WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: JOHN, JAMES

Age if under 18: Over 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18') Occupation: PILOT

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: J.JOHN Date: 13/04/2018

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

I am providing this statement to detail my role piloting a helicopter for the National Police Air Service (NPAS) on the 14th June 2017, responding to the fatal fire at Grenfell Tower.

I currently work as a Line Pilot for NPAS based at RAF Benson. As a line pilot I cover one of the four lines of helicopters available from NPAS to ensure there is a 24/7 response capability. I have worked within this role since September 2015, and have always been based at Benson. Prior to working for NPAS, I was a pilot within the Arm for seven (7) years, and was a helicopter engineer within the Army for Seven (7) years before that. As a helicopter engineer, I would also fly aircraft in test situations.

I have flown in many countries across the world, in a variety of environments and scenarios, including high temperatures in Afghanistan. Primarily within the military, I flew Apache helicopters but I have flown squirrel helicopters and fixed wing training aircraft. When flying the Apache helicopters I would often have to control the camera attachment as well as the helicopter itself. This gave me experience and appreciation of how to best place the helicopter to obtain the optimum picture and what movements of the helicopter in the air can make it easiest for the camera operator.

Although I received extensive training within the military to fly helicopters, I obtained an ATPL licence in June 2015. This is a formal qualification set out by the Civil Aviation Authority, which allows me to fly commercially. To obtain this licence it requires a year of home study, completion of twelve (12) written exams and six (6) weeks of both practical and flight simulation assessments.

On 14th June 2017 I was based at RAF Benson on a day shift that started at 07:00 hours. I generally arrive at work around 06:45 for a day shift to be ready to start for 7am. Before going to work that day, I had already seen the news and was aware of the fire at Grenfell Tower. I knew that when I arrived at work it would be highly likely that we would be up and flying straight away to relieve a helicopter and maintain constant coverage of the fire via the helicopter downlink. When I arrived at Benson, I got into my flight suit and went straight into preparing to fly. I was working with Tactical Flight Officers (TFO) Graham BARRELL and Lucy CREED.

To prepare to fly there is a list that we work through, to ensure that it is both legal and safe to fly; this is contained with the NPAS operations manual. The first consideration is the weather and conditions; we use a piece of software called Heli Brief that provides weather data from the Met Office, Air Bases across country and radar images of the forecast to assist with this task. For a fast time incident, such as Grenfell Tower, we would look at just a two (2) hour window of weather, as we know that we will be back at base within this period. From memory, the weather was clear and there were low winds that morning, nothing that would raise concerns about flying. I have provided a diagram, which is a visual reference for weather and operation minima as specified by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). This outlines the agreed legal limits, which NPAS can operate within as an organisation. I exhibit his diagram as JSJ/1. The relevant reference on this diagram for the 14th June 2017 I used was "CAA Agreed Passengers, Day, Congested Area, Sun And Cloud". This states "At Least 300FT AGL (Above Ground Level) Not Within 200FT Of Any Fixed Obstacle On Surface". The latter part of this statement can be explained by considering a bubble around the helicopter with the edges 200FT away in every direction, and not allowing anything within that bubble.

The next thing considered are Notices to Air Men (NOTAMs), this information of any hazards or dangers to avoid for example high cranes, UAVs or military exercises. There are quite a few NOTAMs in London but they can remain in place for quite some time, so you soon can become familiar with their locations. The information about NOTAMs can be accessed in two ways – one being a printed list by the CAA and the other is via a map of NOTAMs. We have both available to us and always carry an Ipad with the detailed NOTAM map on it for reference.

This is followed by an aircraft performance check. The setup of the helicopters and equipment carried on board rarely changes; usually it is just the fuel load that varies. We were flying in an EC135 police helicopter with call sign NPAS16. We typically run at a fuel weight of 450kg, which with the crew would

keep the helicopter below the maximum take-off weight limit. The general flying time for the fuel load is around 1 hour 45 minutes. This can vary though depending on the way in which the helicopter is flown and the weather conditions.

The final part of our checks would be more admin orientated, for example whether anyone had appointments, there was something happening at the base or new information form NPAS HQ. This can be covered over the course of the shift if it is necessary to respond quickly to an incident, such as with Grenfell Tower. We proceeded to fly very quickly on the morning of the 14th June 2017 due to the helicopter already in attendance needing to refuel. Having refreshed my memory by referring to the flight log details (LOG 53), we lifted off at 07:12 hours and arrived on scene at 07:35 hours.

Whilst flying to Grenfell Tower we switched the radio to the channels being used by the emergency services to hear what was happening. There are four (4) radio channels within the helicopter that can be used to speak with NPAS HQ, other NPAS helicopters and to emergency services on the ground, and a further two (2) for air traffic control. The helicopter we were relieving, NPAS 13, provided us with a handover via the radio. It was clear that the main task we were providing was video coverage via the downlink. At the time when we arrived on scene there was a male leaning out of the window on the 8th or 9th floor that we were asked to keep an eye on.

A set approach is needed for taking over from another helicopter to ensure de-confliction, so I flew in from the North side of the tower as NPAS 13 was to the south. It is also expected that the helicopter taking over will be above that of the helicopter leaving. Therefore, I flew around the tower and positioned the helicopter above and behind NPAS 13, so I had a clear view of where they were in relation to us. The next part of handing over is the co-ordinate the downlink switch over. There cannot be two (2) downlink feeds streaming at the same time as this causes interference with the picture. This was co-ordinated by NPAS 13 directing our camera into position via the radio. Once the camera was in the right position, there was a count to three, NPAS 13 switched their downlink off, and we switched ours on. NPAS 13 then left the scene.

I believe for the majority of the time that we were at Grenfell Tower we were monitoring the male at the 8th / 9th floor window, and where the fire was in relation to him. There was not much conversation over the radio in relation to us or to task us. My colleague Lucy would check regularly how the fire crew were

progressing towards the male as the fire was moving closer. Fortunately, the fire crews rescued the male before the fire reached him, whilst we were there.

We also checked over windows of the building by methodically checking up and down the windows on one side of the building, then moving onto another side and doing the same. We did not see anyone else at the windows. Unfortunately, at the time when we were at Grenfell Tower, the fire was well established and it felt like there was very little we could do other than monitor the fire.

The only other tasking we had was to check the best way for more emergency vehicles to access Grenfell Tower. Therefore, I flew northeast of the tower so we could pick out the best road to use, I cannot recall the name of it now.

When I was flying at the tower the height that I flew varied in the range of 700FT to 2000FT. A good height to be at was around 1500FT as this provided the best field of view for the camera and would reduce the noise of the helicopter to people on the ground. I was quite conscientious of the helicopter being noisy and did not want it to disrupt and make things even more challenging for people on the ground trying to communicate and co-ordinate the response. I needed to vary the height of the helicopter to help provide a better view for the camera, such as checking lower windows and areas of the tower; otherwise, the angle would have been too acute. I was also aware of the smoke and avoided flying through that by going above or below it.

I could not say exactly how far away we were flying from the tower but I would estimate that it was around a kilometre away. Again, the camera works better at a distance and I didn't not want to go close to the heat, smoke or debris from the fire due to the effect on the helicopter or vice versa. I was never close enough to the fire that I could feel the heat of the fire, and at no point did I fly over the tower.

When I am flying, I am constantly thinking through the risks and consequences of my actions for the safety of the helicopter and people on the ground. Where Grenfell Tower is situated is a highly built up area, there is little to nowhere that you could land a helicopter if something was to go wrong. The closest thing is the Westway, so most of the time when I was flying it was more over that direction at the large shopping centre. I know that the heat will affect the stability of the helicopter and that the smoke and debris could cause problems for the engines to operate. It was relatively light winds when we were at Grenfell Tower, which meant the smoke mostly came of vertically from the tower.

Initially when we first arrived, the helicopter was not able to hover due to the fuel load, so I flew in a 'bow tie' path to maintain an easy view of the tower for the camera operator. Once we had lost around 30 to 40kg of fuel, it was easier to hover whilst we monitored the tower.

Around 08:36 hours we were relieved by NPAS 64, as we needed to re-fuel. We handed over to NPAS 64 in the same way I described above when NPAS 13 handed over to us. Once we handed over, we flew back to Boreham to refuel. There was a de-brief after the incident but I do not think there was any flight safety issues raised. If anyone feels unsafe they can say at any time, it does not have to wait until the de-brief, but I no one raised anything.