

## [News story: COBR meeting, 18 September 2017: Sir Alan Duncan's statement on Hurricanes Irma and Maria](#)

I'm back in the Crisis Centre because once again we've had another meeting of COBR, which is our emergency committee, because we're looking at an unprecedented sequence of events where having had so many hurricanes there's now a serious danger that we're going to get yet another.

So we are tracking Hurricane Maria and as you can see behind me we've got all the details to see where it's going, and we have to prepare for the worst but hope for the best. But one of the consequences of having these earlier hurricanes is we've got a lot of people and equipment in place.

So what we are very vigorously doing now is trying to anticipate where the damage might lie, and pre-positioning supplies and all of the equipment that can lead to the maximum resilience for these poor people who've been hit once and might be hit again.

So we are focusing of course on our Overseas Territories, which on this occasion might include Montserrat, which was lightly affected last time, but we are working around the clock to do our very best. And I'd urge everybody to follow the [travel advice](#) which we are regularly updating.

Be assured that we are doing our utmost to anticipate where help is needed and to make sure that if this hurricane hits people, and hits them again, we will be there to deliver the need that people will want.

---

## [News story: Channel Tunnel people smuggling gang jailed](#)

The Birmingham-based crime gang's activities began to unravel on 12 March 2015, when a car was stopped by Border Force officers at the UK Control Zone in Coquelles, France. The driver was Lee Anderson, 46, and his passenger was Jason Cowley, 44. When the car was searched by Border Force officers, they found 2 adults and a child, all Albanian nationals, hidden in the boot. Anderson and Cowley were both arrested at the scene.

Later, on 2 August 2015, a car driven by Gillian Barker, 47, was stopped at the same controls. Officers found 2 Albanian men hidden in the boot and Barker was arrested. On both occasions, the Albanians found in the cars were handed to the French authorities.

The cases were passed to Immigration Enforcement's Criminal and Financial Investigation (CFI) team who, following investigations, linked both smuggling attempts to 3 further individuals. On 13 October 2015, officers searched the homes of Ilir Hani, 44, Eduart Karaj, 39, and Vullnet Karaj, 41.

Travel and telephone records linked the three gang members to the 2 smuggling detections. Investigations also showed that Eduart Karaj and Vullnet Karaj were following Anderson and Cowley in a separate car at the first detection to make sure it got through safely. The car used by Barker had also previously been driven by Karaj and Karaj on 12 March 2015 when in convoy with Anderson and Cowley and was previously owned by Vullnet Karaj.

Hani, Karaj and Karaj, all Albanian nationals, were all arrested on suspicion of conspiring to facilitate illegal immigration.

Eduart Karaj, Jason Cowley, Lee Anderson and Gillian Barker all entered guilty pleas at the beginning of their trial last month. Ilir Hani and Vullnet Karaj pleaded not guilty but were convicted.

They were all charged with conspiring to facilitate the commission of a breach of the UK immigration law by a non EU person and sentenced as follows:

Ilir Hani – 5 and a half years Vullnet Karaj – 5 years Eduart Karaj – 4 years Jason Cowley – 30 months Lee Anderson – 30 months Gillian Barker – 20 months

Assistant Director, David Fairclough, from CFI, said:

This was an organised crime group, motivated by money, that has been dismantled thanks to the dedication and expertise of Immigration Enforcement and Border Force officers.

The border detections were only the start of our investigations. As time passed Eduart Karaj, Vullnet Karaj and Hani may have believed that their offences had gone undetected, but my officers were digging deeper, gathering the evidence that would ultimately ensure that they too were held to account for their offences.

This case sends a clear message. We are patient people and never stop looking for those involved in immigration crime.

Paul Morgan, Director Border Force South East and Europe, said:

The Border Force detections were the crucial first step in bringing these offenders to justice. Border Force officers are on the frontline keeping our borders safe and secure. We will continue to work with law enforcement colleagues to ensure that people smugglers and traffickers face the consequences of their crimes.

Anyone with information about suspected immigration abuse can contact

Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 anonymously or visit [www.crimestoppers-uk.org](http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org).

---

## [Press release: UK ready to respond to Hurricane Maria](#)

VIDEOS AND IMAGES – [view and download from Google drive](#)

The UK is in position to respond to further extreme weather in the Caribbean as the approaching Storm Maria is reclassified as a hurricane. The hurricane comes less than two weeks after Hurricane Irma, the most powerful hurricane ever recorded.

UK experts on the ground are working closely with national authorities to prepare for the approaching hurricane. Staff, military assets and relief supplies remain in the region and are ready to respond.

DFID, alongside other government departments, are already working on plans to deal with the hurricane's aftermath and are in close contact with Governor's offices. This includes efforts to get people to public shelters and secure loose materials and debris which could cause further injuries.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

We are under no illusions about the possible impact of Hurricane Maria and are taking every measure possible to prepare communities which have already been devastated by Hurricane Irma.

British troops, police and aid experts are working relentlessly to get help to the victims of Hurricane Irma. Those same individuals will now be tasked with also preparing for the impact of Maria, and to ensure support continues to get to those in need.

Chris Austin, the Head of the UK's Joint Task force, added:

We are planning for the unexpected, we are planning for the worst. We need to demonstrate our own resilience because there is a real chance that Hurricane Maria may significantly impact on our existing efforts to provide relief.

To date, 75 tonnes of DFID relief items have either arrived or been procured in the region including much needed food, water, nearly 3000 shelter kits, 5,000 hygiene kits and 10,000 buckets.

A further 60 tonnes of aid and reconstruction materials is on the way to the region on HMS Ocean, and DFID has chartered a number of flights and vessels which will transport additional relief items to the affected islands.

The UK is also leading the way in the long-term reconstruction of islands hit by Hurricane Irma. Speaking at the 72nd session of the United Nations along with Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, Ms Patel will say that whilst relief effort will go on, plans are being put in place to help rebuild on the islands, more resiliently than in the past, so a future hurricane won't be as devastating.

UK aid is already having a significant impact on many of the victims including Dorothy, a victim of Hurricane Irma in the British Virgin Islands, who said:

I was so happy when the soldier told me yesterday that my house was the first house that was fixed. He said that they had given people things to fix their houses but my house was the first house that a soldier came and fixed. I said God I'm blessed.

I was the happiest person on earth because I was very sad because I had lost everything. With whatever people give me, or what I can get myself, I'll fix up my place so it looks like somewhere I can live.

## Notes to Editors

- Maria is currently a Category 1 hurricane with sustained winds of 80mph. The hurricane is expected to strengthen as it heads towards the Leeward Islands (Barbados). Hurricane warnings are in place for Antigua, Barbuda, Montserrat and Anguilla.
- 32 aid experts, 1,300 military personnel and 59 police officers are working on the UK's response.
- So far the UK has committed nearly £60 million as part of its response to Hurricane Irma.

---

**[News story: UK to renominate Judge](#)**

# Vajda to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU)

The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) has invited nominations for 14 judges and 5 Advocates-General as their terms are due to expire next year, including that of a UK-nominated judge. Therefore, the UK has been asked to nominate a judge to the CJEU.

Judge Christopher Vajda, who has been in post at the CJEU since October 2012, has been selected for reappointment by the UK following the UK's usual process for judicial nominations to the CJEU.

The proposed candidates will be appointed by common accord of the Member States next year.

While we continue to be a Member State, we will honour our rights and obligations, this includes nominating a judge to the Court of Justice.

---

## Press release: Traffic officers praised as dog Bailey comes home

Donna Gilmore, 31, of New Lane, Eccles, who suffers from cystic fibrosis, was understandably distraught when Bailey, her 2-year-old Shi Tzu, disappeared from the house, not far from the M60, earlier this month.

A few days later, after a search of the area and a social media campaign from Donna's friends and family had failed to bring Bailey home, a dog was spotted near junction 12 of the motorway by Highways England traffic officers Mark Wellman and Dave Lavelle.

Mark and Dave, who both work at the Rob Lane outstation at Newton-le-Willows, spotted the dog on the wrong side of the safety barriers on a bridge overlooking the eastbound M62, on the approach to the M60. Traffic was temporarily stopped for everyone's safety and so Bailey could be retrieved. He was taken away to be checked by a vet – while the search for its owner began.

Dave, 58, from Davyhulme in Trafford, said:

We had heard reports of a dog in the area over a few days so we were keeping a look out for safety reasons as much as anything as stray animals can cause drivers to swerve and brake suddenly,

leading to collisions. "At the time we spotted him, we had no idea it was Bailey but we posted a picture on Twitter hoping someone would recognise him and – to cut quite a long story short – a police officer I know and whose daughter is a friend of Donna's made the connection.

And Mark, 51, from Warrington, added:

We dropped Bailey back home at the weekend – he was a bit dishevelled but none the worse for his 6 day adventure – and of course Donna was absolutely thrilled.

Dave and I are just glad we were able to help. Pets do occasionally stray onto the motorway and unfortunately some get killed – but even in those cases Highways England works hard to reunite pets with their owners and deal with each case as sensitively as possible.

There was an added bonus – Bailey's return also reunited him with his 10-month-old son Fudge.

Detective Sergeant Hayden Roberts, the dad of Donna's friend Cerian, has now written to Highways England on behalf of Donna to thank Mark and Dave for their efforts.

He said:

The Twitter picture got back to me via Cerian who hoped I could find out where Bailey had been taken to. I happened to know Dave from a previous job so as a longshot I contacted him – but I had no idea he had actually been involved in Bailey's rescue!

Dave called me back a short time later with the details that Bailey had been taken to the RSPCA in Salford I was able to call my daughter and an overjoyed Donna to give them the good news.

Donna and my daughter asked me to write thank Dave and Mark for the outstanding and caring service they have provided. This is definitely a story with a very happy ending!

## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448

and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.