

Message

From: George Papadopoulos [Personal Data]@mcga.gov.uk
Sent: 26/11/2021 11:33:46
To: James Crane [PD]@mcga.gov.uk
CC: [Name] [PD]@mcga.gov.uk; Mike Bill [PD]@mcga.gov.uk
Subject: Re: Observations from 24/11/2021

Hi James,

Thank you for your email and for raising those 4 points. I will take this forward.

Points 1 and 2 - We are all aware of the issues regarding resourcing assets from both parties. Mike Bill is aware of this and on the 2nd of December there is a planned tabletop exercise followed by further discussions between HMCG and all stakeholders to decide on how we are going to move forward to minimise risks, ensure staff welfare and have adequate resources.

Point 3 - We are holding a meeting today to clarify who is responsible for completing which sections in the tracker. An email will be sent out to confirm the outcome.

Point 4 - Still being operational myself and experiencing the difficulties of dealing with migrant SAR, I can only say thank you to everyone at Dover MRCC. We are going above and beyond on a regular basis.

We need to make sure that we take care of each other whilst on the floor and highlight any concerns that arise.

Please do remember that TRiM is available if needed. Also, I am always here for anyone to have a chat with about anything.

Kind Regards,

George Papadopoulos (LLM Maritime Law)

[Personal Data] 579 // [Personal Data] 966

[Personal Data] 008

Maritime Operations Commander / Migrant SAR Lead

[Personal Data]@mcga.gov.uk

HM Coastguard Operations



HM Coastguard

HM Coastguard

Dover MRCC. Langdon Battery. Swingate. Dover.
CT15 5NA

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I support LGBTQ+ staff within MCA

From: James Crane [Personal Data]@mcga.gov.uk>

Sent: 26 November 2021 06:46

To: George Papadopoulos [Personal Data]@mcga.gov.uk>

Subject: Observations from 24/11/2021

Hi George,

Following on from the Migrant working on 24th November, you asked me to put a few things in an email to you to bring up at a later stage with regards to various operational difficulties we faced.

1) I would like to start with the lack of availability from UK Border Force.

It became very apparent during the day shift of 23rd November that the 24th was going to be a heavy day, and the asset availability was going to be stretched for what had initially been prescribed as an **AMBER** forecast. With that in mind, matters were not helped when the VALIANT went off service and returned to Ramsgate, effectively leaving us with only HURRICANE and HUNTER to deal with the migrant operations during the day. This is simply not sustainable for us to have to work with high numbers of migrant calls with two waterborne Border Force assets. The RNLI are already stretched with crews becoming more reluctant to turn out for migrant taskings, and the employers of the crews must be getting tired of their staff not turning up for their day jobs because of this. I don't know how this can be put to UKBF, but during **RED** and **AMBER** days becoming more and more busy, their need to have more officers from UKBF trained in boat handling, and their deck crews to ensure we have got adequate coverage for a 24-hour period must be addressed.

VALIANT going off service left us with a massive under-commitment of an asset which led to, but was not solely responsible for, the multiple beach landings at Dungeness Point. The initial plan from the day was to have HURRICANE operating to the North of the TSS around the MPC Buoy, and VALIANT to be operating to the South of Zone 14 around Dungeness as these were the two areas that had the highest concentrations.

Similarly, comments from the RIB ARTEMIS about them being able to depart Dungeness and return to Dover because "we have been out here for 5 hours already and would rather not have another couple", simply don't stand up for me. We had Dungeness and Hastings Lifeboats on multiple taskings for a longer period (I think both lifeboats had 5 separate taskings each). From Vision, Hastings were first called at 0931UTC and were recovering on Hastings Beach at 1639UTC - a period of around 7 hours. Dungeness were first called at 0828UTC and phoned in to close down at 1712UTC - a period of nearly 9 hours. This highlights my point in the earlier paragraphs.

I do not have the times that ARTEMIS were engaged in Migrant Operations shown on Vision as their resource tab was not touched during the day.

2) I would like to raise the matter of the fixed wing air cover provided by 2Excel.

As you are aware, we were meant to have CG25 and CG26 assigned to Op Altair/Eos throughout the day but, due to various issues, we only had them for about 2-3 hours at most. They were late taking off from Doncaster due to technical problems on the runway and having to change aircraft - Dover MRCC was not informed of this until we contact UK JRCC (AIR) to find out where the aircraft was.

Once CG26 arrived on task they were only operating in the Channel for a short period of time before reporting a technical issue and would be diverting to Southend to get it looked at. It was also reported to Dover MRCC that the issue was not an operational limitation, and they could return for an additional 3 hours once they had refuelled. This was not to be the case and the aircraft was sat on the ground at Southend Airport for most of the day - even after Dover MRCC being informed that the plan had been for CG26 to return to Doncaster and

the aircrew would come back with CG25 (which had since been repaired following shutdown on the runway resulting in CG26 being used instead).

The lack of air cover proved to be a significant deficit to us as we were not able to maintain an overwatch of targets, nor have a running commentary from the aircraft - which we are used to receiving during migrant days.

My concern with air cover is primarily in two parts with this point:

- The lack of information coming to Dover MRCC from UK JRCC (AIR) regarding the availability (or lack thereof) - as an SMC I am sure you understand the importance of a situational overview, and not having an asset which can provide that information is a huge drawback to operations
- 2Excel are contracted through HMCG to provide us with a resource for various operational reasons, and yesterday showed a failing to that contractual agreement.

3) This is a really a minor point and strictly operationally relevant, but the Home Office now have got access to the shared migrant tracker, and it was my understanding that they would be filling in statistics and numbers for us. This was not done and left us asking questions about "M" numbers and incident feedback, as well as final numbers.

4) I suppose this one should really be number 1, but, once again, I want to express my gratitude towards all the staff who were in the Ops Room for the day, pulling together and, apart from the VTS Operators who were able to look after themselves, once again everyone missed their break during the day shift:

Name Name Name, Richard Cockerill, myself, and you.

Name has only been in the job for about 3-4 weeks but is more than capable of holding it together with the team, and his work of adding environmental entries into incidents, and keeping an eye on the email inboxes was invaluable to us, as it meant we did not have to expend any extra time to this role ourselves. His learning curve is as steep as any of the other trainee MOOs which have been taken on at Dover MRCC this year.

I don't know about anyone else after the shift, but I know I can say that when I left work that evening I don't remember much about the drive home, and I had definitely lost my appetite when I did have a plate of food in front of me, and only ate because I forced myself to have something (and even then I didn't finish my meal).

I have deliberately omitted talking in depth about the multiple fatalities that day, partly because the incident was coordinated by Gris Nez MRCC, partly because of the political sensitivity of the subject, and partly because I am sure that there will be an investigation into the happenings surrounding it. But I will say that there have been several negative comments from the instant experts who were not involved in the day, but like to add their two-pence (members of public I hasten to add, not ops staff), and these comments have been their usual scathing retorts to the plight of migrants, and the result from an horrific incident in the middle of the TSS. I still stand by and will justify our SAR response to the incident and the tasking of R163 to a request from a coordinating authority to assist in a Maritime Search, and you are well aware that all of our waterborne assets were unavailable at the time due to them being engaged in the boarding of migrants and, at the time they had finished loading, they would have been close to their maximum permitted capacity.

I will happily discuss the contents of this email with you, should you wish to do so, but you asked for any comments on the day to be put in an email to you. I have tried to be constructive where I can but appreciate that it is not an easy subject to write about.

Regards

James

James Crane

Team Leader (Team 4)

HM Coastguard Operations



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Personal Data 008

Personal Data@mcga.gov.uk

HM Coastguard

Langdon Battery, Swingate, Dover
Kent, CT15 5NA



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