

Operation Deveran Joint Activity Review Meeting

Observations, Risks and Recommendations

Thursday 18th November 2021 0930hrs (MRCC Dover or MS Teams)

Attendees:

Mike Bill (MB)	HM Coastguard
Steve Whitton (SW)	Border Force
Name (TL)	Home Office
Name (PB)	HM Coastguard
Name (TE)	HM Coastguard
George Papadopoulos (GP)	HM Coastguard
Name (MP)	HM Coastguard
Name (PD)	HM Coastguard
Name (SM)	Border Force
Name (CW)	Border Force
Name (KM)	Tekever

Apologies:

Toby Whale (TW)	Border Force
Simon Freese (SF)	Border Force

Notes & Actions:

1. Welcome & Introductions

2. MRCC and JCR Operations Review

Attendees recognised risks to effective SAR operations from occurrences (observed over the previous few months) where the separation of SAR coordination and duplication of effort has impacted on shared situational awareness, joint understanding of risk and effective communications.

Therefore, it was agreed that a co-location of the Border Force Maritime Liaison Officer (BFMLO) and Aerial Asset positions within the MRCC should be trialled, with sufficient space to be made available to Op Sommen Silver and their Tactical Adviser as (and when) necessary.

It was also agreed that this move could only commence once access to the Joint Incident Migrant Tracker was available to all parties.

Actions:

1. Trial re-location of BF MLO and Aerial Assets into the MRCC (TE, GP, KM, SM, CW)

3. Joint UK Migrant Incident Tracker

The primary task (as per agenda item 2 above) is to ensure that the Joint Tracker is available to all partners necessary.

It was also recognised that once the Joint Tracker was able to be shared, there would need to be the creation and/or the delivery of guidance notes to those able to input into the Tracker to ensure that each person understands their responsibility with regard to data entry and further sharing.

Actions:

1. *Joint Incident Migrant Tracker to be shared between HMCG and Home Office personnel.
(SF & PD)*

4. The Abandonment of Migrant Vessels

The abandonment of migrant vessels continues to be a recognisable issue both within the UK SRR and internationally. It was also recognised that due to increasing numbers of incidents, there would be a consequent increase in the number of migrant vessels being abandoned by responding units.

HMCG have (in the short-term) decided to share data from the Joint Incident Migrant Tracker with international partners to assist in identifying the position and date time group of abandoned vessels. However, this is unlikely to help in significantly reducing the response by search assets in other SRRs tasked to reports of targets from commercial and leisure vessels. Therefore, it was agreed that a trial of GPS 'tagging and tracking' of an individual migrant vessel should be attempted with the initial cost covered by the Home Office.

Should the trial be successful, this could lead to the establishment of a 3-phase approach to abandoned migrant vessels:

*Phase 1. **Inform** Partners (through use of the Joint Tracker)*

*Phase 2. **Track** (through use of GPS trackers and software)*

*Phase 3. **Recover** (by surface assets – as available – being able to proceed to coordinates provided by the GPS trackers).*

Actions:

1. *Trial of tracking hardware/software for abandoned migrant vessels.
(TE & SF)*

5. Operation Deveran Maritime & Land Assets: Requirements, Availability, Limitations, Deployment and Coordination

It was recognised that both Border Force Maritime and RNLI surface assets are functioning at the highest level of their capacity to respond to the increasing number of migrant incidents in 2021. For Border Force Maritime, this situation is at a critical level which will need to be resolved to ensure

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they remain an effective responder in their main areas of responsibility (i.e. Law Enforcement etc.) This may come from an increase in their own assets, further use of external contractors or a withdrawal from a focus on SAR response. This last option may result in further demand on existing declared SAR assets and an increased risk of controlled/uncontrolled beach landings, with a consequent impact on Immigration Enforcement, Police and Coastguard Rescue Service (CRS) responders.

The Coastguard Rescue Service has been used to good effect for the unloading of migrants from vessels at the Tug Haven. The faster speed that the CRS are able to deal with individuals, means a quicker turnaround of vessels at the Tug Haven and therefore more hours spent at sea for interdiction and rescue.

6. Operation Deveran Air Assets: Requirements, Availability, Deployment and Coordination

The use of UAS systems (provided by Tekever) have been used to great effect for SAR response with both AR5 and AR3 aircraft able to receive tasking instructions, proceed to a position, carry out search activity, locate & identify a migrant vessel, provide live footage & high-resolution imagery and then to continue monitoring the condition of the vessel until a surface asset is available for interdiction/rescue.

2-Excel Coastguard aircraft have also been utilised for both surveillance taskings and SAR response flights.

However, the tasking of, communication with and situational awareness derived from the use of aerial assets is somewhat disjointed with the UAS systems coordinated by the Joint Control Room (JCR) and the Coastguard aircraft by the MRCC once they are on-scene.

Therefore, it is hoped that the trial re-location of the Border Force Maritime Liaison Officer and Aerial Assets positions within the MRCC will result in a more unified use of aircraft in the Op Deveran operational area, with the Aerial Assets Liaison Officer (AALO) able to receive tasking instructions directly from the Search & Rescue Mission Coordinator (SMC) and the AALO then able to provide situation reports regarding the positions etc. for all aircraft employed on SAR response.

Actions:

- 1. Establishment of the Aerial Asset position within the MRCC without the loss of (mandatory) operational support to Home Office functions within the Joint Control Room.
(KM, TE, GP, SF)*
- 2. Further discussion and evaluation as to how the effective use of aerial assets can be utilised for SAR response once the AALO has been re-located within the MRCC.
(KM & GP)*

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7. AOB

N/A

8. Review of Actions

1. *Trial re-location of BF MLO and Aerial Assets into the MRCC
(TE, GP, KM, SM, CW)*
2. *Joint Incident Migrant Tracker to be shared between HMCG and Home Office personnel.
(SF & PD)*
3. *Trial of tracking hardware/software for abandoned migrant vessels.
(TE & SF)*
4. *Establishment of the Aerial Asset position within the MRCC without the loss of (mandatory) operational support to Home Office functions within the Joint Control Room.
(KM, TE, GP, SF)*
5. *Further discussion and evaluation as to how the effective use of aerial assets can be utilised for SAR response once the AALO has been re-located within the MRCC.
(KM & GP)*