

Judge refuses private inquiry into Brook House abuse claims

Diane Taylor

The court of appeal has refused an application by the Home Office to conduct an inquiry into claims of systemic abuse at Brook House immigration detention centre in private, rejecting the claims that public hearings would be prohibitively expensive.

In a further blow to the government the argument that had been presented saying that 21 G4S staff involved in the allegations should not be compelled to

give evidence was also rejected yesterday by the court.

Lord Justice Bean said: "The special investigation should be permitted to proceed without further delay." Of the Home Office's application, he said: "I do not consider there is any realistic prospect of success."

In June a high court judge, Mrs Justice May, ordered the hearings for an inquiry into claims of systemic abuse at the centre, near Gatwick, West Sussex, be held in public. She said 21 staff from the security firm working there at the time could be compelled to give

evidence. It was the first time a public inquiry into abuse claims in detention had been ordered.

The case was brought by two former detainees who were featured in a BBC Panorama programme about Brook House. Footage showed one detainee being throttled by a member of G4S staff.

The programme, broadcast in 2017, revealed a culture of chaos, with officials mocking, abusing and assaulting detainees, prompting the security firm to order an independent review. Despite the revelations the Home

Office awarded G4S a contract to run Brook House for a further two years.

Of the 21 staff involved in the allegations, 11 were dismissed or left the organisation, G4S has said. Three later resigned. One was dismissed after subsequent similar behaviour.

Bean said: "It is difficult to see how a satisfactory investigation could be carried out in the present case without the alleged perpetrators of the abuse being required to give evidence."

A Home Office spokesperson said: "We have noted the judgment and are considering next steps."

Fasten your seatbelts ... changes to jet stream spell a bumpy flight

Nicola Davis

The climate crisis could be making flights across the Atlantic bumpier, according to new research into the impact of global heating on the jet stream.

Jet streams are powerful currents of air, sometimes meandering, that reach up to 250mph. They result from the air temperature gradient between the poles and the tropics.

Researchers say previous studies looking at the speed of the fastest part of the North Atlantic jet stream - the altitudes at which planes fly - and its location have found only small changes over time, although there are signs it is slowly shifting north.

Experts say the lack of dramatic alterations is because climate change produces competing effects at different altitudes. However the latest study took a different approach.

"Just because the speed isn't changing, doesn't mean the jet stream isn't changing in other ways," said Prof Paul Williams, lead author of the research from the University of Reading.

The study, published in the journal *Nature*, looked at the change in wind speed with height - a gradient known as vertical shear. "The higher up you go, the windier it gets," said Williams.

Using three different datasets based on satellite observations, the team found vertical shear increased by 15% between 1979 and 2017 - a finding consistent with what would be expected from global heating.

"The winds and the temperatures are in a certain kind of balance in the atmosphere," said Williams. "The consequence is it is impossible to change the temperature patterns without having an effect on the wind patterns."

The increase in vertical shear has important consequences for aircraft, even if they fly at a steady altitude.

"If that wind shear effect gets too strong and [on] moving from one layer [of air] up to the next there is a big jump in speed, that is what causes turbulence," said Williams. In other words, large change in wind speeds with height can result in a breakdown, or disruption, of layers of air.

The impact goes beyond simply having to keep your seatbelt on in flight, with Williams noting more

patches of turbulence will lead to more diversions as planes try to avoid them - increasing journey times, flight emissions and fuel costs, which will likely be passed on to passengers.

Previous work by the team suggests that, assuming drastic action on the climate crisis is not taken, there could be a doubling or even trebling of the amount of severe turbulence in the atmosphere by 2050-2080.

Somewhat ironically, the aviation industry could well be contributing to the changes found by Williams and colleagues, with the sector accounting for about 2% of global CO2 emissions, and becoming one of the fastest-growing polluters.

According to a recent analysis by the Guardian highlighting the disproportionate carbon footprint of those who can afford to fly, taking a long-haul flight generates more carbon emissions than the average person in dozens of countries around the world produces in a whole year, and even a short-haul flight from London to Edinburgh contributes more CO2 than the mean annual emissions of one person in Uganda or Somalia.

The study backs up predictions by the team made several years ago that changes to vertical shear will not only be felt by those who fly, with the researchers pointing out it could also have important consequences for large-scale atmospheric thermodynamics and dynamics.

Williams said the findings were cause for concern.

"The change [in vertical shear] has been taking place silently, high above our heads, for the past 40 years, and it has gone unnoticed until now," he said. "It makes me wonder what else we don't yet know about how climate change is altering the global atmospheric circulation."

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15%

Increase in vertical shear - the wind speed at high altitude - over past 40 years, consistent with global heating

2%

Proportion of global CO2 emissions accounted for by aviation, a figure that is rising as the industry grows