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Press release - UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01hrs, 12th August 2008

Foreign Office reveals new incident figures in annual British Behaviour Abroad Report

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) is appealing to British holidaymakers not to cut corners on travel insurance as its third annual British Behaviour Abroad report reveals that Brits are continuing to get into trouble overseas.

The report, based on incident figures from FCO records, reveals that 8,304 Britons needed assistance in the US, 6,710 passports were lost in Spain, 602 Brits were hospitalised in Greece and 1,591 died in Spain over the period April 06–March 07.

In a separate survey¹, two thirds of British holiday makers have admitted that they will be spending less on their foreign holiday preparations this year due to the credit crunch. This has prompted concerns that people will opt out of getting comprehensive travel insurance, adding potential financial ruin to the trauma of experiencing a serious problem abroad.

Foreign Office Minister, Meg Munn, said:

"This report highlights what can go wrong on holiday. It is a reminder to all that taking out comprehensive travel insurance is a crucial part of your holiday planning and not something that should be sacrificed in order to save a few pounds.

Helping British nationals in distress overseas is one of our most important tasks but many of the problems faced by holidaymakers are preventable. By carrying out some simple research on the laws, customs and health requirements of a country in advance, many people could prevent their holidays being ruined."

¹ ¹ A survey commissioned by the FCO showed that 66% of Brits that go on holidays abroad are planning on making some sort of financial cut on their holiday preparations this year. The survey was carried out by YouGov with a total sample size was 1,990 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 18th - 21st July 2008. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

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The report reveals many interesting findings including:

- Taking into account the number of British visitors and residents, Indonesia showed a very high rate of serious assistance cases (10.05 for every 1,000 Brits) followed by Pakistan (1.95) and then India (1.37)
 - **There are a number of reasons for Indonesia's high rates of serious assistance cases including accidents, theft of money and passports and involvement in drugs. It's not unusual for the police to round people up in bars where they suspect drugs are being used and make them submit to a urine or blood test; a positive result is then sufficient evidence to charge for using*
- Spain had the highest number of hospitalisations (695) followed by Greece (602) and then Thailand (324)
 - **Many of the hospitalisations in Thailand are a result of motorbike accidents – particularly in the Southern islands. Thailand has one of the world's highest road traffic accident rates, almost all of which involve motorbikes*
- Proportionally, Brits were more likely to be arrested in Cyprus, closely followed by the USA and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)
 - **Many of the Brits arrested in the UAE were transiting between the UK and elsewhere and were detained as a result of the country's zero policy on drugs, with possession of as little as 0.01g leading to people being arrested and detained. Low tolerance of alcohol related activities and driving offences as well as low tolerance of any perceived anti-Islamic behaviour, such as a lack of respect for UAE officials, also contributed*
- Although approximately 247,000 fewer people visited India in 06/07, 56% more passports were lost than the year before

For specific travel advice by country visit www.fco.gov.uk/travel and click on your destination

Ends

** Based on anecdotal information from Consular posts*

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FCO BRITISH BEHAVIOUR ABROAD REPORT -

Top 15 countries where British nationals required the most consular assistance from 01 April 2006 - 31 March 2007

Country	Estimated no. British Visits *	British Residents **	Total no. assistance cases***	Total no. serious assistance cases****	Lost Passports
USA	6,500,000	678,000	8,304	2,765	2,792
Spain	17,000,000	761,000	7,590	5,470	6,710
United Arab Emirates	1,100,000	55,000	3,597	606	147
Italy	3,500,000	26,000	3,267	619	1,015
France	14,800,000	200,000	2,900	1,572	1,647
Germany	2,372,320	115,000	2,503	1,739	1,040
Indonesia	140,673	11,000	2,294	1,525	44
Greece	3,000,000	18,000	1,910	1,405	276
India	600,000	32,000	1,506	866	225
Thailand	860,000	41,000	1,412	1,066	746
Australia	700,000	1,300,000	1,235	1,128	2,006
Cyprus	1,500,000	59,000	1,209	1,182	272
Pakistan	275,544	47,000	1,179	629	214
Turkey	1,916,130	34,000	1,015	482	157
Netherlands	1,902,000	44,000	748	563	471

Country	Total Arrests	Hospitalisations	Deaths	Reported rapes
USA	1,415	75	95	2
Spain	2,032	695	1,591	29
United Arab Emirates	230	20	51	2
Italy	38	171	156	2
France	153	246	385	6
Germany	162	29	294	1
Indonesia	18	25	2	0
Greece	230	602	131	28
India	46	45	126	1
Thailand	141	324	269	2
Australia	47	47	76	1
Cyprus	377	100	81	9
Pakistan	19	0	14	0
Turkey	34	137	69	21
Netherlands	20	16	18	0

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* These figures are based on visitor numbers provided by individual country authorities except Indonesia which is sourced from ONS

** Source: IPPR (Institute for Public Policy Research). Figure based on Brits living in country for a year or longer

***Total no. assistance cases - includes 'Advice and Self Help' cases.

**** Total no. serious assistance cases (arrests, hospitalizations, deaths, reported rapes). Excludes 'Advice and Self Help' cases.

- REPORT FINDINGS AND TRAVEL ADVICE FROM THE FCO -

ARRESTS

The facts

- 2,032 Brits were arrested in Spain last year – 33% more than the year before and more than any other country
- As a proportion however, Brits were more likely to be arrested in Cyprus, closely followed by the USA and United Arab Emirates.
- 153 arrests were made in France – 42% more than the year before

FCO advice to prevent unwittingly getting into problems with the law abroad:

- Before you travel, check out the local laws and customs of your destination – what might be perfectly appropriate behaviour or dress in one country might not be acceptable in another – for example, wearing camouflage clothing is illegal in some Caribbean countries and some nasal sprays widely used in the UK are illegal in Japan. Check out www.fco.gov.uk/travel which contains the latest travel information by country. Travel guide books and tour operators are also good sources of information
- Be aware of what you can and can't bring home. Customs departments throughout the world confiscate illegal souvenirs, and in the UK you could face a criminal prosecution and fines. Get more information on bringing back meat, animal products or plants from the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Visit www.defra.gov.uk for further information
- Many arrests are due to behaviour caused by excessive drinking. Know your limit and try not to drink more than you usually would at home. Be aware that your travel insurance may not cover you if you have an accident whilst under the influence of alcohol
- Avoid areas where you might be unintentionally caught up in trouble e.g. rallies, marches or protests

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HOSPITALISATIONS

The facts

- Spain had the highest number of hospitalisations (695) followed by Greece (602) and then Thailand (324)
- As a proportion of visitors and residents, Thailand showed the highest rates of hospitalisations. In fact, Brits were nearly twice as likely to be hospitalised in Thailand than Greece which showed the second highest rates proportionally.
- The five locations where injuries are most likely to occur are roads, beaches, hotels, remote locations and ski slopes

FCO advice to prevent illness or injury whilst on holiday

- If travelling mid or long-haul, visit your GP as soon as possible beforehand to obtain any necessary vaccinations or medication
- If you're going to be driving, familiarise yourself with the rules of the road, the condition of the roads and whether the general style of driving is different from the UK – and if you're hiring a car always do so from a reputable company.
- It's not usually advisable to hire a moped or quad bike abroad, but if you are going to, check the small print of your insurance to make sure you're covered and always wear a helmet
- See the FCO's advice on driving abroad at www.fco.gov.uk/travel
- Check with your airline that you can carry any medication you are taking in hand luggage and pack enough supplies for your whole trip and possible delays. You should keep your medication in its original packaging and take any prescription documents with you. Check with the nearest embassy of the country you are going to that your medication will be legal in that country and find out whether you will need to take a doctor's letter with you
- Purchase full travel insurance. Anyone travelling within the European Economic Area or Switzerland should also get a free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC – which replaces the former E111) which entitles you to some reduced or free emergency care – but you will still need travel insurance. You can apply for an EHIC with the Department of Health on-line via www.dh.gov/travellers
- Make sure your insurance is up to date, valid for the entire trip and covers everyone who is travelling. Check exactly what is covered, for example, cover for all the activities you want to do, including any dangerous sports, all your luggage

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and equipment, personal injury as a result of terrorist activity, and legal costs

DEATHS

The facts

- 1,591 Brits died in Spain in 06/07 – this was 20% more than the previous year
This compares with only 385 in France – the second most visited country by Brits.
- 126 British citizens died in India in 06/07 – this is 33% more than the US even though 11 times as many Brits visited/live the US.
- As a proportion, Brits are significantly more likely to die in Thailand than in the other countries

FCO advice around death abroad:

- Ensure all members of your party have insurance and declare all pre-existing medical conditions – if an uninsured person dies whilst abroad any treatment they have received and their repatriation to the UK will not be covered
- All deaths must be registered in the country in which the death occurs. If a person in your party dies, whatever the circumstances, report the incident to the local authorities immediately
- There is no obligation to contact the British Consul/Embassy but they can offer support and practical advice at this distressing time

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REPORTED RAPES

The facts

- Spain and Greece had the most reported rape incidents (29 and 28 respectively) followed by Turkey (21)

FCO advice to help prevent yourself becoming a victim of rape and sexual assault whilst abroad :

- Try and avoid walking alone, particularly at night – stick to well lit areas in safe neighborhoods
- Always tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return
- Make sure you know the address and phone number of where you are staying and how to get back
- Be aware that drugs are sometimes used in rape. They are normally colourless and tasteless, and can make you virtually unconscious and defenceless. Once someone has added drugs to your drink, you will not normally be able to detect them. Be aware that rape drugs can also work in non-alcoholic drinks
- Nominate someone to watch your drinks, especially if you are leaving the group you are with, for example to go to the toilet
- If you are going to drink alcohol, know your limit and be aware that alcohol measures are often much larger abroad than in the UK. Alcohol is the most frequently used drug in drug-assisted rape
- Never accept drinks from or share drinks with strangers or from anyone you do not completely trust
- Be sure to observe the customs of your destination in terms of appropriate dress and behaviour, particularly if you are in a non-Western country – follow the lead of the local women if you're unsure

LOST PASSPORTS

The facts

- 6,710 passports were lost in Spain – this was an increase of 10% on the previous year
- 2,006 passports were lost in Australia – this was proportionally the highest of all the countries.
- Although approximately 247,000 fewer people visited India in 06/07, 56% more passports were lost than the year before

FCO advice on passports:

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- Always fill in the next of kin details on your passport
- Before you travel, make a copy of the page with your details on. Leave it with friends or family at home or upload it onto a secure online data storage site - this will assist a speedier turnaround if your passport is lost or stolen
- Take the number of the British Embassy or Consulate that will be nearest to you (find out which it is at www.fco.gov.uk/travel) or 0845 850 2829
- Once abroad, keep your passport in a safe place (e.g. hotel safe)
- If you lose your passport or it is stolen, report the loss immediately to the nearest local police station and obtain a police report before contacting the nearest Embassy or Consulate. Have your photocopy handy.

Notes to Editors

The figures have been released as part of the FCO's ongoing Know Before You Go campaign, which aims to encourage British nationals to take responsibility for preparing for their foreign travel. The campaign targets a number of audiences, from gap year students to package holidaymakers; sports fans to older travellers and people visiting friends and family abroad. The campaign works with 250 travel industry partners to communicate its messages.

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