

## TRAVEL



### Hand luggage rules 'don't reduce risk'

By Julie Clothier for CNN

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**LONDON, England (CNN) -- Security experts say restricting the size of hand luggage that passengers are allowed to take on board flights does little or nothing to reduce the risk of a terror attack.**

After allegations of a terror plot to blow up transatlantic flights surfaced on August 10, passengers were banned for four days from taking any hand luggage apart from travel documents on board.

Since then, travelers flying from the UK and those connecting within UK airports have been allowed to take only one piece of hand luggage, no more than 45 cm (17.7 inches) wide x 35 cm (13.7 inches) long x 16 cm (6.2 inches) deep.

But two security experts told CNN the new rules did not help reduce the threat of terrorism.

Iain Donald, director of global risk at security and intelligence firm AKE, questioned the point of limiting passengers' hand luggage.

Donald said the size of weapons needed to do serious damage to an aircraft was very small.

"You don't need much to depressurize an aircraft. Limiting the size of hand luggage, if this is in relation to security, it's of little or no consequence. The individual factor of the size of the bag is pointless almost," he said.

"At a time when there's a high terror alert we can see why it's being done, but reducing the size of luggage, I'm not sure why they are doing that. The size doesn't make a huge amount of difference."

He also questioned why there had been such large delays at UK airports in the days following August 10.

"The strategic problem is that the public is always reacting to the last threat. After 9/11, they sealed up cockpit doors and removed all metal cutlery. Then Richard Reid became known as the 'shoe bomber,' so we all have to remove our shoes before we get on the plane.

"Now with this latest threat, liquids have been banned. The emphasis needs to go on intelligence."

Donald said he expects to see a drift towards pre-August 10 security levels but did not expect things to completely return to how they were.

A spokesman for Britain's Department for Transport, which enforces the rules in the UK, said restrictions on hand baggage were necessary.

"It gives passengers some sort of comfort, it allows them to take a reasonable amount of personal items on board.

"The security checks have been stringent and tight. Every bag is being thoroughly checked by security personnel and reducing the bags allowed on board reduces the number of items needing to be checked."

But Neil Thompson, operational director for global security agency red24, said there was no "rhyme or reason" to justify a reduction in hand luggage.

He had traveled through London's Heathrow airport since August 10 and said that while all bags were being x-rayed, not every bag was not being individually searched.

"I just do not think that excuse holds water to be perfectly honest," he said. "Nobody has given me a real reason why these restrictions have come into place. No one is saying why.

"I just cannot believe that a smaller bag makes a difference. It makes me more suspicious. Perhaps they know about something that can fit into normal sized luggage that they are not telling us. Perhaps they have been thinking about doing this for some time."

He said business travelers were hardest hit by the new rules because they traveled frequently and depended on getting in and out of the airport in the quickest time.