

THE CRANSTON INQUIRY

THIRD WITNESS STATEMENT OF MATTHEW LEAT

I, Matthew Leat, Assistant Chief Coastguard at His Majesty's Coastguard ('HMCG') c/o Spring Place, 105 Commercial Road, Southampton, SO15 1EG, will say as follows:-

1. I make this statement on behalf of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency ('MCA') in response to a third witness evidence request from the Cranston Inquiry ('the Inquiry') dated 4 June 2025. This statement is provided on behalf of the MCA and is made further to my first witness statement dated 1 November 2024 [INQ010098] and to my second witness statement stated dated 17 February 2025 [INQ010510].
2. I confirm that I am duly authorised to make this statement.
3. The Inquiry's request is in relation to whether activating the 'call forwarding' feature on the HM Coastguard mobile phone, or any other call forwarding service, was considered by the MCA as a temporary solution to the challenge of integrating the mobile phone into the HM Coastguard's system prior to November 2021.

4. With reference to paragraph 4.14 of my first witness statement [INQ010098], I explained that operational shared learning with the French Coast Guard led to MRCC Dover introducing the use of WhatsApp as a method to communicate with those on small boats. In October 2020, a mobile phone was provided in the operations room for the sole purpose of making contact with those on small boats [INQ006746]. To be clear, this was for the specific purpose of receiving position information from small boats by means of WhatsApp geolocation. I also explained in my witness statement that, at the same time, a user guide on WhatsApp message communication was provided and distributed [INQ006747] to staff at MRCC Dover.
5. With reference to paragraph 5.81 of my first witness statement, I further explained that the provision of this standalone mobile phone was an attempt to receive positional information in the absence of any other available means. It must be stressed that the only purpose of this mobile phone was to provide positional information.
6. The MCA's position is that the mobile phone was not intended to be used for making or receiving voice calls. All calls were to be made and received through HM Coastguard Integrated Communications Control System (ICCS) in order to ensure calls were recorded. I am therefore not aware that any consideration was given by the MCA to the use of a 'call forwarding' feature on the mobile phone at that time.
7. I am however aware that subsequently in early to mid 2022, and in part as a result of HM Coastguard's investigation into Incident Charlie, a call forwarding

feature was introduced to divert mobile telephone calls received on the mobile phone, to enable it to be transferred through ICCS. This was as an interim measure prior to the integration and introduction of the software referenced at paragraph 8 of this statement. At this time, there were certain limitations on the 'call forwarding' feature in that this was only available for mobile calls and was not available for voice calls received via Whatsapp. It is understood that the incompatibility of forwarding Whatsapp calls to the ICCS at this time was because Whatsapp calls are internet-based, whereas mobile phone calls use the cellular mobile network.

8. The Inquiry has received evidence that since 24 November 2021, again in part as a result of HM Coastguard's investigation into Incident Charlie and technological advancements, HM Coastguard introduced software which automatically provides positional information based on a phone's location, with additional functions including live text chat and video streaming from the recipient's phone. This has been in place for approximately 2 and a half years and is fully integrated into HM Coastguard systems.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Personal Data

Signed:

Dated:30/06/2025

