

Detainees under escort:  
Inspection of escort and removals to

**Tirana, Albania and  
Pristina, Kosovo**

by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

**27 June and 25 July 2014**

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Printed and published by:  
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons  
Victory House  
6th floor  
30–34 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6EX  
England

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# Fact page

## 27 June 2014 – flight A

**Departure airport**

Stansted

**Destination country**

Albania

**Destination airport**

Tirana

**Escort contractor**

TASCOR

**Number of detainees escorted**

53

**Number of escort staff**

93

**Health care staff**

2 (Aeromed)

**Length of journey**

7 hours

## 25 July 2014 – flight B

**Departure airport**

Stansted

**Destination countries**

Kosovo and Albania, via France

**Destination airports**

Pristina and Tirana

**Escort contractor**

TASCOR

**Number of detainees escorted**

46

**Number of escort staff**

80

**Health care staff**

2 (Aeromed)

**Length of journey**

10 hours 40 minutes (longest)

# Introduction

This report sets out the findings from the inspections of two escorts and removals; the first to Tirana, Albania on 27 June 2014 (flight A) and the second, a joint operation with the French government, to Pristina in Kosovo and Tirana, Albania on 25 July 2014 (flight B). I accompanied inspectors on the second removal.

Both removals were generally well organised and calm. There had been progress in addressing some of the concerns we have identified in previous removal inspections. There was good de-escalation of situations in which detainees exhibited distress or reluctance to travel, and for the most part escort staff interacted sensitively with detainees. Use of restraint was generally more proportionate than we have seen in the past and training relevant to the confined spaces of an aircraft had begun to be rolled out.

However, these removals also reinforced some of our long-standing concerns. In particular, the practice of overbooking flights and placing some detainees on a reserve list without their knowledge, hence the detainee, having gone through the distress and anxiety of preparing to leave, found at the last minute that they were never likely to have travelled. This was not just unacceptable treatment of the detainees concerned but undoubtedly made the calm removal of these detainees in future more difficult for the staff involved. The problem was exacerbated on flight B because the return flight of an earlier removal had been delayed for technical reasons. This meant that some escort staff who had been scheduled to join flight B were unavailable and so the number of detainees who could be removed was reduced. There was an inexcusable delay in notifying the centres concerned. At Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal centre for instance, women and men who had been roused for departure at 2.30 am were not informed it had been cancelled until 4.20 am. There was little sense that any of the staff involved had any idea how much distress and anxiety it caused the detainees. Some of the replacement staff who covered on flight B were not familiar with escort duties but experienced supervisors generally made sure matters progressed safely.

Despite improvement, some security processes remained disproportionate and not sufficiently based on an individual risk assessment. Some staff were dressed inappropriately, and sometimes unnecessarily laid hands on detainees in a way that might have been provocative. Detainees could not use the toilet on the coach or aircraft without the door being propped ajar – to the obvious discomfort, in particular, of one woman who asked to use the toilet on a coach carrying male detainees.

Flight B stopped in Lille, France to pick up 10 detainees who were being removed from France and their escorts. The French removal appeared to be conducted on a similar basis to that from the UK. The two operations were kept largely separate but UK staff were unable to explain who would have ultimate authority in the event of an incident affecting the flight as a whole.

The whole removal process took a very long time. On flight B the first detainee boarded the coach at Harmondsworth IRC at 3.10 am and the last disembarked in Tirana at 1.40 pm UK time later that day. Not surprisingly most detainees on the flight slept as did some of the escorts who were supposed to be supervising them on flight A. The journeys were therefore generally calm, physical conditions were good and senior staff helped resolve detainees' concerns. Detainees who had self-harmed or who were at risk of doing so received good care although some established procedures were not followed. Interpretation services were not provided consistently.

Detainees who arrived in Tirana on flight B were taken to a newly established holding centre which had been established with support and funding from the UK government. The facility was of a reasonable standard but mainly focussed on crime prevention and security issues and provided little support for detainees who might be vulnerable. It was unclear how women or children would be dealt with in the facility.

Even on a generally short and well-organised flight with many detainees who wished to return home, these removals are a sad business. It was good that these removals provided further evidence that many of our recommendations from earlier inspections had been implemented or were in the process of being so, although more needed to be done to bring these improvements to a conclusion. However, the continued use of reserve lists and delays in notifying unavoidable cancellations is simply unacceptable. Flight B saw new partnerships with French and Albanian authorities being implemented and there were issues with both of these that should be resolved before problems occur.

**Nick Hardwick**  
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons

November 2014

## Section 1. Summary

- I.1** Flight A on 27 June was a relatively short-haul removal operation during which 53 people, including three women, were taken to Tirana, Albania. There were 92 escort officers, two health care staff, a senior supervising officer, a chief immigration officer, and a Home Office monitor. The level of staffing was proportionate, the operation was well organised and ran smoothly. No detainees had been identified as at risk of self-harm, and most of those we spoke to did not express severe distress at being returned.
- I.2** Flight B on 25 July was the first joint operation with the French government to both Kosovo and Albania. It carried 36 UK detainees: from Stansted with 66 escorts, two health care staff, a senior supervising officer, chief immigration officer, and Home Office and Tascor managers observing the operation. At Lille airport, 10 people detained by the French government joined the flight, with 20 French police officers as escorts. Two detainees disembarked at Pristina and the remainder at Tirana. It was not clear where overall authority lay for the combined UK-French operation. Collection from Yarl's Wood and Colnbrook was cancelled the day before as a result of staff shortages, but the centres were not informed at that time. At Yarl's Wood, detainees had said their goodbyes and were waiting with their packed bags when they were notified of the cancellation, causing unnecessary and avoidable distress.
- I.3** These removals underlined the severely negative impact on detainees' wellbeing of the uncertainty over whether or not they would travel. Three men who eventually flew on flight A had previously been upset at the prospect of not flying; one had stated that he would self-harm if he did not fly. An official contacted the Home Office to negotiate with Albania to take another three detainees and this was successful. On flight B, similar stresses were in evidence, and very (unnecessarily) late notification of cancellations arising from technical problems on an earlier flight made them worse. On flight A, a number of escort staff said that they were expected to lie to 'reserve' detainees, telling them that they would fly when this was not certain. Those managing the operations did not appear to understand the traumatic effect which the reserve system had on detainees.
- I.4** Very few detainees had been held in a separation unit before departure. There had been legitimate grounds for this in most cases, but a woman on flight A had been separated with no clear evidence of risk.
- I.5** Handcuffs had only been used twice during the five most recent Operation Aardvark removals (charter flights to Albania and Kosovo) in the immigration removal centre (IRC) only. On the whole, escort staff no longer took detainees' arms when escorting them to a coach within the secure perimeter of the IRC, though there were a number of exceptions. Security team members still took hold of both arms of each detainee when taking them from the coach to the terminal at Stansted. Few staff had completed the new training package on restraint during removal journeys.
- I.6** The appearance of some escort staff may have been unnecessarily intimidating for some detainees. Combat-style trousers and boots were worn by some TASCOR staff, and some staff supplementing the Tascor team wore items connected with their primary role as police officers.
- I.7** Escorting officers were courteous and appropriate in their manner towards detainees and in their communications in the presence of detainees. There was no effective handover of key information, including medical information, from centre staff to escort staff and to staff in destination countries, other than in the form of paper files.

- I.8** Although the general mood of detainees was more positive than on some longer flights, the risk of self-harm was still present. This was managed in a caring manner but established procedures were not used consistently.
- I.9** Most escorting officers spoke to detainees from time to time, and a few struck up lively conversations. However, even though flight A was a short flight taking off at 9.20am, a number of escorting officers slept for lengthy periods while allocated to personal supervision of a named detainee. Staff said that their working pattern sometimes made it impossible to stay awake.
- I.10** Food and drink were of sufficient quality and quantity and hot drinks were offered to detainees during the coach journey. All detainees were given written information about making a complaint, but many did not understand this. Detainees' property was efficiently managed.
- I.11** A female detainee needing to use the toilet was taken on to a coach of male detainees and was asked to use the toilet with the door wedged open. She understandably declined. Toilets were routinely wedged open with a foot or with handcuffs.
- I.12** On each removal, an interpreter who spoke Albanian and a number of other languages joined the escort at Stansted. However, on flight A no interpretation was used with detainees who spoke very little English, and the information booklet given out was in a number of languages but, not Albanian. On each flight, the chief immigration officer made themselves available to answer detainees' questions. Paramedics gave appropriate care to detainees.
- I.13** On arrival, the detainees were able to disembark quickly. There was a constructive atmosphere between Home Office and Albanian or Kosovan staff, and between officials of the destination countries and the arriving detainees. Most detainees seemed confident of where they would go and how they would resume their lives in their country, but there was no obvious assistance for those lacking such confidence.
- I.14** Detainees disembarking at Tirana from flight B were taken to a new holding facility, which was of a reasonable standard. The focus of the holding facility was on crime and security and little attention was given to the needs of vulnerable detainees.

## Section 2. Background

- 2.1** All inspections carried out by HM Inspectorate of Prisons contribute to the UK's response to its international obligations under the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). OPCAT requires that all places of detention are visited regularly by independent bodies – known as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) – which monitors the treatment of and conditions for detainees. Escorts are included in this remit. HM Inspectorate of Prisons is one of several bodies making up the NPM in the UK.
- 2.2** These were the first charter flights to Albania or Kosovo that we had inspected. The aircraft were chartered by the Home Office Directorate of Immigration Enforcement, and Tascor was the escort contractor. Flight A on 27 June was from Stansted to Tirana. Flight B on 25 July was a first joint operation with the French government: from Stansted the aircraft flew to Lille, where 10 detainees, escorted by French staff, joined the flight. Two disembarked at Pristina and the remainder at Tirana.
- 2.3** On flight A, detainees were collected from four immigration removal centres (IRCs): Colnbrook, Brook House, Harmondsworth and Yarl's Wood.
- 2.4** On flight B, collection had been planned from the same four centres, but those from Yarl's Wood and Colnbrook were cancelled, although the centres were only notified of this at an avoidably late stage. A preceding removal flight had been severely delayed at Tashkent and many TASCOR escort staff were not available to work on this removal. A number of volunteers were drafted in from Home Office Immigration Enforcement and the police, but not enough to staff coaches to all the IRCs. Some TASCOR staff on flight B had had no more than 12 hours' break since their previous assignment. It was not clear whether all the escort staff were detention custody officers certified under Part 8 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- 2.5** We inspected the removal from the collection of detainees at the IRCs to disembarkation of all detainees at their respective destinations. Two inspectors travelled on the aircraft on each occasion. Flight A took off from Stansted at 9.30am and arrived at Tirana at noon. Flight B left Stansted at 8.15am, reached Pristina at 12.30pm and Tirana at 1.40pm (GMT). The records of three previous flights to Tirana were also examined for this report.

## Section 3. Safety

### Expected outcomes:

**Detainees are escorted in safety and due regard is given to individual needs and risks. Removals are conducted in accordance with law. Security and good order are maintained through proportional operational arrangements and force is only used as a last resort.**

**3.1** *Detainees were treated humanely in the lead-up to the flights, apart from unnecessary segregation of one woman, but the system of reserves and cancellation of removal when the process was under way, caused serious and unnecessary stress. TASCOR staff taking custody of the detainees treated them well and courteously. They received information about the detainees on paper only. With some exceptions, officers did not hold detainees' arms when moving within the IRCs, but still held them firmly when moving from coaches to aircraft at Stansted. Handcuffs were used very sparingly. The British and French contingents worked together well on flight B, but overall responsibility for the operation had not been defined clearly. The appearance of some escorting staff was too reminiscent of military or police uniform. The risk of self-harm – which was likely to have been exacerbated by the uncertainty of whether the detainee was going to be removed – was reflected in a caring approach from staff. The assessment, care in detention and teamwork procedure was not used consistently.*

## Preparation and departure from removal centres

**3.2** A limit of 50 detainees had been placed on the Operation Aardvark flights (we were told that this was at the request of the Albanian government). Both flights had been planned for 50 detainees. On flight A, after last-minute negotiations by Home Office officials, an additional three were accepted. On flight B, 46 were taken, including the 10 who joined the flight at Lille.

### Reserves

**3.3** On flight A at least five reserves were taken to Stansted in case of any cancellations. They were not told at any stage that they were reserves and TASCOR staff were not allowed to tell them, which, they said, they found very difficult. One detainee had been a reserve before and had not travelled; another said that he had relatives travelling for 2.5 hours to Tirana to meet him. One of the reserves had been at Harmondsworth for two months, and wished only to return to Albania. They were waiting locked in a van when the other detainees had been taken into the terminal and became suspicious that they were not going to fly; one threatened to self-harm if he did not fly. Negotiations ensued between Home Office officials present and their colleagues, and between British and Albanian officials, which led to three being permitted to fly.

**3.4** On flight B, we were told that the original manifest list had numbered 46, 29 of whom started the journey from Brook House. A detainee who had been designated a reserve was very keen to fly. Even though one detainee did not join the flight owing to a judicial review application, and there were four vacancies on the flight, Home Office Immigration Enforcement managers accompanying the flight could not explain why the reserve was not taken. IRC staff told us that he had been angry earlier in the day when they told him he was a reserve. He had been placed in an empty cell on the ground floor of the first night wing,

where he waited with his bag packed for final confirmation, and was unhappy to be told that he was not going. By contrast, the detainees at Yarl's Wood were relieved not to be going.

## Cancellations

- 3.5** Coaches for flight B had been planned for Yarl's Wood and Colnbrook removal centres. The centres were not told until 3.30am on the day of the flight that the coaches had been cancelled and a number of female and male detainees were prepared for departure up to the moment of boarding the coach. It did not appear that those managing the operation understood the traumatic effect which the reserve system had on detainees.
- 3.6** At Yarl's Wood, preparation for removal began at 1.30am, transport had been arranged for 2.30am, and the removal was only abandoned at 4.20am.

## Preparation

- 3.7** Detainees whom we asked said that they had been given a week's notice of the flight, and that the arrangements had been confirmed to them 24 hours beforehand.
- 3.8** Many detainees had been transferred from the prison estate the day before the flight. Of the sample that we checked, most moves had been at reasonable times, although one detainee had left Dover IRC at midnight to arrive at Harmondsworth in time to board the coach. Otherwise, detainees were roused an hour before the escorts arrived and taken from their rooms to the holding room individually.
- 3.9** At Harmondsworth workmen working at night to replace the floor on the first night unit were making a great deal of noise. Little regard had been given to the fact that newly arrived detainees and those about to be deported were particularly likely to need a good night's rest. Detainees due for removal in the early hours to catch flight B said they had found it hard to sleep.
- 3.10** We observed some good work by IRC staff to persuade potentially non-compliant detainees to go on the removal without coercion. At Harmondsworth, a detainee was lying in bed, refusing to get up. The duty manager spoke to him very calmly and at length, explaining that he was unable to refuse because the decision had been made. He knelt by his bed and answered the detainees' questions without threats or false promises. A number of other staff were present but did not interfere. The detainee eventually got up and walked to the coach calmly.
- 3.11** A second detainee had also refused to move from his cell. Wrist locks and handcuffs had been used to take him off the residential unit. At this point he was given the chance to walk; he complied and walked to the discharge area without incident. This detainee was taken to Stansted on his own in a van and the two escorts with him built up a good rapport, for example explaining the person escort record to him.
- 3.12** The holding rooms were in reasonable condition and the holding room at Brook House had been refurbished. Detainees were allowed to change into their own clothes in reception, if they requested. The search area at Harmondsworth remained small and bare. It was used as a thoroughfare and was crowded with six staff and a detainee. The waiting room at Yarl's Wood had comfortable chairs and a television.

- 3.13** One detainee had been in a separation unit before departure for smashing a television and another because he had said he would resist being removed. Most detainees had spent the night before removal on ordinary wings.

### Handover to escort staff at the IRC

- 3.14** Two of the three women being removed on flight A had remained in their rooms the night before, while one had been segregated because she had told staff she would not walk to reception in the morning. When we spoke to her, she was compliant and continued to be compliant when the escort staff arrived. The escort staff said they had received some information about the woman in segregation before they arrived but they did not receive a handover from centre staff. Health care did provide a handover to the paramedic. On arrival in the segregation unit, escort staff did not reassess the risk and a separate vehicle was used to transport the woman, even though she was compliant throughout and said that she wanted to travel with her friends.
- 3.15** In general, escort staff were polite and the search team members introduced themselves to the detainees, shaking their hand. However, they did not address the detainee by name in many cases. They explained what was happening and asked each detainee if they understood. It was not clear if a few detainees who spoke almost no English understood what was said. At Colnbrook, the member of the IRC staff who dealt with the discharge process was not as courteous or patient as TASCOR staff.
- 3.16** All detainees on flight A complied calmly with these procedures. Eight of the 12 detainees from Colnbrook said they were glad to be returning home. However, none of the women wanted to be removed and expressed concern about returning to Albania.
- 3.17** Searching was carried out respectfully, although at Harmondsworth detainees were searched with the door open and people walking through the area, which afforded no privacy. At Brook House, the procedure had improved and a privacy screen was used.
- 3.18** All detainees were given time to copy contact numbers from their IRC mobile phones or from their own phones before handing them to staff. At Harmondsworth, not all detainees were told when they had their phones removed for the journey, that they could borrow a TASCOR phone if they wished. Staff at Harmondsworth waited patiently when the phone of one detainee which he had left in his room was retrieved.

### Recommendation

- 3.19** **The reserves system should be abandoned to alleviate the unnecessary stress caused to detainees by the uncertainty of whether they will travel. Adequate advance notice should be given of cancellations.**

### Housekeeping point

- 3.20** Information about individual detainees should be given in person by centre staff (both operational and medical) to their counterparts involved in the removal.

## Security, order and rules

- 3.21** TASCOR staff updated individual person escort records frequently, and records that we examined during the flight were completed thoroughly. The atmosphere on both flights was calm.
- 3.22** The British and French contingents on flight B remained separate, with little communication. It was unclear who would have overall authority in an emergency situation if issues in the operation of one country affected the other.

### Recommendation

- 3.23** **Protocols should be agreed for joint operations on the response to operational issues affecting staff of participating countries.**

## Good order and behaviour management

- 3.24** Information on violent behaviour or offences had been flagged to escorts, but this was sometimes of poor quality, for example 'disruptive behaviour' was noted, with no clarification.
- 3.25** All detainees were filmed going through the search process and on to the aircraft. They were not told what this was for or reassured that this was for their protection rather than a possible source of intimidation.
- 3.26** One man became very vocal on the aircraft because he said that a manager in the IRC had persuaded him to comply with the removal by promising that his wallet would be returned to him before embarkation, and this had not happened. The chief immigration officer played a helpful role in resolving this.

### Recommendation

- 3.27** **Escort staff should tell detainees early in the removal process that they are going to be filmed, and explain the reasons why and how the footage will be managed.**

## Use of force

- 3.28** New training was being rolled out for staff in the use of force in confined spaces. However, most had not yet been trained. One who had completed the training said it was thorough and 'intense', taking place over five days and testing many scenarios.
- 3.29** While detainees were collected from IRCs for flight A, no escorting officer touched detainees except to shake their hand on meeting, and to carry out a search. Some officers put their hands lightly on detainees' arms while escorting them from reception to the coach for flight B, despite the fact that this was within the secure confines of the establishment. Managers agreed that this was unnecessary and could be perceived as provocative by detainees.
- 3.30** At Stansted, officers on either side of each detainee gripped their arms from the coach to the X-ray portal in the terminal, and from there to their seat on the aircraft. Maintaining a

grip on each arm while moving quickly through confined spaces involved some rough handling. Given the large number of staff, it was not clear if this was always justified.

- 3.31** There was no use of handcuffs on either flight. During removal for the previous three flights to Albania, handcuffs had been used on one occasion, when a detainee produced a razor blade and put it to his mouth when about to be searched in the IRC; he had been handcuffed very briefly for safety as he was returned to the custody of the centre staff; he remained in the centre.

## Recommendations

- 3.32** Escorts should not lay hands on detainees without a specific cause, justified in writing in each individual case
- 3.33** All escorting staff should receive full accredited training in the use of force, particularly on board an aircraft.

## Bullying and intimidation

- 3.34** The appearance and manner of staff was generally not intimidating, although many staff on both flights wore combat-style trousers and some wore heavy boots. They did not all wear visible ID until they were on the aircraft, by which time their name was just visible on an ID card on an armband or on a lanyard.
- 3.35** There was an unusually wide range of staff on flight B. For example, the coach from Brook House contained two from Mitie (security management company), two from Serco, two TASCOR in-country escort staff, and nine from immigration enforcement teams. The latter group included seconded police officers, who wore jackets with police logos and epaulettes with metal numbers. Some wore obtrusive leather shoulder-holsters holding rigid handcuffs in full view. However, the interactions of these staff with detainees were appropriate and, in some cases, markedly pro-social. The regular staff had to brief them frequently about how to carry out escort duties.

## Recommendation

- 3.36** All staff, including non-TASCOR staff brought in on a contingency basis, should have been trained and fully briefed on appropriate appearance and escorting procedures.

## Emotional distress and self-harm

- 3.37** On flight A no detainees had been identified as at risk of self-harm or otherwise vulnerable, and none was being monitored for self-harm risk. Inspection of person escort records (PERs) indicated that all detainees had been asked if they had any problems with flying. Escorts were

made aware of a detainee with an ACDT<sup>1</sup> document which had been opened the previous month; a copy was available and the situation was dealt with appropriately.

- 3.38** Brook House staff were concerned about two detainees for flight A, who were desperate to leave for Albania but were on the standby reserve list. Both had threatened to harm themselves if they were not taken. Several detainees said that they had experienced two previous trips to the airport as reserves and were upset by this. One man had kicked a window at Morton Hall IRC in frustration following a cancelled removal, causing a 12cm cut to his leg. He had been placed on an ACDT, but this was no longer active.
- 3.39** A detainee for flight B had been on constant supervision at Brook House following a self-harm incident with multiple cuts to each forearm at 9.25pm on the night of the removal. He had been placed on the ACDT earlier in the day by a mental health nurse concerned about his mood. The ACDT care map gave only two objectives and actions attributed to the detainee: 'to stop flight' and 'to maintain contact with family', rather than a plan to support the detainee. Both paramedics (who re-dressed the wound at the detainee's request during the flight) and the escorting staff worked constructively to support him. The wing manager ensured that there were no staff watching as he left the wing for the removal, and he was taken to Stansted in a separate vehicle. This man told us that he had been in the UK since he was 13 and was leaving behind a wife and seven-month-old baby. He was initially in a middle seat on the aircraft with an officer each side, but when he became calm one officer moved away to sit behind him, to give him more space, which was sensitive.
- 3.40** Another detainee on flight B had been on an ACDT until 8pm on the night of the removal. The PER noted this, but did not explain what had led to the ACDT or why it had been closed. The escorting officer had not noticed that the detainee had been on an ACDT until we asked about it.
- 3.41** The paramedic accompanying the coach from Brook House was not aware what the acronym ACDT referred to.

## Recommendation

- 3.42** **All staff should be familiar with ACDT processes for management of self-harm risk, and these processes should be followed at every stage to provide effective support for those at risk of self-harm.**

## Legal rights

- 3.43** All detainees had been able to contact a legal adviser during their last hours at the IRC, and were offered use of a telephone to contact family and legal representatives. One detainee said that he had been in the UK since 2003, had an English wife, and had not been able to access legal advice because he had been asked for £12,000 by his solicitor.
- 3.44** Three of those being removed were on the facilitated returns scheme for foreign nationals held in prisons in England and Wales.

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<sup>1</sup> Assessment, care in detention and teamwork – the paper-based system for assessing and managing risk in the case of a detainee at risk of self-harm or suicide

- 3.45** The chief immigration officer (CIO) on each flight conducted surgeries and resolved some issues successfully. The CIO on flight B dealt effectively with the distressed detainee who had self-harmed, but 10 people observed this, which compromised confidentiality.

## **Child care and protection**

- 3.46** There were no children on the flights. Escorting officers had received basic child protection training during their initial and annual refresher training.

## Section 4. Respect

### Expected outcomes:

**Detainees are escorted in decent physical conditions and individual needs are addressed.  
Detainees are treated with humanity and respect.**

**4.1** *Conditions on the coaches and aircraft were satisfactory and food and drink were offered. Staff wedged the toilet door open when it was being used by a detainee, and a woman was expected to use the toilet with the door not shut on a coach occupied by men. Property was properly accounted for. Many staff interacted positively with the detainee whom they were escorting. However, on flight A several staff were asleep for significant periods, while sitting next to a detainee they were responsible for. Almost no interpretation was offered to detainees who spoke little English, even though there was an Albanian-speaking interpreter on each flight. The detainees had access to a complaints system, but many were not aware of this. The health care staff were visible and helpful throughout, although there was little continuity of care at the beginning and end of the journey.*

### Physical conditions

- 4.2** The coaches were clean and spacious. Food and drink were offered as soon as the coach was on the road: sandwiches, fruit, crisps, chocolate and water (at Brook House, a bag of these items was given to each detainee before boarding the coach). There was plenty of food and it was of reasonable quality. Detainees were offered food first and the remainder was offered to staff. Detainees were offered hot drinks, in one case on the coach and in the other when the coach reached the airport. We were told that this was a feature of Aardvark flights only, since the detainees were regarded as more compliant than those on longer flights.
- 4.3** Staff used a foot or handcuffs to keep the toilet door open on the coach and on the flight. On a coach from Brook House, the hand washing facilities in the toilet broke down early in the journey and detainees were unable to wash their hands.

### Recommendation

- 4.4** **Unless individual risk assessment indicates otherwise, detainees should be able to use the toilet in privacy, and women should have access to toilets which are appropriate for their use.**

### Property and clothing

- 4.5** Detainee property was organised well, checked, sealed into individual bags and signed for before loading on to the coach. All seal numbers were added to a manifest which travelled with the coach commander except at Colnbrook, where detainees were told their seal numbers and asked to remember them.
- 4.6** Although the hold luggage capacity had been increased from 20kg to 25kg in 2013, staff at Harmondsworth IRC told us they still enforced a limit of 20kg hold luggage and 5kg hand luggage. Even the increased limit was insufficient for many detainees with substantial belongings accumulated over many years. There were no capacity problems at the centre, in

transit or on the aircraft and there seemed to be no good reason for these limits on a charter flight.

- 4.7** Detainees were given their paper money and medication where appropriate, before boarding the coach. Coins, watches, jewellery and belts with metal buckles were generally removed and put in the detainee's luggage, but detainees travelling from Brook House were allowed to keep watches and jewellery. Staff explained that this expedited passage through the metal detector portal and search procedures at Stansted.

## Positive relationships

- 4.8** TASCOR staff were courteous and friendly towards detainees from the time of handover from IRC staff. A few staff recognised some of the detainees from previous escorts. When detainees were brought into the terminal at Stansted, they were referred to by number and not name, which was demeaning to the detainees.
- 4.9** On flight A some escorts fell asleep during the coach journey. A manager walked through one coach, woke several staff and reminded them to stay awake. On the aircraft, most escorting officers spoke to the detainee from time to time, and a few struck up lively conversations. Even though this was a short flight taking off at 9.20am, a number of escorting officers slept while allocated to personal supervision of a named detainee. Security staff standing at the front kept an eye on the detainees whose escorts were sleeping but said that it was not appropriate to wake staff who were very tired. Sleeping staff were not relieved by others. With a compliant group of detainees, some of whom were asleep themselves, there was little evident risk, but the system of one-to-one supervision of detainees existed in name only. Staff said that length of shift and irregular recovery periods between removal operations sometimes made it impossible to stay awake. We heard no inappropriate language or behaviour from staff.
- 4.10** On flight B, very few staff slept. Custody officers moved up and down the aircraft throughout the flight, offering to relieve a colleague who was feeling drowsy or needed a break.

## Recommendation

- 4.11 Senior managers should ensure that staff are able to undertake their duties effectively and safely at all times while they are responsible for the care of detainees.**

## Diversity

- 4.12** On flight A, an 18-year-old female detainee from Yarl's Wood was brought on to a coach of men to use the toilet, which was intimidating (see recommendation 4.4). The escort said that a foot block would be used to keep the door open. The detainee declined to use the toilet because of the lack of privacy and bad smell. She was taken back to the van and told she would have to wait until she boarded the aircraft. Staff told us that they were not allowed to take a detainee to use the toilet in the terminal and that it was normal practice for a detainee who had travelled in a van to be asked to use the toilet in a coach. When we queried this, a manager decided that the female detainees could use the terminal facilities.
- 4.13** On flight A, the three female detainees were located at the front of the aircraft, separated from the male detainees at the back and middle of the plane. The Tascor staff escorting the women detainees were attentive, supportive and sensitive to their needs. Escort staff moved

seats to comfort a female detainee who was visibly upset as the flight took off. Medics on board gave her Paracetamol to treat a headache.

- 4.14** The information booklet given to all detainees was in a number of languages but not Albanian. An Albanian interpreter on the aircraft explained that their primary task was to speak to detainees claiming a particular nationality, to check if their dialect and accent were authentic. On flight A, the interpreter disembarked at Tirana to interpret for British and local officials but he had spent the whole flight in the managers' seating section at the front of the plane. He said that he was available to be called if a detainee needed interpretation but did not make detainees aware that he was available. No interpretation was used in the coaches.
- 4.15** On flight B the interpreter interacted more with detainees, boarding coaches on arrival at Stansted to exchange a few words with detainees, and helping with the CIO's surgery. A paramedic said that he had problems understanding some detainees at Harmondsworth IRC, but he had made no attempt to use telephone interpretation.
- 4.16** On flight A a detainee with good English was asked to interpret for a detainee who was being transported separately on a van because he had a leg in a cast. Some detainees clearly did not understand what was being said to them, and other detainees were frequently asked to interpret.

## Recommendation

- 4.17 Professional interpretation should be used throughout the removal process to enhance communication.**

## Complaints

- 4.18** Photocopied sheets headed 'Confide in us' were offered to detainees on most coaches with a free telephone number to call if they had concerns about their treatment and an email address. Staff said that a detainee wanting to complain could use this. Most detainees whom we spoke to on the flight were not sure about these sheets, and in many cases no longer had them. There were no complaint forms on the coaches, although staff had them on the aircraft.

## Health

- 4.19** All detainees for flight B had been seen by a health care professional at Yarl's Wood on the afternoon before departure and were seen again by a nurse in the medical room in reception at the point of departure. The nurse confirmed that detainees requiring medication were given two weeks' supply to take home and that he gave instructions to Tascor about the medical care of detainees who needed it. Each detainee had a sealed letter marked 'medical in confidence' containing a medical summary. The medical section of each PER was completed appropriately. Interpretation services were available, as were female and male nurses if required.
- 4.20** All medication was labelled and stapled to accompanying documentation, but there was little personal handover of medical information. For example, at Brook House, a centre nurse met the paramedic who was to travel on flight A. She had no information about the detainees, but simply passed over sealed envelopes which had been prepared by her colleagues on the earlier shift. The paramedic checked all the documentation and medication thoroughly and

followed up the one concern, which was a detainee with a leg in plaster. He was transported by van so that he could keep his leg raised and was searched sitting down. A nurse at Harmondsworth came to reception on request with some reluctance to discuss medication issues that the paramedic on flight B was not clear about; he was appropriately assertive in insisting on clarifying this.

- 4.21** The paramedics on the coaches handed over information to those who were flying. On the aircraft, the paramedics moved among the detainees to ensure that any needs were met. The detainee who required medication during the flight was reassured by the paramedic that he would receive this, and he did receive it.
- 4.22** Staff said that they had received first aid training, and they understood risks such as that of positional asphyxia.
- 4.23** On arrival at the destinations, the documentation and medication were handed over, but there was no contact between Aeromed paramedics and health care staff in the destination countries.

## Section 5. Preparation for reintegration

### Expected outcomes:

**Detainees are prepared for their arrival and early days in the destination country.  
Any unacceptable behaviour in destination countries is appropriately challenged.**

- 5.1** *Disembarkation was uneventful in all cases, with good liaison between British and Albanian officials. Many detainees knew where they were going and how to get there. There was no apparent help for detainees without their own contacts, and the fact that written information, including medical information, was not available in a local language, put some at a disadvantage. The new holding facility at Tirana was fit for purpose, but lacked sufficiently safe supervision of detainees.*
- 5.2** The chief immigration officer was willing to speak to any detainee, and his manner was direct and polite.
- 5.3** All detainees disembarked from the aircraft quickly, calmly and efficiently. They were met by Albanian police who transported them in police vans away from the aircraft. There appeared to be good communication through the interpreter between the Home Office official and the Albanian officials. Local immigration staff treated detainees with courtesy. All detainees we spoke to on flight A said that they knew where they were going in Albania, and had family or friends to rejoin. This was not true of all the detainees on flight B, and we saw no evidence of resettlement support for those without their own contacts.
- 5.4** A sealed envelope with information for clinicians in the destination country was provided where appropriate. However, not all detainees understood what this was; for example, the three women were given a letter for their future clinicians, but the information was not translated and not all the women understood what the letter contained.
- 5.5** On arrival of flight B, the detainees disembarked quickly in a single group to a waiting bus. Some were met by relatives or friends. One detainee claiming to be Kosovan was refused entry by Kosovo immigration officials because of his accent. He reboarded and disembarked at Tirana without incident. Home Office and local immigration staff communicated well and appeared to have a good working relationship.
- 5.6** At Tirana, the detainees were taken to a new reception facility with three large waiting rooms and interview rooms. These rooms became very crowded, and there was not enough supervision to protect and support vulnerable detainees and to ensure security. It was funded by the UK government, which had trained staff and would provide support for a year. There was a leaflet in English and Albanian for staff setting out the standards of behaviour expected of them. It was not clear how much assistance the centre would provide to detainees who needed it.

### Recommendation

- 5.7 The UK Government should use its influence to ensure that the holding centre in Tirana provides appropriate support for detainees who need it.**

## Section 6. Recommendations and housekeeping point

### Recommendations

To the Home Office

#### Safety

- 6.1 The reserves system should be abandoned to alleviate the unnecessary stress caused to detainees by the uncertainty of whether they will travel. Adequate advance notice should be given of cancellations. (3.19)
- 6.2 Protocols should be agreed for joint operations on the response to operational issues affecting staff of participating countries. (3.23)
- 6.3 All staff, including non-TASCOR staff brought in on a contingency basis, should have been trained and fully briefed on appropriate appearance and escorting procedures. (3.36)

#### Preparation for reintegration

- 6.4 The UK Government should use its influence to ensure that the holding centre in Tirana provides appropriate support for detainees who need it. (5.7)

### Recommendations

To the Home Office and Tascor

#### Safety

- 6.5 All escorting staff should receive full accredited training in the use of force, particularly on board an aircraft. (3.33)
- 6.6 All staff should be familiar with ACDT processes for management of self-harm risk, and these processes should be followed at every stage to provide effective support for those at risk of self-harm. (3.42)

#### Respect

- 6.7 Professional interpretation should be used throughout the removal process to enhance communication. (4.17)

### Recommendations

To Tascor

#### Safety

- 6.8 Escort staff should tell detainees early in the removal process that they are going to be filmed, and explain the reasons why and how the footage will be managed. (3.27)

- 6.9** Escorts should not lay hands on detainees without a specific cause, justified in writing in each individual case. (3.32)

## Respect

- 6.10** Unless individual risk assessment indicates otherwise, detainees should be able to use the toilet in privacy, and women should have access to toilets which are appropriate for their use. (4.4)
- 6.11** Senior managers should ensure that staff are able to undertake their duties effectively and safely at all times while they are responsible for the care of detainees. (4.11)

## Housekeeping point

To IRC managers

- 6.12** Information about individual detainees should be given in person by centre staff (both operational and medical) to their counterparts involved in the removal. (3.20)

# Section 7. Appendix

## Appendix I: Inspection team

Nick Hardwick	Chief Inspector (flight B)
Martin Kettle	Team leader (flights A and B)
Sarah Cutler	Inspector (flight A)
Fionnuala Gordon	Inspector (flight A)
Jeannette Hall	Inspector (flight B)
Angus Mulready-Jones	Inspector (flight A)
Hindpal Singh Bhui	Inspector (flight B)
Paul Tarbuck	Health services inspector (flight B)