

2.11 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding hand-held lasers:

Will the Minister, in consultation with the Minister for Economic Development be seeking to ban the new powerful handheld green lasers that have a distance of over 25,000 feet and could be a danger to aircraft and shipping? If not, why not?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand (The Minister for Home Affairs):

The answer to the question is probably. [Laughter] I have the power to control the importation of goods by adding them to the Customs and Excise Import and Export Control Order. There are various classes of laser pens and the problem appears to arise in class 3 and above. Class one and 2 seems to have acceptable usage such as on white boards or things like that that point things out. Class 3 seems to have a very limited legitimate use which apparently is that of highlighting stars at night. However, the most serious issue in my view is that the law needs to be improved in relation to criminal offences for misuse in relation to aircraft. There is a new offence shortly to be created in the U.K. of directing or shining any light at any aircraft in flight so as to dazzle or distract the pilot or the aircraft and my view is that we will need to have that extended if we can to Jersey so we have the equivalent in Jersey.

2.11.1 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

I would just like to ask the Minister, before we go into bringing in new laws, how many instances have there been of laser pens being directed at aeroplanes? Have there been any prosecutions? Thank you.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I have figures on that and to date there have been 250 instances in the U.K. of lasers against aircraft in flight and there have been some prosecutions including one fellow recently where someone was sent to prison for 4 months for persistently shining a light at a helicopter pilot. In Jersey so far we have had 2 incidents reported and one of them was last month.

2.11.2 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I thank the Minister for his reply and encouraging remarks. Of course, as the Minister is aware, I was not referring to the earlier red laser pens which have a nuisance value but more so the green new class 3 laser pens that can light up a cockpit of an aircraft at up to 25,000 feet, strike a match at 6 feet and burst a balloon at 6 feet after a few seconds. It can destroy the human eye irreparably after 5 seconds. This is an important bit of legislation and I would urge the Minister to bring it forward as soon as possible, does the Minister not agree?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

In the light of the further information I have received, I can now update my original answer to very probably.