

# U.K.: More to Fear from Swine Flu Than Terrorism

By Matthew Harwood  
07/20/2009 -

Home Secretary Alan Johnson told the BBC that the United Kingdom has more to fear from swine flu than terrorism, reports the *Daily Mail*.

Interviewed on the *Andrew Marr Show* yesterday on BBC1, Johnson responded to criticisms that the government had overreacted to the emergence of swine flu.

*We've been preparing for this for a long time. It came actually above terrorism as a threat to this country, and so we have the whole Cobra machinery, the inter-agency working; we'd gone through simulation exercises like Winter Willow where everyone was involved. And what we're seeing is that that is absolutely the right approach. No country was better prepared than this country.*

Cobra is the British government's emergency committee that handles public emergencies and crisis management.

Despite Johnson's defense of the government's swine flu preparations, Marr pushed Johnson on whether the fears associated with swine flu were overblown, especially reports that women shouldn't have babies. He agreed that indeed that advice was an overreaction.

Nevertheless, Johnson emphasized that the British government is the best prepared nation to combat swine flu, noting that it has stockpiled antivirals for more than 50 percent of the population and that a vaccine was on the way.

Also yesterday, the *Telegraph* reported that the government had drawn up contingency plans to minimize swine flu's spread. Plans included using "shipping containers and inflatable storage facilities as emergency mortuaries" while suggesting that local planners discuss the practicability of running crematoria "24/7."

The plan also recommends that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) issue fines and cautions for minor offenses rather than physically bring offenders into the court system.

"The prospect of a major crown court along with the prosecutor's department being brought to its knees by swine flu is something to be avoided at all costs," a CPS insider told the *Telegraph*.

The plans also discussed banning crowds from live sporting events, business continuity best practices, and longer sick leaves to guard against the flu's spread.



<http://www.forbes.com/2009/07/20/swine-flu-uk-markets-equity-economy.html>