

Message

**From:** Mike Bill [Personal Data]  
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**Sent:** 17/08/2021 11:45:48 AM  
**To:** Helen McCaffery; [Personal Data]  
[Personal Data] [Name]  
**Subject:** FW: Migrant Activity  
**Attachments:** 20210815 Migrant Activity Incident Review 15th October 2021.docx

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Maritime & Coastguard Agency



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**From:** Mike Bill  
**Sent:** 17 August 2021 10:38  
**To:** [Name] [Personal Data] @mcga.gov.uk>; Peter Mizen; [PD] @mcga.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Migrant Activity

Good morning

Below may be worthy of further discussion during our planned call today.

Attached is a further report from [Name] from his perspective in the JCR over the last weekend. In comparison to some recent days this was not particularly busy with only 18 incidents and 285 migrants but the same themes are apparent as with the early feedback from [Name]

The amalgamated list of recommendations is captured at the bottom of the email but I've highlighted in bold below what I feel are the key areas of concern and cover several of those recommendations:

**Lack of situational awareness and challenges of the remote SMC.**

From PB report - To maintain situational awareness, the remote SMC requested the SAR team to provide more information into the incidents, however due to the number of open incidents, difficulties in correlating duplicate incidents\*, and the constant demand on the SAR team to

Speak with the SMC, the Border Force Liaison Officer, SAR units, as well as having to initially deal with other ongoing incidents within Zone 14 (one being a reported firearms incident involving the report of someone firing a shotgun from a boat), the team simply lacked the capacity to do so.

*\*Despite being the correct process, this shows a lack of awareness at other stations regarding the dynamics and workload in the operation room during migrant incidents, and highlights the limitations of remote SMC conduct, as much of the information the SMC requires is not available in ViSION and the migrant incident tracker. There were a number of conversations between the SMC and the HMCG Liaison Officer which assisted in an increase of shared situational awareness and appreciation of risk but was insufficient to replace the SMC being in the operations room.*

The same challenge was experienced by **Name** at Humber on the 4<sup>th</sup> August who felt he had lost control and needed to relinquish that role which he successfully undertook on the previous day. More SMC's at JRCC and Humber are gaining an experience of acting as a remote SMC and are beginning to understand and realise the complexities and challenges that the staff face at Dover.

#### Challenges:

- Dover only have 3 SMC's outside of what will be only 2 Team Leaders at the end of this month.
- There are staff ready to progress through TAON SMOO and undertake SMC. In discussion with **Name** the earliest we could put up to 3 through would be in December on SMOO 2 with SMOO 1 already populated by the JRCC. Following successful completion they could attend SMC 5 in May next year and hopefully in readiness for the busy season.

#### Options:

- Continue with remote SMC and further experiment with the use of lpad/Hub connection between the 2 ops rooms.
- Should the JRCC have capacity allow them to take zone 14 leaving the Dover team with SAR only 11,13 and 15 (Humber could take 11). This would give the staff at Dover a break following an intense period. If this is to be tested then suggest we try it on a day when less migrant activity is forecast and start to build it up. In doing so we might introduce further doglegs/delays with the JCR liaison.
- Bring competent staff to Dover for periods of duty. I've sounded out **Name** at Humber who is prepared to come for periods and we may have an option at Belfast. Could an EOI or similar be sent out to the coast for SMC's to undertake periods of duty at Dover until we hit the Autumn and less favourable weather.
- George Papadopoulos will be a presence in the Ops room but will not be able to attend for every busy day.

#### Staff at capacity for long periods.

The MOOs involved in the SAR response at MRCC Dover were witnessed to be struggling\* with the amount of information coming in, the logging of the information, the analysis of this data and communication with the remote SMC.

*\*There was genuine concern for the welfare of those officers involved in the SAR response, with no adequate time available for rest, comfort or meal breaks.*

The MOOs involved in the SAR response at MRCC Dover were at capacity throughout, with the amount of information, logging, the analysis of this data and communication with the remote SMC, Border Force Liaison and SAR units. There was no adequate time for any rest, comfort or meal breaks until mid-afternoon.

Challenge:

- Insufficient staff at Dover - MOO recruitment has been challenging. Having started last year we managed to onboard 7 around March/April this year with 2 soon deciding it was not for them. They joined during the pandemic when restrictions on travel, etc were in play. Dover did not have sufficient staff to train the MOO's on station (some on station training did take place – mainly consolidation) and other options were successfully employed such as remote Comms training from 2 x TL at Humber and bringing other trainers to Dover where possible to deliver training. As such we managed to get 5 new MOO's competent to play a role over the busy summer.
- A second MOO recruitment has also been delayed until the end of April and we are currently trying to onboard a further 6 (launch to appointment 4 months!!). They will not be able to offer much during this summer period and their MOO training course is scheduled for January 2022.
- The most qualified and experienced staff (the longer serving) are the same staff that currently have the Sunk and CNIS endorsements and are pulled to the VTS side leaving those lesser experienced staff to take the weight of the migrant incidents. With recent leavers we have lost several Sunk endorsed staff and at currently at minimum levels of 2 per watch [Name] is working hard with his team to get others competent and lift the number.

Options:

- As above the JRCC may be able to offer some relief if they can take zone 14.
- Increase headcount by staff from other stations attending allowing some breaks to happen.

**No single version of the truth – numerous migrant trackers (French, HMCG, Border Force).**

- The French use their own tracker as they receive reports of vessels in the French SRR and this is shared with Dover/Border Force through a shared mail box. This information allows some heads up to prepare for arrival in UK SRR identifying where possible on C-Scope and tracking progress. On the 4<sup>th</sup> August the first sighting of this spreadsheet had over 20 incidents on it and made it impossible for the team at Dover and remote SMC at Humber to get to grips with it. [Name] will raise this concern at the planned meetings with French and Belgium colleagues highlighting the challenges it causes at Dover and asking if it can be avoided.
- At present on our side we have a HMCG tracker and there is a separate Border Force tracker. I've asked [Name] and [Name] to work with Border Force to make this a single tracker that both sides can input to and update. A format has been produced that meets the requirements of both sides. Current challenge is sharing between the 2 organisations on a single platform that is easily accessible to both. The tracker particularly comes into play at phase 5 but also serves as an overview document during the day.

**High level migrant activity is not restricted to Red days** and is commonly experienced on Amber and Yellow days as well as days that were considered Green 5 days earlier.

Challenge:

- The biggest challenge here is preparation and pre-planning/manning up when the weather position can change within a couple of days. Should a high pressure area build then conditions are normally easier to forecast (other than low cloud/fog affecting air operations) and the

chances are they will be a prolonged period of Red days. Sometimes this will mean that activity starts to reduce as the backlog of migrants wanting to cross reduces. Similarly following a period of adverse weather and no crossings the first opportunity, possibly yellow or amber, will be taken to launch boats. In summary its not an exact science and difficult to allows plan for.

#### Options:

- **Name** or the JCR Liaison officer **Name** NMIC and others all join the Border force Gold call prior to any expected period of high activity which is often supported by other intelligence as well as detail from the met forecaster. Output from this call should/could assist our planning and at other times the link between the CG JCG liaison officer and Border Force should give some heads up which can be filtered into watch planning to build watch capacity where possible.

#### Major incident or not

- These high intensity days meet our definition of a Major Incident however we are not declaring it as such. To do so would advertise to the wider world (perhaps not preferred by Home Office) but would also inform our partner agencies that we are stretched at Dover and may not be able to support any requests coming from them.

The list of recommendations are generally mirrored in both reports and below is a list of

1. The presence of an SMC physically based at MRCC Dover for all 'amber and red days.' **Name** report suggests yellow days as well for points 1-3)
2. Sufficient trained personnel at MRCC Dover for all 'amber and red days' to support the SMC.
3. Conducting adequate preparation and resourcing when there is credible intelligence and/or information to indicate that a 'amber and/or red day' is likely.

#### Points 1-3 covered above

4. The implementation of SOPs and Protocols that are tested, trained, exercised and regularly reviewed.

#### This is currently in development

5. The implementation of migrant specific post-incident reviews both internally (and with partner agencies) to ensure that lessons are learnt and new strategy and/or tactics can be developed.

Commenced with this feedback from the JCR liaison officers **Name** is starting to review past incidents and George will be present in the Ops room to enforce policy and tactics.

6. Welfare support for staff that are exhibiting any signs of stress, tiredness and/or a drop in performance due to repetitive exposure to 'amber and red days.'

Noted above with options.

7. The proportionate and careful use of 'broadcast action' when dealing with multiple migrant incidents in distress and 'broadcast actions' which can be focussed on specific vessels by using C-Scope/AIS.

**Procedure/SOP to identify**

8. Early access to the French Migrant Tracker can ensure that the Ops Room aren't overwhelmed with information immediately and have sufficient time to assess the data. This was apparent when Thursday's (5<sup>th</sup> August) day started with 7 incidents on the French tracker as opposed to 23 incidents on Wednesday.

**To be raised and hopefully resolved at the next meeting with French/Belgium colleagues**

9. The creation of one UK Migrant Incident Tracker which all parties (HMCG and BF) can access and input into.

**Noted above.**

10. Creating all incidents as distress would require mayday relays being broadcast, this would be impossible given the amount of work. Should we look at/amend the SOPs to ensure we are still adhering to the correct procedure.

**Still to be considered**

Regards  
Mike

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Divisional Commander  
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