

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: ELLIS, DOMINIC

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

Occupation: FIRE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 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:

Date: 17/10/2017

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

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The content of this statement constitutes a transcript of an interview conducted by DC's Lou

JONES and Peta JAMES with myself at Union Street on 29/09/2017 between 13:50 and

15:15.

I have been a fire fighter for 28½ years, the last four or five of which I have been Assistant Commissioner (AC).

Throughout the course of this statement I will refer to two documents. The main document I

refer to is entitled Log for AC D. Ellis in relation to incident number 076029 Flat 16, Grenfell

Tower, Lancaster West Estate, London W11 1TG, Incident date 14th June 2017 (14/06/2017), which I

exhibit as DMC/1 and is sealed with MPSZ13133813 and the second is a telephone log

which is exhibit DMC/2 SEALED WITH mpsz13133814.

I first became aware of the Grenfell Tower fire, when I had awoken on the morning of the 14 June 2017 (14/06/2017). I hadn't slept well the night before and I was up early. As I was getting changed I had the TV on and I saw the fire and I thought "Oh, they are re-running the footage of the Dubai fire" and then I saw that this fire was in Kensington at the bottom of the TV screen and thought "I had better get in

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quick". On my route in I called AC Dan DALY who was the duty Brigade Manager that night and who was chairing the Commissioner group. I have a record here of a 5.44 am phone call to him, I think I left a message saying something along the lines of "I'm available and I'm on my way in", because I could tell it was going to be a very challenging day for us. I arrived at the London Fire Brigade (LFB) headquarters a little before 6am and I have a record of sending AC Dan DALY a text at 05:56hrs saying "Morning Dan, I'm in, holler if you need anything".

Soon after this I quickly met up with Dan Daly. I became involved in the Commissioners Group, which involves the wider strategic co-ordination of issues to do with the incident. Initially this primarily involved organising reception and welfare arrangements for the initial attendance fire crews coming off the incident. So I, Dan DALY and another AC called Tim CUTBILL organised reception arrangements at Paddington Fire Station because we wanted arrangements for all of the crews coming off to have some sort of de-brief, opportunity to decompress and some sort of counselling support. We also wanted to assist and advise crews about getting their contemporaneous notes down and providing them with a good template to achieve this. We want all of that put in to place quickly.

After this and at the next Commissioners Group I was asked to go to the scene and relieve AC Andy ROE as he had been the officer in charge of the incident for a long time and had had a very demanding and challenging period there. I think he had just been missed by casualty that had jumped from the building as well so all round an extremely challenging time in charge. I of course agreed to go to scene and relieve Andy ROE.

I mobilised with my Staff Officer, Andy WILLIAMS, on the log it shows that we mobilised at about 10.33 hrs. Andy was in his car and I was in my car and we blue lighted it there as quickly as we could to relieve Andy ROE. On the log it shows we arrived on scene at 11.19 hrs. I recall the roads were very busy and it was quite challenging as you got nearer to the incident. As you would expect it was busy at the site and it took us a while to park and make our way to the scene of operations.

I remember walking to the scene. Grenfell Tower still quite obviously had multiple seats of fire and was still a very challenging looking incident. There was dense smoke emitting from all over the building. The smoke was kind of heavy, horrible looking black, dark brown. This indicated that everything had been burning for a long time and that the fire was possibly starting to effect some of the internal structures. It looked horrible, really formidable. It looked like most of the fire, compared to the earlier scenes that I had

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seen on TV, had been extinguished or burnt itself out and died down into multiple and still substantial pockets of heavily smouldering fires. The whole building was pushing out smoke from just about every window it seemed.

The Incident Command Unit (CU) was based in Bomore Rd and a second CU was in Grenfell Rd, this was the CU from where they were running the Fire Survival Guidance

(FSG) co-ordination.

I now refer to my decision log and that shows that I met with AC Andy ROE and started our handover from 11.30 hrs. I can't remember exactly where I met him but I do remember that we walked round and did a comprehensive tour of the site and through that we discussed key tactical priorities as per my scene log notes. They were: Life - he was talking about rescues achieved and fatalities recorded so far and I think the numbers, as I recall, were surprisingly low in terms of confirmed deceased at that stage. Crews had reached and searched to the floor including all flats on those floors. Even then there was doubt as to whether there was further saveable life in the Tower. But we didn't want to give up, just in case. Basically working on the principle of if in doubt, then no doubt, push on. We had a discussion about that and we agreed that we would still maintain determined efforts to press on up in the building in case there were any further saveable lives, just in case anyone may have found refuge somewhere, in any room, chute room or lift — wherever basically.

We discussed operations, command support, investigation preparation, all the usual strategies you would have and the tactical priorities for such an incident. The key bit for me though was life.

It was a massive operation for the London Fire Brigade. It was a 40 pump fire with an immediate 20 pump relief. That is nearly half of London's resources at this incident, which presented some challenges with logistics and marshalling of our resources. Andy had a really good handle on it and was talking through the command structures that had been in place, the key officers and key support people that he had at his Tactical Co-ordination Meetings (TCM's) and he talked about the investigation that was already commencing and how our fire investigation officers had already started to liaise with DVI so all that was already starting up.

Obviously the media interest was immense and there had already been a tri-service media piece to camera so we talked about the press strategy and who was dealing with that.

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We talked about the wider infrastructure for major incidents. Safety was talked about because we had a serious fire in that building and that burning for as long as this had could cause serious structural issues so we discussed the stability of the building in some detail. John ALLEN the Local Authority Dangerous Structures Engineer was there, and from the interactions they had had with him I could tell that was going to play a key part in my decision making moving forward, because there was that balance of the possibility of total or partial collapse of the building verses or balanced against the possibility of further saveable life and the timely retrieval of deceased casualties. It was that kind of balance.

That was the main chunk of the handover and we did a walk round of the full site. When I look at my notes that handover took about an hour. I don't think that's reflective of the handover on its own, I think its reflective almost of Andy not wanting to go as he had been so immersed in it and that allowed him to slowly wind down from the immense pressure he had been under. It was useful because there was so much to talk about and we were together as a Command Team and he was showing me all the aspects of the incident, it was a very detailed handover.

Whilst conducting the walk round I was able to see the serious nature of the incident. We still had crews committed, we still had fires on multiple floors, we had in place the command structures I would expect for a serious high rise fire in that we had a Bridgehead and we had an Operations Commander because of the scale of the incident. It felt well-structured and managed. It felt calm, there was no rush, no panic. Everyone had a sober look of strong intent about them. Everyone was there and purposeful and I was reassured to see that in the circumstances.

Police were protecting fire crews entering the building from falling debris with their riot shields which was outstandingly brave. However tragic the fire has proven to be I think it has been an excellent example of emergency responders representing the highest standards of public service, prepared to give their life if necessary in the service of others. That was quite inspiring, everyone was just doing their jobs and doing them well.

There was debris everywhere, there were still debris coming down from the building and it was obvious we still had a very serious building fire, multiple seats of fire plus the construction issues. By then it had been going for about ten hours. Normally in that type of building they are three hour fire resistant floors and walls, this had been burning for 10 hours, we still had crews in there we potentially still had saveable

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life within the tower. It was a calm, purposeful, steady state of operations, the main purpose being still pushing up the building as hard and as fast as we could just in case somebody was stuck somewhere.

In order to help with the management of spans of control at a very large and/or complex incident and where a greater degree of command is required, the Incident Commander may appoint one or more Operations Commanders to take responsibility for a number of sectors for the Incident Commander. When I was in charge of the Grenfell fire I had Deputy Assistant Commissioner (DAC) Rick OGDEN as my Operations Commander in charge of the fire-fighting side of the business, so he was in charge of the Bridgehead, lobby sector, fire sector and the external sectors with allocated safety officers also reporting in to him.

As we did the walk round we saw DAC OGDEN and he said they had searched up to the 12th floor, so in the period of the handover three more floors had been cleared which was indicative of just how hard crews were trying to push up the building.

I requested that DAC Lee DRAWBRIDGE who was dealing with our resources to come and see me, because it was evident that a problem we were having with lots of the crews is that they didn't want to leave the scene or be relieved of their duties. They wanted to see it through and our resources officers were still chasing crews into the afternoon, trying to get them off the fire ground because they had been there too long.

At about 12.50 hrs, Rick OGDEN informed me that because in the initial attack of getting up the stairs all the hose had become tangled and was really hard to move, crews were having to expend too much air trying to move it. He said we needed to stop, sort that out and then continue to move up the stairs. We agreed to that and he set about getting it all in place so that it would be easier to move the hose and therefore easier to move up the building quicker.

At 12.55 we finally completed our handover and I took over as incident commander and then I went into my first TCM meeting at 13:00 hrs. Present at that meeting were the following:

London Fire Brigade (LFB) Myself

Group Manager PUGSLEY

Group Manager ASHMAN

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Station Manager COX

Station Manager WILLIAMS

London Ambulance Service (LAS) Tracy PORTER

Gareth (surname not recorded)

Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Graham PRICE

Alistair HUTCHINS

British Transport Police (BTP) Simon BARKER

Transport for London (TF Gary STEWARD

London Underground Liaison (LUL) Tim BINGLE

Local Authority Liaison Officer (LAL) Mike RUMBLE

In that, my record shows that my situational update around fire-fighting and casualties was that the possibility of finding further survivors was now believed to be minimal however London Fire Brigade crews would be pushing up through the building as far as reasonably possible just in case there was a chance of further survival and to find and facilitate the removal of deceased casualties. So even then at 13:00 hrs that is the kind of language we were using and how we were thinking. Still the optimists amongst us were holding out hope that we might find someone somewhere.

We also informed the TCM that we would clear the building on a floor by floor basis. This was because we did not want additional weight working above crews until the fires had been extinguished on each floor and the stability of that floor and the ceiling/bottom of the floor above assessed. So clear a floor, assess its relative safety and then move above. We did have real concerns about structural stability. We were thinking about keeping our people safe and so it was that balance between safety and progressing up the building in as measured an approach as possible in the circumstances.

Interestingly at the bottom of page 3 of exhibit DMC/1 Group Manager ASHMAN who was the London Fire Bridge FSG call co-ordinator gave us an update and at that stage we had 9 deceased, 3 were inside

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the building and 6 outside and if you recall we were up to the 12th floor at that stage. He gave an overview of the challenges in trying to triangulate how many calls you had, how many people were in the building, how many people were potentially still missing.

Alistair HUTCHINS, who I believe is the Metropolitan Police DVI liaison, had received a report of possible casualties on the roof and we asked whether the National Police Air Service (NPAS) would be able to look at this for us. As I recall they didn't but Kent Fire and Rescue dealt with this through use of their drone, which I believe confirmed that there were no casualties on the roof.

Soon after that meeting at 13:25 hrs I went for another walk of the incident to check our progress and I received an update from Rick OGDEN that they had just about cleared the hose on the staircase so they could start moving up and this is when we started to realise we had gas fed fires on many floors in the building. We had gas fed fires on the 10th floor, floors 5, 6, 7 and 8 had jets working — in other words working fires on those floors so straight away you have five floors of fire there before we have even got above the 12th floor which would have been a massive challenge on any day.

We moved the Bridgehead up to the 8th floor which meant that the smoke had cleared and we could now get up to that floor which meant that the crews did not have to use so much air progressing further up into the building. Crews could push on up more aggressively so that was positive news.

At 13:50 hrs we had an update from the local authority structural engineer John ALLEN who talked about the construction of the building, the reinforced concrete and the concern that if floors collapsed leaving columns unsupported you could have challenges with stability of the building and risk of collapse. But as far as he had gone up, which I think was to the 7th or 9th floor by then, his advice to us was to stay within the central core of the building with minimal progression out onto the floor area because he could not guarantee the safety as it had been burning for about 11 hours at this stage.

Bearing these structural concerns in mind I took the decision that I wanted to continue with aggressive fire-fighting, search and rescue until it was absolutely certain that there was no further saveable life within the building. That wasn't just me taking that stance, the feedback from the Operations Commander DAC OGDEN was that we're getting up there, we're getting up the floors. A lot of the floors that were fire damaged, you didn't really need to get into the different compartment to see and to search, you could look through the door from a position of relative safety in the central core of the building and you could see there was no need to search that compartment because all the internal walls and doors were gone.

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They had all burnt through completely and everything in the compartment was reduced to ash and debris. This meant crews could clear floors quite quickly once fires were under control. There were generally six flats per floor so crews could look in the flats and know there was no further saveable life on that floor. Mainly the casualties we were finding were in the lift lobby and stairwells as crews progressed up the floors.

As part of fire crews safety briefings they were being reminded to look out for spalling of concrete from floors, ceilings and columns which are all signs that the fire has started to undermine the fire resistance and structural integrity of the key elements of structure in the building. The concern being that if the concrete has spalled away in the fire this can leave the reinforced steel bars or 'rebar' to be exposed to fire which can cause it to expand, weaken or rupture and that then starts to weaken the integrity of the building. That was mainly on the ceilings. If you can imagine fire goes up and you would look at the ceiling and there would be a patch where the concrete had spalled away and you could see the reinforced steel rods exposed on the ceilings.

The main drive there was with my Senior Safety Officer who was Group Manager Julian SPOONER and Dangerous Structures engineer John ALLEN to keep an eye on the building and if any time they thought it was not safe enough for internal operations to let me know. That was the constant battle I had, to ensure that if I had to I could get my officers out of the building, balanced against the need to extinguish the fire, search for saveable life and locate deceased casualties.

In fire-fighting we have Standard Duration Breathing Apparatus (SDBA) which lasts for about 21 — 30 minutes. However in a hot fire it may only last 15 or less minutes because the wearer is working harder and breathing far heavier. Then we have Extended Duration Breathing Apparatus (EDBA) which will last twice as long basically. EDBA sets have two cylinders on the back rather than one.

Andy ROE and the Commissioner Dany COTTON had ordered on all of London's EDBA sets to the incident and primarily it was EDBA that was being used by crews because of the travel distances and because we had to deviate from some of our safe systems of work to try and save saveable life so earlier on in the incident that had been what we would call operational discretion, meaning that you are going outside of operational policy, which requires you to record that decision and record your rationale for working outside of policy, so that is what they had been doing earlier on, — prior to my taking over command of the incident.

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I was being informed that there were only 53 EDBA wearers available as most had been used earlier and so I was asked, if necessary, would I authorise people to wear again. Normally it is one wear per firefighter per incident and then ideally you use a fresh wearer. I said if we needed to and that crews were sufficiently rested and were prepared to then yes, however, as it appeared that we were coming to a slower time operation I felt that the SDBA would suffice. Because there was less of a fire front all around the building it meant the building was naturally ventilating which was why we were able to get our bridgehead up to the 8th floor. The building was not as hot and smoke logged as earlier in the incident, so I felt fairly confident we could do a lot more with the SDBA.

Earlier on during the incident, the challenge I didn't have but Andy ROE did, was that the whole building was burning intensely. The thing with high rise buildings is that you can get really complex wind patterns resulting in intense up currents, down drafts, eddies and vortices being produced which when combined with the intense convection currents caused by the fire leads to really dangerous and unpredictable firefighting conditions which can blow or fan the fire right through the building. So as people evacuated, left their fire doors open and the wind patterns changed you can see how people would get trapped and caught out in there. One minute your escape route could be in fairly clear conditions, then the conditions change and you get the heat, smoke and flame coming in on you.

I walked the floors just the other week as part of a test we were doing on breathing apparatus (BA) and it was really interesting that on some floors the emergency lighting has melted which meant that area of that stairwell probably got to at least 200 degrees or so and then the next floor the emergency lighting is fine. This just shows the kind of challenges in fighting such a complex high rise fire as this with different temperatures in different and unpredictable places throughout the building.

At 14:05 hrs I received an update from Group Manager DISSANAYAKE, who is one of our Health and Safety officers, about fire fighter injuries. We had one fire fighter injured by a falling body, five fire fighters suffered from heat exhaustion and one fire fighter suffering from a twisted ankle. My reflection on this was that I thought that these were the few we knew about at that time and the few that wanted to admit to injury as no-one wanted to leave the incident. The other reflection I had was about how fortunate we had been so far not to have seriously injured or lost any firefighters, especially considering some of the heroic efforts many of the crews had put in, placing themselves in considerable danger.

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At 14:50 hrs we wrote up and recorded the safe system of work agreed earlier regarding our agreed strategy for firefighting and rescue operations as we progressed up inside the building. It was written up in the decision log and passed out to the Operations Commander to confirm and record the SSOW for firefighters to progress up through the building.

15:30 hrs we had another TCM meeting. The same stakeholders were at this meeting with the following changes:

LUL Jack SAVILLE

LAS Martin BARRY

MPS Chris JONES

Structural engineer Jose ANON.

Interestingly at that time, as indicated in my notes, I felt we were getting close to our limit. So although we were continuing to clear each floor, still searching for any saveable life and push on to the top, the feedback coming back from the crews and the sectors was that it was getting more difficult as they were getting higher up the building and that the level of destruction was getting worse the higher they got. At that point I reiterated the point that we needed to look at the stability of the building moving forward and consider and plan for getting the building stabilised by a specialist contractor. I was starting to think that if there was a possibility of the building collapsing either locally or fully, although I never really thought the whole building would collapse, what I thought could happen was that a series of floors could collapse locally in one corner, we would have to do some sort of shoring operation on this moving forward. Shoring and stabilising the whole building would be outside the capabilities of the fire service and we would have to put it out to a specialist contractor. I felt that this should be flagged up as early as possible so that plans could be put into motion and this could be fed up to Gold command for decision and resourcing.

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Our main issue now with the fires, right up to the stage I left, were that most of the remaining fires in the building were gas fed fires. Where boilers or cookers had been destroyed by the fire, you literally had a gas pipe sticking up with a flame coming out of it in the middle of a room and it would be a desolate room with nothing else left to burn but just the gas flame burning in the middle of the room. We could not knock those fires out because that would cause a gas explosion hazard so the only way forward was to isolate the gas. To facilitate this I committed a crew into the basement to see if we could isolate the gas in the basement as there were some isolation valves in there but that was just at the same time as reports of quite a few really loud banging noises in the building were heard and we thought maybe a few floors are going. Because of this I ordered an evacuation of all personnel from the building and then we were out for some time while we methodically assessed the stability of the building. In the interim the Gas board started digging up the road in three separate places to isolate the various gas supplies to the building. We did try to commit crews again into the basement to isolate the gas but the gas board at this stage and following the previous evacuation of the building did not want to commit staff to the basement of the building.

An unfortunate consequence of the gas fed fires on several floors I can imagine, was that people would have been looking at a building with fires flickering in the windows thinking that we weren't doing all we could to extinguish the remaining fires which basically involved a gas pipe burning in an empty room surrounded by concrete walls. Obviously it didn't look good and I understand that this may have looked like we were allowing fires to continue to burn and not doing anything about it, but that wasn't the case. We just couldn't do anything because the gas was still burning. I remember leaving at midnight and feeling disappointed that the building still looked like it was on fire when it was actually controlled burning of the ruptured gas supplies.

We continued to use Kent's drone to take photographs of key elements of structure within the building. The key thrust in most of what I did was in the balance between safety and possibly finding someone alive and equally finding deceased casualties to bring closure for the families of those affected. So that there was some rationale and rigour behind that risk assessment we used Kent's drone to go round the building in a structured and methodical manner hourly. We were recording pictures of key elements of structure in the building, i.e. columns and floors, to identify signs of collapse and movement in the building. We then examined these pictures, comparing them to earlier pictures of the same areas on the Command Units screen so that we could compare areas of damage to see if there had been any further

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cracks or worsening of conditions as the building cooled. The main thing we were worried about was a floor coming away from a column because if a floor goes that column is left unsupported. That was one of our key concerns and thankfully there was no evidence of that throughout the period I was there.

At the top of page 6 and this is at the 15:30 TCM Group Manager ASHMAN who was in charge of our FSG confirmed that there were 10 confirmed deceased. Four inside the building and six outside the building and that five had been removed. So at that time there were still surprisingly low numbers compared to the time of day and compared to how far we had progressed up the building by that stage.

At 16:26 hrs the log reflects a further update from Group Manager ASHMAN, regarding persons deceased and he reported two found on the 9th, one on the 13th two on the 14th, one on the 15th, one on the 17th, one on the 18th, two on the 19th and one on the 23rd. This indicated to me that we had been up to the 23rd floor. The feedback then was that it was fairly evident once you got above about the 18th floor that due to the scale of overall fire damage it was clear that there would be no further possibility of saveable life in the building. At 16:35 there is a further entry in the log regarding a review of the structure, as I said earlier, this process was ongoing. Prior to that there had been a number of really loud bangs. You would hear the noise and everyone would stop. I wasn't in the building, this is what I was told was going on inside. However after these isolated bangs firefighters would continue to press on with their work. However at 16:35 hrs there were a number of loud bangs in quick succession and I think those working inside the building thought that this was possibly floors collapsing and pancaking above them.

When a floor pancakes you get increased momentum, weight and force, which in turn can lead to further localised or worst case scenario, total collapse of the building like a 9/11 type scenario. I ordered a tactical withdrawal which meant that everyone came out of the building. Initially I think I said we would withdraw for about 45 minutes but this extended to a couple of hours. Immediately after this and the withdrawal there was still no sign of actual collapse anywhere in or around the building.

The building was starting to cool, obviously when things get heated they expand and when they cool down they contract. The risk with the building cooling and contracting is that it might cause a floor to come away from its column supports or other tie into the building. Therefore my view was for us all to come out and consolidate and leave the building to cool.

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However although we had withdrawn from the building internally we maintained external fire-fighting and damped down fires from outside using jets and aerials appliances. I also increased the hazard zone in case of falling debris or possible localised collapse.

Even at this stage I was as confident as I could be at the time, through my professional judgement and constant monitoring of the building with the drone, that there wasn't going to be a complete collapse. I didn't think there was going to be localised collapse either, but I thought of the two a localised collapse would be more likely, so as a precaution I wanted to have the maximum hazard zone that was applicable to the footprint of the building and the surrounding grounds.

On page 6 of my notes at 16:35 hrs Group Manager SPOONER was saying to me that a search of all floors and stairwells had been carried out as best as possible considering the amount of debris on each floor. I asked him, along with the DSE to assess the hazard zone and if they were not happy with it to suggest where we should move it to.

At 16:51 hrs I had a phone call with Dan DALY in our Commissioners Group and I remember the spirit of that call was that we need to start gearing up for no further saveable life which to me was quite a big message to send given the level of television coverage and the impact this news would have on loved ones watching. This felt like quite a big call and that it would need feeding up into the Commissioners group and Gold Command. During this call Dan DALY made me aware of a dangerous structures engineer a Dr Barbara LANE who was a renowned expert in this field and who had been ringing into the LFB with safety concerns to do with Grenfell Tower and the effect the protracted fire would have on its construction and stability. I think I took Dr LANE'S contact details and arranged for her to be 'blue lighted' to the scene for advice. I then gave her contact details to Julian SPOONER my senior safety officer. Julian SPOONER had a phone conversation with her and she confirmed with Julian I believe that in a building that has been burning for that length of time there was a danger of collapse. Essentially all the things that we had concerns about and had been continually assessing during the incident. While we were waiting for her arrival we continued to use the Kent drone to take images of the building to assess its stability and further collapse risk. We continued to maintain the hazard zone and continued to use jets on the fire. I also agreed for the gas engineers to be allowed to continue to work in the hazard zone but we provided spotters who's job it was to continually monitor the building so if there was any evidence of further collapse in or of the Tower then the alarm could be raised and the gas and LFB personnel could retreat to a place of relative safety.

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At 17:35 I had quite a long a discussion with Gold Commander Richard MILLS and the spirit of that conversation was that this should be brought to the attention of the Gold Group meeting so that they could decide on the strategy and communications piece moving forward for the message of no further saveable life and the consolidation phase of the incident.

At 18:30hrs there was a further TCG and I updated them as to where we stood at that time. There were some concerns about the hazard zones as we were using the natural curtilage of the building and the surrounding grounds which was giving us our 30 to 50 m in places which was enough for the provision of debris falling off of the building and aquaplaning down but not enough for total collapse.

Generally the rules for collapse are to allow a hazard zone of between 1 1/2 to 2 times the height of the building or wall in question, however to allow for the total collapse of a tower block would be far more than this due to the forces involved and the debris field it would create, the hazard zone would need to be very large indeed. These were the sorts of questions being asked in the TCM. Did we think we needed to prepare for total collapse or were we alright as we were? I maintained the position that I believed that the building would not suffer total collapse, but that there was a risk of partial collapse where we thought that the floors in one corner might collapse and pancake down on each other like the Ronan point collapse in the 1960's.

We again discussed preparing for specialist teams to come in to provide structural shoring and support for the building and I again reiterated to Alistair HUTCHINS the DVI Police officer that I would make places safe as required to get to deceased casualties but we weren't going to be doing the overall shoring of the whole building as I did not see this as a fire service responsibility.

I came out of that TCG at 19:30 hrs and Julian SPOONER reported to me that Barbara LANE had attended and had left the incident. I believe that Dr LANE had real concerns about our ongoing operations in the building and that she felt that the building had been compromised and that it would come down and that should it do so we were all in the hazard zone. I believe that Dr LANE wasn't comfortable being in our Command Unit, as she felt it would be in the hazard zone should the building collapse, so she made her position clear and left the scene. Obviously this advice was of real concern to me so my Command

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team and I had a detailed discussion with the DSE engineers about the stability of the building. A full review was carried out which involved looking at all the images and following all of this we did not come to the same conclusion as Dr LANE. Following this review of all of the information available to us my command team and I agreed that we did not believe that the building would collapse totally and we maintained our position that a localised collapse was more likely and we had provided for that with relevant and proportionate hazard zones around the building. As it had now been over 3 hours since we all evacuated the building and had been monitoring it continuously whilst it cooled I made the decision that firefighting and casualty location activities could recommence inside building but on the basis that the numbers of personnel within the building would be kept to a minimum for the activities required.

Just prior to this a concern had been voiced as to whether or not the lifts had been searched and so a crew was committed into the building to search the lifts and they were confirmed as empty.

At 20:10 hrs we recommitted into the building. We had gas fed fires on floors 10, 11, 12, 13, 15 and various hot spots remaining throughout the building but generally anything else that was combustible had burnt away.

At 21:00 hrs I asked to inspect the building myself so along with DAC OGDEN, Group Manager Darren MUNRO and Andy WILLIAMS my Staff Officer we inspected all fire damaged floors up to the 23rd. I had the made the call that I believed it was relatively safe to work in the building for firefighting and body retrieval activities so I wanted to check this for myself. We inspected every floor and although there was some slight sagging of floors and spalling of ceilings and columns evident there was nothing that changed my or my colleague's previous view in relation to the stability of the building. I didn't see any columns, floors or ceilings where all the concrete had fallen away from the reinforced steels. We all confirmed that we were happy we still had crews in there and so that allowed us to still have a commitment inside the building to dampen the fires down as and when the gas was isolated. We still also wanted to be able to assist the DVI officers to remove deceased casualties where possible.

At the time we walked up the tower inspecting each floor, although we were wearing our fire-fighting PPE, we were not wearing any further protective equipment or breathing apparatus. The building was pretty much self-ventilated by this time as all windows in fire compartments had failed and other than the gas fed fires and some small hotspots the fires had been extinguished or burnt out. You weren't working

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in smoke as everything had blown through. After about the 21st floor you could feel a change in the temperature and it was still pretty warm on those top few floors.

Walking up the building we had to carefully step over deceased casualties in the stairwells and in several of the lift lobbies. We went into each lobby and looked in every flat. I couldn't tell you where they all were but I did see the large black lady, the family on the stairs, the mum with the baby. As I walked up I saw all of the casualties. What was also evident as to how ferocious the fire was, in that once you were past about the 19th floor, as far as I recollect, there were no identifiable casualties. By that I mean that up until that floor or there about I had been able to identify human remains of deceased casualties by evidence such as ribs, or a femur protruding out from the ash and debris, but after that nothing. I think the fire had got to such a temperature for such a long time you just could not see any further remains. In my opinion the casualties above there had essentially been cremated and reduced pretty much to ashes. It was outside my point of reference. I have experience of a lot of fatalities and serious burns in my career but to not see any evidence of casualties because they have been reduced to ashes was new to me. In fact when I got home that morning I went and pulled some of my technical books on fire investigation from when I studied for my Institute of Fire Engineers exams and the first chapter on fire investigation makes a point on how hard it is to cremate a human body, so it shows the temperatures that had been reached up there for such a long period. My eternal optimist hoped that more people had got out than we thought, but of course that was not to be.

There were a few floors — four or six in total — where the gas pipes were burning but there was nothing for it to catch fire to. It was quite eerie. It was just a gas flame, like a large Bunsen burner in the middle of a reinforced concrete void. But from the outside of the building it looks as though there were still fires burning and that we weren't extinguishing them. I can imagine, if you are a member of the public or if you have a loved one missing in the building, you would be feeling frustrated with that. As were we but as I say we were allowing the gas to burn off in a controlled manner, as if we had extinguished them then there would be the danger of a build up of gas with the risk of a gas explosion which could lead to a further collapse risk in the building.

Credit to the gas board as they agreed to work in the hazard zone to isolate the gas. They didn't need to do that and if the building had of collapsed they would have been in the hazard zone. We did have safe systems of work in place for this as I mentioned earlier so that personnel could retreat to a place of

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relative safety should there be any evidence of collapse, but you know they didn't need to do that but they did.

I went into the 21:30 hrs TCG and that is where I confirmed that having checked all floors we were confident that there was now no further saveable life in the building and the operation should move to the recovery stage at this incident.

We all then started planning for the next day. Our priority was to get the gas shut off and knock out and damp down the remaining fires. We continued to have the safety of the building in our minds and to make it as safe a site as possible to begin removing the remaining deceased casualties in cooperation with DVI officers.

That TCG finished at 22:15 hrs and I was relieved quite quickly after that by DAC Wayne BROWN at 22.56 hrs.

As I left when I looked back at the building, it was out, the fire had been extinguished and it looked cool and out and wasn't issuing heavy smoke like it had been when I arrived. There was still the lazy lick of flame from a couple of the windows and this was the controlled burning of gas pipe fires that we still had burning. I recall upon speaking to Wayne later that once the gas was turned off these fires pretty much went out by themselves. There was nothing left round them to burn and they sent crews in to double check and damp down.

My understanding is that a fridge/freezer on the 4th floor caused the fire. Fridges and freezers, if they catch fire, can cause fast burning and hot fires due to their fuel loading because of the insulation materials in them, they are basically a solid block of fuel for the fire. That fire then spread out of the window and then it got involved with the cladding and insulation materials outside. It seems to me that there has been a particular set of circumstances that meant that the fuel plus the oxygen to that fuel has all been at the right kind of mixtures to really get the fire spreading as quickly as it did. I don't know why it did but the fire should not have spread like that.

When I first saw the Grenfell Tower fire on the TV earlier that morning I thought it was a terrorist attack, as no building should burn like that. I had seen the literature about ISIS promoting the use of fire as a weapon and I thought it was a determined arsonist because no building should burn like that. I think the crews from North Kensington were surprised because they had gone in and put out the original 4th floor

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flat fire and then were hearing the messages of make pumps eight, ten and then realised that they had put the flat out but it was racing up the outside of the building.

In my experience even if the fire had broken out of the window there should not have been combustible materials outside to ignite. So the crews should have put the fire out and that would have been that. Worst case scenario we have had, especially in the summer months, is that if people have their windows open the flames can lick up either to the flat above or miss a flat and lick into the flat above that, especially if they have got net curtains in the windows. This would mean that you could have fire spreading to one or more floors so you would have to go up a couple of floors and knock these fires out also. You would not expect it to go racing across all sides of the building.

A serious fire in a front room can really get hold in a couple of minutes and then very quickly, as modern materials burn very hot, sofas, TVs, plastics, they burn very hot. So very quickly you can be getting in to 500/800 degrees temperatures at ceiling height.

Internal fire doors should give you at least half hour fire resistance, however if they are left open the fire will quickly spread into the hallway or adjacent room.

Generally people have smoke detectors and somebody raises the alarm, they call us and generally our first attendance is within 6 minutes or under. I think our average is just over 5 minutes across London.

So a compartment fire in a block of flats like that, if everything works as it should, the fire should be out within the hour generally. If it starts to spread up, summers day, windows open and it spreads up a couple of floors then you have more of a challenge and it will take longer but should still be contained generally to the compartments alight.

If the doors are closed you get to a stage in a fire where you get what is called a flash over where everything reaches its ignition temperature. My expectation would be that in flats internally they would have fire doors. I am not a fire safety expert, but my expectation would be that they would be at least half hour fire resisting fire doors internally but that the door from the flat to the communal lobby should be a more substantial 1 hour fire resisting door i.e. a heavy fire door with a working self-closer on it.

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I think some of the challenges we have is that people don't like those heavy fire doors and they replace them with something they like and the door they like isn't a properly rated fire resisting door, so even if your compartment is a light and you shut the door, if you remember to shut the door, and it hasn't got a self-closer or you have changed it for a double glazing unit, it is not going to hold the fire in check for as long. So the fire can then break out of the compartment of origin and compromise the escape lobby and staircase. The whole high rise principle is designed on keeping the fire contained in the compartment of origin so we can come along and put it out in that compartment.

People don't always respect the fire precautions built into buildings like this, quite often they have got their doors propped open or they may have removed the kitchen door because they like it being open plan and so when they have a fire in the kitchen and it then quickly compromises the front room, then people panic and run out of their flat and if it is not a self-closing door you then possibly compromise the stairwell and so on. Then if you get people above smelling smoke, they panic and start to come down the stairs as we are trying to get up the stairs to fight the fire, then that delays firefighters getting to the fire. You then have the possibility of people becoming overcome with smoke when they didn't need to as they could have stayed put in their flat. This is how some of these issues can snowball and make fires and firefighting challenging in high rise blocks if the built in fire safety of the building is not maintained and understood.

Having a plan and staying safe is the overarching advice for high rise residents and stay put is a subset of that. The plan usually is that if the fire is in your building and you are aware of it and it is not affecting you then it is best to stay put. If it starts to threaten you i.e.: you can see smoke or flame then you need to think about getting out if you are able to do so

So it's 'Know your plan' not stay put come what may. It's if there is a fire on the 3rd floor and you are on the 23rd floor and it is not affecting you at all then hopefully you won't even know about it. But if you can see flame or you are threatened by smoke or your apartment is compromised then obviously you need to think about escaping and knowing what your escape routes are.

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Statement of: ELLIS, DOMINIC

Form MG11(T)

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By the time I arrived at Grenfell Tower the Police had done a great job of controlling the crowds. I understand that Andy ROE had had some challenges with crowd control earlier which you would expect with people outside watching their loved ones in the building. By the time I was there and in the area I operated in, which was primarily in the inner cordon, it was really calm. I didn't have any issues with frustrations from members of the public and the few times I did wander outside of the areas I talked about, you had someone offering you a cup of tea or thank you for doing your job.

Prior to this incident I had not been to Grenfell Tower and had no prior knowledge of the building.

I did not suffer any injury as a result of my attendance there and did not require any first aid.

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