

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

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

Statement of: PRICE, GRAHAM

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

Occupation: POLICE OFFICER

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This statement (consisting of 14 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: GRAHAM PRICE

Date: 17/01/2018

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

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On WEDNESDAY 14<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2017, I was on-call Public Order Commander (cadre) for London. This role is allocated on a rota basis to all senior officers trained and accredited to carry out the role of advanced public order commander. The on-call period starts at about 0700 hrs on a Sunday morning and one must be available for the whole week.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2017, I rose at about 05.30hrs. I became aware of the fire at GRENFELL TOWER via the public news channel. Shortly afterwards I was contacted by the on-call coordinator at Public Order Branch. I was asked to attend Special Operations Room, (SOR) in the basement of the LAMBETH CONTROL CENTRE in PRATTS WALK, LAMBETH as soon as possible. As I was reliant on public transport and had to attend my office at CHARING CROSS POLICE STATION first, I finally arrived at SOR at about 07.30hrs.

At SOR I saw CHIEF INSPCTOR JOSEPH STOKOE, who was SILVER Commander for the day. A meeting was convened at about 0740hrs. Other than CI STOKOE and myself, I do not recall who was at the meeting. The subject was the fire, and the roles and responsibilities of police in respect of that major incident in KENSINGTON. I had taken an officer with me to act as a driver and loggist for me, but he was not a regular public order loggist with whom I worked and I cannot recall who he was. He made notes for me throughout the day in a PUBLIC ORDER LOG (Book 29A). I also wrote in that log from time to time. I kept the book and I am using it to aid my recall in writing this statement. I present this

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book as EXHIBIT GAP/1. Stapled in the rear of the log is a note which was photocopied and handed to me in the meeting. It relates to 'GOLD (GX) STRATEGY' and gives the parameters under which I was expected to work whilst engaged in this incident. The strategy as provided is 'To maintain an effective emergency response to preserve life, minimise impact on London's community during a period of sustained demand whilst incident at Latimer Road dealt with and aid return to normality. Objectives: Save lives and prevent further loss of life, minimise impact on community, continuity of service provision, maintain health and safety of responders, provide information to the community to aid self – help, aid return to normality. This is shown as coming from "SCG".

Two further objectives were added. These are written in my hand writing but I do not recall at what point they were added. To the best of my knowledge and belief I wrote them in later on in the day, but they will have come from SOR at some point, and as Bronze commander I would not have set objectives. The further two are Secure preserve evidence in relation to incident, secure/preserve (evidence) to I.D. deceased in a dignified manner as possible". I know commander Neil JEROME was present in SOR around the time of the meeting. I cannot remember whether or not he participated in it. I was briefed and recorded what I was briefed on on Ps4+5 of my log. I was posted as 'Bonze Scene' and asked to attend the estate and take over from Superintendent Paul WARNETT, who had been the night duty senior and also cadre on-call and was still on duty. I made my way to the Rendez-vous point at Bomore Road, Kensington, London W11. The time was morning 'rush hour' and the fire response had added to the difficulties of travelling around the area.

I arrived at GRENFELL ESTATE at about 0840hrs. We had to leave our vehicle at Lancaster Road and made our way on footpast the scene to get to Bomore Road. The block was still visibly on fire, but the fire was very much reduced from what I had seen on television news reports earlier in the morning. Thick black smoke was billowing from the top stories of the block. LFB and LAS personnel was resting from fire fighting and rescue operations in front of the local sports centre, parts of which were open and being used as command points. At Bomore Road I was shown a map which indicated where police cordons were in place. The scene was very extensive and was using many police resources. I remember I was also asked to deploy police to assist LFB move vehicles around, which I agreed to do. Night duty appliances needed to be replaced with fresh units.

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I had numerous concerns, including (in no order of priority) establishing where the police cordons were and making contact with Police Support Unit Commanders. Assisting partner blue light agencies to carry out their functions; ensuring staff safety, particularly in relation to the risk of building collapse from the tower itself, and ensuring relief for officers who had been on night duty and were still on duty. These were all additional concerns to the objective set by silver in relation to Gold's strategy.

As I walked around the site I was shown three residential blocks that lay south south west of Grenfell Tower. The blocks north end abutted the fire and were connected as far as I recall by a walkway on deck. They spread out like three legs towards Whitchurch Road. Because of their appearance on a map, we referred to these as 'The Spiders' legs! These blocks were a source of concern to me throughout the day. They were social housing run by a management organisation.

Overnight they had been evacuated for fire fighting purposes, but some premises had to be entered by force to check that there was nobody in them. These premises were insecure and I was very aware that probably hundreds of families lived in these blocks and were displaced, without access to clothes or any other items that they would feel increasing need for as the day wore on. The blocks were difficult to keep secured because of their size and local geography. I requested representatives of the management company to come and secure the properties, which I hoped to reopen as soon as possible as in my view they could be safely reoccupied without impact on the scene, and the latter could be secured by placing cordons on the deck at Grenfell Walk. Ultimately I had to keep these closed as I could not get a representative of the Housing Association to attend, and therefore was unable to ensure the security of the premises that had been broken into overnight, or to ensure that those entering were in fact residents of the blocks.

At 09.30hrs on WEDS 14<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2017, my log shows that I had a meeting with Superintendent WARNETT. At that time it was unknown how many fatalities had been caused by the fire, but it appeared the number would be high. At that time, I was informed only sixty-eight residents were accounted for. A few people had chosen to jump from the building and overall, the night duty had been extremely traumatic for those concerned.

I was told the tower itself was structurally sound but that the cladding was damaged and lumps likely to

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fall off, causing risk and danger to staff. Casualty identification was going to be an issue, and representatives of the MPS were liaising with the coroner to establish protocols and procedures to ensure that was done correctly.

After walking the cordons and being briefed by Superintendent WARNETT, at 10:10hrs I attend the TACTICAL COMMAND MEETING at the LONDON FIRE BRIGADE COMMAND POST in a vehicle on BOMORE ROAD. I made some notes at the meeting but these were of points of interest for my role and I do not believe that they are a complete record of what was discussed. I recorded that the seat of the fire was believed at that time to be on the FIFTH (5<sup>th</sup>) or SIXTH (6<sup>th</sup>) floor. LFB were working to establish survivor details floor by floor. Their staff were attempting to climb the building counting deceased as they went up. There were at least two deceased in stairwells, but none below the fourth floor. The local district surveyor reported that the tower was built in 1974. At that time the concrete frame should give FOUR to FIVE (4-5) hours fire resistance but the block had been on fire for a very long time so its structural integrity couldn't be guaranteed. The building shouldn't pancake but for absolute safety the cordons needed to be 'moved back'. The media requests and also ensuring SPECIAL OPERATIONS ROOM were also able to get a large-scale map.

At 15.30 hours there was a COMMAND MEETING. LFB had by this time penetrated to the sixteenth (16) floor of the building. There were at that point TEN (10) confirmed deceased, four (4) inside the tower and six (6) outside of it. However, the LFB had not yet entered any flats until engineers had confirmed the floors to be secure. Discussion with RTPC and Highways had led to an agreement that the A40 Westway Flyover could be re-opened with a speed restriction, subject to debris, possibly containing asbestos, being cleared from the carriageway. It was stated DVI teams could not start to remove the deceased bodies until LAS 'HART' Teams had pronounced life to be extinct.

A number of rest centres had been set up, and LFB were reportedly seeking access to the basement of GRENfell TOWER in order to shut off the gas to the whole block. The priorities from the meeting were deemed to be to get the A40 reopened within two (2) hours and to extract casualties from the Tower. At that time it was stated ELEVEN (11) fatalities had been seen by the DISASTER VICTIM IDENTIFICATION (DVI) teams. There was still concern about the on-going stability of structure itself with the building needing to be stabilised before proper operations could begin to recover the deceased.

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There were still pockets of fire being fed by gas leaks. The time of the next meeting was set at 18:30 hours. The next SILVER CONFERENCE CALL was scheduled for 1800hrs.

At about 17:30hrs I became aware that units at the REST CENTRE at 11 WALMER ROAD had called for urgent assistance, alarmed by the crowd dynamics at the scene I attended the scene.

It was a warm evening, and daylight would continue for a number of hours. There was a significant crowd outside the REST CENTRE. They were excited, labile, but having had experience of public order at many ranks over THIRTY (30) years I did not perceive a threat to police from them. It is difficult to remember number but I would estimate there were over TWO HUNDRED (200) people in the roadway outside the Rest Centre, where staff were working to calm individuals down. I also saw a number of media representatives present. I saw nothing untowards going on by anyone but it was clear to me that people at the location were reacting to the presence of the press there. A number of individuals stated to me that the press were behaving insensitively towards victims, or potential victims, relatives. They believed that press were pursuing intrusive lines of questioning and filming individuals who did not wish to be filmed. I stress that I saw nothing of the above described behaviour going on, but there was a clear perception that this was the case. To alleviate the situation, protect people and preserve public order, I asked the media if they would help me by voluntarily standing on the junction of a road that met WALMER ROAD about TWENTY (20) yards down from the rest centre. I explained that this was in the nature of a request, not a direction, but that tempers were high and to do so would reduce any risk of disorder or assaults. I explained the perception I had been told, stressing this was only a 'perception'. All the media crews obliged me by withdrawing the short distance without complaint or comment.

To the best of my knowledge there were no further problems at that location. Before leaving I ensured that police and public were safe, that nobody had been injured and the rest centre and its staff were comfortable. I assigned S581A to the location to act as visible reassurance. I understood that the crowd had gathered at that location because they believed that the rest centre was able to provide casualty information, which was wrong. I asked for the website and social media output of partners be checked to ensure accuracy. I assigned BRONZE HOSPITALS to remain at the location and determine resources going forwards and monitor the mood, numbers and movements of the crowd. I then returned to the Sports Centre to participate in the SILVER Conference Call. From this I recorded that LFB were still concerned about the risk of internal collapse and were looking to allow a TWO (2) hour cooldown period

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before they reentered the building, and entry would still be limited to the Central Staircase area only. The only risk was viewed as the risk of internal collapse, so a THIRTY (30) metre inner cordon was being maintained and would be for the foreseeable future. The displaced residents would be accommodated in hotels. Other displaced persons would choose to remain elsewhere with family members. If neither were available the WESTWAY SPORTS CENTRE was being opened as overnight accommodation. The Local authority expressed concerns about a lack of police presence at the WESTWAY centre. High profile public figures were expected to visit in the next TWENTY FOUR (24) hours which might draw crowds. The LA would not be opening additional rest centres. I undertook to liaise with BRONZE CORDONS to try to resource the location, possibly by reducing staffing on the cordons to deliver more units to assist. I also asked communications be improved outside the centres.

London underground were apparently about to initiate clean-up procedure on the railway track, so long as they were able to withdraw staff if it became necessary. At 1830hrs the next command team meeting took place. LFB reported that their crews had now reached the TWENTY THIRD (23<sup>rd</sup>) floor via a protected staircase. SEVENTEEN (17) casualties had been identified inside the structure so far, SIX (6) were confirmed and removed. Owing to instability, LFB had carried out a tactical withdrawal. Their strategy was to now let the building cool, settle and then reassess its stability. Once able to do so, THREE (3) D scanning would be carried out inside the building. Various other measures were being taken to ensure the safety. Of the TWO HUNDRED AND SEVENTY SEVEN (277) people registered living in the tower, ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY FOUR (174) were confirmed safe, THIRTY EIGHT (38) were confirmed missing and SIXTY FIVE (65) were completely unaccounted for.

The A40 was still not open and had been sent to SILVER for a decision. After this series of meetings, I walked the perimeter of the cordons to reassess the need. BARRINGTON WALK FLATS – ‘THE SPIDER BUILDING’ was still closed off. This was a significant area to resource and I looked to move cordons in if possible. If we could reopen the block it would alleviate large numbers of people from needing to use rest centres. LFB had stated that the cordons were no longer required for fire-fighting purposes and there was no risk of building collapse by this time. However, LFB were requesting that the cordons in BOMORE ROAD be extended to protect equipment they had stored on the carriageway. BRONZE cordons was delegated to identify and resource that.

At 2100hr there was a further SILVER CONFERENCE call. Other than confirming LFB were now

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stating that the building would not collapse, little new was learned. There was a discussion about the usefulness of continuing to spray water on the TOWER itself overnight. I remember saying it was a matter for LFB, but if I had any influence, my request would be to continue to play the hoses on it. My reasoning for requesting this was that I had become aware of tensions in the area, and a sense of belief that the emergency services had made less than strenuous efforts to save people and were dragging their heels to remove victims. The reality was that every one was concerned to achieve that end but such major incidents often end up, and require, a 'slow time' response to therecovery phase after initial life saving is completed.

I had seen the agitation amongst the crowd at WALMER ROAD earlier, and I believed that whilst the water-spraying could achieve little in reality, from a visual and psychological aspect I believed it would be useful in persuading local people that the blue light services were serious in their efforts to help them. I believe the jets were left on overnight, but I do not know the extent, if any, that my intervention influenced that decision.

Press had gained access to a hospital and 'BRONZE HOSPITALS' deployed additional units to prevent incursions. People who had been made homeless were to be directed to the WESTWAY SPORTS CENTRE but it was likely there could be impromptu, unofficial rest centres would pop up in the area. These could become centres of crime and disorder if not managed correctly.

The A40 was to be reopened with a restricted speed limit. The 2130hrs command meeting took place immediately after the call.

The LFB stated that debris was still falling from the building. Nothing major came from that meeting. I sought to reduce staff in the cordons, if that would prove possible, in order to provide extra staff to deal with issues arising from the rest centre. I know, as I was tasked to be NIGHT DUTY SILVER the following night that the cordon sure was not, in fact reduced because BARRINGDON WALK blocks and the 'SPIDERS LEGS' could not be reoccupied because they had no gas, water or electricity.

I handed over to INSP RICK WENHAM from LEWISHAM as BRONZE SCENE. I am not sure when that was but it was towards midnight on the 14<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2017. I then returned to CHARING CROSS

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Form MG11(T)

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POLICE STATION and booked off duty.

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