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US authorities are investigating claims that British users of Uber, the online taxi booking service, have had money taken from their accounts fraudulently for fictitious journeys often made abroad.

Among the victims is Anthea Turner, the former *Blue Peter* presenter, who tweeted: "Account has been hacked — nothing to help me on website." Another user said: "I woke up in London to find it said I had taken a \$260 (£170) ride in a limousine in California. Because of the time lag it had been ordered in the middle of the night here. I didn't receive the notification until I looked at my phone in the morning."

According to *The Observer*, Uber users' accounts have been sold on the dark net, a private network of websites, encrypted and controlled anonymously, that facilitates criminal activity.

It comes as pressure builds to restrict the growth of Uber, which connects passengers with drivers via a mobile app. Licensed taxi drivers are angered by its unrestricted expansion, which they say threatens their livelihoods.

Boris Johnson, the mayor of London, is understood to be pushing for legislation to be included in the Queen's Speech that would cap the number of minicab licences in the capital.

Jo Bertram, the head of Uber's UK business, said: "We take any issue of this nature very seriously and, after investigating, have found no evidence of a breach at Uber. Attempting to access and use Uber accounts fraudulently is illegal and we notify the authorities about such activity. Anyone who is charged for a trip they didn't book or take will get a refund."

A spokesman for Uber denied that the FBI was investigating the company and said that fraudsters had used passwords illegally obtained elsewhere.