Witness Name: Graham Hamilton
Statement No.: 1
Exhibits: [INQ000702] [INQ008989]
[INQ000699] [INQ008983]
[INQ000700] [INQ008985]
[INQ000701] [INQ008987]
[INQ005343] [INQ005346]
[INQ005351] [INQ005349]
[INQ008981]
Dated: 3 December 2024

THE CRANSTON INQUIRY

ORGANISATIONAL STATEMENT OF BRISTOW HELICOPTERS LIMITED

I, Graham Hamilton, c/o Bristow Helicopters Limited, Redhill Aerodome, Kings Mill Lane, Redhill, Surrey RH1 5JZ, will say as follows on behalf of Bristow Helicopters Limited:

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 I make this statement on behalf of Bristow Helicopters Limited in response to an organisational evidence request dated 30 July 2024. I am authorised to make this statement on behalf of Bristow Helicopters Limited.

1.2 My name is Graham Douglas Hamilton and my date of birth is **Personal Data** I am currently the Director of UK Search and Rescue ("SAR") of Bristow Helicopters Limited ("Bristow").

1.3 My professional background has focused on aviation engineering. I was in the Royal Navy for 32 years as an aircraft engineer officer and carried out various roles within the Royal Navy including chief investigator for the military air accident investigation branch. I have a master's degree in safety engineering and I am both a chartered engineer and a chartered manager and a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society. I

left the Royal Navy and went offshore in 2014 to work for Bureau Veritas as head of offshore safety. I left that role to join Bristow in June 2015. I joined Bristow as the safety and compliance manager for UK SAR before becoming the deputy director in 2019 and the director in 2022.

1.4 In my role, I am responsible for Bristow's contracts with UK Government Services including HM Coastguard (the "SARH contract"), the Ministry of Defence for Falkland Islands providing Search and Rescue, Support Helicopters for the British Force South Atlantic and the Royal Navy for transportation of sailors to Royal Navy ships. Under the aviation regulations. I am the *'accountable manager'* which means I am accountable to the Civil Aviation Authority for all regulated activities (i.e. the air operations and ground operations).

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 Bristow Group Inc ("Bristow Group") is a leader in global vertical flight solutions offering helicopter offshore energy transportation and SAR services, to civil and government organisations worldwide. Bristow Group is based in the USA and has its corporate headquarters in Houston, Texas. Since 1971, Bristow Group has provided SAR services to governments and the energy industry. To date, Bristow Group has conducted more than 85,000 flight hours supporting over 31,000 SAR missions, during which more than 19,000 people have been rescued or assisted by our crews worldwide. Operating under Bristow Group's Offshore Energy Services service line, Bristow Group's commercial SAR footprint includes Norway, Trinidad, Suriname, United States and Canada through our partnership with Cougar Helicopters. In my role as director of Bristow, I report to the Chief Operating Officer of Government

Services at Bristow Group who, in turn, reports directly to the President and Chief Executive Officer of Bristow Group.

2.2 Bristow is a UK-based civil helicopter operator which is a wholly owned subsidiary of, and reports directly to, the Bristow Group. Bristow operates government SAR contracts under Bristow's Government Services service line. Under the SARH contract, Bristow operates the HM Coastguard helicopter SAR service for the Maritime and Coastguard Agency ("MCA") of the UK Government. From April 2015 until March 2024, there have been 21,500 taskings and 11,000 people rescued by Bristow.

2.3 The nature of Bristow's operations and services are the provision of Helicopter SAR services to HM Coastguard operating from ten strategically located helicopter bases around the UK, responding to incidents overland, around the coast and at sea. We operate a dual fleet of SAR-configured Sikorsky S-92A ("S92") and Leonardo AW189 ("AW189") aircraft (helicopters), specifically designed for maximum capability in the face of the operational challenges of the seas, dynamic coastline and mountains of the UK.

2.4 Bristow operates out of Sumburgh, Stornoway, Inverness, Prestwick, Caernarfon, St Athan, Newquay, Lee on Solent ("LoS"), Lydd and Humberside. The bases of relevance to the Dover Strait are LoS, Lydd and, to a lesser extent, Humberside.

3 WORK UNDERTAKEN ON BEHALF OF HM COASTGUARD

3.1 Bristow has provided Helicopter SAR services on behalf of HM Coastguard since April 2015. Since March 2022, Bristow has also conducted enhanced situational awareness in the English Channel. These functions are slightly different; whilst both

are in support of saving lives at sea, the channel services contract also provides situational awareness through dedicated patrols.

3.2 The functions of the SAR units are to: (1) provide assistance to persons, vessels and aircraft in distress or potential distress; and (2) deliver survivors to a place of safety or where further assistance can be rendered.[1] This includes providing aircraft, hangarage, maintenance, fuel, training and personnel.

3.3 The relationship between Bristow and HM Coastguard as at 23 November 2021 was and remains a contractual relationship where Bristow is held accountable for performance against the key performance indicators within the SARH contract. This is monitored in real time by the MCA via an electronic system known as iSAR[2]. This is a live system which is used daily by Bristow and allows the MCA to monitor the performance of the SARH contract. Bristow provides the MCA with access to iSAR as part of the SARH contract. iSAR is a vast and complex system which gives a live snapshot of Bristow's operators. For example, it shows flight hours, all flight crew names and their qualifications and training, equipment on aircraft, status of aircrafts / bases and information on taskings.

3.4 The contract is measured by a number of key performance indicators as defined in Schedule 8.2 of the SARH contract. MCA has access to the live data through iSAR but Bristow also provides the MCA with a written report every month. In addition, every quarter, the MCA management team receive written 'contract management' briefings from Bristow and a meeting takes place to discuss performance against the SARH contract.

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[1] Page 5 of Schedule 8.2 of SARH contract (page 623 of collated contract) **[INQ005349]**
[2] Flight operations software provided by Bellwade Ltd

3.5 Bristow currently has 20 aircraft in total across the ten UK bases. There are typically two aircraft at Lydd and two at LoS. The numbers of aircraft at each base may fluctuate if they are tasked elsewhere or under maintenance. As at November 2021, there were 19 helicopters in the UK as one of the helicopters was loaned to Bristow Holland. Of those 19 helicopters, 15 were serviceable (i.e. in operation) as four were in maintenance. Every base had at least one green aircraft.

3.6 Taskings are categorised into the following areas:

3.6.1 **rescue or recovery**: the transfer of person(s) resulting in them being delivered to a safe environment (including medical facilities);

3.6.2 **search**: search for craft, person(s) or anything else which does not result in moving a person;

3.6.3 **pre-arranged transfer**: transfer of patients or organs between medical establishments; and

3.6.4 **support**: including on-scene assistance, pre-positioning of SAR units for a potential incident and movement of equipment/personnel. This type of tasking may result in person(s) being assisted, though depending on the type of support given, Bristow may not always know how many people were assisted.

3.7 The four operations on 23/24 November 2021 under the SARH contract were search operations.

3.8 Operation names are only given to taskings when Bristow is asked to support specific non-SAR contract tasks which are prearranged. For example: (1) Op Angel was an

S92 dedicated to supporting the NHS based out of LoS during COVID; and (2) Op Blighty was to support the G7 conference in Cornwall.

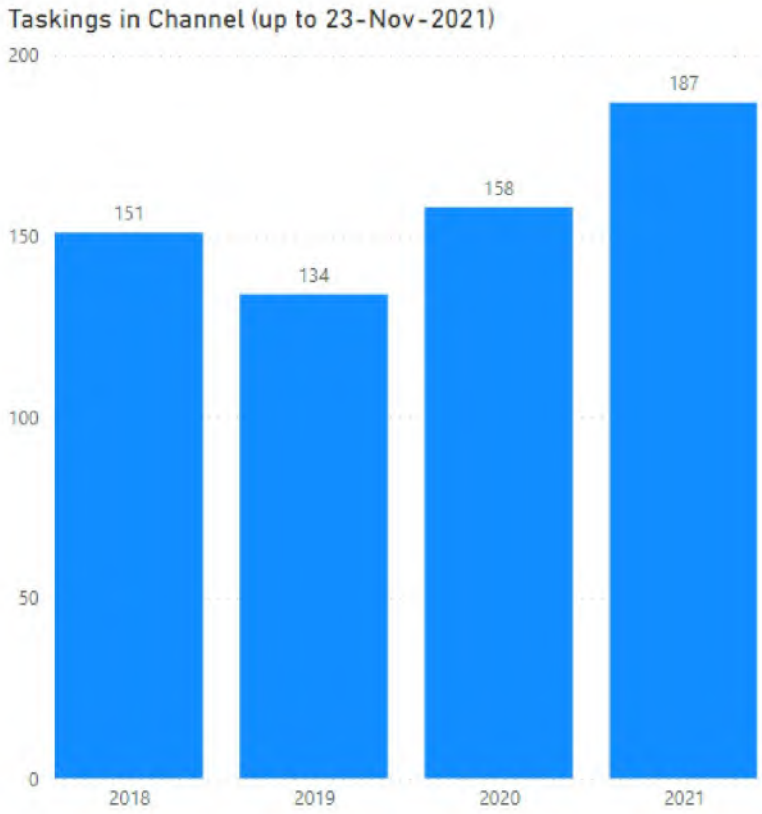
3.9 The process by which taskings are issued to Bristow under the SARH contract is that the HM Coastguard's Joint Rescue Coordination Centre – Air Rescue (the "JRCC") contact the relevant Bristow base by telephone call. This will be determined by the JRCC on the basis of which base is closest to the task. The telephone at each Bristow base in manned by the duty crew during normal hours (0800 – 2200) and the duty captain during quiet hours (2200 – 0800). The crew request the relevant information from the JRCC to allow it to assess the task. This includes location, weather information, number of casualties and type of task (e.g. unknown number of people in water). If there are causalities, the JRCC will also provide information about the type of injuries. Once the crew has all of the relevant information, it will decide whether to accept the task. A crew may refuse a task if, for example, it is better suited to another base, or they have just returned from another task. If a crew does not accept a task, the JRCC may switch the request to another base. A tasking can be received by a crew when they are at base or airborne.

3.10 Once a task is accepted, the crew will prepare themselves and the aircraft for the task. This will include loading it with the necessary additional equipment required for the specific tasks such as salvage pumps for a sinking vessel. The agreed readiness times, as per the SARH contract, are 15 minutes by day (0800 – 2200) and 45 minutes at night (2200 – 0800). During the day the average readiness time is 10 minutes and at night the average readiness time is 40 minutes. This is measured from when the task has been accepted by the crew to take off.

3.11 The types of assets utilised in taskings for the Dover Strait are AW189's from Lydd and LoS. In addition, there is an S92 from Humberside which supported operations in the Dover Strait. Humberside is further down the list as it is further away from the Dover Strait. As explained later, for person in the water searches both helicopters are equal and have the same equipment. However, the S92 can go further and has an additional internal fuel tank to provide increased range as required. JRCC are aware of the ranges of each helicopter and will consider that information before contacting the relevant base. Bristow is not involved in that part of the process.

3.12 In terms of the frequency of work undertaken on behalf of HM Coastguard in the Dover Strait, the tasking rates for Lydd and LoS in the period from 2018 to 2021 are as follows (information taken from iSAR):

Year	**Monthly Average Tasking**
2018	12.6
2019	11.2
2020	13.1
2021	15.6



3.13 Bristow maintains strong lines of communication with the MCA through the operations team via the head of flight operations and his team as well as the duty operations manager. These individuals have direct lines into the JRCC and the MCA Operations Teams. The MCA Commercial team also reach out to Bristow to ask for subject matter expertise ("SME"). For example, whether Bristow can: provide certain aerial support for G7; place an aircraft in place X; or attend an airshow.

3.14 In terms of policies governing the work carried out by Bristow on behalf of HM Coastguard, all policies are contained in Bristow's Flight Operations Manual (the "Manual") **[INQ005343] [INQ005346]** which is an approved document set by the CAA. The Manual is vast and contains a significant amount of commercially sensitive information including some areas covered by iSAR and intellectual property of the

original equipment manufacturers such as the forward looking infra-red technology of Leonardo and Sikorsky. The techniques described in the Manual are borne from Bristow's collective knowledge of SAR operations and many of the aircraft modifications are unique to Bristow.

3.15 By way of explanation, the Manual is split into different parts and the parts which I think are relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference are:

3.15.1 Part A **[INQ005343]** is general information in terms of how Bristow flies helicopters and operates as a company. This is specific to the UK. It details, for example, the nature of the taskings, the briefing form, relevant weather considerations and additional equipment required. Part A has already been disclosed to the Inquiry; and

3.15.2 Part B **[INQ005351]** is operational information for specific types of helicopters.

3.16 The Bristow management structure is set out in the organigram at Appendix 1 **[INQ008981]** with me as the Director UKSAR supported by a Deputy Director and the heads of department / managers for various different areas. The roles in blue in the organigram are the UKSAR Executive Heads and the roles in orange are the nominated persons required by the Civil Aviation Authority ("CAA") under the Air Operator Certificate. It includes, for example, the Head of flight Operations, Flight Operations Manager, Operational Assurance Manager, Clinical Manager and Safety and Compliance Manager. In terms of assurance, the Safety & Compliance Manager (with their team) conducts regular audits and inspections across Bristow to ensure operational compliance. The organisational structure has changed since November 2021 to include additional contract work for the Falklands, the MOD and the channel

operations. The channel operations include the addition of a UAS Operations Manager and supporting team. However, the core activities associated with the SAR helicopter roles have not changed.

4 WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED IN RESPONDING TO SMALL BOATS ATTEMPTING TO CROSS THE DOVER STRAIT

4.1 As at November 2021, Bristow had no practical working relationship with Border Force, 2Excel Aviation or RVL. The only one which Bristow had contact with was Border Force as Bristow shared the same airspace as the Border Force aircraft so needed to deconflict. With regard to other stakeholders, Bristow had some involvement with, for example, the RNLI, Police (carriage of Armed Police if required), Mountain Rescue Teams, Cliff Rescue Teams, Mud Rescue Teams and Cave Rescue teams. However, this would be through involvement in specific rescues. Such rescues would be tasked through the JRCC and the relevant systems are those included in Part A of the Manual, but all interaction is through the JRCC.

4.2 An operational awareness programme, known as English Channel – Enhanced Situational Awareness ("Op Caesar"), was initiated on 1 March 2022 as part of the UK Government's response to the increased number of crossing attempts of the English Channel by small boats and the associated risk to life. The introduction of Op Caesar has led to increased levels of collaboration with the other stakeholders. Prior to Op Caesar, the MCA had access to fixed wing aircraft for Channel incidents through the aerial surveillance contract with 2Excel Aviation, but those aircraft were not dedicated to the channel and could be tasked to go offshore to conduct other duties. Op Caesar led to the introduction of dedicated channel aviation assets: two

Diamond DA62 aircraft ("DA62") (fixed wing aircrafts as opposed to helicopters) and four Schiebel S-100 Camcopter Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) ("S-100"). Op Caesar aircraft are based at Lydd and operated by Bristow on behalf of the MCA. These aircraft now provide the opportunity to deploy a persistent maritime patrol capability to deliver enhanced situational awareness of the English Channel. This is achieved through the sharing of real-time imagery from the aircraft's onboard camera systems into HM Coastguard Dover. This empowers HM Coastguard scene commanders to immediately assess the risk to life and triage the most appropriate response to each incident. These dedicated HM Coastguard Channel assets are deployable for up to 16 hours per day, this can be extended if an incident is ongoing. This has relieved pressure on the SAR helicopter fleet in the region and allows that fleet to be reserved for its primary lifesaving role.

4.3 Since March 2022, Op Caesar aircraft and their crews routinely work together with Border Force surface vessels and Home Office aircraft as part of the wider coordinated response to small boat crossings. The sharing of intelligence and weather forecasting between all government department stakeholders now ensures the most effective and efficient deployment of these multi agency assets.

4.4 On 4 November 2021 **Name** (the then director of UKSAR) and I attended a tabletop exercise alongside various stakeholders involved in responding to small boats attempting to cross the Dover Strait. I do not recall the specific attendees, but it was chaired by the Chief Coastguard (Peter Mizen). At this tabletop exercise, a simulated capsizing of small boats was explored. Mass events were also looked at from an aviation point of view in terms of how we could surge assets and the extent and duration of the support we could offer in a large operation.

4.5 In terms of lessons learned, my view is that it was more about understanding the capabilities and resources of the relevant stakeholders. For example, we explained that Bristow has cameras that could assist with other aspects of the operations. I do recall that Bristow was asked to stock more deployable life rafts at Lydd. This would allow us to saturate the water with inflatable life rafts for people to use in the event of a large operation. This was actioned immediately following the meeting.

5 RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR SAR ON THE DOVER STRAIT IN 2021

5.1 The below map shows Bristow's taskings in the Dover Strait in 2021 (this map is taken from iSAR):

5.2 This extract shows the geographical spread of taskings and evidences that, if necessary for a rescue, Bristow will go to the French side of the Dover Strait.

5.3 Bristow does not have an overview of whether there was a significant increase in the number of small boats attempting to cross the Dover Strait in 2021. Bristow was involved in responding to tasks but did not monitor the number of small boat crossings. Bristow was not involved in monitoring until the introduction of Op Caesar.

5.4 As evidenced by the tables at paragraph 3.12, there was an increase in demand for Bristow's SAR assets in 2021. However, Bristow had sufficient resources to meet this demand.

5.5 Bristow was tasked to conduct surveillance in support of safety of life at sea ("SOLAS"), but this did not impact upon the availability of assets for SAR. The helicopter could be re-tasked to SAR in flight if it was currently engaged in a surveillance or training task. If necessary, the JRCC would contact the aircraft and issue the SAR task in flight.

5.6 In the period from 2018 to 2021, Bristow had no rejected tasks in the Dover Strait.

5.7 Bristow is not aware of any matters relating to the availability of resources for SAR on the Dover Strait in 2021.

6 ARRANGEMENTS FOR SAR IN NOVEMBER 2021 AND THE CAPABILITIES OF ASSETS

6.1 The SARH contract requires Bristow to have SAR assets available at the relevant bases and to a set standard. Therefore, other than the changes implemented by Op Caesar, there has been no change in the availability or capabilities of Bristow assets.

Techniques / methods utilised by Bristow's crews

6.2 The techniques utilised by Bristow crews for SAR are set out in Part A of the Manual (Supplement 1 – SAR Techniques) **[INQ005343]**. Part A of the Manual has already been provided to the Inquiry. There are around ten different techniques that can be used to extract persons from the water. The technique used would depend on the rescue situation. For example, stretchers, strops and various other lift and recovery techniques. The technique to be used depends on a number of factors including weather, casualty condition, swell and aircraft performance. If there are a group of people in the water, different techniques may be used for different persons.

6.3 All of these techniques have different advantages and disadvantages. For example, some techniques are more effective with unresponsive or oversized casualties, or in certain weather conditions. The training of the crew should allow them to utilise the most effective technique for each situation and person.

6.4 There are also different flight patterns used by the pilot depending on the purpose and extent of the search. For example, the pilot may use an expanding square search when looking for small boats or persons in a specific area. All search patterns are defined in the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue ("IAMSAR") Manual set.

Training

6.5 All crew members and pilots must complete core training and pass an independent assessment / examination process before they are qualified to fly / operate. This process takes around one year for technical crew members and around five years for pilots. Once qualified, all crew must maintain their competencies and currencies on an ongoing basis. An individual must have completed the necessary training to be 'competent' in a specific competency. In addition, they must have demonstrated a

level of 'currency' in that competency (e.g. a minimum number of hours using it) in order to demonstrate a sufficient level of proficiency and experience. A crew member will only be allowed to carry out specific roles when they are both competent and current in relation to all of the necessary competencies for that role.

6.6 Crew members also undergo an annual competence check where they are given a scenario, and the assurance team will carry out audits at each of the bases and monitor the crew against the requirements outlined in the Manual. While the necessary skills are tested on every flight, the ongoing training regime ensure that all Bristow technical crew and pilots are suitably qualified and experienced to conduct their roles.

6.7 In terms of examples of the types of competencies, crews are trained to use visual search techniques and the aircraft's sensors. This includes instruction on the advantages and disadvantages of each. For example, a forward looking infra-red ("FLIR") search is different from a visual or Night Vision search. Crew are also taught how thermal crossover, mist, snow, rain, and industrial haze may affect a search, and how the aircraft's sensors may be used to mitigate these affects. In the case of crossings at the Dover Strait, it is unlikely that Bristow would be able to home in on a small boat using a personal locator beacon. Instead, the crew are trained to identify small boats using a combination of aircraft sensors / night vision and visual search techniques.

6.8 If a SAR target is a person in the water as opposed to being on a boat, there is a smaller cross section / exposed area which makes it more difficult to find the target. A person may be covered by the waves, and there may be limited or no heat signature

(given the majority of a person's body may be under the water). It is therefore difficult to identify a person in the water.

Physical capabilities of Bristow's assets

6.9 All assets on the Dover Strait as at 23 – 24 November 2021 were AW189s (at Lydd and LoS) or S92s (at Humberside). All of the AW189s were identical and the S92s had the same capabilities for providing SAR and medical care. The technology on board both assets which could be utilised for the purpose of SAR includes:

6.9.1 **Aircraft Mission Management System**: an internal visual display showing all the relevant information to the crew.

6.9.2 **Automatic Flight Control Systems ("AFCS"):** a cruise control function allowing the aircraft to automatically hover, approach or move in a certain way. This allows the crew to focus on the rescue.

6.9.3 **Night Vision Imaging System**: equipment which amplifies light and provides better vision during dark searches.

6.9.4 **Forward Looking Infra-Red ("FLIR"):** a camera which seeks to identify heat signatures in the water.

6.9.5 **Advanced Search Radar**: radar technology which seeks to identify objects on the surface of the water.

6.9.6 **Helicopter Terrain Avoidance Warning System ("HTAWS")**: a warning system which allows the pilot to safely navigate any obstacles at lower altitudes (e.g. oil rigs).

6.9.7 **Lighting**: aircraft lights, external search lights and the Red Star Safire (a very powerful search light).

6.9.8 **Chelton Direction Finder**: equipment which homes in on specific radio signals.

6.9.9 **Multi-frequency homing:** equipment which allows the crew to home in on certain signals (e.g. signals emitted from a SOLAS lifejacket).

6.9.10 **AIS transponder**: equipment which allows you to receive and transmit data to and from vessels. This allows the crew to communicate with shipping vessels.

6.9.11 **Two dual hoists**: only one hoist is operated at a time, but the assets are equipped with two in case one was to fail or break.

6.9.12 **Rescue strops**: a piece of equipment placed around a person's chest.

6.9.13 **Stretcher**: a flat piece of equipment which a person can be strapped into.

6.9.14 **Air deployable life raft:** a life raft which automatically inflates.

6.9.15 **Full icing protection**: this allows the helicopters to fly in snow or extreme weather.

6.10 All of the equipment and technology outlined above may be used by the crew in any context. However, the technology highlighted below may be of particular assistance in the following contexts:

6.10.1 **Identifying small boats in the water**: Night Vision, FLIR, Search Lights and Radar.

6.10.2 **Identifying persons in the water**: Night Vision, FLIR, Search Lights and Radar.

6.10.3 **Carrying out SAR at night**: Night Vision, FLIR, Seach Lights (in particular, Star Safire), Radar, Chelton Direction Finder, HTAWS, AFCS, Aircraft Mission Management System and AIS Transponder.

6.10.4 **Carrying out SAR in poor weather conditions**: Night Vision, FLIR, Seach Lights (in particular, Star Safire), Radar, Chelton Direction Finder, HTAWS, AFCS, Aircraft Mission Management System and AIS Transponder.

6.11 In terms of communications equipment, Bristow's aircrafts can communicate with anyone. We operate over essentially every communication frequency / mode: standard frequencies; civil and military ultra-high frequencies (UHF); marine very high frequencies (VHF); high frequencies (HF); satellite communications (SATCOM); terrestrial trunked radio (TETRA) used by government and emergency services; and there is a wireless winchman intercom (allowing communications between the winchman and the crew on the aircraft).

6.12 Depending on the fuel state at take-off, the maximum endurance of the Bristow assets is 3 hours with a 30-minute reserve.

6.13 The only limitations of the helicopters are speed and height. The helicopter is used in the low-level environment whereas the fixed wing operates at height. The fixed wing aircraft can carry out searches and surveillance of a much wider geographical area but it cannot physically execute a rescue.

6.14 As already outlined at paragraph 3.10, the agreed readiness times under the SARH contract are 15 minutes by day (0800 – 2200) and 45 minutes at night (2200 – 0800).

The average readiness time is 10 minutes by day and 40 minutes at night. This is measured from when the task has been accepted by the crew to take off.

7 The events of 23-24 November 2021

7.1 On 23-24 November 2021, Bristow had a full complement of crew (two pilots and two technical crew) for each of the assets at Lydd and LoS. Each base was also fully manned with engineers and all other necessary ground staff. All of the crew members were fully competent and current in terms of their training, and therefore appropriately trained and qualified to undertake SAR taskings for small boats attempting to cross the Dover Strait.

7.2 Bristow staff and assets were involved in four missions during this period (with the relevant mission reports and pilot logs appended to this statement):

7.2.1 **SAR 233/21 (Lydd) [INQ000699] and [INQ008983]** - see appendices 2 and 3 for the mission report and pilot's flight log ("PLOG").

7.2.2 **SAR 224/21 (LoS) [INQ000700] and [INQ008985]** - see appendices 4 and 5 for the mission report and PLOG.

7.2.3 **SAR 234/1 (Lydd) [INQ000701] and [INQ008987]**- see appendices 6 and 7 for the mission report and PLOG.

7.2.4 **SAR 235/21 (Lydd) [INQ000702] and [INQ008989]** - see appendices 8 and 9 for the mission report and PLOG.

7.3 The below chronology of events has been taken from each of those documents:

7.4 **Mission 1: SAR 233/21 (Lydd)**

7.4.1 We received this request for tasking at 0246. R163 was tasked for a migrant search in the Channel. Three migrant vessels were located and their

position was sent to a Border force vessel (Valiant) via Dover Coastguard. On completion of the search plan and due to fuel restraints, R163 was cleared to return to base to Lydd and await further instructions. On return R163, was stood down by UKRCC. No tasking issues were encountered. There was a technical issue on start but the aircraft was shut down and this was rectified. We were on scene at 0402 and off scene at 0606. The position of the incident was 51° 9.28 N 1° 47.2 E. The below image was taken from iSAR:

7.4.2 The crew on R163 were not aware of ''Charlie''. Three migrant vessels were located and positions passed to Border Force vessel Valiant via Dover Coastguard. Positions were not recoded by aircraft crew. No persons were identified in the water. No information about the vessels and persons in the water was passed to any agency.

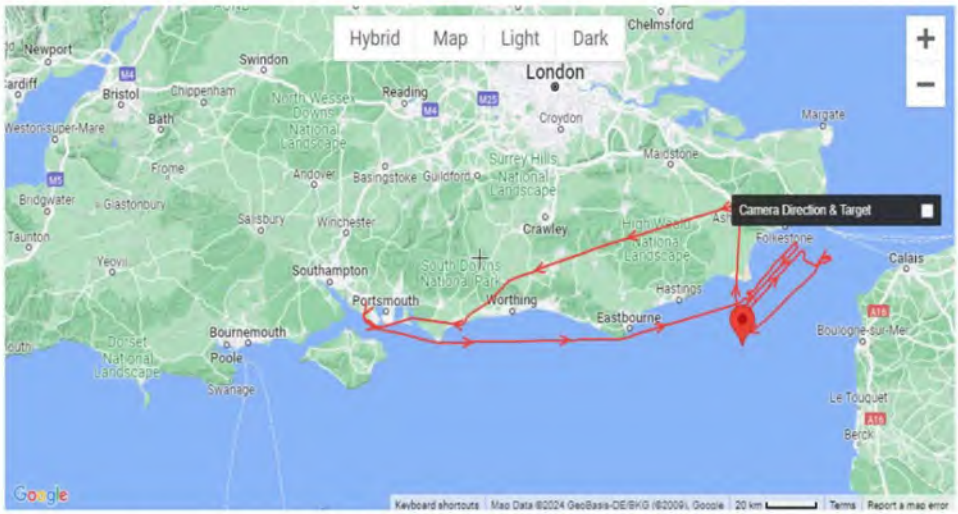
7.4.3 Bristow does not record any of its communications. The cockpit recording is also overwritten after two hours and is not downloaded. This provides protection in the event that there is an aircraft crash. HM Coastguard

records all of its communications with Bristow which is predominantly by telephone and over iSAR.

7.4.4 There was no specific outcome to this tasking. The crew landed back at base and were stood down by JRCC at around 0630.

7.5 Mission 2: SAR 224/21 (LoS)

7.5.1 We received the tasking request at 0950 and were tasked to conduct a search in Migrant Search Area C for illegal immigration activity. We searched for approximately 1 hour before being contacted by Hastings all weather lifeboats ("ALB") regarding a pregnant female with abdominal pain. There was a slight delay in take-off for the uplift of additional fuel. We commenced our search of Migrant Search Area Charlie at 1048. The below image was taken from iSAR:



7.5.2 The search area was referred to as Migrant Search Area Charlie. Numerous contacts of interest were sighted and this information was relayed by us to Dover Coastguard. A female Libyan national was uplifted from Hastings

ALB and transferred to Ashford Hospital. Thereafter we returned to base at 1255.

7.6 Mission 3: SAR 234/21 (Lydd)

7.6.1 We received the request for tasking at 1302. We were tasked to multiple persons in the water having become separated from a small inflatable boat whilst transiting the English Channel from France. The search area was across French and British waters with multiple French Coastguard / Lifeboat surface assets on scene. A French Coastguard helicopter – Rescue GW – was also involved in the mission. We did not encounter any issues. Our search commenced at 1325. The below image is taken from iSAR.

7.6.2 The crew were not aware of the existence of Charlie on this tasking. After approximately one hour of searching, R163 spotted multiple persons in the water. Due to the casualties being in the immediate vicinity of French surface vessels, individual smoke grenades were fired alongside each individual to direct the French surface vessels to casualty locations. These were then promptly recovered by Coastguard / Lifeboat vessels. This

proved to be a more expeditious method than attempting to winch each casualty. A total of five casualties were located by R163 and all were recovered by French assets. All casualties were submerged or face down and appeared to be unconscious. The French surface vessels were the agency to whom information about the vessels and persons in the water was transmitted to.

7.6.3 The outcome of the tasking was to return to base for fuel and further tasking instructions. We were off scene at 1510 and stood down at 1745.

7.7 Mission 4: SAR 235/21 (Lydd)

7.7.1 We received this request for tasking at 1527. We were tasked to return to the general search area and continue to search for outstanding persons in the water. By this time there were low mlx levels for NVGs (this refers to the fact that sunset was at 1556 so there was a transition from daylight to night vision, but it was still too light for full night vision), plus casualties had been in the water for a prolonged period therefore poor thermal contrast for FLIR. No other issues were encountered. Our search commenced at 1622. The below image is taken from iSAR.

7.7.2 The crew were not aware of the existence of "Charlie". We identified an empty rigid inflatable lifeboat and the location was passed to French Coastguard. No persons were found in the water. The outcome of this tasking was that we were stood down and continued with training on return to base at 1745.

8 REVIEW AND LESSON LEARNING FOLLOWING 23-24 NOVEMBER 2021

8.1 Bristow has conducted a review of the events on 23-24 November 2021 from a SAR helicopter operations perspective. One minor issue was identified in that some of the crew had not followed guidance relating to downloading FLIR camera imagery files post flight. All crews were reminded to download FLIR mission files post-flight when involved in any Channel operations and not only where an event (i.e. a rescue or sighting) occurred. The crew were reminded to always download the FLIR camera data in line with the procedures. No other issues were identified. Since the review, Bristow's assurance team have conducted regular checks to ensure that all of the information is being downloaded from the aircraft following each mission.

9 POST-INCIDENT DEVELOPMENTS

9.1 The contract change notice in February 2022 related to the provision of unmanned surveillance ("UAS") in the English Channel. The MCA was aware of the UAS development work being undertaken by Bristow at Caernarfon. Bristow had conducted successful trials integrating UAS into coastguard operations. The MCA tasked Bristow to review: (i) the feasibility of moving the UAS operations from Caernarfon to Lydd to offer increased situational awareness in the Channel; and (ii) to identify different options to support the Lydd base to increase readiness to 15 minutes 24/7.

9.2 Bristow gave various options to HM Coastguard: one option was to double man the base and the other option was to use UAS. The more cost-efficient option was the use of UAS.

9.3 The contract change notice was mostly about how we could integrate the UAS services into our SAR services. This ultimately resulted in the implementation of Op Caesar in March 2022 which I have discussed in detail at paragraphs 4.2 to 4.3. this change allows for the deployment of a persistent maritime patrol capability to deliver enhanced situational awareness of the English Channel.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed: Personal Data

Dated: 03 December 2024 | 11:09 AM GMT