

Activity Sheet 2.2

Analysing the Media

EVEN THE PLANE WON'T GO HOME



Unwanted arrival . . . Afghans' rustbucket jet stays too

By NICK PARKER

BRITAIN was branded the dustbin of the world last night over the Afghan "hijack" scam at Stansted.

As Home Secretary Jack Straw vowed to boot **OUT** scores of asylum seekers, do-gooders were demanding they **STAY**.

And the episode took another farcical turn when it emerged that even the refugees' **PLANE** will remain in Britain. The dilapidated 20-year-old jet

Fight to kick out Afghans

Continued on Page Seven

I WATCHED in astonishment yesterday as a swish Hilton Hotel was turned into a four-star refugee camp for a bedraggled bunch of Afghan asylum seekers.

For years the name Hilton has been a watchword for style, luxury and efficiency favoured by discerning executives across the globe. But I'm demanding a refund after a depressing stay at the worldwide chain's newest addition – the Kabul Hilton at Stansted Airport.

Since the start of the hijack crisis I had been paying £202-a-night for a basic twin-bedded room at the hotel, which boasts a business centre, leisure complex, smart en-suite rooms and fine dining.

But the needs of paying guests were suddenly deemed as insignificant as those of the British taxpayer yesterday as a flood of freeloaders began piling off the plane.

First, a hotel receptionist called to politely request that I move out of my third-floor room immediately. I explained that I was working to a deadline at the time and would prefer to stay rather than move all my computer gear and clothes.

Ten minutes later the hotel duty manager – with police hovering in the background – knocked at my door and repeated the request that I move.

I was concerned by his persistence but refused again after pointing out that I was trying to work in my room.

It was only later that I discovered that the whole third floor of around 80 rooms had been commandeered at great expense to create a secure "sterile area" for Afghans from the hijack jet.

And before long I realised that I was the only paying guest on the entire floor.

I have stayed at Hilton Hotels throughout the world, but have never rubbed shoulders with guests like these.

A man with a shaggy black beard and a flowing traditional Afghan dress looked bewildered as he was led from a lift along plush corridors to his suite.

Marquee

Scruffy children laughed and joked while Afghan women in headscarves gazed in wonder at the furnishings.

Hotel staff hurried back and forth all day with expensive orders of room service food on trolleys and trays.

I found myself stepping over piles of plastic bags stuffed with clothes and toys being provided for the new arrivals.

Women Red Cross volunteers fussed over the heaps as the numbers of police guarding the corridors and lifts grew.

Outside, a huge steel-framed marquee began to take shape beside the hotel for use as overflow accommodation.

Workmen said it was costing £2,000 to assemble plus around £200 a day to hire.

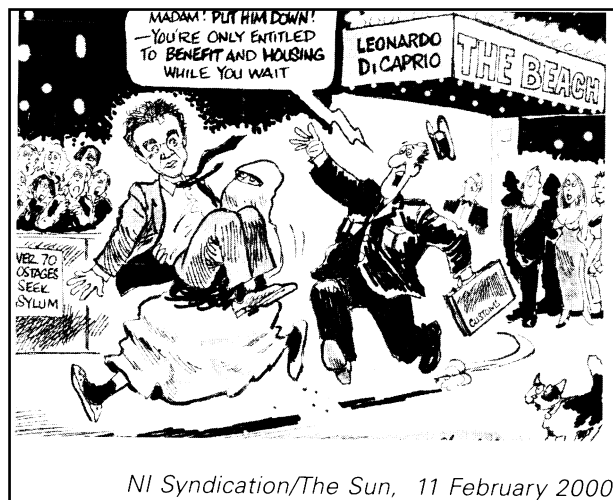
The 18ft high striped structure is usually put up for society weddings and is carpeted and lit by chandeliers.

The hotel and marquee were being used for women, kids and elderly men while other men were being put up at a VIP suite in an air firm's hangar.

As I tried to return to my room, I was challenged by a policewoman outside the lift who refused to let me pass until Afghan children were ushered away.

When I asked why I was being stopped, I was told: "This is a sterile area. I'm only doing my job."

Tempers frayed as I replied: "Yes, and I'm trying to do mine in that room which is costing me £200-a-night. How much are these people paying?"



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