

WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r27.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5b

Statement of: HEFFERNON, DAVID

Age if under 18: (if over 18 insert 'over 18')

Occupation: POLICE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 3 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature: PC HEFFERNON

Date: 28/09/2017

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded ☐ (supply witness details on rear)

On TUESDAY 13TH JUNE 2017 from 23:00 I was on duty in full uniform as part of a night duty marked police serial 994C which was posted to LEICESTER SQUARE LONDON where we were conducting high visibility Counter Terrorism patrols, the Sergeant for my serial was PS SEAL 33LX.

At approximately 01:00 on WEDNESDAY 14TH JUNE 2017 we were redeployed to an RVP at BOMORE ROAD W11 to assist London Fire brigade and London Ambulance service as they were dealing with a large block of flats on fire. It took us approximately 15 minutes to arrive at the RVP, as we approached the RVP I could see that the sky was thick with smoke and glowing red, I then began smelling the smoke and could hear the blaze. When we arrived I could see that the top half of one side of GRENFELL TOWER was on fire, I could see debris falling from the tower and could hear lots of people screaming and shouting.

As we arrived there were multiple ambulances and fire engines on scene, apart from the local response team we were the first Police serial to arrive and were tasked with putting in cordons on BOMORE ROAD at the junction of AVONDALE PARK ROAD W11, this was to keep a sterile area so that emergency services could work more effectively and to keep members of public back, some of which had friends and family still inside GRENFELL TOWER, we were heavily outnumbered and at times were not able to hold them all back, London ambulance service had set up a treatment area on BOMORE ROAD W11 outside KENSINGTON LEISURE CENTRE on the pavement area for casualties. Next to this treatment centre an area was used as the designated mortuary. As casualties and the deceased were being carried out to this area the public were breaking through our cordons and trying to get to the treatment and

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mortuary area searching for their loved ones, this happened several times before it was decided that we force entry into the Leisure Centre and use this as a treatment centre and mortuary. This allowed the ambulance service to do their jobs more effectively without distressed people getting in their way.

By this time the fire had spread around most of the building, I could still hear screaming coming from people trapped inside the block as the Fire brigade continued to battle the blaze, several times I left the cordon to assist paramedics bringing them equipment from their vehicles so they could continue treating casualties, returning to the cordon after.

We had been on scene a couple of hours when the control room made a circulation over our personal radio's advising the officers who were speaking with residents on the phone still trapped inside the building to encourage them to self-evacuate as the Fire brigade were unable to get above the 14th floor as the fire had spread so rapidly and the equipment they had wasn't giving them the capability to climb any further.

While I was standing on the cordon a black female in her early 20's ran up to me with her phone in her hand, the female was very distressed and handed me her phone saying her sister and niece were still inside the building on the 22nd floor. A PC from another serial circulated this information on the radio channel while I was speaking to this female's sister on the phone. The female I spoke to on the phone was distressed, coughing heavily, I could also hear a child crying in the background and the signal kept cutting out on the phone. I tried my best to reassure the female that the Fire brigade were doing their best to get to people trapped inside the building, I advised her that if there was an opportunity she should try to self-evacuate with her child. The female told me that she had tried and couldn't open her front door as it was too hot and smoke was pouring in. I continued to re assure her by telling her the Fire brigade were inside the building, I tried advising the female to put damp towels at the bottom of the doors and to keep low to the floor and open a window and stand by this for air. I told the female that I think she should speak with her sister. Although I didn't tell the female standing in front of me or the female on the phone, I knew that this may have been the last opportunity they got to speak to each other. I handed the phone back to the female and she ran off into the crowd before I had chance to take any details.

I continued to maintain the cordon with my colleagues advising residents and public who had loved ones missing to attend one of the refuge centres that had been opened up where they would be given more information and could get the details of anyone they knew were missing recorded.

It still looked like the fire was spreading further on the building and fire fighters began to rotate, as there were so many road closures in place vehicles that were transporting drinking water to the emergency

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services couldn't get through, I began collecting cases of water and taking them down to where the ambulance and fire crews were. During one of my trips I spoke with an Asian male who asked me if I could allow his uncle into the cordon to stand with him. The male explained that his sister and mother live on one of the top floors of the building, he went onto say that they left his house a few hours before returning home to GRENFELL TOWER and then he received a phone call from his sister explaining that they were trapped. He said that his mother was disabled so there was no way his sister would be able to get her out of the building without assistance, the male had already given his details to one of my colleagues but just wanted his uncle to stay with him for support, I felt very worried for this male so I took this male to meet his uncle as he did not know the way out of the cordon, I left the male in the company of his uncle and returned to the cordon where I remained until early turn serials arrived at approximately 08:00. At around 08:30 we were advised to attend the debrief and were dismissed from there returning to Brixton Police Station.

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