

GLOBAL MONITORING ALERT

New U.S. and U.K. regulations on electronic devices on certain direct flights

Incident:

On 20 and 21 March 2017, transportation security officials in the U.S. and the U.K. issued orders prohibiting travelers from bringing laptops, portable DVD players, tablet computers and other large electronic devices in carry-on luggage onboard flights from certain Middle Eastern countries.

The U.S. and the U.K. orders both define the bans in terms of device size and origin of the flight, but the regulations differ in some particulars. The U.S. order bans travelers from bringing electronic equipment larger than a smartphone into the aircraft cabin; along with cell phones, the order exempts medical devices. Reports indicate that U.S. authorities have given airlines until 25 March 2017 to implement the order. The ban does not apply to flight crews. The U.S. order applies to direct flights to the U.S. from the following facilities:

- Queen Alia International Airport, Amman Jordan (OJAI/AMM)
- Abu Dhabi International Airport, Abu Dhabi UAE (OMAA/AUH)
- Dubai International Airport, Dubai UAE (OMDB/DXB)
- Kuwait International Airport, Kuwait City Kuwait (OKBK/KWI)
- Cairo International Airport, Cairo Egypt (HECA/CAI)
- Istanbul Ataturk Airport, Turkey (LTBA/IST)
- King Abdulaziz International Airport, Jeddah Saudi Arabia (OEJN/JED)
- King Khalid International Airport, Riyadh Saudi Arabia (OERK/RUH)
- Mohammed V International Airport, Casablanca Morocco (GMMN/CMN)
- Hamad International Airport, Doha Qatar (OTHH/DOH)

The U.K. order forbids travelers from taking electronic devices larger than 16 cm in length, 9.3 cm in width and 1.5 cm in depth (approximately 6 in by 4 in by 0.6 in), which is approximately the size of a large smart phone, on board flights from the designated countries. The U.K. order applies to flights from Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia. The U.K. order also goes into full effect on 25 March 2017; U.K. officials have given the airlines discretion as to when they implement the order before the effective date. The ban does not apply to flight crews

Neither the U.S. nor the U.K. orders defined the ban as applying to specific airlines, but because the orders apply to carriers that offer direct flights from the locations identified above, the bans affect the following airlines:

The U.S. order affects EgyptAir, Emirates, Etihad, Kuwait Airlines, Royal Air Maroc, Saudi Arabian Airlines, Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, Royal Jordanian Airlines and British Airways

The U.K. order affects EasyJet, Jet2.com, Monarch, Thomas Cook, Thomson, Pegasus Airways, Atlas-Global Airlines, Middle East Airlines and Tunis Air.

The orders do not affect U.S. airlines because U.S. carriers do not operate direct flights to or from the designated countries.

Evaluation:

It appears that the concerns which prompted the U.S. and U.K. orders stem from the greater technical capabilities of certain jihadi groups -- including al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Islamic State (IS) -- combined with pre-existing concerns about airport security in the listed countries, which include concerns about potential terrorist infiltration of airport security. There are no reports indicating that the bans are related to a specific threat.

The new regulations have raised safety questions regarding the storage of electronic equipment in the cargo hold of aircraft. They also raise immediate concern with the security of equipment that does not remain in the immediate possession of the owner at all times. These issues may eventually prompt revisions or adjustments in the policies, and travelers should be prepared for the possibility of such changes.

Recommendations:

- Travelers should back up all data on their large electronic devices before placing them into checked luggage.
- Business travelers should take steps to protect proprietary information on corporate-owned machines and avoid bringing unnecessary proprietary information with them on trips to or through the affected countries. Business travelers should check with their corporate security or travel department for direct advice.
- Travelers should place TSA-approved locks on bags containing sensitive electronic devices.

If you require assistance or have any concerns regarding travel to this destination, or the content of this briefing, please contact UnitedHealthcare Global - day or night - at (1-713) 430-7300.