

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: WATTS, CHRIS

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:

Date: 22/09/2017

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

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On TUESDAY 13th JUNE 2017 I was on duty in full uniform as the Sergeant on a Marked Police carrier patrolling Covent Garden as part of security patrols. The serial call sign was S997C and the PC's on the serial were PC PRICE 279YR, PC PEARCE 398YR, PC SMITH 299YR, PC IBRAHAM 564YR, PC ESPIE 329YR and PC SMITH 868YR.

We were deployed between the hours of 1800-0200 hours. Whilst patrolling at approx 0130 hours on 14th JUNE 17, we were contacted by the control room 'GT' to redeploy to a fire at a block of flats. Briefing was to take place at BOWMORE ROAD, W11.

We made our way to the scene on blue lights and arrived 5 mins later. I could see the fire at the flats on route and due to the traffic on BOWMORE ROAD we parked our vehicle on WALMER ROAD, W11 and made our way on foot. We met with INSP THATCHER, call sign BS1N outside the leisure centre on BOWMORE ROAD and were deployed to a cordons at BOWMORE ROAD/GRENFELL ROAD and TREADGOLD STREET/BOWMORE ROAD, to stop members of public getting close to the scene and to facilitate movement for the fire officers from the London Fire Brigade (LFB)

I deployed PC ESPIE and PC PEARCE to TREADGOLD STREET/BOWMORE ROAD and they took up the cordon control.

I, along with the other officers from my serial went to GRENFELL ROAD/BOWMORE ROAD to assist with the cordon control. This area was extremely busy with members of the public and residents from

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neighbouring properties. There were only a few Police Officers from Kensington and Chelsea borough (BS) trying to control this crowd. We began to ask the crowd to move back, but they kept trying to get through and get closer to the block.

I decided to place the cordon tape across the South Part of the junction and move the crowds back. The officers I had with me were experienced officers and were doing what they could to facilitate the movement of the LFB and paramedics. The crowd at the cordon were upset and wanting information, that we could not give them at the time.

An LFB command unit was in place at opposite TREADGOLD STREET, on BOWMORE ROAD and this was where the LFB commanders and INSP THATCHER call sign BS1N would meet.

Whilst completing the cordon control I was designated 'Bronze Shields' by Insp THATCHER's runner/log, as the LFB needed the shields under the tower at the junction with GRENFELL ROAD.

The crowd were engaging with officers but venting frustration and anger, that they felt Police were not doing enough to assist at the location. I spoke to the crowd as often as possible and explained that the LFB were doing what they can to assist. I also explained that every time that members of the crowd were trying to push past the cordon and get to the block they were putting themselves in danger and interfering with what the emergency services were trying to do. I was totally aware that there were several cordons in place and if there was a public order situation at the location, there would not be any more officers to assist.

From our cordon you could see the upper levels of the GRENFELL TOWER and could see that the fire had taken hold of several sides of the tower. This was clear to the public and provoked a lot of panic.

Information from the LFB had been for residents to stay inside the flats within the building and close windows and doors. When at the cordon several members of the public had approached officers stating that they were speaking to friends and family members who were inside the tower still or could not account for where they were.

There was a female Police Officer from BS with a LFB control/command vehicle on GRENFELL ROAD, close to our cordon and any information recorded by the cordon officers was passed to the female officer, who then passed this to the LFB. The Police officers were writing down flat number, floor and

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number people inside. They were also passing on the information to the residents to remain inside and close doors and windows as per LFB advice.

I was approached by several people at the cordon who stated that they had accommodation available locally for residents. These premises were Belushi's in SHEPHERDS BUSH GREEN, W12 8PH and to speak to Tim HENDRIX [REDACTED] (non UK mobile number) and he had 10 beds available. This information was passed to GT.

At 0315 hours I instructed PC PRICE to obtain the shields from our vehicle and return to the cordon. He engaged with the public and found willing people to assist him to save losing Police officers from the cordon.

When he returned I took these shields up to the Tower, with a male BS officer. I went up to the junction, under the covered roof section where I saw a LFB pump vehicle in situ and carried on close to the junction. This was like a service area and garage access. I spoke to one of the LFB inspectors and left the shields against a wall close to the fire fighters. I could see large pieces of material falling from the building and landing close to the entrance. I returned to the cordon and got the remaining shields. I again took these up to the same location and left them in place.

Whilst walking up and down the road, I could see how bad the fire had become at the location, but also saw people being escorted out of the block by fire fighters. I could hear shouts and screams coming from the building, but due to smoke and fire I could not see where these were coming from.

Whilst on the cordon I spoke to a local male named Mr Tarek GOTTL, [REDACTED] of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] who was assisting in trying to calm the crowd still and then asked people to assist the emergency services and to get water and anything that may assist.

A short time later they returned with several large crates of water, a small amount was distributed to the Police officers and the remained was taken by myself down to the LFB, by the tower.

Approx. an hour later a request was made for more shields to go up to the tower. I found some outside the leisure centre and got these brought to my location. Again I walked up to the Tower with these and this time had to wade through water that was up to my knee area, as I went under a covered service area.

When I walked back out I saw an [REDACTED] male standing by the corner and recognised him as being at the cordon earlier and stated his sister was inside. I spoke to him and said he couldn't be this close to the building. He said a fireman had his phone. At this point a fireman walked towards us on the phone and

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passed the phone to the male and said 'tell her you love her and tell her to be strong' which he did, the fireman then took the phone back and continued to speak with the person. He acknowledged the person was there and that he would be Ok with him at the junction. I returned to get more shields and done this alone due to the amount of people at the cordon still.

When I walked back up, I could see the fireman kneeling against a wall and was giving what sounded like CPR advice. I then saw 2 IC2 males walk down from a staircase from what is known as the 'finger blocks', which is the LANCASTER WEST ESTATE. As well as these two males was an IC1 male with a camera. I approached them both and removed them from the area they were and pointed them down GRENFELL ROAD. I then did the same with the IC1 male, who stated he was a photographer and asked where he was supposed to go to get photos. I explained that the area he was in was not the place to be and he would have to leave the area. I then escorted him out of the area and down to the cordon. (A photo appeared in the Evening Standard the following day showing the LFB officer and myself in the background)

A decision was made by the LFB and an announcement made by the LFB Commander over our radio channel. This announcement was that the LFB could not get to those inside the block and that if spoken to the residents should try and make their own way out.

A decision was made to evacuate the LANCASTER WEST BLOCKS. We were joined at our cordon by a Police serial from Westminster (CW) and PC PRICE, PC SMITH, PC J SMITH, assisted by a Territorial Support Group (TSG) serial went inside to clear the blocks.

This started with BARANDON WALK with the officers and continued with other serials for TESTERTON WALK and HURSTWAY WALK.

We remained at the cordon for a period of time, but were gradually replaced during the morning by officers from other boroughs, that had arrived after 0800 hours. We moved to just cover the cordon at TREADGOLD STREET, where a number media reporters had arrived.

I encouraged my officers to have breaks and get refreshments from the Salvation station that had arrived at the location, but maintained the cordon.

I was approached by Insp THATCHER and thanked for our work during the night. A BS Borough Supt arrived at the scene and explained that we would be attending a debrief at KENSINGTON POLICE STATION once we were relieved by the early turn officers.

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Once relieved all officers got onto our vehicle and we made our way to the Police station to meet PS WALKER. Following our debrief, we made our way back to WOOD GREEN PATROL BASE and booked off duty at 1145 hours.

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