

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: CRISALL, DAVID

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

Occupation: POLICE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 4 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: D.CRISALL

Date: 03/05/2018

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

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

I currently am the Senior Pilot at NPAS Boreham and have worked within this role since September 2012. I have worked within police air operations since 1999 when I worked for the Cambridgeshire Air Operations Unit as a line pilot and later as a senior pilot. The Cambridgeshire base closed and this is when I began working for NPAS, initially as a floating pilot, working at whichever area required a pilot, before becoming Senior pilot at Boreham. Whilst flying within police air operations I have flown the following types of helicopter: AS355 Twin Squirrel helicopter, the MD902 Explorer helicopter and since 2012 the EC135.

I started flying helicopters in 1989 as a Commissioned Officer with the Army Air Corps, as a Line Pilot, Aircraft Commander and later as a Flight Commander. Whilst in the arm I primarily flew Lynx helicopters in utility and anti-tank roles in diverse environments – for example in West Germany, the Gulf, Northern Ireland and Bosnia. From 1996 through to 1999, I served with the Australian Army as a Senior Flying Instructor at the School of Army Aviation. This involved teaching other pilots all aspects of initial flying training, operational flying, use of under slung loads and hoisting operations. Whilst flying in Australia I mainly flew UH-1H Iroquois (Huey) helicopters. Flying in the outback, the temperatures would reach levels that were at the top end of the performance envelope the helicopters, which would

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make it more challenging. In total, I would estimate that I have accrued six thousand five hundred hours (6500) of flight experience in helicopters.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 I was working on a night shift at NPAS Boreham, the shift began at 19:00 (13<sup>th</sup> June 2017) and was due to end at 07:00. I was working with Tactical Flight Officers (TFOs) Scott GLASSCOCK and Nick SPENCER, using call sign NPAS 13 and the EC135 T2+ aircraft. The usual checks of the aircraft and flying conditions were conducted at the beginning of the shift and there were no concerns with the aircraft or the conditions that night.

At 01:30 hours, we had lifted from NPAS Boreham to attend a call in the Stevenage area having flown to one other call previously that night. It was whilst we were out on this call that we became aware over the radio that there was a requirement for a helicopter to relieve the Lippitts Hill Helicopter (NPAS 44) at Grenfell Tower, due to them need to refuel. We volunteered to position to relieve NPAS 44 as we had finished our current task. I then flew to NPAS Lippitts Hill to re-fuel, landing at 02:20, as this was the closest base. Whilst we were at NPAS Lippitts Hill there was a further communication over the radio from NPAS 44 saying that they had chip caption appear and were returning to base immediately. A chip caption is an indicator that there is an engine or gearbox fault with the aircraft.

Due to their return to base, we needed to lift off straight away to provide coverage to assist London Fire Brigade (LFB) as soon as possible. We took off at 02:50 hours and arrived at Grenfell Tower within Ten (10) minutes. We did not have a formal briefing on the ground about attending Grenfell Tower; we did speak with NPAS 44 over the radio as we flew there. They told us what was happening, that they had been providing a video downlink and monitoring the progress of the fire. When we arrived at Grenfell Tower NPAS 44 were no longer on station so we did not need to co-ordinate flying or switching over the downlink between the helicopters.

On arriving, we immediately got the video downlink working and conducted a few orbits around the tower to assess the situation. It was fortuitous that Scott is a Metropolitan Police Officer as he knew his way around the Metropolitan Police Radio channels and was very quick to set the radios up to communicate with people on the ground. I recall that there were some downlink issues but this was with the LFB receiving the video link The feed was working fine to Police Control. I am not sure if the issue was resolved with the LFB or not.

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We, as the crew of the helicopter, verbally discussed and risk-assessed the situation having arrived and observed the tower and surrounding. The fire was already well established by the time of our arrival, having covered most of the height of the tower. We considered what we could do and whether we could land on the roof. It was quickly apparent that this would not be practical, and technically we are not legally able to do so – landing on elevated helipads now requires specific training and assessments to be legally endorsed. The updraft, the heat, the smoke and the debris would have made it too dangerous to the crew, the helicopter and people on the ground to land on the roof. We are not a Search and Rescue (SAR) asset and are not equipped with hoists or specialist equipment.

It was clear that providing coverage and as much visual information as possible to the LFB was the best and most appropriate assistance we could deliver. There were already many resources on the ground, and the surroundings are a built but residential area, so casualty evacuation from the ground was not required.

I'd describe the next part of the flight as going into a maintenance phase, where I flew the helicopter in orbits around the tower to allow the camera operator to monitor the tower and provide images from a variety of angles not visible from the ground. This was a methodical process where we would cover an elevation of the tower, count floor and check windows to be able to feed information back to LFB as to where people were visible at windows. We also tracked the fire as it moved across and up the tower. We primarily were self-tasked, rather than being tasked from people on the ground. Our aim was to provide the most relevant information at a given time, and as much information as we could.

We used the thermal camera to show where the heat and fire was travelling across and through the tower. We also monitored rooftops of the buildings in the immediate surroundings of Grenfell Tower, as there were large amounts of debris drifting from the tower that could have potentially spread the fire. We also monitored the debris directly falling from Grenfell Tower as it would potentially harm the people on the ground. We could see police officers with their shields helping the fire officers to access Grenfell Tower.

There was a point when we checked the rooftops, railway line and surrounding areas for crowds gathering near to Grenfell Tower so police were able to ensure the cordons were kept and people remained safe.

When attending Grenfell Tower I flew at a variety of heights. At some points I would need to fly above or below the smoke plume. Another reason for the variation in altitude was to obtain lower or higher angles for the camera's field of view. I would say that I flew in an altitude range of 800 – 2000 Ft. I couldn't say how far away I flew from the tower, it is hard to judge. I did fly well off from Grenfell Tower, there was

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no need to fly close and it would not have been safe to do so. This was due to the fire, the heat from the fire, the smoke and the debris coming from the tower.

Initially when we lifted, we filled the fuel up to near the maximum limit of 500 Kg. this made the helicopter heavy, which in turn made it difficult for me to hover the helicopter. To alleviate this and to get the most flight time out of the fuel load, I flew in small orbits when we needed to focus on a single elevation of Grenfell Tower, as well as the larger orbits I flew around Grenfell Tower itself. As the flight went on and the fuel burnt off it became easier to fly and hover the helicopter.

We managed to fly for nearly two (2) hours before needing to refuel. We had already called ahead to arrange for the day shift pilot from NPAS Boreham to come in early to ensure he could perform the aircraft checks and be ready to fly straight away. We were relieved from Grenfell Tower by NPAS 64 and Scott provided them with a verbal handover via the radio. They flew in above and behind our helicopter and Scott co-ordinated the downlink handover before we left at 04:32 hours.

We flew back to NPAS Boreham where the day pilot had arrived early and we performed the aircraft checks. There were no problems with the aircraft and the day pilot ensured a swift turn around of the helicopter in case the aircraft on station at Grenfell Tower needed relief. This was the end of my shift, we did not have a de-brief at that time but we did have a chat a day or two later. No one raised any concerns and there were not any problems raised regarding the flight. The only technical issue we experienced was the thermal camera needing re-calibrating on a couple of occasions during the flight.

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