

House of Commons: Written Statement (HCWS128)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Written Statement made by: **The Secretary for State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr Philip Hammond)** on 16 Jul 2015.

Alleged Serious and Significant Offences (Diplomatic Immunity): 2014

In 2014, 14 serious and significant offences allegedly committed by people entitled to diplomatic immunity in the United Kingdom were drawn to the attention of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office by Parliamentary and Diplomatic Protection of the Metropolitan Police, or other law enforcement agencies. Twelve of these were driving-related. We define serious offences as those which could, in certain circumstances, carry a penalty of 12 months' imprisonment or more. Also included are drink-driving and driving without insurance.

Some 22,000 people are entitled to diplomatic immunity in the United Kingdom and the majority of diplomats abide by UK law. The number of alleged serious crimes committed by members of the diplomatic community in the UK is proportionately low.

Under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961, those entitled to immunity are expected to obey the law. The FCO does not tolerate foreign diplomats breaking the law.

We take all allegations of illegal activity seriously. When instances of alleged criminal conduct are brought to our attention by the police, we ask the relevant foreign government to waive diplomatic immunity where appropriate. For the most serious offences, and when a relevant waiver has not been granted, we seek the immediate withdrawal of the diplomat.

Alleged serious and significant offences reported to the FCO in 2014 are listed below.

2014

Driving without insurance

Greece	1
Algeria	1
Equatorial Guinea	1
Mexico	1

Driving without insurance, driving otherwise than in accordance with a licence, and without due care and attention

South Africa	1
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Driving without insurance, without an MOT, and with tyres significantly worn below the legal limit

Saudi Arabia	1
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Driving whilst under the influence of alcohol, without insurance, and without a valid licence

Malawi	1
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Driving under the influence of alcohol

Thailand	1
Saudi Arabia	1
Guatemala	1

Equatorial Guinea		1
<i>In charge of a vehicle under the influence of alcohol</i>		
China	1	
<i>Possession of a firearm</i>		
Saudi Arabia		1
<i>Development of malware for the purpose of fraud</i>		
Saudi Arabia		1

We also wish to record a further four offences of conspiracy to cheat the revenue between 2009 and 2012, of which four former Gambian diplomats were convicted in 2014. These were not recorded in previous Written Ministerial Statements because the cases were either under investigation or were sub judice. Their previous inclusion may have hampered investigations or prejudiced the outcome of criminal proceedings.

Figures for previous years are available in the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs' written statement to the House on 15 July 2014, *Official Report*, column 50WS.