

Deportation Charter Flights Fact Sheet January 2017

In 2013, Corporate Watch published a research report titled “Collective Expulsion: the case against mass deportation charter flights”. Three years later, not much has changed. The UK continues to make political deportation deals with governments of its former colonies and war zones. Almost 2,000 people a year are still loaded onto secretive night flights from Stansted airport, handcuffed by private security “escorts”, in one of the most brutal facets of the detention and deportation regime.

This factsheet updates recent facts and figures, but doesn't supplant the more in-depth analysis in the 2013 report. It also adds a new section containing short summary profiles of some of the main companies involved in the charter flight business: security guards Tascor (a subsidiary of Capita), plane charter company Titan Airways, and travel bookers Carlson Wagonlit.

Contents

1. A guide to UK charter flights

- 1.1 Deportations: an overall snapshot
- 1.2 Charter flights: the basics
- 1.3 What are charter flights for?
- 1.4 How charter flights work: the mechanics

2. Company Involvement

- 2.1 The muscle: Tascor / Capita
- 2.2 The fixer: Carlson Wagonlit Travel
- 2.3 The supplier: Titan Airways

1. Charter Flights: UK collective expulsions in 2017

1.1 Deportations: an overall snapshot

The UK Home Office “deports” or “removes” tens of thousands of migrants every year. In this report we will generally use plain language and call all of these events “deportations”. Officially, though, they are classed in a number of categories:

- “Deportations” of “foreign national offenders” who have been convicted of crimes. 5,825 cases in the year up to the end of September 2016; 5,729 the year before.
- “Enforced removals” of people who have not been convicted of crimes: e.g., failed asylum seekers, visa overstayers, “illegal entrants” and others. 12,111 cases in 2015 (12,627 in 2014). 3,398 of these were asylum seekers (4,372 in 2014).
- “Voluntary removals” of migrants who are told to leave themselves under threat of enforced removal. The Home Office may pay their fares under the “Assisted Voluntary Return” scheme and other programmes. 29,769 cases in 2015; 27,552 in 2014.

There are also those who are immediately stopped and detained at ports and other borders: 17,636 people in 2015; 15,993 the year before.

The Home Office says that its aim is to increase the number of voluntary returns, and reduce the

number of forced removals. This is for cost reasons: it is much cheaper if people leave without a security escort. The figures do show a drop in forced deportations over the years: for example, there were 14,854 “enforced removals” back in 2010, and 21,425 back in 2004.

The largest number of “enforced removals” are of European nationals: 5,375 in 2015. In particular, this included 1,269 Albanians and 1,028 Romanians. Asian nationals are next (4,195 for all of Asia, but not including the “Middle East”), and above all “South Asian” people (2,877). South Asians are also by the far the most targeted for “voluntary return”, 13,847 in 2015. 1,468 Africans were “forcibly removed” in 2015, and 658 people from “Central and South America”, including 303 Jamaicans. NB: these figures do not include “criminal” deportations, for which the Home Office does not provide a breakdown by nationality.

Official figures on removals are published every 3 months. Here is the latest set:
[<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2016/returns#returns-by-type>]

1.2 Charter Flights: the basics

Mass deportations on chartered aircraft are only one small part of the deportation system. Many more people are “removed”, either “voluntarily” or with a guard of “escorts”, on standard scheduled flights. But in many ways charters are the system's most brutal and terrifying instrument, taking take place away from the public gaze in secretive night flights.

The UK began using charter deportations in 2001. From the beginning, they have targeted a handful of countries, mainly those symbolically identified with the “refugee crisis”, and with the UK's war machine. The first flights were to Kosova and Albania. Romania and the Czech Republic soon followed, with Roma people the main targets of these deportations. In 2003 charters began to Afghanistan, newly declared “safe”. For the next nine years, the majority of flights were to Kosovo / Albania and Afghanistan.

More recently, Pakistan has taken over as the UK government's main charter “partner”, after a landmark deal was struck with the Pakistani government in 2011, as part of a larger trade and aid negotiation. African countries have also now become regular destinations, notably Nigeria, Ghana and (until recently) the Democratic Republic of Congo. September 2016 also saw a charter flight to Jamaica, the first since 2014.

Flights have ceased, at least for the meantime, to Iraq and Sri Lanka, after successful political and legal campaigns involving refugee movements from these countries. In the case of Iraq, organised opposition in the destination country was a major factor, which led to the Iraqi parliament and Iraqi Kurdish authorities refusing to accept deportees.¹

Flights to Afghanistan have also stopped for the moment, but they continue from other European countries, and many fear they will also soon resume from the UK.

The UK government does not routinely publish data on charter flight deportations. However, it does release some information on the numbers and destinations of people deported on these flights in response to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. We have the basic figures for 2014 and 2015 thanks to an FOI request submitted (by someone not connected to the authors of this report) in April 2016, to which the Home Office eventually replied five months later, in October 2016. The Home Office has regularly refused to give certain further information on these flights such as the names of the contractors operating the flights.

1,877 people were deported on charters in 2015 (2,364 in 2014): that is, about one in ten of all those deported with force through either “criminal deportations” or “enforced removals”.

The destinations in 2015 were: three flights to Afghanistan, 11 to Albania, three calling at both Kosovo and Albania, six to Nigeria and Ghana, and 14 to Pakistan, plus one special flight to Morocco carrying only one deportee. In 2014 there were more flights to Afghanistan (nine), 12 to Kosovo and Albania, five to Nigeria and Ghana with another four only to Nigeria, 13 to Pakistan, and one flight to Jamaica. As far as we are aware, the main destinations have been the same in 2016, except that there have been no charters to Afghanistan, and there was again a flight to Jamaica in September 2016.

Pakistan is the biggest destination for charter deportations. 729 people were sent there in 2015 (934 in 2014). 706 people were deported to Kosovo or Albania (554 in 2014). 336 people were taken to Nigeria or Ghana (429 in 2014). In 2015, 75 people were sent on charter deportations to Afghanistan, some way down on the 404 in 2014. In 2014, 43 people were deported by charter to Jamaica.

Media reporting of deportation charters typically presents them as containing dangerous “criminals”. In fact only 24% of those sent on charter flights in 2015 were criminal “deportations” (in 2014 it was 21%). 5% of those all those removed on charter flights in 2015 were women, 7% in 2014.

Campaigners against charter flights have highlighted the particular torture of the “reserve” system, in which many more people are booked on flights than are actually deported – sometimes dozens are taken on coaches from the detention centre, waiting for last minute news from lawyers or officials about their cases, before being sent back or released at the last minute. In 2015, in fact 4,276 people were given “removal directions” for charter flights, but only 1,877 flew in the end.

See: Home Office response October 2016 to FOI request by Thomas Averyⁱⁱ

1.3 What are charter flights for?

Every now and then, right-wing media run stories slamming the exorbitant cost of charter flights. And, indeed, they are expensive to run, costing over £5,000 per person deported (according to a statement by then Immigration Minister James Brokenshire in 2015.)ⁱⁱⁱ

Corporate Watch's 2013 report on charter flights, “Collective Expulsion”, analysed in some depth the expenses of charter flights, and considered some of the reasons why the UK Home Office chooses to use this means despite the cost. The report highlighted a number of possible factors.

1) Meeting targets. Charter flights are a quick way to organise mass deportations of particular nationalities, so helping meet Home Office headline targets. A 2002 government white paper explained: “Despite the cost of charter flights, this is a very efficient way of enforcing the volume departure of those who have no right to stay here.”

2. Stifling rebellion. This aim was very clearly put in 2009 by David Wood, then UKBA head of Criminality and Detention, who explained that the charter flight programme is:

“a response to the fact that some of those being deported realised that if they made a big enough fuss at the airport – if they took off their clothes, for instance, or started biting and spitting – they

could delay the process. We found that pilots would then refuse to take the person on the grounds that other passengers would object. So although we still use scheduled flights, we use special flights for individuals who are difficult to remove and might cause trouble.”

3. “Deterrent effect”. As with other aspects of the UK border regime, for instance detention centres and Immigration Raids, charters are less about the actual numbers of “illegals” removed from UK territory, than the terrorising effect they have on those who remain or who might yet arrive. (For more on this point see the recent Corporate Watch report on Immigration Raids.^{iv})

4. Foreign policy tool. Charters only go to a select number of countries where the UK has specific agreements with partner governments. Charters have a particular symbolic value in international relations, perhaps in a number of respects. For example, they may be used to demonstrate that a country is now “safe” after British military intervention: as in the cases of Kosovo and Afghanistan, and less successfully Iraq. In the Sri Lankan case, Tamil campaigners argued that charters also served as an instrument of the Sri Lankan state in both “normalising” its post-war regime and terrorising the Tamil diaspora. In the cases of Nigeria, Jamaica, Pakistan and other charter destinations, these agreements may play other complex material and symbolic roles within wider trade, aid, and “security” negotiations with Britain's former colonies.

See: Corporate Watch “Collective Expulsion: The case against Britain's mass deportation charter flights”, by Phil Miller and Shiar Youssef, 2013.^v

On the Sri Lanka case see: “Did Liam Fox plan deportations to hide Tamil genocide?” by Phil Miller.^{vi}

1.5 How charter flights work: the mechanics

Step 1. High politics

Charter flight routes are agreed between the UK and other states at the highest political and diplomatic levels. For example, the first in the new wave of charters to Pakistan took place in November 2011, not long after a visit by then prime minister David Cameron to negotiate a new “Enhanced Strategic Dialogue”, which included an objective of increasing bilateral trade to £2.5 billion per year as well as a £650 million “education aid” programme. The flight itself took place on the same day of a visit to Pakistan by then home secretary Teresa May. The first flight to Ghana took place in the same month, just a few weeks after a visit by then Immigration Minister Damian Green.^{vii}

Step 2. The routine is fixed

For the main destinations – Pakistan, Kosovo/Albania, Afghanistan, and Nigeria / Ghana – flights appear to be scheduled at more or less regular intervals. E.g., for some years, Afghan migrants and their friends knew to expect a fortnightly or monthly charter to Kabul – with arrests made to fill up the numbers. Almost all charter flights take place on a Tuesday or Thursday, and are generally spaced so that there is at most one a week.

- In 2014 and 2015, there was a charter to Pakistan at least every month, with the one exception of November 2015. The flights were almost (but not quite) always on a Tuesday, and typically every three weeks.
- In 2014 and 2015, there was usually a monthly flight to Kosovo / Albania, and sometimes two in one month. Through much of 2014 these flights were generally on Fridays, but then

switched to Thursday as the regular day.

- In 2015, there was a flight to Nigeria and Ghana at the end of every other month (in January, March, May, July, September, November). They were always on a Tuesday, either eight or nine weeks apart.
- Flights to Afghanistan became much less regular over this period, and there were only three in 2015. Still, they were always on Tuesdays.

Step 3. Filling up the flights: the “National Removals Command”

Getting people onto these flights is part of the job of the Home Office's “Immigration Enforcement” division. This division was set up in 2012/13 when the Home Office split the functions of the former UK Border Agency (UKBA), and it is in charge of all “enforcement” roles within the territory as opposed to at the frontiers: i.e., raids, detention, and deportation.

In July 2013, the Home Office set up a central unit called “National Removals Command” (NRC) within the Immigration Enforcement division. This unit, based in Croydon's Lunar House, is in charge of arranging detention and deportation of “illegals”, as well as running the “assisted voluntary return” scheme. To do this it liaises with the Immigration Control and Enforcement (ICE) teams who carry out raids and arrests on the ground.

The official procedure is basically as follows. First, “illegal migrants” are picked up in ICE raids (e.g., dawn raids on homes, workplace raids, raids on “sham marriages”, etc.), or when reporting at a signing centre, or perhaps by the police. The arrest team contacts NRC, who give the order whether or not the person should be detained. Once in detention, NRC decides how and when to deport the detainee, including whether they should be put on a charter flight.

In reality, we know that NRC has spaces to fill on the charter flights, and this will affect how they decide about which people to target and detain. We believe it likely that:

- ICE teams may have standing instructions to find and arrest quotas of migrants from the regular “charter nationalities”, i.e., at the present time, Pakistanis, Albanians, Nigerians and Ghanaians. Home Office statistics show that these nationalities are particularly hit by deportations – although it is hard to show whether the existence of regular charter routes is a cause or a result (or both?) of this.
- If a specific less regular charter flight is planned, e.g., the recent flight to Jamaica, ICE teams may be given specific instructions to round up people of these nationalities in the weeks running up to the flight. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence of this pattern.

See: ICIBI “An Inspection of Removals” December 2015.^{viii} This report doesn't specifically look at charters, but explains the general structure of NRC decision making.

Step 4. Booking the plane

The Home Office reveals very little information about exactly how charter flights are arranged and carried out. What we do know is that much of the logistics is outsourced to a private company called Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT). This company has been the Home Office's “travel services” contractor since 2004; its initial contract was renewed in 2010, and is currently up for retender again.

According to the "Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration", CWT's job covers: "management of charter flights and ticketing provision for scheduled flights for migrants subject to enforced removal and escorts, where required, and the management of relationships with carriers to maintain and expand available routes."

I.e., it is Carlson Wagonlit that deals with the airlines and books the planes, rather than the Home Office directly. This includes both charters and scheduled deportations. The cost of the contract is around £30 million per year, although about half of that goes on scheduled flight tickets.

The Home Office has repeatedly refused to release information on the companies that lease the planes, citing "commercial confidentiality". And, unlike other large government contracts including even Ministry of Defence charters, the contracts do not appear in public tender databases. This may just be because they are all sub-contracted through Carlson Wagonlit. Corporate Watch has contacted CWT in the past about its contract, and been told that the company is "prohibited" from speaking.

One company that has certainly provided charter planes on at least a number of occasions, as testified by multiple deportees and supporters, is Titan Airways. We do not know at this time whether other charter companies are also involved.

See: ICIBI "Inspection of Outsourced Contracts" published March 2016; and earlier Corporate Watch article on Carlson Wagonlit Travel from 2011.^{ix}

Step 5. Notice period

If the Home Office plans to deport someone, it should give them notice. Until now, this has been five days for people due to go on charter flights, although it is possible that new guidance is changing the notice periods. If they are being deported on a charter flight, they do not have to be given the exact time or even destination. The notice period is to give people time to get legal advice and appeal the deportation.

In theory, if there is no immediate prospect of deporting someone, they should be released from detention. In reality, people have lingered for years in detention centres and never been deported.

The few days notice period gives very little time to get a case through the legal system to stop a flight, and particularly when the majority of detainees' only access to legal representation is queuing up for the few sessions run by the handful of legal aid lawyers with contracts to work inside the detention centres. Even so, some do manage to get last minute injunctions to stay their deportations.

Often removal stays really do come at the last minute, when people are on the way to or waiting at the airport. For this reason the Home Office routinely issues removal directions to more people than will actually fit on the flight, and takes extra coach loads of these "reserves" to the airport, in order to fill up the spaces of those whose lawyers are successful (see Corporate Watch's 'Collective Expulsion' report on the reserve system).

Step 6. Detention centre to airport

Deportation charters generally leave from Stansted Airport, east of London. In the days before the flight, people held in faraway detention centres (e.g., Dungavel in Scotland, or Morton Hall in Lincolnshire) may be transferred to the main London centres near Gatwick and Heathrow (Brook House, Tinsley House, Harmondsworth and Colnbrook). According to the Unity Centre, detainees are typically put into cells alone the night before the flight, and may be moved to a separate wing

for this purpose.

On the day of the flight itself, detainees are boarded onto coaches, usually many hours ahead of the scheduled departure time. For example, many flights are scheduled to take off at night, e.g., 10.30pm or midnight; but coaches may begin boarding at the detention centres soon after noon.

Shortly before boarding the coaches, guards will come to their cells, tell them to gather their belongings, and take away their mobile phones. The prisoners are walked onto the coaches accompanied by “escort” guards.

Both escorts and coaches are provided by private contractors. The escort company is currently Tascor, a subsidiary of Capita, after it took over the contract from G4S in 2010. Various coach companies have been used. One of the best known is WH Tours, based in Crawley, not far from Gatwick Airport.

Detainees often arrive at Stansted hours before the actual flight. Deportation planes have been seen to leave from the private aviation area at the western side of the airport, which is clearly visible from the perimeter. On arrival, coaches may head for the “Inflite Jet Centre” building.^x Escorts may get off the coaches to use facilities or stretch their legs, while detainees are kept on the coaches until boarded onto the plane.

On the plane itself, deportees are generally outnumbered at least two to one by escorts. Waist restraint belts are commonly used, and also head restraints.

See these links for further information and some personal accounts:

"Planespotting": James Bridle watches a charter night flight take off from Stansted

<http://booktwo.org/notebook/planespotting/>

Unity Centre Glasgow on May 24 2016 flight to Nigeria and Ghana

<http://unitycentreglasgow.org/mass-deportation-charter-flight-to-nigeria-and-ghana-set-for-may-24th/>

"Ghosted Away: UK's secret removal flights examined" by Lotte Lewis Smith

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/shinealight/lotte-ls/ghosted-away-uk-s-secret-removal-flights-examined>

"Rough handling and restraint: UK forced removals still a nasty business" by Lotte Lewis Smith

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/uk/shinealight/lotte-ls/rough-handling-and-restraint-UK-forced-removals-still-nasty-business>

Phil Miller on use of restraints

<https://corporatwatch.org/news/2015/nov/20/deportees-tied-animals>

2. Company Involvement

Private companies are involved in the charter flight process at a number of stages.

The two companies that work most directly with the Home Office are Tascor, which has the “escorting” contract, and Carlson Wagonlit (CWT), which has the “travel services” contract. Tascor is responsible for providing “escorts” to guard deportees as they are moved from the detention centre, and when they are on the flight. CWT is responsible for organising the chartered planes.

Other contractors provide the vehicles and pilots/drivers used in the deportation: i.e., the plane itself, and the coaches that carry deportees from the detention centre to the plane.

There is much less publicly available information about these contracts. They do not appear in official government contracts databases, and the Home Office has repeatedly refused to answer Freedom of Information (FOI) requests about plane suppliers. It may be the case that these companies are sub-contracted by Carlson Wagonlit or other intermediaries, and this is why they do not appear in the databases.

We know the identities of at least some of these contractors because their branded vehicles have been observed at work in deportations. Planes belonging to Titan Airways, and coaches belonging to WH Tours, have been observed and photographed numerous times. But we do not currently have a full list of all plane and coach providers.

NB: the travel services (Carlson Wagonlit) and escorting (Tascor) contracts are both currently being re-tendered. CWT has had its current contract since 2010, though it first started doing this job back in 2004. Tascor (previously called Reliance), has had its contract since May 2011, after replacing G4S. The new contracts were both advertised in 2016, and the application periods have both now closed. At the moment of writing, the new contractors have not yet been announced. The new travel services contract should begin in July 2017. The new escorting contract, valued at around £460 million and extendible for up to 10 years, will begin in May 2018.

In the pages below we will give very summary profiles of some of these companies.

Details of the contract re-tenderings are available on UK and European government contracts databases. Here are the relevant links for these contracts:

[<http://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:89911-2016:TEXT:EN:HTML&src=0>]

[<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/004f2b82-13d0-4157-84a6-3e9a44f64a79?p=@08=UFQxUIRRPT0=ODZNT>]

[<https://www.contractsfinder.service.gov.uk/Notice/d3581ec2-139c-498e-9874-a946bacd835b?p=@08=UFQxUIRRPT0=NTFNT>]

2.1 The muscle: Tascor / Capita

Capita is a major "outsourcing" corporation, i.e., it runs a range of administrative and support services for other corporations and for governments. Its "business process" services include everything from technology and data management, through debt collection or meter reading, to medics and security guards. It is based in the UK and has many major British government contracts. It is also active in Ireland and expanding in Western and Northern Europe.

Tascor is a Capita subsidiary that specialises in security and "facilities management" for UK state agencies. It was created in 2012 when Capita bought a company called "Reliance Secure Task Management Ltd", which had a number of PFI contracts with police forces across the UK as well as the major Home Office contract to "escort" immigration detainees between detention centres and on deportation flights. The company's name was changed to Tascor in the same year. Since then Tascor has won more contracts mainly with UK state agencies and emergency services providing "custody services" (i.e., prison guards), security guards and CCTV systems, and also building maintenance and medical services.

NB: Tascor's "escorting" contract for the Home Office is currently (January 2017) in the process of being retendered, and a new contract will begin in May 2018. The new contractor has not yet been announced.

Capita: business basics

Capita is the largest outsourcing company in the UK, with around 28% of the total market in "business process management" (Annual Report 2015 p18). It is a public listed company (PLC) in the FTSE100 index of biggest UK companies, with revenues of around £5 billion a year. 53% of its business comes from selling services to other private companies: but it is best known for the other half of its business, taking over and running public services in government contracts.

In the public sector, Capita is everywhere, one of the main winners from the "public private partnership" approach that took off under the 1997 Labour government. It works for many local authorities and for central government departments from defence and justice to health and education. Its latest annual report identifies central government civil service cuts, NHS and education "reforms", and police budget tightening as profitable opportunities for its future: all these are expected to increase outsourcing as government bodies are pressed to slash budgets (see Capita's Annual Report 2015.^{xi}).

Capita has flourished by picking off UK government services for decades. It was founded in 1984 by former local government worker Rod Aldridge as a breakaway from the public sector accountants' association, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). Aldridge left in 2007 after it was exposed that he had lent £1 million to the governing Labour Party. By then Capita had won £2.6bn of business in the nine years since Labour came to power in 1997.^{xii}

Dubbed "Crapita" by Private Eye, Capita's basic government-linked business model is to take over public sector staff then make big cuts. Government bodies are thus spared the political fallout of making the cuts themselves, leaving Capita to act as a convenient scapegoat when the "efficiency savings" cause declines in services. So despite its history of failures and fines, Capita carries on winning new contracts. In any case, its rivals (Mitie, G4S, Serco, and all) use similar approaches with similar results.

For more on Capita's past record and the secrets of its "success" see Corporate Watch's 2013

company profile.^{xiii}

Here are just a few examples that have actually made the news of when Capita has been fined for its contract failings:

- 2003 CRB vetting failures fine [<http://www.publicfinance.co.uk/news/2003/05/capita-fined-%C2%A32m-crb-vetting-delays>];
- 2003 Congestion Charge failures fine [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/london/3180492.stm];
- 2006 Capita Financial fraud case [<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/4813748.stm>];
- 2014 court interpreting service failures [<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-25824907>];
- 2016 fine from Irish Central Bank for running an unauthorised financial services firm [<https://www.irishtimes.com/business/markets/central-bank-fines-unit-of-capita-1-15m-for-rules-breach-1.2828373>].

Capita has thousands of contracts of all kinds. Here are just a very few highlights:

- NHS England: £400m for "primary care support services", i.e., administration of the system of GPs and local health centres, awarded in 2015. Capita's plan for the contract involved cutting 1,000 NHS jobs and shutting down 28 of 30 offices. [<http://www.healthinvestor.co.uk/ShowArticle.aspx?ID=4260>]
- London Fire Brigade: 10 year contract to run the 999 call service signed in 2012. [<http://londonist.com/2012/03/london-fire-brigades-control-room-privatised>]
- Ministry of Defence: scandal-prone contract to run a new army recruitment system. [<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/capita-makes-100m-in-army-recruitment-fiasco-9563829.html>]
- Department of Work and Pensions (DWP): running the "personal independence payments" (PIP) benefit system. [<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/apr/06/civil-servants-capita-pip-assessments-backlog>]
- Collecting the London congestion charge for TfL. Capita had this contract at the very start of the scheme, was fined for poor service and later lost the contract to IBM, but took it back in 2015.
- Collecting the BBC license fee until 2020. [<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/supportservices/8929112/Capita-extends-BBC-licence-fee-contract.html> <http://www.capita-dis.co.uk/case-study/bbcs-tv-licensing-service>]
- Electronic tagging contract with Ministry of Justice, replacing G4S and Serco in 2014. [<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/jul/15/capita-electronic-tagging-grayling-uk-contract-6-years-g4s-serco>]
- Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera), which investigates food and environmental health and safety issues. UK Government sold 75% to Capita in 2015. [<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/capita-and-the-great-british-food-safety-sell-off-10134275.html>]
- Fire Services College: Capita bought the UK's main fire service training centre from the state for 10m 2013. [<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-gloucestershire-21615409>]
- "Smart meters" for energy companies.
- ParkingEye automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) system for car parks.
- Admin services for many local councils, particularly collecting rates and council tax debts.
- Employment services: e.g., employee screening, payroll admin, and more, for the Civil Service, Network Rail, and many big corporates from BP to McDonalds.
- Business software packages, e.g., control room software for South Wales Police and the

- London Fire Brigade; operating software for many utility companies; and much more.
- Capita was well known for running the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) database for the Home Office for ten years, but lost the contract in 2012 when the CRB became the "Disclosure and Barring Service" (DBS). [<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-gloucestershire-21615409>]

The current Chief Executive is Andy Parker. He has worked at Capita since 2001 and got the top job in 2014, replacing long serving predecessor Paul Pindar. Parker was paid £2,687,263 in 2015: £550,000 base salary, the same amount as a cash bonus, and the rest mainly as a bonus paid in company shares.

Capita has 75,000 employees. Most are based in 80 big "multi service" business centres in the UK, Ireland and the Channel Islands. There are also seven such sites in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Poland employing 7,500 people; five call centres in India employing 5,700 people; and one base in each of South Africa and Dubai. As well as these 94 major centres, Capita has a network of over 500 more offices and other sites across the UK and Ireland.

In December 2016 Capita announced new investment programmes in robot technology, looking to cut labour costs by increasingly automating its workforce. [<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/dec/08/capita-to-replace-staff-with-robots-to-save-money>]

Capita has a main charity partnership with The Prince's Trust. [<https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/success-stories/capita>]

Capita's founder Sir Rod Aldridge is a former trustee and current patron of the Trust and founding member of Prince Charles' "Prince's Charities Council". [<http://www.aldridge.uk.net/people/>]

Growth and faltering profits

Capita believes that there is still plenty of room for growth in its UK market. It claims that while £13.7bn of business services are already outsourced today (28% of that is in the public sector and 72% private), the market has the potential to be ten times bigger and reach £132bn (Annual Report 2015).

Although Capita is best known for government contracts, private sector services are just over half of its business, and it will need to find new opportunities there if it is to keep on growing. The company is also looking to expand outside UK. In 2015 it bought a German and Swiss outsourcing company called Avocis, and set up a new Capita Europe division. Capita seeks to grow both by winning new contracts ("organic growth") and by buying other companies ("acquisitions"). It spent over 400m on buying new small and medium companies in 2015.

Capita's revenue was nearly £5 billion in 2015 (4,836.9 million). Profit before tax was £112.1m, and £55.6m after tax. Revenue has grown strongly in recent years: e.g., in 2012 it was £3.35bn. The relatively low profit figure in 2015 was, according to the company, largely due to so-called "non-underlying" items such as the sale of some under-performing subsidiaries.

However, Capita has not done so well in 2016. It released two profits warnings to investors in the last quarter of 2016, and its shares slumped nearly 60% over the year. The first profits warning came in September 2016, as Capita announced that it was seeing a slowdown post-Brexit, because customers were holding off making commitments to new contracts. This sent its shares crashing

28% in a day. Its outsourcing rival Mitie had made a similar announcement the week before. [<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/sep/29/capita-shares-crash-brexit-woes-vote-profit-warning>]

Then in December, Capita made a second announcement, saying that it had still been too optimistic about its profits. In particular, analysts and investors were concerned at the lower sustainability of its debt while earnings were falling. The company announced that it will sell one of its subsidiaries (Capita Asset Services) to balance the books.

[<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/dec/08/capita-shares-profit-warning-brexit-vote>]

It also plans to move more jobs to its Indian call centres, and to cut 2,000 jobs altogether. In the longer term, Capita announced that it is investing in robot technologies with a view to replace more human workers with robots. [<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/dec/08/capita-to-replace-staff-with-robots-to-save-money>]

Capita is owned by major global investment funds. These were the biggest investors at the end of December 2015:

- * Invesco 8.06%
- * Veritas 6.3%
- * BlackRock Inc. 5.54%
- * Woodford Investment Management 5.46%
- * Baillie Gifford & Co 4.57%
- * The Capital Group 4.5%
- * Marathon Asset Management 3.38
- * Legal & General Investment Management 3.02%

Tascor

Tascor Services is just one small part of Capita's business empire. (NB: as well as Tascor Services, there is another similarly named Capita subsidiary called Tascor Medical Services, which also has its own contracts for healthcare in detention.)

Tascor is part of Capita's "integrated services" division. It focuses largely on "secure" services, which, as well as prisoner guards or CCTV systems, also involves general "facilities management" (e.g., reception desks, cleaning, catering, mailroom) for secure locations such as police stations or military bases. Its website advertises the following clients:

Police Services: custody suites / facilities management / building maintenance: Gloucestershire Police; North Kent Police; Cleveland Police

Fire Brigade facilities / maintenance: Fire Services College, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue

"Secure Transport": Home Office, Scottish Police Authority, "a large mental health trust", "a national forensic science provider" (transporting forensic evidence)

[<http://www.tascor.co.uk/>]

Under its old name "Reliance Secure Task Management" (RTSM), the company was a division of the Reliance Security group owned by Conservative Party donor Brian Kingham. Capita bought the company in August 2012. Capita later brought a civil case in the High Court arguing that Reliance Security unlawfully received an £11.25m dividend from RSTM just before the sale. Capita argued that RTSM was losing money on the Home Office escorting contract and could not in fact afford to pay the dividend.

[<https://corporatewatch.org/news/2014/sep/05/rival-firms-fight-over-deportation-dividend>]

The contract initially lost large amounts of money because Reliance had made a mistake about the charges for transporting prisoners. According to its lawyer's documents: "The Company had thought the relevant charges were to be made per detainee per mile, whereas they were actually chargeable per vehicle per mile." While Capita was negotiating to take over the contract, the Home Office agreed to up its rate in order to make the contract profitable.

[<https://corporatewatch.org/news/2014/sep/05/rival-firms-fight-over-deportation-dividend>]

The contract involves:

- Deporting people on commercial and privately chartered flights
- Transferring immigration detainees between reporting centres, holding cells, courts, hospitals, prisons and detention centres.
- Holding people detained by Immigration Officers at airports, ports (including Calais and Coquelles in Northern France) and asylum reporting centres.
- Running two short term holding facilities for the Home Office; Pennine House in Manchester, where 43-year-old Pakistani man Tahir Mehmood died in July 2013, and Larne House, a converted police station in County Antrim.

The contract is currently being retendered, with the new contractor due to be announced. It is not known whether Tascor is bidding again. The new contract may not include work in Calais, as this role will become part of another separate outsourcing contract for the Border Force across the channel.

[<https://corporatewatch.org/news/2016/sep/13/home-office-quietly-advertises-%C2%A380-million-privatisation-calais-border-security>]

The Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) report on deportations outsourcing notes various problems and Home Office complaints with the Tascor contract. According to this report, relations between Home Office managers and Tascor often seem frayed.

"Tascor and the Home Office had been involved in a series of disputes about the escorting contract almost from the outset, stemming from Tascor's view that there was a significant gap between the value of the contract and the cost of providing the contracted services. These disputes had been allowed to carry on for too long, affecting relationships and progress towards resolving performance issues."

The two parties finally came to a settlement in February 2015, in which basically the Home Office agreed to pay Tascor more. But, according to the Inspector, "the Home Office had yet to see the significant performance improvements it was looking for."

[<http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICIBI-report-on-Outsourced-Contracts-and-Cedars-Final.pdf>]

Nor does the company seem to be popular with its staff. On internet job forums, people who claim to be Tascor workers or ex-employees have many complaints to make. Here is a representative thread: [<https://www.indeed.co.uk/cmp/Tascor/reviews?fcountry=GB>]

According to posts on that employees forum, the pay (outside London) is £8.10 an hour, and staff complain about long hours and often unpaid overtime. Staff have very low morale and no confidence at all in their managers. To pick one comment:

"Awful company, many vile staff, even worse managers! If you value family and having a life STAY AWAY FROM THIS JOB there are no prospects at all, you will end up a shattered mess of

your former self! So many on and off long term sick, treated so bad, worst I have ever known.
PLEASE STEER CLEAR FROM THIS COMPANY."

2.2 The fixer: Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT)

Carlson Wagonlit is a global business travel services company, i.e., a large scale travel agent and booker for companies and government agencies. Its official head office is in France, but it is 100% owned by privately owned US conglomerate Carlson Companies Inc. It claims to be active in more than 150 countries, including local partnerships as well as fully owned subsidiary companies and joint ventures. According to its website "In 2015, sales volume for wholly owned operations and joint ventures totaled US\$24.2 billion".

See here for a list of local operations and offices worldwide:

[<http://www.carlsonwagonlit.com/content/cwt/global/en/office-locations.html>]

As well as general business travel, hotel bookings and events management, CWT provides "specialist travel services" to the oil, gas and other energy industries. However this business line has not been doing well of late, with the slump in oil and commodities prices hitting CWT's revenues.

CWT started as a joint venture between the family run Carlson Companies and the French company Wagonlit, part of the Accor group, but it is now fully owned by Carlson which bought out its remaining partners in 2014. Carlson's other main businesses were the TGI Fridays restaurants and the Carlson hotels group, which included the Radisson hotels brand. However it sold these businesses in 2014 and 2016 respectively, and it now appears that the Carlson Companies basically is just CWT. As a privately held US company, Carlson does not release detailed financial and other information.

Carlson appears proud of its "ethical" and philanthropic image, which includes funding a charitable trust called the Carlson Family Foundation. [<http://www.clcfamilyfoundation.com/>]

Carlson was first contracted to run the Home Office's deportation "travel services" in 2004. When that contract expired, it was hired again in 2010 to continue the job. The contract is currently up for retender again, with the new contract due to begin in July 2017. It is not known at this point whether CWT or another company has been awarded the new contract.

According to the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, CWT's contract involves "management of charter flights and ticketing provision for scheduled flights for migrants subject to enforced removal and escorts, where required, and the management of relationships with carriers to maintain and expand available routes. The annual cost of this contract was approximately £30m, roughly half of which, in FY 2014/15, was the cost of scheduled flight tickets."

"Annually, CWT processed approximately 21,000 booking requests from Home Office caseworkers for tickets for enforced removals. Some booking requests were for multiple travellers and/or more than one flight and might involve several transactions. CWT also managed flight rescheduling, cancellations and refunds. The volume of transactions processed varied from 5,000 to 8,000 per month."

For more on CWT's role in deportations (but focusing on scheduled flights) see: ICIBI "Inspection of Outsourced Contracts" published March 2016 [<http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICIBI-report-on-Outsourced-Contracts-and-Cedars-Final.pdf>]

According to that report (para 5.10), CWT generally provides a useful service to the Home Office using its worldwide contacts to facilitate deportations: "Both Home Office and CWT managers noted that CWT's position as a major travel operator had enabled it to negotiate favourable deals

with airlines and, over the life of the contract to increase the range of routes available for enforced removals." (Para 5.10). Although it is noted that "the reluctance of many carriers to take enforced removal passengers, or passengers with escorts, was a significant constraint and led to delays".

CWT has been contacted by Corporate Watch in the past and asked to comment about its work on deportations, but has said that it is "prohibited" from doing so. See the Corporate Watch article on Carlson Wagonlit Travel from 2011. [<https://corporatewatch.org/magazine/49/summer-2011/engagement-deportation-machine>]

2.3 The supplier: Titan Airways

Titan is a charter aircraft operator which provides planes to basically anyone who will pay. Clients include Royal Mail, tour operators, airlines, corporate events, sports teams and VIPs, through to the military. It has a fleet of 12 planes, over 300 staff, and made a profit of £4.75 million after tax (from revenue of some £78 million) in the 2015/16 financial year.

Titan is conveniently based inside Stansted Airport, in a building called Enterprise House, which is right next to the Inflight Jet Centre from where private flights including deportation charters are run.

Titan flights have numbers beginning ZT or AWC.

Titan is owned by a parent holding company called Hagondale, which is also the actual owner of its aircraft. Titan/Hagondale is wholly owned by one man, Gene Willson, born 26/10/1950. Willson is a pilot who started the business in 1988 with one light aircraft. He later went into partnership with private equity firm 3i to get capital to expand, but bought out 3i fully in 2013, becoming the sole shareholder. Thanks to his dividends from Titan, Willson is reportedly “the 41st richest man in Essex”, and lives in a £1.6 million farmhouse in Saffron Walden. Assuming he was the highest paid director in 2015, he drew a salary of £387,000; on top of which he then paid himself a neat £4 million dividend. (Source: Companies House.)

[http://www.essexlifemag.co.uk/people/who_s_the_top_50_richest_in_essex_1_1641468]

Willson's son Alastair “Ali” Willson (born 27/04/1986) joined the company as an executive director in 2014. Alastair appears to have been groomed for the job, having studied for a degree in airline management at City University (2004-7), then working for other charter airlines. He is also a keen rugby and football fan, and active on social media with busy twitter and instagram accounts. ([<https://www.instagram.com/alastairwillson/>]; [<https://www.facebook.com/alastair.willson/>]; [<https://twitter.com/aliwillson>])

Titan/Hagondale is profitable, having made a profit in the large majority of its 27 year life. In 2015 Hagondale posted an operating profit of £7.1 million, which after net interest payments of over £1.1m and tax of £1.27 million left a profit of £4.75m. In 2014 operating profit was £4.55 million, and after interest and tax it made £3.37 million. About 90% of the company's sales are in the UK, with most of the rest elsewhere in Europe.

Its fixed assets, largely aircraft, are valued at around £56.2 million in the last accounts. As expected of an expanding company buying expensive machinery, it does owe around £40 million, of which £22 million fell due within a year at the last accounts. But it comes out with £35 million in net assets. It had good cash flow with over £9 million cash at hand and in the bank.

NB: We contacted Titan Airways several days before publication of this report to ask them for any comment on their involvement in deportation charter flights. They did not respond.

Contracts and business partners

Titan has contracts and partnerships with many other airlines, tour operators, and others. Here are some of the company's major deals and business areas, as advertised on its website. Unlike other aspects of its business, Titan does not publicise its work on deportation charters or mention these anywhere on its website. Probably many of its partners and customers are unaware of this side of its business.

Jet2.com. Titan has a 50/50 joint venture with Spanish airline Jet2.com, called Postal Air Services.

Royal Mail. One of Titan's biggest and longest standing cargo customers is the Royal Mail, which has been a mainstay of its business for years. In 2014 it won a new contract lasting until January 2017 to operate three Stansted based Boeing 737s to Edinburgh and Belfast.

Tour operators. Titan says on its website that the following are all longstanding customers: Cunard, Hurtigruten, Tangney Tours, Corsican Places, Inghams, Crystal Ski, Esprit Holidays and Club Med.

Croatia: Titan has announced a new tour contract for Summer 2017 with “independent activity holiday specialist, Neilson”. This will involve weekly flights from London Stansted and Manchester to Zadar.

Corsica: summer contract with tour operator Corsican Places. According to Titan's website, from May-October 2016 it ran flights every Sunday for this tour company.

Lourdes: summer contract with pilgrimage company Tangney Tours. [www.tangney-tours.com]

According to Titan's website, it ran flights to Lourdes for this company through the summer.

Cruises: summer contracts with Cunard, P&O cruises and Celebrity Cruises.

[www.celebritycruises.co.uk] According to Titan's website, in summer 2016 it ran regular flights to various destinations for these cruise ship operators.

Gambia: In 2015-16, Titan ran regular flights to Banjul with tour operator “The Gambia Experience”. [https://www.gambia.co.uk/]

Skiing tour flights: “Titan Airways operate charter flights on behalf of the following major UK ski tour operators: Club Med; Crystal Ski Holidays; Esprit Ski; Inghams; Neilson; Ski Total and Skiworld.”

Airlines. Titan offers both longer term leasing and a “Go Now” short notice service for airlines. This is a service to provide aircraft at short notice to airlines, with aircraft apparently “on standby 24/7”. Titan's website mentions that the following companies have used this service: “British Airways; Aer Lingus; Virgin Little Red; Thomas Cook Airlines; Monarch Airlines; Thomson Airways; Arke Fly; Condor; Transavia; British Airways Open Skies; Jet2.com; Primera Air; Air Berlin; Vueling; German Wings; SAS Scandinavian Airline System, EasyJet and many more.”

Specialist, VIP and corporate charters. Titan provides planes for sports teams, bands and musicians, VIPs, and corporate events.

- Sports charters. Titan says on its website that “Premier League and international football clubs” are notable among its “loyal clientele”.
- Corporate Events. Titan leases planes for corporate events, and notes on its website: “product launches, trade shows, promotional events and hospitality trips for numerous companies including energy firms, car manufacturers, communications companies, TV channels, radio stations and print media corporations”.
- VIPs and music business. Titan says that its client base includes “royalty and heads of state, government delegations, senior business executives, world-renowned personalities from the music and film industries and international sports stars.” In particular it notes “many years of experience in providing air charter solutions for rock and pop bands, orchestras and film production companies”.

Government and military. Titan works for the UK and other governments, including the military. Its website states that it has transported “high profile government ministers, the evacuation of civilians, humanitarian missions, search and rescue operations, troop movements and the transportation of military supplies and equipment.”

- Titan's website states that it has a “long history of operation” with air charter broker

Chapman Freeborn Airchartering Ltd. This company has multiple contracts with the Ministry of Defence, and may sub-contract to Titan.

- In February 2016 Titan was one of a number of aircraft providers awarded a contract for transport services by the Department for International Development
[<http://ted.europa.eu/udl?uri=TED:NOTICE:50686-2016:TEXT:EN:HTML&src=0>]

Oil and gas industry. “Proven experience of oil and gas air charter operations, transporting both personnel and essential cargo whenever, wherever they are required. We are certified to operate worldwide and have a wealth of experience in operating to remote, potentially inhospitable airfields and in extreme weather conditions.”

Cargo. “Today we operate three Boeing 737-300QC aircraft, convertible from passenger to freight configuration and vice versa in just 30minutes.” These are the three planes used for the Royal Mail contract, but can also be available for other cargo jobs.

i <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/02/iraq-parliament-deported-nationals-europe>

ii https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/enforced_removals_and_deportatio#incoming-879337

iii <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2015-07-14.6908.h&s=charter+flight#g6908.r0>

iv <https://corporatewatch.org/news/2016/aug/30/snitches-stings-leaks-how-immigration-enforcement-works>

v <https://corporatewatch.org/publications/2013/collective-expulsion>

vi <https://stopdeportations.wordpress.com/2012/07/05/did-liam-fox-plan-deportations-to-hide-tamil-genocide/>

vii See Corporate Watch: Collective Expulsion p19.

viii <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/ICIBI-report-on-Removals-17.12.2015.pdf>

ix <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ICIBI-report-on-Outsourced-Contracts-and-Cedars-Final.pdf>; <https://corporatewatch.org/magazine/49/summer-2011/engagement-deportation-machine>

x <http://www.inflitejetcentre.co.uk/welcome.htm>

xi <http://investors.capita.com/reports-and-presentations/2015>

xii <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/2935220/Aldridge-leaves-Capita-decapitated.html>

xiii <https://corporatewatch.org/company-profiles/capita>