WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r 27. 2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s. 9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5B

URN

Statement of: **Name**

Age if under 18: over 18   *(if over 18 insert 'over 18')*   Occupation: Police Officer

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.

Witness Signature: **Name** .... Date: 19/09/2024

I am the above named person and I have been employed as a police officer for the past twenty five years, and for the past seven years have been working in the Operations Support Office at MetCC Lambeth.

On Tuesday 17th of September I was asked by my second line manager (Sharon Harmer) to produce a comparison between two periods (December 2020 – February 2021, and December 2021 – February 2022) looking at incidents passed by the MPS to HM Coastguard to try and identify the numbers of incidents received regarding "small boat" crossing attempts in the English Channel.

The MPS has three methods for passing information from our control room to HM Coastguard. The first, and by far the most common, is an electronic link between our CAD (Computer Aided Despatch) system and that used by HM Coastguard, which is generally known within the MPS control room as "EXP/MCA". This is the command used in CAD to send a message (EXP is the CAD command for "Export", and "MCA" is the recipient code for HM Coastguard). CAD is a system that is several decades old and although it has been updated considerably it does not have all the functionality that a modern system would have.

We can also contact their London control room via a telephone number (which is available to all staff and is contained on each riverside CAD location), and finally we can call them up on the radio via either the ESICTRL shared hailing group or the ES3 channel.

CAD incidents generally consist of a single page which contains the type of call, a unique identifying number (a sequential number (which starts at midnight with CAD 1) followed by the date and year), the caller's phone number, name and other contact details, three locations (attendance, incident and caller location), three opening codes (three digit numbers which can be used to describe an incident), some other information such as the vehicle registration mark of any vehicle involved and the urgency of the call, and then a field called "Remarks" which contains a running log of comments from the caller, from the operators dealing with the incident, any police units responding to it and any partner agencies involved. Below the "Remarks" window are a series of tabs containing other screens, one of which (called "Previous Actions" lists all the actions that a user has taken that are not entries in "Remarks".

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When passing information to the MCA, the actual text will be contained in remarks but there will be an action recorded elsewhere in the incident record that the command EXP/MCA has been used.

In order to identify the calls sent from the MPS to HM Coastguard, the best system available to me to run the checks required is called DARIS. This is a data store containing information from CAD and allows a user to check various things such as the incident type codes used, the location of incidents, the commands a user has carried out on an incident and so on but this does not allow the actual remarks on a particular CAD to be searched (no system currently available allows me to search the remarks in CAD). However DARIS does contain a link to the CAD Archive so a user would be able to manually check any hits returned using other criteria.

I considered searching DARIS for all mention of the word "Channel" in a location field, however I discounted this as it may not return all the incidents where an incident in the channel had been reported (as the operator would have to record the Channel as a location involved in the call, which is not guaranteed).

I concluded that the most comprehensive way that one would be able to find incidents passed to HM Coastguard involving incidents in the Channel would be to search every incident where an operator has used the EXP/MCA command on that incident.

This would show all the incidents that were passed with the exception of those passed over the phone or radio only (ie: not those where someone has tried to pass a message but it failed). Those incidents where HM Coastguard were informed by phone or radio would not be easily discoverable within DARIS because there is no single way in which they would be recorded. However normal practice is that EXP/MCA is used and in my searches I was only able to find a few days when it was not (1st December 2020, 4th, 24th and 28th January 2021 and 13th January 2022 all had no EXP/MCA entries). This may be because the system was down or simply because there were no relevant incidents on those days.

These searches would also not identify when the MPS has taken a call and not informed the MCA. Currently there would be no way to identify these incidents (except by reviewing every incident created) as the mention of the Channel would only be in remarks, which cannot be searched.

DARIS only allows searches for periods of 14 days at a time when searching the entire MPS, so the required number of searches were done and then the results cut and paste onto a single MS Excel spreadsheet for each of the two periods.

Searching first the period from 1st December 2020 to 28th February 2021, I identified a total of 462 occasions where EXP/MCA had been used. Of these, three incidents involved incidents in the channel:

CAD 3992/10Jan21, received at 15:50 related to a call from someone whose name was recorded as [Name] She reported that she had been receiving threats online from a male who she believed was smuggling people from France, on a dinghy, to Jersey. She reported that she had a voice recording of him smuggling people in and believed he had said

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he was being paid £15000 a head. This information was sent at 16:08 to the Coastguard via the EXP/MCA link, and they said they would pass it to their international team. The incident was closed on CAD at 17:07.

CAD 97/05Feb21 was received at 00:06 hours. This was initially an abandoned call and the operator had to ring the caller back to establish what was happening. The call related to a male (who the operator recorded as [Name]) calling the MPS about his brother (recorded as [Name]), who [Name] said was aboard a boat in the channel that was in distress – the waves were high and there were twenty-five people aboard.

EXP/MCA was used at 00:21 hours to send the message "Report of refugee boat in difficulty in the channel. Departed 3-4 hours ago from Calais". This was acknowledged by MCA electronically with a reference of 002517-050220021. A further message was sent at 00:22 via EXP/MCA that said "update: number for male on boat: [PD] 132 [Name] 72 yrs". A message was sent back from the Coastguard at 00:23 that read "Coastguard aware and investigateing (sic) at this time". The operator attempted to call [Name] around 00:29 hours and got through but thought he [Name]) couldn't hear him. The operator asked DI/10 (a part of Pan London who make outbound phone calls) "Unsure of procedure, consider contacting Royal Navy and Border Force" at 00:32, to which DI/10 replied at 00:34 "this is best passed to Kent Pol as they will not (sic) doubt have a protocol with Border Force for this".

The operator may have still been on the call at this point because at 00:35 they passed a further message via EXP/MCA which said "update: boat is heading for Dover reports that rain and water are coming into the boat reported that 12 people in the boat have advised caller to keep line free in case you want to contact brother [Name]". The operator then called Kent Police at 0035 and received a reference of 05-0030. The operator then (at 00:50) sent a further message via EXP/MCA which reads "Update: inft has advised at approx. 00:40 received a call notifying that French Coastguard have located the boat and are with inft's brother and other people within the boat". The operator then passed this information to Kent Police at 00:55 hours, and the incident was closed on CAD at 01:00.

CAD 600/05Feb21 related to a call made at 02:12 by someone whose name the operator recorded as [Name]. The operator identified that an Arabic translator would be required – this may have taken some time as the next entries were at 02:30 - and established that the caller's brother (who the operator recorded as Adnan Motawe) was on a boat from Dover but was lost. He (Adnan) had sent his brother a voice message on WhatsApp saying that "We are going to sink" and asking for the Coastguards.

At some point the caller stopped responding and a call-back attempt was not successful. A message was sent over EXP/MCA at 02:33 that read "Call has come through from a Mr [Name] – Tel [PD] 766. He has received a WhatsApp from his brother who is illegally coming into the UK via boat – V/M at 0120hrs of him screaming saying the boat is sinking and asking for help. Location was sent via WhatsApp but it just shows the sea. Caller can see Dover is coming up nearby. Brother – [Name] Tel [PD] 998 havent got any further details at present – caller requires Arabic translator". MCA provided a reference of 2521-05022021.

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Coastguard then replied at 02:41 saying "Have passed to Dover Coastguard who are currently dealing with a number of migrant incidents in the channel. If you can get further details from the first informant, like number of persons on board, lifejackets? Lights on the Boat? And a description of the vessel that would be helpful to link it to any current jobs". The operator contacted Kent police and at 02:46 recorded that their reference was 113 05/02/2021. At 02:46 the operator replied to Coastguard via EXP/MCA saying "Noted your update – I have passed info across to Kent Police and they stated they will deal with any further enquiries – your update was noted once I had terminated call with them Kent Pol Ref – 113 05/02/2021 Do you still want me to try and call back to get further details or do you want me to leave it with Kent to deal?". Coastguard responded at 02:49 saying "Happy for Kent Police to deal, if they could pass any updates direct to Dover CG ref: 002521". The incident was not closed (as the location was outside of the MPS CAD routed it to the SI) but it was logged (an alternative to closure for these incidents) at 03:03.

All other uses of EXP/MCA over the period searched related to incidents of other kinds.

A search was then done for all uses of EXP/MCA between 1st December 2021 and 28th February 2022. This revealed 590 uses of EXP/MCA over the reporting period, but none related to incidents in the Channel.

My interpretation of the data from both of the three-month periods was that calls reporting incidents in the Channel appear to be very rare occurrences, with only three incidents identified. The overwhelming majority of the incidents involved incidents occurring within London itself.

All three incidents that were found related to people currently in London who happened to call Police to report incidents elsewhere; one would not expect that calls from these boats would be received by the MPS if they had dialled 999 because the BT Operator would connect them to the nearest force (usually Kent Police).

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