to put down strict rules and needs to have penalties to enforce them.

“But to suggest that a 10-year sentence is going to result from a false declaration on a form on landing at Heathrow Airport is, I think, a mistake because it is exaggerated, it is not going to happen.”

‘Lie and cheat’

Failing to quarantine in a designated hotel after arriving from a “red list” country will carry a fine of between £5,000 and £10,000.

The 10-year jail term would be the maximum penalty for anyone found to have falsified their travel history on the mandatory passenger locator form filled in by travellers when they arrive in the UK.

New border measures also require international arrivals to pay for additional tests during their quarantine period.

Downing Street said MPs will not be asked to vote on the plans as the government will be including the restrictions under the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981.

Asked about harsh penalties attached to the new measures, Mr Shapps told BBC Breakfast those who are fined as much as £10,000 would have to “go out of their way to lie and cheat” the new system.

Mr Shapps said the 10-year maximum jail term reflected the “serious” nature of the offence.

“I think the British public would expect pretty strong action” for those who seek to evade hotel quarantine, he said.

Around 1,300 people a week are arriving into the UK from the 33 red list countries - including Portugal, Brazil and South Africa - at the moment, Mr Shapps said.

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