



Robert Lawson KC

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Rob is an internationally renowned aviation lawyer. He has focussed upon the world of, and law relating to, aviation throughout his legal career. This has consisted of practice at leading aviation sets at the London Bar from 1990 until 2017 - 5 Bell Yard and latterly Quadrant Chambers, followed by 9 years as a partner at the world's foremost aviation law firm, Clyde & Co LLP, including 3 years as chair of its Aviation Global Practice Group, and then his return to Quadrant as from February 2026.

Rob has broad experience in the aviation sector with regard to: air carrier liability (including attritional and major loss); regulatory and licensing issues (including ownership & control); carrier-original equipment manufacturer, product liability, ground handling, finance & leasing (wet and dry), slots and general intra-industry commercial disputes; inquests; insurance coverage; and contractual, treaty & statutory interpretation. In addition to advocacy and advisory work, from time to time he also acts as an arbitrator and as a mediator (for which he holds CI Arb accreditation).

Rob has acted and advised in many of the most notable aviation related disputes with an English or English law nexus that have arisen over the last three decades (see **Aviation & Travel**). Whilst at Clyde & Co he also acted in and managed aviation related disputes, including litigation, in many other jurisdictions around the world (both common and civil law). He has been named:

- Hall of Fame – Aviation, Legal 500 United Kingdom, 2026
- a 'Global Elite Thought Leader' by Lexology in both contentious aviation and aviation regulatory for 2025 & 2026 (and previously by Who's Who Legal - Transport in the same categories for 2024 & 2023 and in contentious aviation for 2022)
- a 'Thomson Reuters Stand-out Lawyer' for 2025
- Aviation Law – London Lawyer of the Year 2023 by Best Lawyers
- Transport: Individual (London) of the Year 2020 by Legal 500
- Aviation – Regulatory Lawyer of the Year 2020 by Who's Who Legal
- one of the 10 most highly regarded individuals in the world for contentious aviation by Who's Who Legal, 2014

He has also been acknowledged as a leading aviation lawyer by Chambers & Partner's Guide to the UK Legal Profession, The Legal 500, Expert Guides to the World's Leading Aviation Lawyers, Legal Experts, Best Lawyers in United Kingdom, International Who's Who of Aviation Lawyers, Lexology Index: Transport, Who's Who Legal: Transport, The Lawyer and Airline International's Aviation Counsel. In his first stint at the Bar he was also recognised in independent directories as a leading practitioner in Travel, International Arbitration, Product Liability and Professional Discipline.

Rob has published several works on air law (see **Publications**) and speaks regularly on the international air law conference circuit on a wide variety of aspects of aviation law, to date including at events organised by the International Civil Aviation Organization, International Air Transport Association, European Air Law Association, International Chamber of Commerce, UK Civil Aviation Authority, UK Air Accidents Investigation Branch, Leiden University, Luiss University and McGill University, amongst others.

He is Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society and was Chairman of its Air Law Group from 2010 to 2016. He is also a fellow of the International Academy of Trial lawyers, and a member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, the Executive Committee of the European Air Law Association and the Expert Committee of the Shanghai International Aviation Court of Arbitration.

Aviation & Travel

Rob acts predominantly for air carriers, as well as for their insurers. Much of his work is confidential in nature, but significant matters in which he has acted include:

In relation to the Warsaw and Montreal Conventions on air carrier liability:

- **Felicísima v. Iberia Líneas Aereas de España SA Operadora Unipersonal and IATA Espana SLU** Case C-218/24, ECLI:EU:C:2025:794 - whether pets accompanying passengers are excluded from the meaning of 'baggage'
- **Wealmoor Ltd v. KLM CIA Real Holandesa de Aviacion** [2026] 1 WLR 261 – 'event which caused the damage', 'inherent vice', 'defective packaging'
- **Ford v. Malaysian Airline System Berhad** [2014] 1 Lloyd's Rep 301 (CA) – 'accident'
- **Barclay v. British Airways Plc** [2010] QB 187 (CA) – 'accident' *Laroche v. Spirit of Adventure (UK) Ltd* [2009] QB 778 (CA), [2008] 4 All ER 494 (QBD) – time bar, 'aircraft'
- **Re Deep Vein Thrombosis and Air Travel Group Litigation** [2006] 1 AC 495 (HL), [2004] QB 234 (CA), [2003] 1 All ER 935 (QBD) – 'accident', airline liability for DVTs; successful defence of class action acting for 26 of the 27 carriers originally sued, as well as advising and assisting with the written advocacy in the parallel Australian case **Povey v. Qantas Airways Ltd** [2005] 223 CLR 189 (HCA), (2003) 11 VR 642 (SCV(CA)).
- **GKN Westland Helicopters Ltd v. Korean Air** [2003] 2 Lloyd's Rep 629 (QBD) – interface of the convention with CPR Pt 36.
- **Morris v. KLM Royal Dutch Airlines** [2002] 2 AC 628 (HL), [2002] QB 100 (CA) – 'bodily injury'
- **Disley v. Levine** [2002] 1 WLR 785 (CA), [2001] PIQR P10 (QBD) – 'aircraft'; 'passenger'; carriage 'for reward'
- **Rolls Royce Plc v. Heavylift-Volga Dnepr Ltd** [2000] 1 Lloyd's Rep 653 (QBD) – scope of carriage by air; 'aerodrome', article 25 recklessness
- **The Post Office v. British World Airlines Ltd** [2000] 1 Lloyd's Rep 378 (QBD) – entitlement of Post Office to sue pursuant to the Convention re mail flights
- **Chaudhari v. British Airways Plc** [1997] EWCA Civ 1413 (CA) – 'accident'
- **Deaville and others v. Aeroflot Russian International Airlines** [1997] 2 Lloyd's Rep 67 (QBD) – Jurisdiction; stay of foreign proceedings
- **Milor SRL v. British Airways Plc** [1996] QB 702 (CA) – Jurisdiction, forum non-conveniens
- **Gurtner v. Beaton** [1993] 2 Lloyd's Rep 369 (CA), (1990) 1 S&B Av R VII/499 (QBD) – article 25 recklessness; apparent authority

In relation to Regulation (EC) No.261/2004 on denied boarding, cancellation and delay:

- **Gahan v. Emirates** [2018] 1 WLR 2287 (CA) – territorial extent; connecting flights
- **Dawson v. Thomson Airways Ltd** [2015] 1 WLR 883 (CA) – applicable limitation period; obligation to follow EU law
- **Huzar v. Jet2.Com Ltd** [2014] 4 All ER 581 (CA) – 'extraordinary circumstances'

In relation to public international air law/ the Chicago Convention 1944:

- **R (Kibris Turk Hava Yollari) v. Secretary of State for Transport** [2011] 2 All ER (Comm) 340 (CA), [2010] 1 All ER (Comm) 253 (QBD) – Sovereign territory; suspension of treaty rights; obligation to respect treaty rights of other signatory states; the right to fly to Northern Cyprus

In relation to the admissibility of Annex 13 air accident reports in civil proceedings:

- **Rogers v. Hoyle** [2015] QB 265 (CA)

In relation to travel law/ ATOL Regulation:

- **R (The Association of British Travel Agents Ltd) v. Civil Aviation Authority** [2007] 2 All ER (Comm) 898 (CA), (2006) ACD 49 (QBD) – 'package'; successful judicial review of CAA's legal interpretation

In relation to slots:

- **ICC Arbitration No. 25365**. A dispute between two airlines concerning rights to airport slots at a major international airport subject to EU remedy allocation (2020).
- The purchase by British Airways Plc from the administrators of Monarch Airlines Ltd of the latter's entire portfolio of take-off and landing slots at London Gatwick airport (2017)

In relation to route allocation/licensing:

- Air Transport Licensing Authority of Hong Kong's Public Inquiry re Application for a Licence by Jetstar Hong Kong Airways Ltd (2015) – Principal Place of Business; successful objection to licensing of Jetstar Hong Kong
- Civil Aviation Authority Scarce Capacity Allocation Certificate Decisions 1/12 (Moscow), 1/10 (Cairo) & 1/09 (Kiev)
- Civil Aviation Authority Air Transport Licences and Route Licences Decisions 2/99 (Zurich/Geneva), 4/98 (Moscow) & 3/98 (Cape Town)

In relation to product liability:

- Ad hoc arbitration between an air carrier and others concerning responsibility for a major aircraft accident arising out of a mid-air collision. A dispute concerning alleged negligent design of an avionics system as installed on a much-used class of commercial passenger aircraft. (2011)
- **ICC arbitration No.16348**. A dispute between an aircraft product manufacturer and a specialist sub-contractor concerning a

component of a part within the landing gear of a much-used class of commercial passenger aircraft. (2010)

- **The Nimrod Review** (aka the Haddon-Cave Review, 2009) and the related inquest into the loss of Nimrod MR2 XV230 (2008) – airworthiness of Nimrod MR2 aircraft type, safety case adequacy; the watershed in military aviation safety regulation
- **Ethiopian Airlines Enterprise v. Honeywell Ltd and others** (QBD) – responsibility for the Boeing 787 Dreamliner fire at London Heathrow airport as between various aircraft part manufacturers, 2015
- **Lambson Aviation Ltd v. Embraer Empresa Brasileira de Aeronautica SA** [2001] All ER (D) 152 (QBD) – responsibility for the Knight Air flight 816 fatal air accident as between the operator, aircraft manufacturer and an aircraft flight instrument manufacturer

In relation to matters of contract:

- **Odyssey Aviation Ltd v. GFG 737 Ltd** [2019] EWHC 1980 (Comm) – jurisdiction to award statutory interest
- **Aircraft Purchase Fleet Ltd v. Compagnia Aera Italiana SPA** [2018] EWHC 3315 (comm) – renunciation of contract; impossibility of performance; successful defence of US\$260 million damages claim
- **Donkers v. Storm Aviation Ltd** [2015] 1 All ER (Comm) 282 (QBD) – proper law of indemnity provision in a ground handling agreement; recovery of foreign social insurance payments
- **Mehboob Travel Ltd and others v. Pakistan International Airlines Corp** [2013] EWHC 2120 (QB) (QBD) - compromise
- **Global 5000 Ltd v. Sarang Wadhawan** [2012] 2 All ER (Comm) 18 (CA), [2011] 2 All ER (Comm) 190 (QBD) – contractual gateway for service out of the jurisdiction; whether guarantee given
- **Monarch Airlines Ltd v. London Luton Airport Ltd** [1998] 1 Lloyd's Rep 403 (QBD) – construction and reasonableness of an airport operator's exclusion clause (in standard market form)

Rob also has considerable experience in conducting ICC, LCIA and ad hoc arbitrations covering a wide range of disputes (including insurance coverage).

Academic

MA (Oxon) - Politics, Philosophy & Economics

Dip. Law, City University

Publications

- Lexology In Depth, Aviation, chapter 'United Kingdom' 12th edition (2024) & 13th edition (2025), formerly The Aviation Law Review, (ed. Gates; Law Business Research Ltd), chapter 'The United Kingdom', 4th Edition (2016) - 11th Edition (2023)
- 'The Montreal Convention 1999: A Silver Jubilee Critique', Air & Space Law, Vol 49, No.4&5 (2024), p. 389
- The Montreal Convention 1999, A Commentary, (eds. Leloudas, Dempsey & Chassot; Edward Elgar, 2023), chapter 'Article 17 – Death and Injury to Passengers – Damage to Baggage'
- Elgar Concise Encyclopedia of Aviation Law (eds. Masutti & Mendes de Leon; Edward Elgar, 2023), entry 'Brexit (Aviation)'
- 'Unusual but Perhaps Not Unexpected: The Lonely Furrow Ploughed by the CJEU in Respect of an Article 17 'Accident'', Air & Space Law, Vol 48, No. 1 (2023), p.1
- 'Air Passenger Rights in the UK Post-Brexit: The Position so Far' Air & Space Law, Vol 46, Special Issue (2021), p. 45
- 'Brexit – will the flying public notice any meaningful difference?' (2021)
- 'The Potential for Exposure of Air Carriers to Passenger Liability in Respect of COVID-19' Air & Space Law, Vol 45, Special Issue (2020), p. 143
- 'The Montreal Convention 1999 at 21: has it come of age or passed its sell-by date?' Air & Space Law, Vol 45, No. 3 (2020), p.265; also published in Mandarin in the Aviation Law Review, pp.250-268 (2022) 《航空法评论(第10辑)》 with translation by Dongyuan Zhao
- 'COVID-19: état des lieux au 1er mai 2020 de la réponse du Royaume-Uni.' Revue Française de Droit Aérien et Spatial, 2020, Vol 293, p.14
- 'Will COVID-19 prove to be a great disruptor to progress of the EU State Aid policy?' (2020)
- Behind and Beyond the Chicago convention: The Evolution of Aerial Sovereignty (eds. Mendes de Leon & Buissing; Wolters Kluwer, 2019), chapter 'Does an Immovable Object Meet an Irresistible Force? An EU Perspective on the Apparent Tension Between the Protection of Airspace Sovereignty and the Notion of Private Sector Transnational Carriers'
- 'The Montreal Convention 1999 and the decisions of the ECJ in the case of IATA and Sturgeon - in harmony or discord?', Air & Space Law, Vol 36, No.2 (2011), p.99
- 'UK Air Passenger Duty held to be consistent with the Chicago convention', Air & Space Law, Vol 33, No.1 (2008), p.3
- Halsbury's Laws of England - title 'Aviation', Volume 2(3), 4th Edition Reissue (2003), also published with adaptation as The Laws of Scotland: Stair Memorial Encyclopaedia - title 'Aviation', Reissue (2003)