



Ryanair

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Ryanair boss suggests bringing in army to end airport travel chaos

Michael O'Leary hits back at Grant Shapps's claim that firms have oversold flights and holidays

Joe Middleton

Thu 2 Jun 2022 17:14 BST

Ryanair boss Michael O'Leary has suggested the army be drafted into UK airports for the next "three to four months" to help resolve the widespread disruption that has peaked over the half-term break.

The airline chief executive said "defence personnel with experience providing security" should be deployed at under-pressure transport hubs to prevent the lengthy queues and delays that have plagued passengers this week.

He told ITV News: "Bringing in the army, which they do at many other European airports, would, at a stroke, relieve the pressure on airport security and would mean that people have a much better experience - not just this weekend, but for each weekend over the next three, four months."

O'Leary also hit back at claims made by the transport secretary,

Grant Shapps, on Wednesday that travel firms have “seriously oversold flights and holidays relative to their capacity to deliver”.

Shapps, who met with aviation leaders on Wednesday afternoon to discuss the problems, had also said there should be “no repeat” of the disruption tourists have faced in the half-term holidays over the summer months.

O’Leary said no airline operator “is going to deliberately sell a flight that they can’t crew or operate” and that crew shortages often happened at very short notice.

He added: “Army personnel, defence personnel who are good at providing security could relieve the pressure. And that would be something useful that this government could do instead of blaming the airports or the airlines, which doesn’t solve anything.

“We are going to have pinch points at the UK airports right through to the end of this summer until the kids go back to school in September.

“And I believe that the best way of solving these pinch points ... is to deploy military personnel who are security trained and who could relieve the pressure on airport security and if you relieve the pressure in airport security, you get rid of the queues.”

O’Leary’s comments come a day after the Liberal Democrats urged the government to draft in the armed forces to help ease pressure at hectic airports, ports and roads.

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The party’s transport spokesperson, Sarah Olney, said: “The chaotic scenes at airports up and down the country have been nothing short of a complete disaster ... That’s why drafting Britain’s best and brightest logistics minds from the army to get things moving again is a no-brainer.

“Conservative ministers need to get a grip on this chaos at the 11th hour to save the jubilee weekend. Empowering the army to run point from a command centre would do just that.”

The Department for Transport said: “We have no plans to use the army at airports. It is for operators to ensure airports and airlines are appropriately staffed.”

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