

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: HUTCHINSON, ANDREW

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

Occupation: POLICE OFFICER

This statement (consisting of 2 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: A HUTCHINSON

Date: 05/12/2017

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

I am currently in the post of Base Manager at the National Police Air Service (NPAS) Base in London, and have been in this role since April 2015. Previously I was the Operations Sergeant for the Metropolitan Police Service Air Support Unit since January 2005.

Until December 4th 2017 the NPAS London Base at Lippitts Hill had its own 24/7 control room staffed by MPS Air operations Officers. These staff were responsible for the triaging of requests from the MPS for the helicopter, and the tasking of the aircraft. Staff in the Lippitts Hill control room have direct access to the MPS Computer Aided Despatch (CAD) system, and every MPS and Emergency Services (ES) Airwave radio talkgroups.

On Wednesday 14th June 2017 the night duty Air Operations Officer, Matt COWLEY, tasked the night duty NPAS London helicopter to CAD 4482 a large fire at Grenfell Tower. The MPS Air Support Unit has worked to a Memorandum of understanding with the London Fire Brigade since the implementation of the helicopter digital downlink project in 2005. The aircraft are fitted with a transmitter which sends the moving video imagery down to ground based receiver sites. The Air Support Unit has supported London Fire Brigade at major fires and other major incidents, and provides a direct helicopter video feed live to the Special Operations Group at LFB Headquarters in Union Street, and also into each Fire Command vehicle. This MOU has continued into the migration of the MPS ASU into NPAS. Live helicopter video also goes directly into the MPS video matrix, and can be viewed at any of the Communications Command Centres in Lambeth, Bow and Hendon, and the Special Operations Room at Lambeth. The live video can also be viewed in specially equipped Territorial Support Group vehicles, and

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via hand held devices for approved senior police Public Order CADRE officers. The aim of the live pictures is to provide ground commanders from any of the emergency services to make command decisions on what they can see from the helicopter video, day or night, supported by what they can hear from the helicopter crews over the radio. For deployments in support of the London Fire Brigade the helicopter crews will provide video images of the fire ground, location of persons reported, casualties, access routes in and out, RVP locations, the spread of the fire and any adjacent buildings which are getting hotter due to the fire. Each NPAS London aircraft also carries a hand held heli-telly video downlink receiver which can be delivered. The helicopter crews will be in contact via Airwave radio with Police Officers on the ground, the control room dealing with the incident, and other emergency services on the Airwave London emergency Services talkgroup.

On the night of the 13th June 2017 NPAS London were operating a Eurocopter EC145 helicopter. This is a medium size helicopter, with a crew of three, a Pilot and two Tactical Flight Officers (TFOs). The pilot and TFO 1 sit side by side in the front of the helicopter, TFO 2 sits in the back. The pilot is legally in charge of the aircraft, and will fly the aircraft within the rules laid out in the Air Navigation Order, and the NPAS Operations Manual. These provide legal limits on heights the aircraft has to operate above and below, weather minima for day and night operations, rules on operating inside controlled airspace, and the operating requirements specific to the aircraft type. The EC145 has the ability to carry four passengers with the seating configuration it was in. This particular aircraft, registration [REDACTED] has no capability of carrying any externally fitted winch or other lifting or deployment device. There are no legal approvals to carry out any winching operations on any NPAS aircraft. No crews are trained in winching.

The aircraft is fitted with a multi sensor electro optical camera system, a FLIR Star Sapphire. This is a stabilised gimbal fitted to the front of the right hand skid. The gimbal contains a daylight camera and a thermal camera. The camera is operated by the TFO in the front left hand seat of the aircraft, who sits next to the pilot. The aircraft also has a Nightsun fitted to the rear of the right hand skid, a powerful torch which can be operated by the TFO or Pilot.

The rear seat TFO is known as the Tactical Commander of the aircraft, and responsible for which tasks the aircraft completes, how the task is completed, and uses the four police Airwave radios to communicate with officers on the ground, control rooms, and other emergency services. The rear TFO has the ability to view any on the camera sensors on screens in the rear of the aircraft, and also has an electronic moving map which is linked to the camera system.

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The other helicopters operated by NPAS are Eurocopter EC135 helicopters. These are smaller aircraft, carrying the same configuration of three crew and a single passenger seat. These are similarly equipped with cameras, Nightsun, moving maps, and Airwave radios.

On the night, several NPAS aircraft were deployed to the area around Grenfell Tower, one at a time, to provide a constant coverage to the emergency services on the ground.

At the end of each crews shift the video recordings are transferred from a digital memory card in the aircraft onto an evidential hard drive at each base. An evidential DVD is then produced by the TFO in the front seat of the aircraft.

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