

US refuses to extradite spy's wife to UK over death of Harry Dunn

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On January 23, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced that the Trump administration has refused the request by UK authorities to extradite Anne Sacoolas, the wife of a US intelligence officer.

Sacoolas's husband was based at the Croughton RAF base in Northamptonshire. On August 27 last year she drove her car on the wrong side of the road and hit the motorcycle being driven by 19-year-old Harry Dunn, taking his life.

In its statement the US State Department said, "If the United States were to grant the UK's extradition request, it would render the invocation of diplomatic immunity a practical nullity and would set an extraordinarily troubling precedent."

Police visited Sacoolas at her UK address the day after the crash. She informed them that she was subject to diplomatic immunity, supposedly as the wife of a diplomat. The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) asked the US Embassy in London to waive immunity for Sacoolas so she could be questioned. On September 13 the US embassy informed the FCO that it would not waive immunity and that Sacoolas would be leaving the country unless the UK government objected strongly. No objection was made.

Sacoolas flew out of the UK on a US Air Force plane on September 15 with the UK government supposedly only being told the following day. However, subsequent events suggest British collusion from the outset.

The FCO informed the Northamptonshire police of Sacoolas's flight and then asked that the police delay informing the family.

By September 23 the family of Harry Dunn finally became aware that Sacoolas had skipped the country and asked police to confirm if it was true. On September 26, 11 days after Sacoolas had fled the

country, police finally met officially with Dunn's family and confirmed what they already suspected.

Since the tragic death of Harry Dunn other incidents of cars leaving the Croughton base and being driven on the wrong side of the road by US personnel have been reported. A widely viewed social media clip of dashcam footage shows a car encountering another car on the wrong side of the road near the base. Northamptonshire police have announced they will run sessions on road safety for new US arrivals at the base.

Harry's father Tim Dunn and mother Charlotte Charles have pursued a principled and determined fight to achieve justice for their son, while the Johnson government has merely gone through the motions of registering a protest to cover their tracks.

Visiting America to publicise the case on October 15, Harry's parents were in effect ambushed by President Donald Trump. He had asked to meet with them at the White House, where he ruled out Sacoolas being sent back to the UK to face charges. Instead, he told Harry's parents that Sacoolas was waiting in an adjacent room and suggested they talk. The parents refused Trump's offer, warning of the potentially traumatic impact of such an encounter, including for Sacoolas.

A *Guardian* article November 7 reported that the Trump White House had sought to buy off Harry's parents. "(Radd) Seiger (the family legal representative) told PA Media that their meeting at the White House on 15 October ended with the president saying the secretary of the treasury, Steven Mnuchin, was 'standing by ready to write a cheque'."

The article continued, quoting Seiger, "When he (Trump) said: 'We've got the driver here' he basically meant that we're all going to have a big hug and a kiss, and I'll get my treasury guy to write a cheque. That's how it was. On the day it just didn't register with me,

but the more I think about those words, the more shocking it is.”

In the run up to the December 12 general election, Harry’s father and supporters attempted to attend a hustings meeting involving then and current Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab. They were denied access, with organisers claiming their presence would contravene fire regulations.

On October 25 last year, Harry’s parents launched their legal action against the FCO over the granting of diplomatic immunity to Sacoolas. They claim it was wrong in law for her, the wife of a spy and not a diplomat, to have such immunity.

Sacoolas’s immunity was also questioned by human rights activist and former UK ambassador Craig Murray. Writing on his website on October 8 last year, he explained that in a reciprocal arrangement to circumvent legal restraints on US and UK intelligence agents, US agents spy on UK citizens from bases such as Croughton. “What does apparently exist between the UK and the US is a secret, bilateral agreement to treat GCHQ and NSA staff *as if* they had diplomatic immunity.”

Murray continued, “I am not at all convinced, as a matter of law, that the government has the power to grant, by bilateral treaty or otherwise, immunity from criminal prosecution to foreign national ... outside the provision of the Vienna Convention (relating to diplomatic immunity). This should be tested by the courts.”

At the time of the family’s legal challenge, the FCO said it would both appeal and seek costs against the family, estimated to be £50,000. The threat to penalise the family was an attempt to keep covered the relationship that exists between the British state and the US regarding spying activities at the Croughton base.

Harry’s mother, Charlotte, called the extradition refusal an expected blow. Speaking to Sky News she said, “We’ve just got to carry on fighting, and we will get there in the end. It doesn’t matter when, whether it’s this administration or the next. The extradition request is always going to be over Anne Sacoolas’s head, and we are never going to give up.”

The Tories have now gone into full damage-limitation mode over the explosive conflict. Andrea Leadsom, the business secretary and constituency MP for the Dunn family, met with US Ambassador Woody

Johnson on January 24. Leadsom claimed to reporters afterwards that Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson was “very much on the side of the family in their desire to see justice done. All of us in government are working to that end.”

According to an *Independent* report of January 27, Johnson had phoned Trump on January 24 over the Sacoolas extradition and stressed “the need for the individual involved to return to the UK.” Speaking on January 27 at a Westminster briefing, a spokesman for Johnson described the extradition refusal as “a denial of justice” and called for Sacoolas to be extradited.

Dominic Raab went further, meeting with Harry’s parents Monday, after which Seiger described the foreign secretary as being “incandescent with rage” at the US refusal to grant the extradition of Sacoolas. Seiger was now convinced Raab would confront Pompeo when he meets him alongside Johnson today. “On a very human level, he is a parent himself, and he made it clear that he is going to tell Pompeo that Sacoolas has to come back.” As a placatory gesture the proposed judicial review of the case has been replaced by a discussion with the Foreign Office.

Pompeo will not be fooled by such theatrics and will confidently dismiss any appeals regarding Sacoolas, knowing they are made purely for the record.



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