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ΑΠΟ: ΓΡΑΦΕΙΟ ΤΥΠΟΥ ΛΟΝΔΙΝΟΥ  
Λονδίνο, 11 Δεκεμβρίου 2001  
ΑΠ 1560 /Φ. 2011  
Συντ: Ε. Δρακοπούλου

**ΠΡΟΣ: ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΤΥΠΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΜΜΕ**

- Δ/ση Πληροφόρησης

**ΚΟΙΝ.:** -Γραφείο κ. Υπουργού

-Γραφείο κ. Υφυπουργού

-Γραφείο κ. Γενικού Γραμματέα Ενημέρωσης

-Γραφείο κ. Γενικού Γραμματέα Τύπου

-Δ/ση Υπηρεσιών Εξωτερικού

-Γραφείο Τύπου Πρωθυπουργού

-Υπουργείο Εξωτερικών - Δ/ση Ενημέρωσης

-Υπουργείο Εξωτερικών - Γραφείο κ. Υπουργού

- Υπουργείο Εξωτερικών - Υπόψη κ. Α. Ρόντου

-Υπουργείο Δικαιοσύνης - Γραφείο κ. Υπουργού

-Υπουργείο Δημόσιας Τάξης - Γραφείο κ. Υπουργού

- Πρεσβεία Λονδίνου

**ΘΕΜΑ: Επισκόπηση βρετανικού τύπου (11-12-2001), α' μέρος.**

#### **ΒΡΕΤΑΝΟΙ ΠΑΡΑΤΗΡΗΤΕΣ ΑΕΡΟΠΛΑΝΩΝ**

Η υπόθεση των 12 Βρετανών που κρατούνται στην Ελλάδα με την κατηγορία της κατασκοπίας παρουσιάζεται στα πρώτα θέματα των σημερινών ραδιοτηλεοπτικών δελτίων (BBC News, ITV, Channel Four), ορισμένες μάλιστα φορές και ως πρώτο θέμα, πριν από τις εξελίξεις στο Αφγανιστάν.

Σημαντική είναι επίσης η κάλυψη του θέματος από τις σημερινές εφημερίδες (DAILY MAIL, TIMES, GUARDIAN, INDEPENDENT, DAILY TELEGRAPH, DAILY EXPRESS, SUN).

Το θέμα που κυριαρχεί τόσο στα ραδιοτηλεοπτικά ΜΜΕ όσο και στο γραπτό τύπο είναι η εισήγηση του εισαγγελέα πλημμελειοδικών προς το δικαστικό συμβούλιο, στο οποίο παραπέμφθηκε η υπόθεση, να προσαχθούν οι Βρετανοί σε δίκη με την κατηγορία της κατασκοπίας.

Η DAILY MAIL συνεχίζει και σήμερα την εκστρατεία της για την απελευθέρωση των Βρετανών με αντ/ση από Αθήνα των Lucie Morris - Beth Hale με τίτλο " Απελπισία καθώς οι 12 παρατηρητές ενδέχεται να περάσουν από δίκη".

Στην αντ/ση αναφέρεται ότι εάν η εισήγηση του εισαγγελέα γίνει δεκτή, τότε οι 12 Βρετανοί θα μπορούσαν να περάσουν ακόμη και 18 μήνες στη φυλακή, σε αναμονή της δίκης ενώ εάν θα καταδικαστούν, η ποινή μπορεί να φθάσει το ανώτατο όριο των 20 ετών.

Ο εισαγγελέας αναφέρει στην εισήγησή του ότι όλα τα μέλη της ομάδας παρείχαν " ψυχολογική υποστήριξη" σε όσους ασκούσαν κατασκοπία και ότι αυτό σημαίνει ότι είναι όλοι ένοχοι. Οι τρεις δικαστές θα συνεδριάσουν κεκλεισμένων των θυρών στην Καλαμάτα σήμερα στις 11.00 και αναμένεται να εκδώσουν απόφαση μέσα στην ερχόμενη εβδομάδα. Θα μπορούσαν ενδεχομένως να αφήσουν ελεύθερους ορισμένους από την ομάδα εάν θεωρήσουν ότι δεν υπάρχουν στοιχεία εναντίον τους.

Η εφημερίδα δημοσιεύει σήμερα, αν και όχι ολόκληρη, την ανασκευαστική επιστολή του Δ/ντή του ΕΟΤ Λονδίνου κ. Παναγιώτη Αργυρού, του οποίου φερόμενες δηλώσεις είχε δημοσιεύσει στις 6/12.

Οι TIMES σε αντ/ση John Carr- Helen Studd με τίτλο " Οι παρατηρητές αεροπλάνων θα περάσουν από δίκη με την κατηγορία της κατασκοπίας τη νέα χρονιά" αναφέρουν ότι η έκθεση του εισαγγελέα καταλήγει στο συμπέρασμα ότι υπάρχουν αρκετές αποδείξεις για την ενοχή τους και ότι πρέπει να παραπεμφθούν σε δίκη. Ο εισαγγελέας υποστηρίζει ότι παρόλο που υπάρχουν λίγες "φυσικές αποδείξεις" υπάρχουν ωστόσο ενδείξεις για "ψυχολογική υποστήριξη" αναφορικά με τις κατηγορίες. Έλληνες αξιωματούχοι λένε ότι τα μέλη της ομάδας είχαν δεχθεί τρεις προειδοποιήσεις πριν από τη σύλληψή τους να μην φωτογραφίζουν σε στρατιωτικές εγκαταστάσεις και ότι οι δραστηριότητές τους ήταν ύποπτες. Οι τρεις δικαστές θα συνεδριάσουν στην Καλαμάτα σήμερα για να αξιολογήσουν τα στοιχεία αλλά οι δικηγόροι των Βρετανών φοβούνται ότι είναι απίθανο να απορρίψουν την εισήγηση του εισαγγελέα και το αποτέλεσμα θα είναι μία δίκη τον επόμενο χρόνο.

... Τα μέλη της ομάδας συνελήφθησαν στην Καλαμάτα στις 8 Νοεμβρίου αφού ένας φρουρός τους κατηγορήσε ότι "κινούνταν περίεργα" στην στρατιωτική περιοχή. Αργότερα βρέθηκε ότι είχαν στην κατοχή τους σημειωματάρια και ημερολόγια που περιείχαν λεπτομέρειες για τις στρατιωτικές κινήσεις στην αεροπορική βάση των Μεγάρων, όπου η πρόσβαση των πολιτών απαγορεύεται αυστηρά.

Η GUARDIAN δημοσιεύει άρθρο με τίτλο " Οι δικαστές θα αποφασίσουν σήμερα για τους παρατηρητές αεροπλάνων", όπου αναφέρει ότι χθες ο Βρετανός ΥΠΕΞ Τζακ Στρω συνάντησε στις Βρυξέλλες τον Γ. Παπανδρέου και έκανε έκκληση για την απελευθέρωση των Βρετανών. Στη συνάντηση ο κ. Στρω έκανε έκκληση στον κ. Παπανδρέου για τη μείωση τουλάχιστον, των κατηγοριών ενάντια στους Βρετανούς, ώστε η κατηγορία να μεταβληθεί από κατασκοπία σε μικρότερη παράβαση του νόμου. Δεν ήταν όμως σε θέση να μεταφέρει καλά νέα στις οικογένειες των Βρετανών μετά τη συνάντηση.

" Τίποτα δεν θα με ευχαριστούσε περισσότερο από την απελευθέρωσή τους τις επόμενες ημέρες αλλά δεν θέλω να δώσω περισσότερες ελπίδες από ότι πρέπει στους κρατούμενους" δήλωσε.

Ο Βρετανός Ευρωβουλευτής Richard Howitt δήλωσε ότι το γεγονός ότι η σύγκληση του δικαστικού συμβουλίου προγραμματίστηκε μόλις μία ημέρα μετά την εισήγηση του εισαγγελέα, μπορεί να σημαίνει καλά ή κακά νέα. " Μπορεί να σημαίνει ότι οι δικαστές αναμένουν να απορρίψουν τις κατηγορίες αλλά αντίστροφα μπορεί να είναι σημάδι ότι θα υποστηρίξουν την άποψη του εισαγγελέα" δήλωσε.

Η INDEPENDENT επίσης δημοσιεύει άρθρο του Chris Gray με τίτλο " Οι παρατηρητές αεροπλάνων πρέπει να δικαστούν, λέει ο εισαγγελέας".

Στο άρθρο αναφέρεται ότι η έκθεση του εισαγγελέα που αποτελείται από 30 σελίδες, παραδόθηκε χθες στο δικαστήριο στην Καλαμάτα. Η έκθεση υποστηρίζει ότι πρέπει να συνεχίσουν να κρατούνται με τις κατηγορίες της κατασκοπίας και πρέπει τελικά να περάσουν από δίκη.

Ένα τριμελές συμβούλιο δικαστών θα οριστεί σήμερα για να αποφασίσει εάν θα τους παραπέμψει σε δίκη, εάν θα τους αφήσει ελεύθερους ή εάν θα τους απαγγείλει ελαφρύτερες κατηγορίες. Ο Ευρωβουλευτής Richard Howitt δήλωσε χθες βράδυ ότι παραμένει αισιόδοξος ότι οι δικαστές θα αφήσουν ελεύθερους τους παρατηρητές αεροπλάνων αφού εξετάσουν τις αποδείξεις.

" Ελπίζω σίγουρα ότι θα αποφασίσουν ότι οι κατηγορίες πρέπει να απορριφθούν ή θα τις μειώσουν σε πταίσμα, ώστε να μπορέσουν να τους αφήσουν ελεύθερους. Παραμένω επιφυλακτικός για το αποτέλεσμα της υπόθεσης", είπε.

Η DAILY EXPRESS σε εκτενές άρθρο με τίτλο " Οι Βρετανοί παρατηρητές αεροπλάνων αντιμετωπίζουν δίκη στην Ελλάδα " αναφέρεται με δραματικό τόνο στην εισήγηση του εισαγγελέα και επαναλαμβάνει επίσης τις χθεσινές δηλώσεις Τζακ Στρω στις Βρυξέλλες.

... Βρετανοί αξιωματούχοι αναγνωρίζουν ότι τα χέρια της ελληνικής κυβέρνησης είναι δεμένα λόγω του σαφούς διαχωρισμού των εξουσιών μεταξύ εκτελεστικής και δικαστικής εξουσίας, κάτι που ισχύει και για τη Βρετανία.

" Συμφωνήσαμε ότι δεν είναι δυνατόν υπουργοί να διατάζουν τις δικαστικές αρχές" δήλωσε ο κ. Στρω. Εξέφρασε όμως την ελπίδα ότι το τωρινό "υψηλό επίπεδο" των κατηγοριών για κατασκοπία μπορεί σύντομα να μειωθεί.

Ο Βρετανός ΥΠΕΞ είπε : " Είχα μέχρι τώρα τέσσερις ιδιωτικές συναντήσεις γι' αυτό το θέμα - και οι Έλληνες δεν έχουν αμφιβολίες για τα αισθήματά μας για την υπόθεση".

Αναφέρει επίσης ότι ο Βρετανός Πρωθυπουργός Τόνυ Μπλαιρ αναμένεται να θίξει το θέμα στον Έλληνα ομόλογό του όταν θα συναντηθούν την Παρασκευή στη Σύνοδο Κορυφής του Βελγίου.

Τέλος αναφέρει ότι ο σκωτλής Υπουργός Εξωτερικών του Συντηρητικού Κόμματος Michael Ancram έγραψε στον Υπουργό Εξωτερικών Τζακ Στρω εκφράζοντας την ανησυχία του για ό,τι αποκάλυψε ως "ανεπαρκείς ενέργειες " από μέρους της κυβέρνησης για την υπόθεση των 12 Βρετανών.

Η DAILY TELEGRAPH σε σύντομη είδηση αναφέρει ότι οι Βρετανοί παρατηρητές αεροπλάνων που κατηγορούνται για κατασκοπία στην Ελλάδα , αντιμετωπίζουν την πιθανότητα να περάσουν τα Χριστούγεννα στη φυλακή, μετά από την απόφαση χθες του εισαγγελέα να μην μειώσει τις κατηγορίες.

Ο εισαγγελέας , Παναγιώτης Πούλιος, εισηγήθηκε επίσης να παραμείνουν οι 12 Βρετανοί στη φυλακή μέχρις ότου διεξαχθεί η δίκη τους.

Ένα συμβούλιο δικαστών συνεδριάζει για πρώτη φορά σήμερα για να αποφασίσει εάν θα ακολουθήσει τις εισηγήσεις του, εάν θα μειώσει τις κατηγορίες ή εάν θα τις απορρίψει συνολικά.

ΕΔ/εδ

ΠΑΠΑΔΑΚΗΣ

Daily Mail, Tuesday, December 11, 2001

### Plane facts

FROM A humanitarian point of view, I sympathise with the 12 British 'planespotters' and I share the concern both of the British Government and the families of the group for a speedy resolution of the issue.

But this matter is subject to Greek law. It is in the hands of the independent judiciary and no government can interfere with the task of justice.

They were warned three times for what was regarded as foolish and transgressive behaviour, as they were breaking the law, which was known to them.

British tourists were, are and always will be wholeheartedly welcome to Greece. This unfortunate incident is a separate issue which has to be seen in context.

*PANOS ARGYROS, Hellenic Tourism Organisation, London W1.*



8 Overseas news

# Plane-spotters to face spy trial in new year

By John Carr  
in Athens  
and Helen Studd

THE 12 British plane-spotters detained in Greece face an indefinite extension of their ordeal this morning after the public prosecutor demanded they be charged with spying.

A report compiled by the Greek authorities, who have been examining the case for the past week, concluded that there is enough evidence to make the group stand trial.

The prosecutor claims that although there is little physical evidence there is proof of "psychological support". Greek officials say that members of the group were warned three times before their arrest that photography was not allowed in military areas and that their activities were suspicious.

A panel of three judges is due to meet in Kalamata today to assess the decision, but lawyers for the defendants fear they are unlikely to challenge the recommendations and the result will be a trial next year. Plane-spotting is an unknown pastime in Greece, and as

such is regarded with suspicion. Unless the prosecutor's recommendations are overturned the 12 British and two Dutch plane-spotters travelling with Touchdown Tours are almost certain to spend Christmas in prison.

Ioannis Zacharias, the lawyer acting on behalf of the group, said: "The prosecutor insists that they have all spied and they must be held. It is certain they are going for trial. It looks like a case of amateurs dealing with matters they know nothing about." He claims the prosecutor made his decision last week but failed to notify the relevant authorities so that the case could progress.

Reports that Paul Coppin, the tour group's leader, had been the guest of the Turkish military on a trip to Greece's sworn enemy earlier this year are said to have damaged the group's case. The visit has provided the link Greek officials had been looking for to press a spying charge.

The group's members were arrested at an airbase in the Peloponnese town of Kalama-

ta on November 8 after a guard accused them of "walking suspiciously" through a military area. They were later found to have notebooks and diaries containing details of military movements at the Megara airbase 50 miles west of Athens, to which civilian access is strictly prohibited.

Relatives say they are worried about the health of some members of the group and are urging the British Government to apply more pressure.

The public prosecutor's recommendations reveal that appeals for a speedy end to the case have fallen on deaf ears. The Greek Government has said it is unable to interfere in the judicial process.

Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, held further talks in Brussels yesterday with Georges Papandreou, his Greek counterpart. "The Greeks are in no doubt about the strength of our feeling on this issue," he said. "These people have had a very harrowing time indeed."

There is particularly concern for Mr Coppin's wife, Lesley, 51, who is being held in the Korydallos high-security

prison away from the rest of the group. According to lawyers, she is said to be "in the lowest spirits of them all".

Wayne Groves, 38, from Tamworth, in Staffordshire, who is among those being held, said that the men detained in Nafplion prison, 80 miles from Athens, were becoming anxious about the prospect of spending Christmas in prison.

Paul Cobbin's father, Bert, said that news that the Britons may face prosecution at least meant the case was moving to a new stage.

Mr Cobbin, 71, said from his home in Sunbury, Surrey: "I have had a message from my ex-wife saying they will be up in court tomorrow. We are very confident there is no case to answer. They have been stuck in a jail for weeks with nothing happening. At least this has been brought to a head."

He said that the families were trying to keep optimistic but added that if the court case went badly he would try to take his three grandsons to see their father.

# Plane spotters 'may be free within days'

CAMPAIGNERS on behalf of 12 British plane spotters being held in Greece on suspicion of spying are hopeful that the group will be released this week.

Richard Howitt, a Labour MEP, said Greek lawyers representing the group have told him that a panel of judges is expected to rule on the case in the next few days.

Mr Howitt, who has been involved in the case since the group was arrested a month ago after allegedly taking notes and photographs of a Greek airforce base, says he has no doubt the judges will conclude that those detained are not spies and release them in time for Christmas.

"We are optimistic for a decision this week," said Mr Howitt.

"There is no new evidence. The only question the judges have to decide is why these people were doing what they were doing. I think there can only be one conclusion."

Mr Howitt has criticised Greek officials for not dealing with the case quickly enough. He said the officials are not biased, however, and dismisses any suggestion of a conspiracy.

But one of the group, Wayne Groves, 38, of Tamworth, Staffordshire, said today: "With Christmas approaching we are getting concerned now."

"On 20 December the courts pack up for Christmas until 7 January, which is obviously causing us concern. We have been here for 32 nights now. They reckon we

## From Paul Anast in Athens

were taking pictures at the air show, which within four to five hours we have proved we had not."

Mr Groves said those being held at Nafplion prison, 60 miles south-west of Athens, are trying to keep their morale up "with books and quizzes but are "totally fed up".

Yannis Zacharias, the defence lawyer for the accused, said yesterday that the decision is being delayed because the council of judges which has been assigned to look at the case has not convened because a document drawn up by investigating magistrate Socrates Gavalas has not been delivered.

"However unbelievable it sounds, they cannot even meet to decide one way or another before this piece of paper is officially delivered to them," Mr Zacharias said.

"Due to this we have already lost about two weeks and are now battling to get them home in time for Christmas."

The release will only take place if the council of judges decides either to drop the espionage charges, or to release them on bail pending trial.

Albert Coppin, whose son Paul, 45, and daughter-in-law Lesley, 51, are among those being held, said some of the group are now suffering from stomach ailments.

## In Brief

### Plane spotters face Christmas in Greek jail

The British plane spotters accused of espionage in Greece are facing the possibility of spending Christmas in jail following the decision of the prosecutor in the case yesterday not to reduce the charges.

The prosecutor, Panagiotis Poullos, also recommended that the 12 Britons and two Dutchmen should remain in custody until their trial.

A tribunal of judges meet for the first time today to decide whether to follow his recommendations, lessen the charges or drop them altogether. Their decision is not expected until later in the week.

THE SUN, Tuesday, December 11, 2001

### Plane 'spy' Brits' D-Day

THE 12 British plane-spotters held in Greece SHOULD face trial for spying, the country's public prosecutor said last night.

Three judges will today examine his 36-page dossier and decide whether they will face court, or be released. They have been in jail for a month.

Foreign Secretary Jack Straw will today renew his pleas to release them.

MEP Richard Howitt said: "I remain cautious about the outcome."

# Judges to decide today on planespotters

Colin Blackstock

The 12 British planespotters being held in Greece, accused of spying, could hear their fate today when three judges hear evidence against them, following a recommendation from the prosecutor that they should face trial.

The judges are expected to make their decision at a hearing involving only lawyers where they will hear submissions from the prosecution and defence, although it is unclear if the judges will make their final decision the same day.

If the judges decide to drop the case they could set the 12 Britons — and two Dutch aviation enthusiasts arrested with them — free by Friday, said the group's lawyer, Iannis

Zacharias. Richard Howitt, the Labour MEP campaigning for the group's release, said he was pleased the case was moving forward with the hearing which will be held in Kalamata.

He said: "Three judges will assess the evidence against the 12. I am certainly hoping they will decide that the charges should be dropped or downgraded them to misdemeanour which will allow them to be freed."

"I am happy that we have succeeded in moving things on. I remain cautious about the outcome of the case."

The group were arrested on November 8 after Greek air force officers were alerted to their "suspicious" behaviour at a military airstrip. The group had been taking notes and

photographs of the airbase, but deny they broke any ban on photography.

When their films were developed, it became clear they had taken photographs of at least two other bases in Greece.

Last night in Brussels, the foreign secretary, Jack Straw, met the Greek foreign minister, Georges Papandreou, and appealed for the release of the planespotters after growing concern that they might spend Christmas in jail.

At the meeting, Mr Straw urged that, at the very least, the charges against the 12 should be reduced from spying to minor breaches of the law, but he was unable to offer any good news to the families after his talks.

"Nothing would please me

more than if they were released in the next few days, but I don't want to raise the hopes of people detained," he said.

Wayne Groves, one of the 12, said the slow progress of their case had raised fears that they might be in prison over Christmas.

Mr Groves, 38, of Tamworth, Staffordshire, said: "We were promised we would hear something by Monday or Tuesday last week, but nothing has happened."

Mr Howitt said: "I always held out hope for a decision this week and the fact that a hearing is now set is a breakthrough."

He said the fact that the hearing was convened just a day after the prosecutor's report was compiled could mean good or bad news. Mr Howitt

added: "It could be that the judges expect to drop the charges, but conversely it could be a sign that they will back the prosecutor. We have to wish the lawyers good luck on behalf of all of the families."

Stephen Jakobi, director of Fair Trials Abroad, said: "The Greeks are seriously in breach of the European convention on human rights article five,

which says there has to be reasonable suspicion of a person having committed a crime or they must be freed, though it could be on bail."

Mr Jakobi added: "Unless the judges decide to release this majority from prison, it will be added confirmation that the Greek judicial system is unable to comply with the ECHR."



# Despair as the Planespotters 12 are ordered to stand trial

From **Lucie Morris** and **Beth Hale** in Athens

THE 12 British planespotters held in Greek jails on suspicion of spying were last night confronted with their worst nightmare: They must face trial.

They had been desperately hoping that the state prosecutor in charge of their case would recognise their innocence and free them for Christmas.

But instead he has given his view that the whole group is guilty and must face a court.

The ruling means the holidaymakers - including grandmother Lesley Coppin - could spend up to 18 months behind bars just waiting for their case to be heard.

If found guilty they could face a further 20 years. More

## 'She will be shattered'

than 20,000 Daily Mail readers have joined the campaign for their release.

The recommendation by the prosecutor has left the 12 and their relatives in despair.

His report now goes before a panel of judges to decide whether the collective charge of espionage should definitely go ahead. Normally the judges would take his advice.

The prosecutor said in his report that all the members of the planespotting tour had provided 'psychological support' to those who had been spying - and that meant they were all guilty.

The independent panel of judges will meet behind closed doors in Kalamata, west of Athens, at 11am today and are expected to give a ruling within the next week.

Although a group charge



has been recommended, they could free some of the 12 if they believe they do not have a case to answer.

But the Britons' families said last night they were 'very pessimistic'.

Jean Butt, 65, whose son Paul Coppin, 45, and daughter-in-law Lesley, 51, are in prisons three hours apart, was 'devastated' by the development. She said: 'Only the commonsense of the three judges can now save them from their nightmare.'

'Lesley will be absolutely shattered. This really might be the last straw for her.'

Mr Coppin, 45, the director of Touchdown Tours which organised the trip, said the group were all 'shocked and

dismayed'. He said: 'We have done nothing wrong and now we can only pray that the judges don't agree with the report.'

'I can't imagine what Lesley must be thinking. She is close to breaking point already, and the worst part is I can't even speak to her.'

The male prisoners are struggling with appalling conditions at Nafplion high security prison, Mr Coppin added. Several have stomach upsets and colds, and many are losing weight. 'We have not even got toilet rolls. We are being treated like animals.'

There are particular fears for the mental health of lorry driver Garry Fagan, 30, and retired printer Michael Keane, 57, as well as of Mrs Coppin.

Euro MP Richard Howitt, who has visited the Britons and is campaigning on their behalf at European level, said the prosecutor's report was exactly the same as one presented two weeks ago in a court hearing.

'The last two weeks have been a complete waste of time,' he said. 'We have an absolute belief that there is no serious evidence against



Daily Mail, Tuesday, December 11, 2001

the group. If the case is looked at objectively, commonsense will prevail.'

Stephen Jakobi, director of Fair Trials Abroad, claimed the Greeks were in breach of Article Five of the European Convention on Human Rights. He said this states that there has to be 'reasonable suspicion of a person having committed a crime or they must be freed, though it could be on bail'.

The Britons and two Dutchmen have consistently protested their innocence since being arrested on November 8 at a military airbase. The charges are based upon them taking notes of plane serial numbers and having a radio scanner.

The group's lawyer Yannis Zacharias said last night of their continued incarceration: 'It is disappointing, but we have to hope the judges do not agree with the report.'

Earlier yesterday Jack Straw tried to put further pressure

## 'We have to hope'

on the Greeks to end the planespotters' plight.

Meeting his Greek counterpart George Papatheou in Brussels during routine talks, the Foreign Secretary spoke of Britain's desire to see the judicial system move faster.

The 12 are the Coppins, from Mildenhall, Suffolk; Mr Fagan, 28, from Kegworth, Leicestershire; Mr Keane, 57, of Dartford, Kent; Steve Rush, 38, of Caterham, Surrey; Peter Norris, 52, of Uxbridge, west London; Antoni Adamiak, 37, of London; Andrew Jenkins, 32, of York; Wayne Groves, 38, of Tamworth; Michael Bussell, 47, of Swanland, near Hull; Christopher Wilson, 46, who lives close to Gatwick Airport, and Graham Arnold, 38, from Ottershaw, Surrey.

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**FREE THE PLANESPOTTER 12 Daily Mail**

**Mr Ambassador,**  
I/We demand that the 12 British planespotters should be freed immediately.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please send your coupon to the Daily Mail  
Planespotters Campaign, Daily Mail, PO Box 5527, London W8 5WJ,  
or fax no: 020 7938 3846, or email to [free12@daily@mail.co.uk](mailto:free12@daily@mail.co.uk)



# Plane-spotters must be tried for spying, says prosecutor

THE BRITISH plane-spotters arrested in Greece should stand trial on espionage charges, a state prosecutor recommended yesterday, in a blow to their hopes of being home for Christmas.

Relatives of the 12 Britons and two Dutch citizens, arrested last month at an air force show at a military base in Kalamata, had pinned their hopes on the prosecutor's report, which they had expected to sanction their release.

But the 30-page report submitted to a court in Kalamata yesterday says they should continue to be held on espionage charges and should eventually stand trial. If convicted they face up to 20 years in prison.

A panel of judges will today be appointed to rule if the 14

BY CHRIS GRAY

should go on trial, be released on bail or be charged with lesser offences.

Last night Richard Howitt, the Labour MEP who has been campaigning for the release of the Britons, confirmed the report recommended they should stand trial but remained hopeful the judges would release the plane-spotters after looking at the evidence.

"Three judges will assess the evidence against the 12. I am certainly hoping they will decide the charges should be dropped or downgrade them to misdemeanour which will allow them to be freed. I remain cautious about the outcome of the case," he said.

Yannis Zacharias, the group's

lawyer, said if the judges ruled in favour of the plane-spotters, they could walk out of jail the same day as the ruling, which he expected between Friday and next Wednesday.

The 14 have been held since 8 November, when they were arrested for allegedly taking photographs at the military base despite being warned three times. They claim they did not break a ban on photography but were simply observing and taking notes about aircraft.

Last night one of the group, Wayne Groves, 38, from Tamworth, said he was pleased the judges would meet today because he had been waiting for weeks for a decision.

"I always held out hope for a decision this week and the fact a hearing is now set is a break-

through. It could be that the judges expect to drop the charges but conversely it could be a sign they will back the prosecutor. No one will know until tomorrow [Tuesday]. We have to wish the lawyers good luck on behalf of all of the families."

Mr Groves said he was becoming increasingly worried the group would not be released in time for Christmas.

Earlier, yesterday, Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, met George Papandreou, the Greek Foreign Minister, in Brussels to renew an appeal to release the group, but could offer relatives little comfort. "Nothing would please me more than if they were released in the next few days, but I don't want to raise the hopes of people detained," he said.



HOPE OF EARLY RELEASE FOR 12 DASHED AS PROSECUTOR CALLS FOR COURT CASE

# British plane spotters facing trial in Greece

BY GREG SWIFT

THE fate of 12 British plane spotters took a dramatic turn yesterday when a top Greek lawyer said they should face trial.

Three judges are due to meet today to hear both prosecution and defence submissions before a final decision is made.

But the news that the Greek state prosecutor believes a trial is necessary dashes any hopes of an early release for the Britons.

Lawyers for the 12 had said they could be home by the end of the week, following the submission of a long-awaited report detailing the evidence against them.

They said the group could be released by Friday if the judges decided to drop the case.

The Britons and two Dutch spotters were arrested in November at an air show and accused of taking photos. In Britain, relatives and friends of the 12 greeted news of the prosecutor's recommendation with dismay.



ORDEAL: British plane spotters file into a Greek courtroom under guard. Hopes for an early release have faded despite pleas by Foreign Secretary Jack Straw

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11/12 01 12:52 FAX

The father of Wayne Groves, one of the 12 being held in jail, said his son would be devastated. Donald Groves, from Worcester, said: "Wayne had been bearing up quite well and was in good spirits.

"He seemed to think that it was only the speed of the Greek judicial protest that was slowing things down but that does not appear to be the case now.

"I am very shocked by this, especially as there is no evidence against Wayne.

"I had hoped that he would be home by Christmas but that doesn't look as if it's going to happen now."

The move came on the day that Foreign Secretary Jack Straw met his Greek counterpart to renew appeals for the release of the Britons.

But after talks in Brussels with the Foreign Minister Georges Papandreou, Mr Straw

had no reassurances for British relatives. He said: "Nothing would please me more than if they were released in the next few days, but I don't want to raise the hopes of people detained."

He also urged that the charges the spotters faced should be reduced from the major alleged offence of spying to relatively minor breaches of the law.

Mr Straw said he expected that the accused group would be brought before a three-judge panel soon.

British officials acknowledged that the Greek Government's hands are tied by the clear separation of authority between politicians and the judiciary - something cherished in Britain as well.

"We agreed that it is not possi-

ble for ministers to order the judiciary around," said Mr Straw.

But he expressed the hope that the current "high level" charges of spying would soon be reduced.

The Foreign Secretary went on: "I don't want to raise hopes. These people have had a very harrowing time indeed.

"I have now had four private meetings on this issue - and the Greeks are in no doubt about the strength of our feeling on this issue."

Efforts are continuing behind the scenes at diplomatic and political level.

Prime Minister Tony Blair is expected to raise the case with his Greek counterpart when they meet at an EU summit in Belgium on Friday.

But Shadow Foreign Secretary

Michael Ancram has written to Mr Straw expressing his concern at what he called insufficient action by the Government over the spotters' plight.

Mr Ancram wrote: "Time is running very short if we are to see this situation resolved before Christmas. As I understand it, if this case is not settled before the December 20 Christmas shut-down of the Greek legal system, it will be another three weeks before proceedings could resume."

Last night Stephen Jakobi, the Director of Fair Trials Abroad, said: "I think this system is quite disgraceful. Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights says that you must have reasonable suspicion of a crime being committed to keep people in prison."

2