

# OPUS2

Manchester Arena Inquiry

Day 129

July 7, 2021

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Wednesday, 7 July 2021

(9.30 am)

MR DEAN NANKIVELL (continued)

Questions from MR GREANEY (continued)

SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Greaney.

MR GREANEY: Good morning, sir.

Mr Nankivell, yesterday we had, as you will recall, dealt with the call from NWFC at 22.52 and we had dealt with your immediate reaction and your immediate actions. As I told you, we are going to deal now with your calls before you departed home and also those on the journey that you made to the CSR before we deal with the CSR itself, and we'll do that by reference to the NWFC schedule.

Mr Lopez, we'll be using this reference extensively during the course of this morning. The overall reference is {INQ041473/1} and we will start at {INQ041473/27}, please.

While that's being pulled up, Mr Nankivell, we will dip in and out of your witness statement as well, your first statement, and we're going to be at paragraphs 43 and 44.

So when I refer to the schedule, Mr Lopez, this is the document that I'll want on the screen.

So we can see, Mr Nankivell, that very soon after

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you came off the phone with NWFC, you made a call to Area Manager Etches. That call was at 22.57 and lasted for just over 2 minutes. What was the purpose of that call?  
A. Firstly, just to check that he or to find out if he was actually aware that there had been an incident at the MEN. Then it was just advising him on the information that, as I remembered it, that Control had just informed me, North West Fire Control had just told me. As we were talking I think we were looking at, both looking at the TV to see what was on TV and then just to affirm that we were going to go and open up the command support room and that I'd RV with him then.  
Q. I think Mr Etches was the assistant principal officer that night?  
A. Indeed, he was the assistant principal officer, which is basically my boss that night.  
Q. So you were calling him to make sure that he knew what had happened and he didn't. The two of you were watching events as they unfolded on the news on television, and I think what you said to us was that you both understood that there would need to be a CSR.  
A. Yes, sir.  
Q. And did you both decide that you would deploy to the CSR?

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A. Absolutely, yes.

Q. Did you also tell him that you would speak to the principal officer on duty that night, that being the CFO, Mr O'Reilly?

A. I did, yes.

Q. Are you able to recall whether you told Area Manager Etches that you had been informed that the NWAS Bronze was at the scene?

A. I can't confirm that, no.

Q. Where did you understand that he was at that stage?

SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: This is Mr Etches?

A. At his home address at that stage.

MR GREANEY: Would it have been your understanding therefore that he would have had access to the log if he had wanted to view it?

A. The same as I, yes.

Q. In your witness statement you recall that the next thing that you did was to call the CFO, but in fact the records indicate that it wasn't until 23.08 that you spoke to the CFO and that instead you did other things first.

Could we go, please, to {INQ041473/32} of the schedule. I'm now at paragraphs 47 to 49 of your witness statement.

We can see from the top entry on that page that at

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23.02 you were called by Station Manager Berry who, as we know, was the duty NILO. Do you recall that call?

A. I don't. My recollection was that I had spoken to the PO and during that call there was an incoming call from Andy, so I don't recall actually talking to him. I thought I'd spoken to the chief first, to be honest with you.

Q. But as I've indicated, the records, as we understand them, indicate a slightly different order. This is the issue that we were speaking about yesterday. But do you have any recollection of speaking to Mr Berry?

A. I do recall speaking to him, yes. I had it in my memory that I spoke to the chief first.

Q. I see. So it's not the fact of the call that you can't remember or the content, it's the point in time at which it occurred?

A. Indeed, sir.

Q. What do you recall of the content of that conversation at 23.02?

A. It's a bit grainy now. I couldn't give you the exact contents of that call. It would have been an informative from Andy. I can't remember the detail if I'm perfectly honest.

Q. Presumably, the two of you would have been discussing in general terms at least what each of you knew at that

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1 stage?  
 2 A. Yes, indeed, and he would be responding as the duty  
 3 NILO.  
 4 Q. Would you have told him that your intention was to  
 5 deploy to the CSR?  
 6 A. Indeed, yes.  
 7 Q. And do you recall whether anything was said to you at  
 8 that stage to you by him about difficulties that he was  
 9 experiencing in contacting the FDO?  
 10 A. No, I wasn't aware of any difficulties at this stage at  
 11 all.  
 12 Q. Do you remember whether you were told by him in that  
 13 call, because you had not been told earlier, that two  
 14 other NILOs, Mr Meakin and Mr Levy, were also deploying  
 15 to Philips Park as additional NILOs?  
 16 A. Andy did tell me that. Yes, I do remember that.  
 17 Q. So at that stage, 23.02, you knew that they were going  
 18 there as well?  
 19 A. I did, yes.  
 20 Q. Very shortly after that call ended -- could we go to  
 21 {INQ041473/36}, please -- you spoke again to North West  
 22 Fire Control. In fact, I think it must be the page  
 23 before, {INQ041473/35}. Go back to the page before that  
 24 even, {INQ041473/34}.  
 25 There we are. At 2.306 you spoke to North West Fire

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1 Control. Can you remember where you were at that stage?  
 2 Had you set off or were you still at home?  
 3 A. I think by that stage -- well, the first call I had with  
 4 the PO I was still in my house. So if I've spoken to  
 5 the PO at this stage, I was definitely mobile when  
 6 I spoke to Andy.  
 7 Q. In fact you speak to the principal officer very shortly  
 8 after this call and so at this stage then you're still  
 9 at home?  
 10 A. Indeed, sir.  
 11 Q. This call to North West Fire Control is well summarised  
 12 in the schedule and so we don't need to listen to it.  
 13 You were told:  
 14 "We've been on to Andy Berry."  
 15 You say:  
 16 "I've spoken to him."  
 17 In fact you'd just done that moments before:  
 18 "He has asked [you are told] for three NILOs and the  
 19 MTFA vehicles, which we have sent from [operationally  
 20 sensitive locations]. Do you still want the TRU going  
 21 to Philips Park?"  
 22 And you reply:  
 23 "Yes, I do. They've got the fire capability, so  
 24 yeah get it all down there."  
 25 So it seems that you were keen that really very

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1 substantial specialist resources of the Fire and Rescue  
 2 Service should deploy to Philips Park?  
 3 A. I was absolutely, yes.  
 4 Q. You were asked:  
 5 "Do I have to check with Andy Berry or shall I just  
 6 do it?"  
 7 Over the page, {INQ041473/35}:  
 8 "No, I've just spoken to Andy Berry, just told him  
 9 what we're doing, so just get them down there."  
 10 Then you were told:  
 11 "he has asked for three NILOs but there's only two  
 12 coming up, Carlos Meakin and Ben Levy. I cannot find  
 13 another. Do you want us to go over the border?"  
 14 Presumably that is to a service, Lancashire or some  
 15 other place?  
 16 A. Yes, indeed.  
 17 Q. And you reply:  
 18 "Just leave it with those three for now, including  
 19 Andy Berry, and then we'll take it from there once we've  
 20 got a bit more information."  
 21 So do we see there an example of you doing what the  
 22 duty group manager's job is, that is to say making  
 23 decisions about the level of support that the  
 24 operational team need?  
 25 A. Yes, sir.

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1 Q. We can now go, I think, to {INQ041473/36}. There we see  
 2 the second full entry down, your call to the CFO,  
 3 Peter O'Reilly, which has a duration of 1 minute and  
 4 20 seconds. So the 0.3 is in fact -- doesn't mean  
 5 30 seconds, it means 0.3 of a minute.  
 6 As you told us, you were still at home. Do you  
 7 recall that call?  
 8 A. I do, yes.  
 9 Q. Where did you understand the CFO was at that time?  
 10 A. At home, at his home.  
 11 Q. Was his home, as you understood it, substantially closer  
 12 to the CSR than your own home?  
 13 A. Yes.  
 14 Q. Would you have expected him to have had access to the  
 15 log at home?  
 16 A. Indeed I would, yes.  
 17 Q. What was discussed between you and Mr O'Reilly in that  
 18 call at 23.08?  
 19 A. Basically that there'd been an incident at the arena,  
 20 he wasn't aware of it either at that stage. Very  
 21 similar responses as Paul Etches, really. I told him  
 22 that I'd spoken to the APO, Paul, told him who Paul was,  
 23 told him the information that I'd got from Andy as  
 24 regards mustering -- I don't like the word  
 25 "mustering" -- rendezvousing at Philips Park, and that

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1 myself and Paul Etches were on our way — on completion  
 2 of that call to the command support room to open the  
 3 command support room up.  
 4 Q. I'm going to ask you what his response was in one  
 5 moment. But can I ask you, so far as Philips Park is  
 6 concerned, and I am later on in my questions going to  
 7 ask you about your own personal view of Philips Park as  
 8 the RVP, but was there any conversation that you had  
 9 either with Mr Etches, the assistant principal officer,  
 10 or Mr O'Reilly, the principal officer, at that early  
 11 stage about the appropriateness of Philips Park as  
 12 an RVP?  
 13 A. No. No, sir.  
 14 Q. Was that because it was overlooked or because you were  
 15 taking the view, and assumed others were taking the  
 16 view, that this was a decision for the duty NILO to  
 17 make?  
 18 A. I took the view that the duty NILO had made that  
 19 decision for a tactical or strategic reason and that's  
 20 why we were sending the pumps to Philips Park.  
 21 Q. Where I'd left you was you told the principal officer  
 22 what you knew and before you tell us his response,  
 23 what was your expectation of what he would do and where  
 24 he would go?  
 25 A. I think ... I think historically when we've had anything

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1 of any size or any consequence, all the sort of training  
 2 for me would have led for the principal officer, albeit  
 3 they may call in at the CSR for a quick update, but I'd  
 4 never really known it before, so I'd have expected the  
 5 PO probably to proceed to a more strategic area rather  
 6 than the CSR.  
 7 Q. Let's just be absolutely plain about this. Was it your  
 8 expectation that the principal officer would go to  
 9 Greater Manchester Police headquarters to fulfil the  
 10 role as Fire and Rescue Service Gold?  
 11 A. Indeed, indeed, but I was informed by — on that call by  
 12 the CFO that he would be going to the CSR.  
 13 Q. I am going to come on to that. First of all, I'm keen  
 14 to capture your expectation and I think we've understood  
 15 your expectation was that he would go to force  
 16 headquarters, police force headquarters, to perform the  
 17 role as Gold, although he might call in at the CSR to  
 18 see how things were going?  
 19 A. Indeed, yes.  
 20 Q. But you were not expecting that he would come and  
 21 position himself longer term at the CSR?  
 22 A. I wasn't, sir, no.  
 23 Q. You have already indicated — in that call, did the  
 24 chief fire officer tell you that his intention was to  
 25 come and position himself at the CSR?

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1 A. He said he was going to meet me at the CSR. He didn't  
 2 say he was going to position himself there. He just  
 3 said he was going to meet me at the CSR.  
 4 Q. As we're going to discover from you, in the result  
 5 that is where he remained for a lengthy period of time,  
 6 did he not?  
 7 A. He did.  
 8 Q. And should we understand from what you've told us that  
 9 it was a surprise to you that that's where he decided to  
 10 position himself during important periods?  
 11 A. It was an unusual occurrence.  
 12 Q. The next contact that we have from you on the schedule  
 13 of contacts is a call, another call by you to  
 14 Paul Etches, the assistant PO, at 23.09. So could we go  
 15 to {INQ041473/37}, please.  
 16 As I indicated yesterday, we're doing this by  
 17 reference to the chronology rather than your statement.  
 18 So you can see, at 23.09, a call that lasted for just  
 19 over 1 minute. Do you recall that call?  
 20 A. Not verbatim, sir, no.  
 21 Q. Well, we could see, if we wanted to take the time, that  
 22 very shortly afterwards, at 23.11, he telephoned North  
 23 West Fire Control. He told them that he had spoken to  
 24 you and that the two of you were on your way to the CSR.  
 25 So do you agree it seems likely that the two of you were

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1 probably discussing those arrangements?  
 2 A. Absolutely, yes, sir.  
 3 Q. As I said, that call by him was at 23.11. At that very  
 4 time, you were being called by Joanne Haslam of North  
 5 West Fire Control. Could we go to {INQ041473/39},  
 6 please.  
 7 Again, the content of this call is accurately  
 8 summarised in the schedule and accurately summarised, so  
 9 you were told:  
 10 "Just to let you know one of the team leaders has  
 11 just informed me and asked me to tell you that the  
 12 FRV..."  
 13 Presumably that means TRU, does it? We can listen  
 14 if needs be. I think it's a reference to TRU.  
 15 A. Got me on that one.  
 16 Q. "... they are going with their TRU and MRU. Are you  
 17 happy with that over to Philips Park?"  
 18 You say:  
 19 "Yes, that's fine. Yes, just so you know, the chief  
 20 is making his way to the command support room. I'm  
 21 going to open the command support room up. There's  
 22 nothing on the telly or anything at the minute.  
 23 I'll ring you when I get there."  
 24 So by this stage, the call that you had with the  
 25 chief having concluded, were you, do you think, on your

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1 way to the CSR?  
 2 A. No, looking at that, it was -- I would say at 23.11  
 3 I was still probably getting some kind of uniform on,  
 4 getting dressed and at that point leaving the house,  
 5 I would say.  
 6 Q. So you're not far from leaving the house at that stage?  
 7 A. Oh, very, very close, yes.  
 8 Q. Some minutes later, at 23.18, you were called by  
 9 Mr Fletcher, from whom we heard yesterday, and this  
 10 takes us to page 44, please {INQ041473/44}.  
 11 It's the bottom entry on that page. Group Manager  
 12 Fletcher, a call to GM Nankivell, a call lasting 1 and  
 13 three-quarter minutes. Do you remember that particular  
 14 call?  
 15 A. I do, sir.  
 16 Q. Do you remember whether at that stage you were still at  
 17 home or on your way to the CSR?  
 18 A. I'm fairly confident I was driving at that stage when  
 19 I received that call.  
 20 Q. Could you tell us what occurred during the course of  
 21 that telephone conversation, please?  
 22 A. Yes, I can. John or Group Manager Fletcher called --  
 23 I know my rota group, I know the officers on my rota  
 24 group, I'm familiar with them all and John isn't one of  
 25 those. He was ringing really to tell me that he was

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1 proceeding to the command support room and didn't want  
 2 it perceived as self-mobilising.  
 3 Q. Let's just understand. We're familiar with the idea of  
 4 self-deployment or self-mobilisation from other evidence  
 5 in the case. And we know, for example, from police  
 6 officers who have given evidence that it's recognised  
 7 that there are dangers involved with self-mobilisation.  
 8 Obviously it can all work out, as it did with Mr Dexter  
 9 deploying to the scene, but do you agree that  
 10 self-mobilisation can cause problems?  
 11 A. It can be extremely problematic, yes.  
 12 Q. And to your mind what may be the risks or dangers with  
 13 self-mobilisation?  
 14 A. Well, for one, we don't know they're actually on duty,  
 15 so if they have a drama or an incident, they may make  
 16 decisions, they may attend a scene or an area that they  
 17 don't know is an area of danger or they actually turn up  
 18 on a scene and people assume that they -- they approach  
 19 them and start assuming they're in command or in  
 20 a position to start making decisions, and that has  
 21 happened in years gone by.  
 22 Q. In short therefore, where command structures are to  
 23 exist, they ought to be put in place formally and that  
 24 may be subverted if people self-mobilise or self-deploy?  
 25 A. Absolutely.

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1 Q. So Mr Fletcher was speaking to you and expressing his  
 2 concern that he might be perceived as self-mobilising?  
 3 A. Yes.  
 4 Q. What was your reaction to that?  
 5 A. Firstly, it was nice to be informed. I know John very  
 6 well and the fact that he was proceeding to the command  
 7 support room, as I acknowledged, was a right move and  
 8 a good move as far as I was concerned.  
 9 Q. Why was that a right and good move so far as you were  
 10 concerned?  
 11 A. Because his knowledge of NILO working, his knowledge of  
 12 FDOs, his knowledge of Plato-type incidents and his  
 13 knowledge of probably the Airwave system, really.  
 14 Q. Was it also your expectation that, if needs be, he would  
 15 be someone who would know how to get hold of the FDO?  
 16 A. Absolutely, yes.  
 17 Q. So that would be someone you'd have in the CSR who would  
 18 have that knowledge and that capability?  
 19 A. Yes, sir.  
 20 Q. Did you also say to Group Manager Fletcher that he  
 21 should not make decisions without informing you first?  
 22 A. I did, yes.  
 23 Q. What was the purpose in giving him that instruction?  
 24 A. I wanted to make sure we had, firstly, a joined-up  
 25 approach from Manchester Fire. I'm very keen that as

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1 much information as possible goes through North West  
 2 Fire Control so they've got the big picture and that  
 3 we've got a record, if you like, of a sequence of  
 4 events, messages, radio messages, all that sort of  
 5 stuff.  
 6 Q. And we are a little later going to see a call that you  
 7 made in which you made it absolutely clear that you  
 8 expected decisions to go through NWFC, but this is an  
 9 example of you seeking to achieve that.  
 10 At 23.23, whilst still, we know, on the road, you  
 11 spoke again to the chief fire officer, Mr O'Reilly. So  
 12 {INQ041473/46} next, please. There we see you to  
 13 Mr O'Reilly, a duration 0.68 of a minute.  
 14 I do appreciate that throughout all of this journey,  
 15 you are making or receiving calls, trying to make  
 16 organisational decisions about what to happen, but do  
 17 you remember that particular call with Mr O'Reilly?  
 18 A. I think I had two calls, if I remember. I think  
 19 I remember that one, yes.  
 20 Q. What do you remember of a second call with Mr O'Reilly?  
 21 A. If I've got my timing right in my head, I'd informed  
 22 Control not to respond to any incidents in the area of  
 23 the MEN or into the city centre unless they were  
 24 life-threatening incidents.  
 25 Q. Pause there for one minute. I think this may be an

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1 example of you getting things in slightly the wrong  
 2 order because we're going to see that you make a call to  
 3 Mr O'Reilly and, immediately afterwards, you make the  
 4 call that you're remembering to North West Fire Control.  
 5 So just fix that in your mind, that order. I think what  
 6 you're remembering is that you called North West Fire  
 7 Control, gave them that instruction, and then told  
 8 Mr O'Reilly. I think what seems to have happened is you  
 9 spoke to Mr O'Reilly, told him what you were going to  
 10 do, and then spoke to North West Fire Control.  
 11 A. That's quite possible, yes.  
 12 Q. I've told you about the order of the conversations.  
 13 Just tell us again, please, what you recall of your  
 14 conversation at 23.23 with the CFO?  
 15 A. It would have been -- my intention then -- I thought I'd  
 16 done it -- would have been to inform North West Fire  
 17 Control not to mobilise any assets to the area unless  
 18 they were life-threatening incidents, such as a house  
 19 fire, persons reported, something like that.  
 20 Q. In one moment I'll ask you why you made that decision,  
 21 but first of all did the chief fire officer agree with  
 22 your assessment?  
 23 A. Absolutely. His words were along the lines of: good  
 24 call, Dean.  
 25 Q. And then as I said, exactly a minute later at 23.24, as

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1 in fact we can see from the screen, you made a call to  
 2 North West Fire Control, spoke to Mr Ellis, and just to  
 3 break this up, we will listen to that call and have the  
 4 transcript on the screen. Then I'll ask you why you  
 5 gave the instruction you gave.  
 6 Mr Lopez, the audio is {INQ004435/1}. The  
 7 transcript is {INQ001206/1}.  
 8 (Audio played)  
 9 So obviously, the attack at the arena had happened  
 10 in the city centre. Were you trying to achieve  
 11 a situation in which no resources went there or were you  
 12 trying to achieve a different state of affairs in that  
 13 call?  
 14 A. A different state of affairs, sir.  
 15 Q. So what was the situation that you were seeking to  
 16 achieve?  
 17 A. We do tend to get a lot of, if I may, rubbish fires,  
 18 fires in the open, fires that are no danger to property  
 19 or people. I didn't want resources being deployed that  
 20 we might need for an incident. And also, probably from  
 21 speaking to Andy, I don't know, but in the back of my  
 22 head there was always a secondary device, so sending  
 23 appliances into an area in the city centre, we might be  
 24 exposing them without any information, so...  
 25 Q. So you were trying to achieve, I think, two things.

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1 First of all, to make sure that resources weren't tied  
 2 up on non-emergencies in circumstances in which they  
 3 might be needed to go to the arena?  
 4 A. Yes.  
 5 Q. And secondly, who was to know what might be in store for  
 6 a resource that was deployed to the city centre given  
 7 what happened at the arena?  
 8 A. Yes.  
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You used the word "confirm". That  
 10 normally means you're repeating something they already  
 11 would know. Is that right or just a use of language?  
 12 A. Just use of language I think, sir.  
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.  
 14 MR GREANEY: By this stage you are still on the road. As  
 15 I told you yesterday, the MODAS system indicates you  
 16 arrived at the CSR at 23.41. And having come off the  
 17 telephone with NWFC, you were back on the phone again.  
 18 This time, you spoke for the first time that night to  
 19 Group Manager Ben Levy, one of the NILOs. So Mr Lopez,  
 20 this is the schedule, {INQ041473/48}.  
 21 23.26, and the duration is not far short of  
 22 3 minutes. Just so we can picture what's happening at  
 23 this stage, Ben Levy had been called very much as you  
 24 had been called, in fact he was paged first of all, and  
 25 as you spoke to him at this time, 23.26, he was on his

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1 way to Philips Park. He was about 9 or 10 minutes away.  
 2 Do you remember that conversation with Mr Levy?  
 3 A. I do, yes.  
 4 Q. What was discussed between the two of you?  
 5 A. Very similar in respect -- that I'd had with John  
 6 Fletcher that -- Ben obviously told me he was proceeding  
 7 to Philips Park. But again, I was very keen that  
 8 I wanted all the messages and all the information to go  
 9 through one source and ideally that's North West Fire  
 10 Control. I was very keen, again, to make sure we didn't  
 11 have anybody self-mobilising or sending -- making  
 12 decisions that weren't in a sort of coordinated manner.  
 13 Q. I think it would be fair to say from what you've told us  
 14 already that, (1), you did not with him whether  
 15 deployment to Philips Park was the right thing to do?  
 16 A. No, sir.  
 17 Q. You just assumed there was a good reason for it?  
 18 A. I did.  
 19 Q. And secondly, I think in common with all of those you  
 20 had spoken to so far, you have no recollection of having  
 21 told them that you had been told that an NWSA Bronze was  
 22 at the scene?  
 23 A. I don't, sir, no.  
 24 Q. We have heard in the inquiry a good deal of evidence  
 25 about the way in which GMFRS organised the command of an

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1 incident. So I would like to know, please, if you're  
 2 able to help us, at that stage, as you made your way to  
 3 the CSR, and perhaps at this moment at 23.26, as you  
 4 spoke to Mr Levy, who did you consider, if anyone, was  
 5 in command of the incident at the arena?  
 6 A. My assumption at that point was that Andy Berry had  
 7 assumed an element of command.  
 8 Q. Did you assume that, just as your role was going to be  
 9 to support him, that the role of Mr Levy was to advise  
 10 him, or did you think Mr Levy was going to have some  
 11 different role?  
 12 A. No, I knew that Ben being a NILO, he'd be responding in  
 13 his role as a NILO, not as an incident commander at that  
 14 stage. He would have been there as part of the NILO  
 15 cadre.  
 16 Q. And we've understood their role is an advisory one; have  
 17 we understood that correctly?  
 18 A. It should be an advisory role, yes, sir.  
 19 Q. You paused before answering that question and said, "It  
 20 should be an advisory role". Was there anything lying  
 21 behind that answer and that pause?  
 22 A. No, just that the NILOs are a specialist officer, just  
 23 like a hazmat officer or a flood manager or missing  
 24 person manager. A NILO is there just to advise and  
 25 support.

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1 Q. I am going to ask you for your views about NILOs in  
 2 a short time, so could you get ready for that?  
 3 Could we go to {INQ041473/50}, please, of the  
 4 schedule. We can see at 23.30, the CSR was opened by  
 5 Area Manager Etches, and at that stage you still had not  
 6 quite arrived at the CSR.  
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Had someone issued an instruction  
 8 earlier to open it up and get it going?  
 9 A. The command support room, sir?  
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes.  
 11 A. No, that was me. That was purely me and Paul.  
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So you arrived there and at that stage  
 13 you'd have to set the computers up and things like that  
 14 or turn them on?  
 15 A. Absolutely. When you arrive at headquarters, and I've  
 16 done it on my own a number of times, firstly you have to  
 17 get through the main gate, which is secure, the lights  
 18 are generally off, you then make your way up, once  
 19 security have let you in, to the command support room,  
 20 which is a dark room, and then you have to power up all  
 21 the computers and all the screens and all the lights  
 22 and --  
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We understand there's a technical person  
 24 who's there.  
 25 A. No, just me. Just me generally, sir.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Does a technical person arrive at some  
 2 stage?  
 3 A. We would generally get a -- if I can term it as an admin  
 4 support officer -- they would come and they would assist  
 5 with that.  
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I just wonder why someone is not  
 7 mobilised in advance to do that stuff.  
 8 A. No, not at all, sir. It's very dark. When you arrive,  
 9 it's not a living thing, it's a very dark room when you  
 10 actually arrive there. There's not a lot going on when  
 11 you actually get there.  
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: How long does it take you to bring it to  
 13 life?  
 14 A. Probably sort of 15 minutes, I would have thought, to  
 15 get any kind of light into the system, sir.  
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. But it's not possible to have  
 17 a system where a technician of some sort actually goes  
 18 and opens it up ready for when you get there?  
 19 A. I would say that was possible, sir, yes.  
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: There's one other thing I'd like to deal  
 21 with at the moment -- two things, really.  
 22 First of all, it's a general thing which perhaps you  
 23 would like to comment on later. You're very keen, and  
 24 I well understand why, why everything should go through  
 25 NWFC because it's quite important that everything is on

23

1 the log.  
 2 A. Yes, sir.  
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And from what we've heard, and perhaps  
 4 you've heard about it too, it doesn't necessarily mean  
 5 that everything did go through NWFC.  
 6 A. I would agree with that, yes.  
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: One of the reasons why everything should  
 8 go through NWFC is that it's all on the log for someone  
 9 to look at to inform them of what's going on. It's  
 10 apparent that you and really all the other officers  
 11 we've heard about, when they hear about the emergency,  
 12 as soon as they can, they're on the road and going  
 13 somewhere. Perhaps that's the instinctive reaction of  
 14 the Fire Service.  
 15 A. Indeed, sir.  
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Would it be better -- would it have been  
 17 better if someone actually stopped and looked at the log  
 18 so they had all the information, somebody in a senior  
 19 position, and if necessary operated from home?  
 20 MR GREANEY: You are jumping ahead to quite an important  
 21 issue that I'm keen to deal with in a different way.  
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: As Mr Greaney would say, have that in  
 23 mind for the future then.  
 24 MR GREANEY: I'm sorry, sir. There is just one thing I'd  
 25 like to pick up on as a result of the chairman's

24

1 questions. You've obviously seen the point. Here  
 2 we have a situation in which at 23.30, so 59 minutes  
 3 after the explosion, and many minutes after North West  
 4 Fire Control are aware that there has been a bomb  
 5 detonation, the assistant principal officer is walking  
 6 into a darkened room and is switching on lights and  
 7 switching on computers. And then 11 minutes after that,  
 8 the duty group manager is turning up and helping him to  
 9 do that. And that does not sound, do you agree, like  
 10 a good use of resources?  
 11 A. I would absolutely agree with you, sir.  
 12 Q. Because someone could have been walking into that room  
 13 as soon as North West Fire Control and the Fire and  
 14 Rescue Service knew what had happened and was getting it  
 15 ready for you, the people who were going to provide  
 16 support, to walk into and get working?  
 17 A. I would agree, sir.  
 18 Q. So that perhaps is a lesson to be learned, do you agree?  
 19 A. Indeed.  
 20 Q. Three minutes after the CSR was opened and you were on  
 21 your way there still, you called North West Fire Control  
 22 again. This takes us to {INQ041473/51} of the schedule.  
 23 I'm sure it'd be fair to observe that anyone that  
 24 considers your conduct over this period would be bound  
 25 to recognise that you were in constant contact with

25

1 people, were you not?  
 2 A. I was, sir, yes.  
 3 Q. So there is that call, 23.33, and the very short summary  
 4 again is accurate:  
 5 "Requests contact details for all NILOs for  
 6 Manchester."  
 7 In fact, there is a little more to that call. One  
 8 of the things that you said was that you wanted all  
 9 NILOs to monitor their pagers and radios but not to call  
 10 in; do you remember that?  
 11 A. I do, yes.  
 12 Q. What was your -- first of all, were you talking about  
 13 all NILOs or all NILOs save for those who had been  
 14 deployed?  
 15 A. All NILOs apart from those that had already been  
 16 involved in the incident.  
 17 Q. So apart from Mr Berry, Mr Meakin and Mr Levy?  
 18 A. Yes, sir.  
 19 Q. What was your purpose in saying that they were not to  
 20 call in but instead were to keep their eyes on the pager  
 21 and listen to their radios?  
 22 A. Again, it was to avoid any kind of conflict,  
 23 self-mobilisation or missed information, exchanges,  
 24 basically -- because the NILOs are a very tight group.  
 25 Q. Were you also keen to avoid a situation in which your

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1 time or your team's time might be taken up with NILOs  
 2 calling in and saying, "Do you want us"?  
 3 A. I'd already had contact from somebody saying that a NILO  
 4 had phoned in asking, does he want me to respond, and my  
 5 view on that is if I want anybody to respond I'll tell  
 6 control to get them to respond.  
 7 Q. So your view was: this is going to be driven proactively  
 8 by me making decisions about who needs to go where as  
 9 opposed to me reacting to people calling in and saying,  
 10 "Do you want me"?  
 11 A. Indeed, yes.  
 12 Q. And you were trying to take control of that situation?  
 13 A. I was, yes.  
 14 Q. By now you were nearing the CSR. And if we go to  
 15 {INQ041473/52} we can see you made a series of calls.  
 16 First of all, at 23.35, you called Assistant Chief  
 17 Fire Officer Keelan for 1 minute and just over  
 18 20 seconds. What was, insofar as you can recall, the  
 19 purpose of that call?  
 20 A. I'd have to be absolutely honest and say I can't even  
 21 recall speaking to Mr Keelan.  
 22 Q. To be fair to you, you don't refer to it in your  
 23 statement either so I won't press you further upon it.  
 24 Then if we go over to -- let's stay there first of  
 25 all. At 23.36, we can see that you made a call to

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1 Mr O'Reilly, which is very short and may therefore have  
 2 been a missed call. And almost immediately afterwards,  
 3 he called you and there was a contact lasting for about  
 4 20 seconds.  
 5 And then if we go over the page, {INQ041473/53},  
 6 we can see at 23.37 he calls you again, and there is  
 7 a substantial contact at that stage of approaching  
 8 3.5 minutes. Do you see that?  
 9 A. I do, yes.  
 10 Q. It looks, does it not, as if you tried to get in touch  
 11 with him, you couldn't, he tried to get you back, and  
 12 then eventually gets hold of you?  
 13 A. I would say so, yes.  
 14 Q. This is the third contact with Mr O'Reilly. It might be  
 15 thought an important one. I'm going to ask you whether  
 16 you recall that call.  
 17 A. I do, yes.  
 18 Q. Could you tell us what was discussed in those  
 19 3.5 minutes?  
 20 A. Yes, I was informing the chief that I was and Paul were  
 21 both in attendance at the command support room. I told  
 22 him that it was starting to hit the airwaves on the  
 23 normal radio and TV channels, that Ben Levy was on his  
 24 way to Philips Park. And he informed me that -- I can't  
 25 remember the exact time, but he was a few minutes away

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1 from the command support room.  
 2 Q. Do you remember that he told you something which came as  
 3 something of a surprise, namely that Assistant Chief  
 4 Fire Officer Harris was also going to attend the CSR?  
 5 A. I do, yes, sir.  
 6 Q. I said you were surprised; am I right?  
 7 A. Yes, sir, definitely.  
 8 Q. Why were you surprised?  
 9 A. One, even though principal officers are on duty 24/7,  
 10 365 days a year, I wasn't aware that -- at the time, my  
 11 recollection is that Mr Harris was actually off sick or  
 12 certainly not in work, and also I didn't see at that  
 13 stage the requirement -- it just seemed an odd thing to  
 14 be happening.  
 15 Q. You've expressed yourself with what might be thought to  
 16 be a good deal of diplomacy, but would it be fair to say  
 17 that, as we're going to hear in due course, in the  
 18 result Mr Harris got in the way in the CSR?  
 19 A. I would agree, sir, yes.  
 20 Q. And I think I know that you won't be keen to agree with  
 21 this, but he is not someone for whom you have a high  
 22 opinion, is he?  
 23 A. I don't, sir, no.  
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You'd better tell me in what way you  
 25 think he got in the way. It's obviously a fairly small

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1 area from what we've seen on the photographs.  
 2 A. It is.  
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So I can understand physically. You  
 4 also have Mr Fletcher in as extra. Is it actual  
 5 physical space for people?  
 6 MR GREANEY: We are going to come to Mr Harris.  
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I just want that particular  
 8 getting in the way explained at some stage.  
 9 MR GREANEY: I promise you, sir, it will be explained at  
 10 some stage. There's a particular phrase which is  
 11 illuminating that Mr Nankivell used during Kerslake that  
 12 we'll come back to.  
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.  
 14 MR GREANEY: Sorry, my structure is my structure. This is  
 15 your inquiry. If you want to deal with things in  
 16 a different way --  
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, your structure, you're asking the  
 18 questions.  
 19 MR GREANEY: We were dealing with the calls that you made  
 20 just before you got to the CSR. We have dealt with the  
 21 CFO call in which you learned and were surprised by Mr  
 22 Harris' attendance.  
 23 Thirdly, if we go to {INQ041473/55}, please. We can  
 24 see that at 23.41, so this must, I think, have been just  
 25 as you were arriving, you were called by Station

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1 Manager Topping. And there was a contact lasting for  
 2 a little over 1 minute. Do you recall that  
 3 conversation?  
 4 A. I do, yes.  
 5 Q. First of all, what was the role of Station Manager  
 6 Alan Topping that night?  
 7 A. He was the nominated command support officer for the  
 8 night.  
 9 Q. What is the role of a command support officer?  
 10 A. It's just that he relieves the incident commander of --  
 11 doesn't take the role away, but he alleviates the  
 12 functional elements of an incident commander, so he  
 13 supports the incident commander with information  
 14 control, constructing radio messages and managing the  
 15 area of the command support unit when it's mobilised.  
 16 Q. So it's an important supportive role?  
 17 A. A key element for me as an incident commander.  
 18 Q. And I've said we're going to come back to a number of  
 19 things. We are going to come back to the extent to  
 20 which Mr Topping was really able to perform that role  
 21 that night.  
 22 So that's who he was. What happened in the course  
 23 of your discussion with him at 23.41?  
 24 A. I spoke to Al a couple of times, I spoke to him a lot,  
 25 but leading up to him becoming directly involved, he had

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1 already been or was on an incident. As I recall it was  
 2 in the Stockport area, which is a significant way from  
 3 where he lives, but --  
 4 Q. We know in fact from other evidence that there had been  
 5 a factory fire in Stockport that night. I don't know if  
 6 that was the same incident and maybe you don't know  
 7 either.  
 8 A. I didn't know the details of the incident.  
 9 Q. At all events he was some distance away?  
 10 A. He was some distance away. There'd been a couple of  
 11 things that had happened. I'd already spoken to one of  
 12 the stations about -- I don't remember who, if I'm  
 13 honest, a firefighter or fire officer, that they'd had  
 14 somebody actually go off duty because they had family  
 15 down at the arena.  
 16 Q. Yes.  
 17 A. I think I had a number of calls to that accord leading  
 18 up to this point and I know that at some point during  
 19 the call, Al Topping had rang me to say that this had  
 20 actually happened and he'd dealt with it for me. So if  
 21 there was anything on my voicemail, don't worry about  
 22 it, he'd dealt with it.  
 23 Q. Obviously, the events at the arena were at the forefront  
 24 of your mind at this stage. Did you agree whether or  
 25 not he was going to perform any role so far as the

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1 response to the arena attack was concerned?  
 2 A. No, he was -- I think he was mobile at this time and  
 3 I said that I was on my way to the command support,  
 4 I said there was an incident, I was a bit short on  
 5 information at this moment. I can't quite remember if  
 6 he said should he go to Central or whether he said he  
 7 should come to the command support room, but whatever  
 8 way he said, I didn't want him to respond anywhere yet  
 9 because I wasn't sure where or if I was going to need  
 10 him.  
 11 Q. In the result, was an agreement reached that he would  
 12 wait at his home for further instruction?  
 13 A. Yes, sir.  
 14 Q. We have now arrived in your account at the CSR. As  
 15 I indicated, the MODAS system records, {INQ041473/55},  
 16 that's where we are, you arriving at 23.41.46 at the  
 17 CSR. Ms Cartwright took Mr Fletcher yesterday to images  
 18 of the CSR and we'll just remind ourselves of those.  
 19 {INQ041614/3-4}.  
 20 Is that showing the CSR as it was set up on the  
 21 night of the incident?  
 22 A. Yes, sir, I would say yes.  
 23 Q. Then we can see the other end of the room in the  
 24 photograph at {INQ041614/4}. Is that the view of the  
 25 cameraman at the other end of the room?

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1 A. Indeed, sir, yes.  
 2 Q. When you walked in, as the chairman has established with  
 3 you, Area Manager Etches was already there?  
 4 A. Yes.  
 5 Q. And he was in the process of switching on the equipment?  
 6 A. Yes, he was, sir.  
 7 Q. But am I right that at that stage, the CFO, Mr O'Reilly,  
 8 the ACFO, Mr Harris, and Group Manager Fletcher, were  
 9 not yet there?  
 10 A. No, they weren't, no.  
 11 Q. As I told you, I do want to explore you with the  
 12 decision--making once they all arrived, but before that,  
 13 two issues. First, if we could go back to the schedule  
 14 of communications, {INQ041473/55}.  
 15 As you were arriving in the CSR, as you can see, at  
 16 23.42, you were called by North West Fire Control,  
 17 Dean Casey. Again, the summary is perfectly adequate  
 18 for our purposes. You were told:  
 19 "David's just sending the message out now to all the  
 20 NILOs like you requested."  
 21 So that's a reference back to, "Don't call me, I'll  
 22 call you":  
 23 "Do you want them to monitor a certain Talk Group or  
 24 are you happy for them to monitor just their pagers?"  
 25 And you replied:

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1 "Just the pagers for now."  
 2 Were you again talking about the NILOs other than  
 3 those who were mustering at Philips Park?  
 4 A. I was, sir, yes.  
 5 Q. Obviously, there's a reference to Talk Groups. So far  
 6 as you know, was any Talk Group used that night by  
 7 GMFRS?  
 8 A. I can't recall, sir.  
 9 Q. I said there were two issues and the second is a little  
 10 more complicated and it takes us back to a point that  
 11 the chairman was interested in for perfectly  
 12 understandable reasons.  
 13 It relates to the log or logs opened by North West  
 14 Fire Control in relation to these events. As I think  
 15 you told us, you weren't aware, although Mr Fletcher,  
 16 I think, was, North West Fire Control opened a number of  
 17 logs. There are three of particular importance, as  
 18 you'll have heard me say yesterday. We'll just look at  
 19 them on the screen.  
 20 The first is the Ellis log, so 9074. It's  
 21 {INQ008376/1}. This is the log that David Ellis created  
 22 at 22.38, so there was a call to North West Fire Control  
 23 that started about something different, about fireworks,  
 24 you probably know this. At 22.34 information starts to  
 25 come through to David Ellis and he starts the log at

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1 22.38. We looked at this yesterday and saw what was  
 2 available at the time of the call to you at 22.52.  
 3 That's the first log, the Ellis log.  
 4 The second log is the Gregson log, 9078,  
 5 {INQ008375/1}. We'll look first at page 1, please, and  
 6 then INQ008375/3 as well. This was a log created by  
 7 Michelle Gregson at 22.48, and as she explained to  
 8 the chairman, the purpose of this log was to avoid  
 9 people deploying to the arena, but instead caused them  
 10 to deploy to Philips Park. So this is the Gregson or  
 11 Philips Park log.  
 12 The third log, the Fallon log, 9083, is  
 13 {INQ008373/1}. Could you go to the first page of the  
 14 actual log? It's probably {INQ008373/3}, Mr Lopez.  
 15 Just enlarge the text, please.  
 16 This is a log that was created by Rochelle Fallon at  
 17 23.13, and the purpose of it, at least as I've  
 18 understood it, was to deal with the deployment of  
 19 personnel, including you, to the CSR that you can see  
 20 at the top of that page. There are cross-referenced  
 21 a number of other logs, including 9074, which is the  
 22 Ellis log, that contains all of the information that we  
 23 looked at yesterday. We'll come back to one of the logs  
 24 in a moment but that will do for the time being,  
 25 Mr Lopez.

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1 What you explained to me yesterday, Mr Nankivell,  
 2 was that when you were at home, you made a decision that  
 3 you wouldn't look at the log because you knew as much as  
 4 you needed to know to open the CSR?  
 5 A. Indeed, sir.  
 6 Q. But that looking at the log was something to be done  
 7 once the CSR was up and running?  
 8 A. Yes.  
 9 Q. We, by which I mean the inquiry legal team, have  
 10 considered these logs closely, although we can't pretend  
 11 to be the master of every piece of information within  
 12 them, and what we believe to be the position is that  
 13 when the log is viewed, I don't mean by us, I mean by  
 14 North West Fire Control or by a firefighter, the number  
 15 of the person doing that viewing is recorded in the log.  
 16 Okay? Does that make sense so far?  
 17 A. It makes sense, sir, yes.  
 18 Q. Again, I'm not expecting you're an expert. If I've got  
 19 any of this wrong, I'm sure I will be put right. Let's  
 20 just look at one example. Let's go back to the Ellis  
 21 log, {INQ008376/6}.  
 22 Can you see an entry at 22.48.33, with the operator  
 23 being 41170? Do you see that?  
 24 A. Yes, sir.  
 25 Q. "Comment: event 9074 viewed at..."

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1 And the time is then given. So that seems to us as  
 2 an example of someone viewing the log and that being  
 3 captured on the log itself. Are you with me so far?  
 4 A. I am, sir, yes.  
 5 Q. The log—in detail we've just looked at, 41170, is the  
 6 log—in number for the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service  
 7 media liaison officer. He or she, they, viewed this  
 8 particular log on 13 occasions over the course of that  
 9 night, and indeed that person looked at one of the other  
 10 logs as well. But what we have been unable to identify  
 11 is any entry showing that you viewed this log or any of  
 12 them or that any of your colleagues in the CSR did.  
 13 A. And you won't, sir, no.  
 14 Q. I've tried to deal with this in a neutral way without  
 15 loading my questions. Is that because no one viewed the  
 16 log or is there some other explanation?  
 17 A. There's another explanation.  
 18 Q. Would you tell me what that is, please?  
 19 A. I will, sir. In the actual command support room, as  
 20 I remember, there's a set log—in for the logs. So  
 21 there's a code, password if you like, that's typed in,  
 22 and that would open up on the log on the screen. So  
 23 we'd have a log—in for each computer, each computer,  
 24 whether it was the weather, whether it was the log, or  
 25 whether it was the mobilising — appliance positioning,

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1 there was a log—in. I would never have used my own  
 2 log—in to log in in the command support room.  
 3 Q. I am sure you will have appreciated that I expressed my  
 4 questions without suggesting that you hadn't, should we  
 5 understand that your position is that you did look  
 6 at the log when you arrived in the CSR?  
 7 A. At some point I would have definitely looked at the log.  
 8 Which log I was looking at I wouldn't be able to verify  
 9 now. I didn't know there were three or four logs at  
 10 that time.  
 11 Q. You wouldn't have been very interested in the logs that  
 12 dealt with deployment to the CSR or that interested in  
 13 documents to Philips Park, would you? You'd have been  
 14 interested in the log that showed what other people knew  
 15 about what was going on?  
 16 A. I would have done, but I wouldn't have known at that  
 17 time that there was AN Other log, if you like.  
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Would you be aware that NWFC might open  
 19 more than one log for the same incident?  
 20 A. I know it's happened lots of time because when we've had  
 21 large incidents there seems to be a myriad of different  
 22 logs. I have never actually understood why there is a  
 23 myriad of different incident logs. I've got more of an  
 24 idea now because of this inquiry but I didn't know  
 25 at the time.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You would know, would you, that you need  
 2 to search for more than one?  
 3 A. Not at this time I didn't, no.  
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So at this time looking for logs,  
 5 you were just looking for one?  
 6 A. I would bring it up. There was an incident number for  
 7 the incident. I'd type up the incident number, that  
 8 would bring up the log and that's where I'd go looking  
 9 for the information.  
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Which log would come up? We don't know?  
 11 MR GREANEY: (Overspeaking) — well, it would depend upon  
 12 what incident reference one put in, whether one put in  
 13 9074, 9078 or the other reference.  
 14 Can we look at it this way? That if you'd sought  
 15 access to a log and what had come up was a log telling  
 16 you who'd come to the CSR, you wouldn't have thought  
 17 that that was very informative, would you?  
 18 A. No, I wouldn't.  
 19 Q. And you must have realised that there must have been  
 20 a log that contained information about what NWFC had  
 21 been told about what had occurred at the arena?  
 22 A. I would have that thought at that point there was  
 23 a vacuum or there was some more information somewhere  
 24 that I wasn't privy to, yes.  
 25 Q. Let me ask you a direct question or direct questions.

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1 You believe you looked at the log at some stage. At  
 2 what stage did you look at the log?  
 3 A. I can't recall, sir. My position in the command support  
 4 room at that time was at the other end of the command  
 5 support room. I wasn't at the log end of it. That's  
 6 not an excuse. I was dealing with lots of other things,  
 7 not the log.  
 8 Q. You are there at 11.41. The chief fire officer and  
 9 others turn up, as we're going to see, very shortly  
 10 after you turn up. On that 9074 log there was all the  
 11 information anyone needed to know that your emergency  
 12 service partners had deployed in numbers to the scene of  
 13 the attack. Did anyone within the CSR register or, even  
 14 better, communicate to others there: do you know what,  
 15 guys, we know that our emergency service partners are  
 16 there on the ground helping the people?  
 17 A. I think that -- I'm not sure whether we would have got  
 18 it from the log or from messages or phone calls, but  
 19 I think it was quite clear, to me anyway, that ambo was  
 20 slightly on scene. I certainly would have expected  
 21 police to be there anyway but I think it was fairly  
 22 clear to me that we had ambo in attendance.  
 23 Q. From 23.41 when you got there, or shortly afterwards  
 24 when everything had been switched on, was it your view  
 25 that the Fire and Rescue Service needed to be deploying

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1 to the scene?  
 2 A. For want of a better phrase, we needed to get into the  
 3 game, yes.  
 4 Q. Were you thinking to yourself: why are we not there  
 5 already?  
 6 A. Yes, I would agree with that.  
 7 Q. Let's move on in time.  
 8 Sir, is there anything else you want to ask about  
 9 logs before we move on?  
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, thank you.  
 11 MR GREANEY: As you explained --  
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Well, only the issue which you may be  
 13 coming back to as to whether someone should have been  
 14 looking at the log before they set off.  
 15 MR GREANEY: I'm going to come back to that, sir, yes.  
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.  
 17 MR GREANEY: As you explained yesterday, and as you have  
 18 indeed told us again today, your view was that  
 19 everything should go through Control.  
 20 I told you that we would look at an entry in the  
 21 schedule that supported that and we'll do that at this  
 22 stage because, at 23.46, you made a call to North West  
 23 Fire Control and you spoke to Janine Carden.  
 24 Mr Lopez, this is {INQ041473/58}. Once again, it  
 25 won't be necessary to listen to this recording. We see

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1 it there. You made that call. You have said:  
 2 "Me and Paul Etches are in the command support room  
 3 and the chief is 2 minutes away."  
 4 This is plainly a reference back to the call  
 5 you have told us about with him:  
 6 "I don't think John Fletcher is far away. I have  
 7 told him and I have told Ben don't make any decisions  
 8 because they're not on... Ben, they'll kind of run away  
 9 with it and put resources in the wrong basket. So I've  
 10 said everything must come through you and the command  
 11 support room before we start."  
 12 So this is the point you have made repeatedly: you  
 13 expected everything to go through them?  
 14 A. Absolutely.  
 15 Q. What did you mean by don't make any decisions? Did you  
 16 mean don't make decisions without communicating it to  
 17 NWFC?  
 18 A. Without communicating it to NWFC, sir.  
 19 Q. And Janine Carden says:  
 20 "Well, that's what I've said to our staff here. As  
 21 long as we keep calm and just listen to whatever you ask  
 22 and do it."  
 23 "Perfect", you said.  
 24 Over the page:  
 25 "We'll be all right."

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1 "Yes, good, good. Have you got any more updates  
 2 that we're not privy of?"  
 3 And North West Fire Control say:  
 4 "No, we haven't. John Fletcher en route. He has  
 5 asked if I could put [and there's some OS material]. He  
 6 has also asked me to put MTF A on standby. I've done  
 7 that and I'm just waiting to... sort of hear."  
 8 When you said, "Have you got any more updates that  
 9 we're not privy of?", what were you hoping to receive?  
 10 A. Probably information I didn't have at that time  
 11 regarding other assets, any messages or something like  
 12 that. I've asked at the very beginning -- I would  
 13 expect that if they there had been a METHANE message  
 14 communicated, I would have expected them to have told me  
 15 things like that.  
 16 Q. You then say:  
 17 "We've got no pumps down at the actual scene of it,  
 18 have we?"  
 19 And if we listen to the recording would we hear  
 20 a sense disappointment, do you think, in your voice as  
 21 you said that?  
 22 A. Absolutely, sir.  
 23 Q. "No, no, no, no. We've just got them at Philips Park.  
 24 We've got two pumps Central, one pump Gorton, and one  
 25 Philips Park, together with three NILOs, Ben, Carlos and

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1 Andy Berry down there as well. We've got the two SRT  
 2 vehicles and TRU, but they've brought the bloody MRU as  
 3 well. There's a time and a place."  
 4 What's the MRU?  
 5 A. It's another response unit that goes with the technical  
 6 response unit for — it carries slightly different  
 7 equipment and I've told them a myriad of times that when  
 8 they go to an incident, take one vehicle. If they are  
 9 going to a road traffic collision, then take both  
 10 vehicles, but they got into the habit of taking both  
 11 vehicles. The problem that creates is if they get  
 12 diverted to another incident, they are not on the right  
 13 vehicle, basically.  
 14 Q. What were you being told and you knew already probably  
 15 was that at Philips Park there were many resources of  
 16 the Fire and Rescue Service, including specialist  
 17 resources?  
 18 A. Indeed, sir, yes.  
 19 Q. You said:  
 20 "If Ben Levy is the DIM officer..."  
 21 DIM being?  
 22 A. DIM is detection, identification and monitoring, so it  
 23 is to do with hazmat.  
 24 Q. Then:  
 25 "We're short of a DIM and hazmat tonight, aren't we?"

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1 "In that case I'll ring Paul Bedford (sic) and bump  
 2 him up to hazmat tonight."  
 3 This was you making a decision, am I right, not  
 4 in relation to what's happening at the arena but just to  
 5 make sure that a resource which had been sucked away to  
 6 the arena was being backfilled by someone else?  
 7 A. Yes, Paul Redford is...  
 8 Q. NWFC:  
 9 "But you're not doing recall of anyone like that at  
 10 this stage?"  
 11 And you say:  
 12 "Not until we've got more information."  
 13 And then this:  
 14 "Just so you know, John Fletcher and the chief are  
 15 now in the command support as well."  
 16 So during the course of that call, you'll be able to  
 17 agree, some time shortly after 23.46, the CFO and  
 18 Mr Fletcher had arrived?  
 19 A. Yes, sir.  
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The fact that you are so concerned about  
 21 everyone doing everything through Control for  
 22 understandable reasons, does that indicate, because  
 23 you're actually doing it before it's even happened, as  
 24 it were, that you were worried that that might be the  
 25 case that people wouldn't be sending stuff through

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1 Control?  
 2 A. It was, yes.  
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's because of previous experience?  
 4 A. Experience and as useful as they are, mobile phones have  
 5 become a bit of a scourge. They're great for  
 6 communicating but they're a closed form of communication  
 7 so decisions get missed.  
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: They are not the most desirable because  
 9 mobile phones may have problems, particularly when  
 10 there's large usage in a particular area?  
 11 A. Indeed, sir.  
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And I think that part of the training?  
 13 A. Indeed.  
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So the fact that people don't do this in  
 15 practice, do everything through Control, is that  
 16 a training issue or just you can train them as much as  
 17 you like but they won't do it?  
 18 A. I think you're right with the second one, sir.  
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. Of course, the purpose of doing  
 20 everything through Control is really good provided  
 21 people are actually looking at the control log and the  
 22 relevant control log to see what's actually been  
 23 recorded on it?  
 24 A. Yes. I think being — at this stage in an emergency  
 25 phase, you are very much proactive, so the proactive

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1 officers or the officers responding go into to, shall  
 2 I say, emergency mode and unless you're in a more sat  
 3 back position or role, looking at the log would be a bit  
 4 of a luxury, if I'm honest, sir.  
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We know the NILOs have a WhatsApp group.  
 6 Does that help when you're trying to get everyone to go  
 7 through Control?  
 8 A. No, I don't believe it does, sir.  
 9 MR GREANEY: Thank you. There we are at 23.46 or shortly  
 10 afterwards and if we go forward to page {INQ041473/66}  
 11 we can see that there is then a gap in terms of  
 12 communications in which you're involved until shortly  
 13 after midnight because I think the next external  
 14 communication, by which I mean communication between you  
 15 and someone outside the CSR, is a call from Station  
 16 Manager Topping to you at 00.03. I'll ask you about  
 17 that in a short time.  
 18 But before we get to that, let's just remind  
 19 ourselves of what is happening at Philips Park because  
 20 by this stage, we've got effectively two teams or two  
 21 groups of firefighters. We've got those who are within  
 22 the CSR, of whom you're one, and we've got those at  
 23 Philips Park?  
 24 A. Indeed.  
 25 Q. So what was happening at Philips Park was this: by

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1 23.41, all three NILOs were at Philips Park. Mr Meakin  
 2 had arrived first, then Mr Levy had arrived and then  
 3 Mr Berry. As I'm certain you are aware, the atmosphere  
 4 there was, to say the least, tense, with firefighters  
 5 desperate to get to the scene.  
 6 A. So I understand, sir, yes.  
 7 Q. At 23.46, Ben Levy asked North West Fire Control to  
 8 ascertain an FCP.  
 9 At 23.52 they called him back and said that they  
 10 didn't know the FCP but that ambulances were  
 11 rendezvousing at Thompson Street.  
 12 At 23.53, Mr Levy spoke to the CFO and by that stage  
 13 he had decided that they were going to deploy to  
 14 Thompson Street as a prelude to going to the scene.  
 15 And then at 00.02, the first appliance arrived  
 16 there, Thompson Street. So all of that is happening  
 17 during that period of 16 minutes between 23.46 and  
 18 00.02.  
 19 Just pausing for a moment, you'll remember that the  
 20 chairman raised yesterday the issue of the choice of  
 21 Philips Park as a rendezvous point, and we've all well  
 22 understood that your position on the night was that  
 23 there must be some good reason for this.  
 24 A. Yes, sir.  
 25 Q. But obviously since then you have had the opportunity to

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1 reflect on the decisions that were made, have you not?  
 2 A. I have indeed, sir.  
 3 Q. And you had a discussion about this topic and others  
 4 with the Kerslake Panel on 17 November 2017. In it, you  
 5 explained that you would never yourself have selected  
 6 an RVP of Thompson Street, but instead from the off, if  
 7 it was not appropriate to deploy to the scene, you would  
 8 have chosen Manchester Central?  
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Which is Thompson Street.  
 10 MR GREANEY: I'm sorry, chosen Philips Park. Thank you,  
 11 sir.  
 12 Instead, you would have chosen Manchester Central?  
 13 A. Yes.  
 14 Q. Why would that have been your choice?  
 15 A. It's ideally located for access. It's got a huge  
 16 footprint and it's right on top of the city centre.  
 17 Q. The advantages that that gives are what?  
 18 A. Oncoming appliances have got plenty of space to  
 19 manoeuvre and park. There's loads of engine bays for  
 20 turning out with. It's speed of response to the city  
 21 centre. And most people in the service will be very,  
 22 very familiar because the training centre is just  
 23 adjacent, so the actual area, people will be very  
 24 familiar with how to get there and how to respond from  
 25 there.

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1 Q. Whilst we're dealing with the --  
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Are you leaving that topic?  
 3 MR GREANEY: Sort of, sir.  
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I well understand you saying, "I'm not  
 5 the decision maker here, I'm here for support". But  
 6 you're obviously a very experienced and knowledgeable  
 7 officer, and there are other experienced and  
 8 knowledgeable officers around you. Don't you actually  
 9 say, "why have they gone there"? You're not going to  
 10 interfere, but do you not say something like that to  
 11 yourselves?  
 12 A. I think off mic, I think those discussions did take  
 13 place. I did find it bizarre and I think they did take  
 14 place between myself and others.  
 15 MR GREANEY: I was going to ask you about a separate part of  
 16 what you said during the Kerslake discussion. We'll put  
 17 this on the screen, {INQ023518T/41}.  
 18 If you enlarge from "and what we needed was",  
 19 please.  
 20 I'm going to read out what you said at the time.  
 21 I think it would be fair to say that for a long time  
 22 after the events of 22 May, you were very angry about  
 23 what had gone wrong, as you perceived it, were you not?  
 24 A. I was incredibly angry, yes.  
 25 Q. In some of what you say to Kerslake, we're going to see

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1 some quite raw reaction; would you agree?  
 2 A. Yes, sir.  
 3 Q. Would you also agree that doesn't mean that what you  
 4 were saying wasn't right?  
 5 A. It was right at the time, definitely, sir.  
 6 Q. You say:  
 7 "And what we needed was -- the only way we were ever  
 8 going to make any kind of decision, informed decision,  
 9 was to have somebody, whether it was a watch manager on  
 10 a fire engine, or a station manager in his car, liaising  
 11 with somebody, or a NILO, or anybody going forward to  
 12 make those decisions and give us some ground truth.  
 13 That was the only way we were going to get that real  
 14 information and it wasn't until eventually we got  
 15 Andy Berry and three pumps down there that information  
 16 started to flow."  
 17 And sensing your feeling, the interviewer says:  
 18 "Frustrating?"  
 19 And you say:  
 20 "Frustrating. I mean, I've gone past anger. I was  
 21 incredibly angry on the night, and I was incredibly  
 22 angry on the day after and the day after. But I've kind  
 23 of moved on from anger because it doesn't -- it doesn't  
 24 achieve anything. The passion for me is to make -- we  
 25 don't -- we don't do this again."

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1 Then this:  
 2 "I know that if I'd been running it, and it's easy  
 3 to say in hindsight, but I would have done things  
 4 completely differently. I wouldn't have sent --  
 5 I wouldn't have got Philips Park involved. I would have  
 6 definitely gone forward and perhaps sometimes I can be  
 7 accused of not being risk averse enough, but it's just  
 8 that business we're in, unfortunately, and we have to  
 9 accept that we are going to take some risks. I think  
 10 they're controlled risks. I think there was enough  
 11 police officers on the ground, or should have been, at  
 12 that point, certainly armed response, and all that sort  
 13 of stuff, so I think there'd have been enough there to  
 14 help us."  
 15 Is what you said there really the core of your  
 16 feelings of what went wrong that night?  
 17 A. It was my feelings then and, if I'm honest, they're  
 18 still my feelings today, those comments.  
 19 Q. That what was needed at a very early stage was someone  
 20 from the Fire and Rescue Service to get down there to  
 21 the arena and get some situational awareness?  
 22 A. They needed a PDA or somebody down there to get the  
 23 ground truth, yes, definitely.  
 24 Q. We've been going for about an hour and 20 minutes. My  
 25 inclination is to press on. I'm not very far from being

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1 at the end of my questions. It might be half an hour.  
 2 (Pause)  
 3 MR GREANEY: We paused in the chronology, but you'll  
 4 remember that I had explained to you that between 23.46  
 5 and 00.03, you don't feature in the communications,  
 6 although that's not to suggest you weren't obviously  
 7 doing other things.  
 8 During that period, when as you know Ben Levy was  
 9 deciding to deploy to Thompson Street to co-locate with  
 10 the Ambulance Service, and then arriving there, we need  
 11 to know what was happening in the CSR. So can you tell  
 12 us what was happening during that period?  
 13 A. During the 16-minute window?  
 14 Q. 19 minutes in fact, but yes.  
 15 A. I can't give the exact scene, but I can tell you the  
 16 types of things that I would have been doing or thing s  
 17 that would have been going on.  
 18 Q. Yes, please do that and then we'll come to the call with  
 19 Mr Topping.  
 20 A. As you saw in the picture, there's a large set of double  
 21 white doors at the back--end of the command support room,  
 22 which is where I mainly position myself. On that, to  
 23 the left of it is all the tallies with all the fire  
 24 appliances, specialist units and officers within the  
 25 Fire Service. So out of that we would take the ones

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1 that were on duty, set them aside so I'd know what  
 2 officers I've got available. I'd take appliances out of  
 3 the equation that were already tied up on other  
 4 incidents, if there were any. I would then take the  
 5 appliances -- the tallies for the appliances that were  
 6 allocated to the job that I was dealing with, so I knew  
 7 that we didn't have any repetition. And then I would  
 8 then divide that again into officers that had been  
 9 attached to the job to officers that I had spare or  
 10 available should I need them for something else. So  
 11 that would be setting up -- it's a very agricultural way  
 12 of doing it, but it's relatively fail-safe because if  
 13 the electric goes off or something happens, I still have  
 14 the picture on the board. So these are magnetic  
 15 tallies. It gives you a good overall picture. That was  
 16 definitely one area I would have been done...  
 17 On the end of it is a desk and a phone with a direct  
 18 line to Control, and at the other end of it was  
 19 Janine Carden mainly for me. So any information I could  
 20 deal with would have been on that. We had a computer  
 21 with the weather, so we'd be checking things like any  
 22 adverse weather that might be coming, anything we need  
 23 to be aware of -- not really applicable in this  
 24 particular incident, but it was there should we need it,  
 25 for wind direction and stuff.

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1 Then obviously liaising with admin officer, in this  
 2 case it was a guy called Rob Lafferty, making sure that  
 3 he'd got the decision log up and running. And just sort  
 4 of building that picture within the command support  
 5 room.  
 6 I know the TV was on, so we would have been trying  
 7 to glean some information on the TV. We also had --  
 8 I forget her name now, sorry, sir. Somebody monitoring  
 9 social media, picking up on social media.  
 10 Shelley Wright was the lady. So she was the corporate  
 11 comms, she was dealing with the communications from  
 12 a social media and news media arena. So it was just  
 13 picking up all those different threads.  
 14 Obviously that was the things I'd be doing. But  
 15 Paul Etches would have been doing his things and in this  
 16 instance the chief would have been doing his things.  
 17 Q. As we know, Mr Fletcher is there doing his things and  
 18 in the end Mr Harris turns up as well. I'm going to  
 19 come back to him in due course.  
 20 Let's go then to that contact at 00.03 between you  
 21 and Mr Topping. So Mr Lopez, {INQ041473/66}.  
 22 By this stage, the chief knew that Mr Levy had  
 23 decided to move the resources from Philips Park to  
 24 Thompson Street, and by the stage that you spoke to  
 25 Mr Topping, did you also know that?

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1 A. Yes, sir, I did.  
 2 Q. In that call between the two of you, with Mr Topping, at  
 3 00.03, what was said?  
 4 A. Again, I can't remember the exact wording but I know  
 5 that Al mentioned coming to the command support room  
 6 a couple of times. I knew I didn't need him at the  
 7 command support room. He was going to be more use for  
 8 me either — well, down at Manchester Central.  
 9 Q. So going down to liaise with those who were actually  
 10 going to deploy to the scene?  
 11 A. Yes. In his role — if he was on the rota as the  
 12 command support officer, so... Yes, it would have been  
 13 to go and down and do that role as command support and  
 14 be my communication point from the incident ground or  
 15 from the rendezvous point.  
 16 Q. At an earlier stage you had understood that the incident  
 17 commander role was being performed by Mr Berry. By now,  
 18 it was Mr Levy, who was making decisions, and we know  
 19 that from about quarter to he told others at the scene,  
 20 "I'm in command now". Were you still proceeding on the  
 21 assumption that Andy Berry was in command or did you  
 22 know that Mr Levy had taken over?  
 23 A. No, I knew anyway because I'd been told but I would have  
 24 made that assumption anyway because it's a natural thing  
 25 to happen. There's two things there, if I can explain.

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1 I don't want to —  
 2 Q. Of course, yes.  
 3 A. One is that, as the incident grows, as the more senior  
 4 officer attends, that senior officer assumes that  
 5 responsibility. It goes with the pay grade, as such, in  
 6 general terms. I suppose the odd thing on this was that  
 7 NILOs, specialist officers responding don't normally  
 8 take charge of incidents. It's normally a designated  
 9 incident commander, and the NILO, regardless of his  
 10 rank, or the hazmat officer or whatever other specialist  
 11 officer it was, regardless of the rank might not assume  
 12 command, they won't assume command, they'll be there in  
 13 an advisory role. So this was an anomaly, if you like.  
 14 Q. So you had said to Mr Topping he was to go to  
 15 Thompson Street, Central Fire Station, and as we're  
 16 going to see if we go to {INQ041473/67}, the bottom  
 17 entry, at 00.06, you called North West Fire Control.  
 18 Over the page, please. {INQ041473/68}. You  
 19 essentially informed them that Mr Topping should be  
 20 added to the incident and that he was on his way to  
 21 Thompson Street?  
 22 A. Yes, sir.  
 23 Q. So this is an example, is it, of you doing what you  
 24 wished others to do, namely putting all decisions  
 25 through North West Fire Control?

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1 A. Yes, sir.  
 2 Q. Did you learn from Mr Topping in due course that he did  
 3 go to Thompson Street?  
 4 A. I did, yes.  
 5 Q. Did you learn from him what reception he received once  
 6 he arrived?  
 7 A. I did, yes.  
 8 Q. What was it?  
 9 A. His words were when he arrived three NILOs were,  
 10 I think, leant over a bonnet or stood in a huddle and  
 11 basically gave him, it appeared, a cold shoulder. Then  
 12 I recall one of them turned round and said, "What are  
 13 you doing here?"  
 14 Q. And thereafter they just ignored him?  
 15 A. The information that Al gave me was yes.  
 16 Q. You regard the command support officer, the role  
 17 Mr Topping had, as a vital functional role at any  
 18 incident and he should have been included in what was  
 19 going on?  
 20 A. Absolutely, sir.  
 21 Q. I told you I was going to ask you some general questions  
 22 about NILOs, and this leads us into that. Yesterday  
 23 when I asked you whether you had ever been a NILO, it  
 24 might be thought that you gave me an emphatic no. It  
 25 might be that there is a clue in that. Let me just ask

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1 you a direct question —  
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm not sure I noticed it being  
 3 emphatic.  
 4 MR GREANEY: It might have been just me.  
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Was it meant to be emphatic?  
 6 A. I think it was emphatic, but it was intentional (sic),  
 7 sir.  
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: An unintentional (sic) emphatic?  
 9 A. I think so, sir, yes.  
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Well, perhaps that is even more  
 11 important then.  
 12 MR GREANEY: It might be, sir. At least I didn't get it  
 13 wrong on this occasion.  
 14 The question is: is there any cultural issue with  
 15 NILOs that the chairman ought to be aware of?  
 16 A. I don't think there's a cultural issue, sir, no.  
 17 Q. Is there any other issue in relation to NILOs that the  
 18 chairman ought to be aware of?  
 19 A. I think there's a perceived issue, sir, yes.  
 20 Q. Well, would you explain that to us in your own words,  
 21 please?  
 22 A. I think that the NILOs have got a role to play and had  
 23 a role to play and at times vital — I've never felt the  
 24 need on any incident — I've never felt the need of  
 25 a NILO. I've never been a position where there's

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1 nothing I can't manage without a NILO and the NILOs,  
 2 rightly or wrongly, it might have been my perception,  
 3 but there was quite a few others had a similar sort of  
 4 perception of it, that the NILOs were a bit of a club  
 5 and had things like a secret WhatsApp group and... I'm  
 6 fairly confident that if the police knew secrets, they  
 7 wouldn't tell the NILOs. They might tell them sensitive  
 8 information, but that was that perception that the  
 9 information didn't always flow out of the NILOs to the  
 10 general population of other officers or firefighters .  
 11 Q. Did you feel that the reaction to Mr Topping, as it was  
 12 described to you, was an example of that kind of thing  
 13 taking place?  
 14 A. I was not surprised when Al told me that, no.  
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: On the other hand you have a very high  
 16 opinion of Mr Levy?  
 17 A. As a fire officer, he was outstanding. I've been on  
 18 floods and other incidents and I think when he stepped  
 19 more into the incident command role I think he came to  
 20 the fore more than he did when he was in the NILO role  
 21 on this incident.  
 22 MR GREANEY: I'm going to read to you something you said in  
 23 this regard in your witness statement, page 20 of your  
 24 first statement, paragraph 109, where I think you  
 25 capture what your position is. You say:

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1 "The very nature of the NILO role itself requires  
 2 review at a national level. It does not promote  
 3 information sharing within the organisation. There is  
 4 an impression amongst NILOs nationally that they are  
 5 tasked with filtering secret information when in fact  
 6 much of that information could be shared through normal  
 7 channels of communication. That is a national issue and  
 8 is not unique to GMFRS, yet this incident demonstrates  
 9 over-reliance upon two individuals in large  
 10 organisations being able to speak directly. It was  
 11 a point of failure and is not the way forward for  
 12 a coordinated emergency response."  
 13 Does that summarise your view?  
 14 A. Absolutely, sir.  
 15 Q. I'm moving on from there.  
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Let me ask a question: does the  
 17 perception between some firefighters -- the perception  
 18 that firefighters don't have necessarily the best  
 19 opinion of NILOs and think they're a sort of -- treat  
 20 themselves as a bit of an elite?  
 21 A. I would say that's right.  
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Does that affect morale generally across  
 23 the Fire Service? Perhaps you don't know generally, but  
 24 within Greater Manchester, let's put it that way.  
 25 A. I am not so much -- probably not affect not morale, but

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1 I think it does affect opinion, sir.  
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. I have said before, because  
 3 I was told that NILOs are there primarily to advise, it  
 4 may be that some people need advice more than you do and  
 5 that's not meant to be in any way rude to you, you  
 6 obviously have great experience. So one can't just  
 7 write them off as being unnecessary, having people there  
 8 to advise maybe. But why three to go to this incident?  
 9 Why was Mr Berry saying, "I want three NILOs"? That's  
 10 three advisers and none necessarily going to be incident  
 11 commander.  
 12 A. Going back to my -- as best I can recall on the training  
 13 exercises and things we'd done, the NILOs would have one  
 14 at the very front, one at the very back, and one  
 15 coordinating the resources, so they would be doing --  
 16 this is responding to an MTFA incident.  
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So this is a normal number for an MTFA?  
 18 A. Going back to my training, yes, and some of the  
 19 exercises that we'd done, there would be even more NILOs  
 20 at the incident, but whether that was just because they  
 21 wanted to pick up on the training value of it or whether  
 22 that was what was needed, but it was to do with the way  
 23 they deployed resources into the warm zone as such.  
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Another important thing about NILOs is  
 25 coordinating with the other rescue agencies. Is that

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1 necessary, in your view, to have them to do that?  
 2 A. Not in my view, sir, no, at all. I don't... I've never  
 3 had any problems talking to the police or the ambo or  
 4 local authority leaders or anybody, so I've never needed  
 5 a NILO to do that talking for me.  
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.  
 7 MR GREANEY: We're going to turn next to a topic that the  
 8 chairman was keen to understand more, which is this: at  
 9 some stage ACFO Harris arrives in the CSR.  
 10 A. Yes, sir.  
 11 Q. In the Kerslake process, you explained that your view  
 12 was that he should not have been there and the phrase  
 13 that you used, which was evocative, was:  
 14 "He didn't have a role. He was interfering with  
 15 play."  
 16 I'm going to ask you to explain in what way he  
 17 interfered with play.  
 18 A. I always think that -- well, he didn't have a role.  
 19 That was for sure. I didn't know what his role was on  
 20 the night. Interfering play-wise would be that he would  
 21 be checking the log and either -- if I make an example,  
 22 I know we deployed some pumps forward and then I would  
 23 then say to Control, we need to get another four  
 24 replacements pumps to replace them, he would then come  
 25 forward and say, "Right, what we need to do is to get

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1 four replacement pumps to come in there".  
 2 So he was just repeating everything I said or  
 3 picking up on things other people said. So he was just  
 4 another voice that we didn't need, in my opinion.  
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So just suppose -- someone had to go off  
 6 to the SCG, to police headquarters at some stage.  
 7 A. Yes, sir.  
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: If, as it turned out, it was the chief  
 9 fire officer, would he then have had a role? Is that  
 10 the purpose of having him so that one or other of them  
 11 could have gone to the other place?  
 12 A. It wasn't anything we'd practised or ever done before.  
 13 I've got -- I was a group manager. We had an area  
 14 manager, Paul Etches, in there. That was often --  
 15 that's a significant amount of experience and knowledge  
 16 and leadership in there. To have another line of  
 17 command in there was just not required really.  
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.  
 19 MR GREANEY: So to return to the question the chairman asked  
 20 very much earlier, it wasn't a question of him  
 21 physically getting in the way because you had to  
 22 manoeuvre yourself around him, it was a question of him  
 23 being a distraction?  
 24 A. It was a bit of both to be honest. The room in the  
 25 photo looks huge, but it's not a great big room. The

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1 desks take up a lot of room and all the rest of it. So  
 2 it is quite confined. But it was more a distraction as  
 3 well.  
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I just need to check this really. All  
 5 of us sometimes don't get on with people who we have to  
 6 work with. Is that what this is about, you just didn't  
 7 get on with him?  
 8 A. No, to that point I'd had no -- I'd never worked with  
 9 Geoff Harris at any point, I'd never worked under his  
 10 command or on him. I'd been to -- I may have been to  
 11 one or two incidents when he'd been at the incident but  
 12 I had no sort of direct working relationship and  
 13 certainly no social relationship. So I had no reason to  
 14 sort of --  
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So it's the events of the night?  
 16 A. The events of the night and obviously I had a knowledge  
 17 of the way that he worked, shall we say.  
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.  
 19 MR GREANEY: Well, let's move on --  
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You were obviously not his greatest  
 21 admirer even before the evening?  
 22 A. No. I would say that was fair, sir.  
 23 MR GREANEY: Was it -- I'm going to give in to temptation:  
 24 was it his management style that you had heard about and  
 25 didn't approve of?

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1 A. Yes, sir, that'd be right.  
 2 Q. And in a couple of words could you explain what you  
 3 understood his management style to be?  
 4 A. He was very much into the detail, and just to give you  
 5 an idea, if you produced a report for Geoff Harris, he  
 6 didn't appear to be very much interested in the content,  
 7 he was more interested in the spelling and the grammar.  
 8 Q. Let's pick up on the chronology.  
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I just explain why we're doing this?  
 10 This is a public criticism being made of Mr Harris --  
 11 and I am not blaming you for doing it, you have been  
 12 asked the questions and he will be coming at a later  
 13 stage.  
 14 MR GREANEY: Hopefully tomorrow, sir.  
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We just needed to know the details of it  
 16 before he comes and he knows what he is having to deal  
 17 with.  
 18 MR GREANEY: Absolutely, and obviously all of this goes to  
 19 the weight that can be attached to this witness'  
 20 evidence.  
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You understand it. I just want to make  
 22 sure everybody else does understand why.  
 23 MR GREANEY: So we pick up the chronology, you've had that  
 24 conversation with Mr Topping at 00.03. As we know,  
 25 a moment earlier, a minute earlier, the first fire

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1 appliance had arrived at Manchester Central, and  
 2 Ben Levy was getting ready to deploy to the scene and  
 3 we'll all know the answer to this question, but did you  
 4 agree with him that it was the right thing to do, to  
 5 deploy to the scene?  
 6 A. Absolutely, I did.  
 7 Q. At 00.15, Ben Levy spoke to North West Fire Control and  
 8 formally recorded that he was in command of the  
 9 incident, although he had in fact made that decision, as  
 10 I've said, half an hour earlier. Do you agree that it  
 11 was appropriate that he should become the incident  
 12 commander?  
 13 A. In the light that we didn't have an incident commander,  
 14 it was exactly the right decision to make.  
 15 Q. So let's be clear about what the relationship should  
 16 have been between him as incident commander and the CSR.  
 17 Ms Cartwright referred to this document yesterday. It's  
 18 the guidance document for GMFRS entitled "Command  
 19 Support Room Emergency Response". Could we have this on  
 20 the screen, please? {INQ004450/5}.  
 21 Paragraph 3. This provides the context for what  
 22 we're now going to be looking at with you:  
 23 "When the CSR is activated, the PO, assistant  
 24 principal officer (APO) or the command support room  
 25 officer (CSRO) are not in command of the incident. The

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1 command of an incident is sole responsibility of the  
 2 incident commander at the scene."  
 3 So those are the lines of responsibility, do you  
 4 agree?  
 5 A. I agree, sir, yes.  
 6 Q. So let's see what in fact happened and judge it by  
 7 reference to that.  
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: While that's there, you're in the CSR,  
 9 you're a very experienced officer, you know what you're  
 10 doing. I'm not saying this is in this case, this is  
 11 just hypothetical, but the incident commander is getting  
 12 it all wrong, lives are put in jeopardy because the  
 13 incident commander is getting it all wrong, do you  
 14 really just leave it to him?  
 15 A. Absolutely not, sir. That document is a guidance  
 16 document, it's not a policy or a procedure. Guidance is  
 17 guidance.  
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Just so we understand that before we  
 19 start, that it's not absolutely set in stone.  
 20 A. Absolutely not, sir, no.  
 21 MR GREANEY: That's a very fair observation, sir, and I take  
 22 that point.  
 23 Was it your understanding at that stage, so shortly  
 24 after midnight, that Ben Levy wanted to deploy himself  
 25 to the scene and that he wanted to deploy with

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1 specialist resources?  
 2 A. I remember that he wanted to deploy, I can't remember if  
 3 it was specifically he wanted to go, but he and I -- and  
 4 he was very keen to get something on the ground, and  
 5 specialist resources was the conversation that we had.  
 6 Q. Before there was a deployment to the scene, did the CFO  
 7 have a conversation on the telephone?  
 8 A. He did, yes.  
 9 Q. With whom did he have a conversation as you understood  
 10 it?  
 11 A. I found out after that it was Steve Hynes.  
 12 Q. So we believe that the timing of -- well, we know the  
 13 timing of that call is at 00.12.  
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You know him, Mr Hynes?  
 15 A. I have never met him or heard of him, sir.  
 16 MR GREANEY: At that stage, so this is before you become  
 17 aware of the declaration of Operation Plato, just to fix  
 18 that in your mind, Mr O'Reilly, having come off the  
 19 telephone with Mr Hynes shortly after 00.12, what was  
 20 the outcome? What was the impact of that conversation  
 21 on deployment?  
 22 A. From the information that the chief gave me, Mr Hynes  
 23 had said that MTFA capability or specialist capability  
 24 wasn't required and all he needed was 12 firefighters.  
 25 Q. I think, but you will correct me if I'm wrong, that at

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1 almost the moment the chief came off the phone, the CSR  
 2 as a whole became aware that GMP had declared  
 3 Operation Plato?  
 4 A. Indeed, sir, yes.  
 5 Q. And in fact, were you on the telephone to Ben Levy  
 6 himself at this time?  
 7 A. Yes, I was, sir, yes.  
 8 Q. Let's have on the screen {INQ041473/71}.  
 9 Obviously, I'm leading some of this information from  
 10 you and I've taken it from documents. If your own  
 11 memory doesn't accord with what I'm suggesting, just  
 12 tell me.  
 13 A. I will. Everything -- I'm up to speed, sir.  
 14 Q. 00.16, Ben Levy calls the CFO. Then 00.16, you call  
 15 Station Manager Berry. As this is unfolding, you're  
 16 actually on the telephone to him. Again, what I would  
 17 like to do is to look at the account that you gave of  
 18 these events when you were spoken to by the Kerslake  
 19 process. Then I'll invite you to agree with what  
 20 you have said, then develop it or correct it as you  
 21 wish.  
 22 The INQ reference is {INQ023518T/19}. I'm going to  
 23 be at risk, here, sir, I warn you, of winning the  
 24 longest question award because I am going to read out  
 25 some parts of this to the witness and then I am going to

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1 ask him a series of questions.  
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I give you dispensation that it won't  
 3 count on this occasion.  
 4 MR GREANEY: Thank you very much. We're on page 19. About  
 5 halfway down the page:  
 6 "I'm trying to think where -- I've lost -- where  
 7 I said I'd come back to. The chief then -- the chief --  
 8 that's right, the chief -- I was on the phone to  
 9 Ben Levy, just talking, he want -- he was pushing --  
 10 he was warning to push resources forward. That's what  
 11 Ben was trying to do."  
 12 So this seems plainly to be that conversation at  
 13 00.16. And the interviewer says:  
 14 "Yes."  
 15 And you continue:  
 16 "I said, 'Right, let's go, let's get a plan together  
 17 now and we -- we'll -- what have you got?' And he said,  
 18 'I've got, you know, five pumps and MTFA units, I've got  
 19 some officers'. I said, 'Well, let's push five pumps  
 20 and get the MTFA-trained guys in play', and at that  
 21 point I heard the word Plato."  
 22 Is that accurate?  
 23 A. Absolutely accurate, sir.  
 24 Q. "To my right -- and it was John Fletcher and I said  
 25 I stopped the phone I said, 'John'. I kept the phone

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1 line open but I said to John, 'What was that, was that  
 2 Plato being called?', 'Yeah Plato's been called', and  
 3 I said, 'Ben, let's go, let's get everything forward  
 4 now. Whatever we've got there in our thing, let's get  
 5 them forward and get them down.'"  
 6 Should we understand that the position was that  
 7 having heard about the declaration of Plato, that  
 8 reinforced your view that you needed to be there?  
 9 A. Absolutely.  
 10 Q. And you say:  
 11 "At that point the chief then came in and did that."  
 12 The interviewer says:  
 13 "On the table?"  
 14 And obviously this wasn't video recorded, just tell  
 15 us what you were demonstrating the chief fire officer  
 16 doing at that stage.  
 17 A. He came back into the command support room from the --  
 18 I was at the desk and, as I was saying, agreeing with  
 19 Ben, he just put his hand on the desk like (indicating)  
 20 (inaudible: distorted) what I presume was to get my  
 21 attention more than anything because I was talking.  
 22 Q. I think on other occasions you've described it as  
 23 slamming his hand on the table. Is that to overstate  
 24 it?  
 25 A. It was probably overstating it, sir, but that's the

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1 action that took place.  
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: At that time, is he aware there's going  
 3 to be any dissent between you about it? I know that  
 4 comes later, but would he have been aware of any  
 5 possibility of dissent?  
 6 A. He may have anticipated, but I don't know, sir.  
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: There's been nothing said?  
 8 A. Nothing said.  
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: He's coming in and saying, "Right, we're  
 10 going to do that?"  
 11 A. Yes.  
 12 MR GREANEY: It continues and you're now referring to what  
 13 the chief said:  
 14 "... and he said, 'I'll tell what you we're going to  
 15 do. I've just spoken to Steve Hynes. He doesn't want  
 16 MTFA down there. He says 12 firemen and an officer, or  
 17 12 firefighters and an officer', which is -- 12  
 18 firefighters, you know, relates to three appliances to  
 19 us and an officer is suffice and that's all he wants.  
 20 I challenged it openly in front of everybody, which is  
 21 not always a good thing to do, but I challenged it  
 22 because, one, I know that they -- they carry ballistic  
 23 bandages, which are especially designed for clog -- with  
 24 clogging agents, to clog wounds. They've got equipment  
 25 for dragging casualties out on special stretchers,

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1 they've got ballistic protection should they need it  
 2 because it was still very much a warm zone in our  
 3 opinion from information we were getting. It was still  
 4 very much a warm zone. And the chief then said -- there  
 5 was -- I can't remember the wording, but there was a bit  
 6 of support from John Fletcher as well at that point."  
 7 So the picture is, have I understood correctly, the  
 8 chief is saying no MTFA, three appliances down there and  
 9 you are challenging that on the basis that the  
 10 specialist resources are designed to deal with this kind  
 11 of situation?  
 12 A. Yes, sir. Just one correction. It wasn't ballistic  
 13 bandages, it was haemostatic bandages.  
 14 Q. And you make plain that this is your point of view that  
 15 you were expressing at the time and you add:  
 16 "My regret is that I didn't labour it harder at that  
 17 point, but the chief said, 'Steve Hynes is telling me  
 18 this is what we're doing and this is what you're doing'.  
 19 He then looked at me and said, 'Are you okay with that?'  
 20 My answer at this point, it was tumbleweed because it  
 21 wasn't said in a shouty voice but it was said in quite  
 22 a loud firm voice and I just shrugged my shoulders and  
 23 said, 'You're the chief'. I told Rob to put it on the  
 24 log, make sure the decision was logged. I was still on  
 25 the phone to Ben. I said, 'Ben, stand down'. He said,

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1 'Yeah, I heard all that, Dean, don't worry about it'.  
 2 He wasn't happy, Ben, I could tell by the tone of his  
 3 voice. He then shouted and he said, 'Right, I'll stand  
 4 the units down'. He started to send those orders and  
 5 then the phone line -- we had cut the phone line between  
 6 me and Ben at that point. I then explained to the chief  
 7 again that, 'We don't need to send them forward in  
 8 ballistic protection if you are not -- if that's not the  
 9 road we want to go down, but let's send them forward  
 10 anyway because we've got the -- the medical training and  
 11 the medical bandages that can help out'. His opinion  
 12 was that everybody is trauma trained, which they're not.  
 13 They're all first aid trained but they're not all trauma  
 14 trained. And that was the decision. I didn't like it,  
 15 because we were being told what to do by some ambulance  
 16 guy that I don't know."  
 17 Then over the page, {INQ023518T/22}, you added:  
 18 "I was miffed because I've spent years and years  
 19 training, building, and making sure that we've got the  
 20 knowledge to support an incident like this and that had  
 21 been dismissed."  
 22 And were you referring there to the experience you'd  
 23 built up over many years of developing the TRU and the  
 24 SRT?  
 25 A. Indeed, sir.

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1 Q. Then one further passage and then I will ask my  
2 questions. {INQ023518T/48}, please.  
3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm sure it is going to be asked but if  
4 we can (inaudible) this point. What you said:  
5 "The chief is a very, very intimidating person, very  
6 leader/follower orientated, where we do it..."  
7 MR GREANEY: You're quite right to draw attention to that.  
8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm sure it will be referred to at some  
9 stage if I don't refer to it now.  
10 MR GREANEY: Page 48, please. It's a little more than  
11 halfway down the page your answer starting:  
12 "So AI for some reason..."  
13 We don't need to read it all out, I'll drop it  
14 halfway through:  
15 "The chief didn't do us any favours that night at  
16 all: one, because he came to the command support room  
17 in the first place; two, he started accepting -- making  
18 orders and decisions; three, he was making phone calls.  
19 And then you added, very much along the lines of  
20 what the chairman just drew attention to:  
21 "He's a very intimidating guy."  
22 A. I said that, sir, yes.  
23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Did he intimidate you? You don't seem  
24 to me to be the sort of person who gets intimidated very  
25 easily, but I obviously don't know you very well.

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1 A. I would say you've got a good judge of character there,  
2 sir. No, I wasn't intimidated. I'd worked for a number  
3 of chiefs and never been intimidated with any of them.  
4 I knew where the line was, I knew how to approach the  
5 line and not cross the line, but I was...  
6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It was a decision you very strongly  
7 disagreed with?  
8 A. I very strongly disagreed with it.  
9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And you tried to express that?  
10 A. I did, yes.  
11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And your advice was not taken?  
12 A. No, sir, and on reflection I know that the chief has  
13 20 years-plus experience in Northern Ireland, so on  
14 reflection he probably had greater insight in explosions  
15 and bombs than I did.  
16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I don't think that had anything to do  
17 with the decision on that night.  
18 A. No, sir.  
19 MR GREANEY: Let's just finish off this passage and go over  
20 to {INQ023518T/49}. First line:  
21 "The minute the chief got there, was very, very cold  
22 and intimidating atmosphere and he didn't need to be  
23 there and he's not a particularly -- I don't know him  
24 socially so I'm on about his work environment. He's not  
25 a very approachable person to work with. So if he'd not

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1 been there we'd probably managed things, we would have  
2 pushed things forward."  
3 Then out of fairness to Mr O'Reilly we ought to draw  
4 attention to the fact that you went on to say:  
5 "I don't think the chief is to blame for all the  
6 incident going wrong. The incident went wrong because  
7 we didn't respond."  
8 I've reached now my questions. First of all, you  
9 said that Mr O'Reilly, the chief fire officer, was  
10 a "very intimidating guy". By that, what did you mean?  
11 A. Well, again, he wasn't intimidating to me, but he could  
12 be. I know to others he came across as intimidating,  
13 but for me, I'm ex--forces and I've been shouted at by  
14 some rather large people, so I wasn't intimidated easily  
15 and I guess you don't get to be the chief or the CEO  
16 (sic) without being a little bit intimidating.  
17 Q. Was he, as you perceived him, the kind of person who was  
18 interested in the views of others?  
19 A. In some instances but possibly not all.  
20 Q. I'll ask you because I know that if I don't, Mr Cooper  
21 certainly will. Was he to your mind a bully?  
22 A. Absolutely not.  
23 Q. Second and I suppose connected with that first point,  
24 the CFO said during the course of the debate that all  
25 firefighters were trauma trained, which wasn't correct,

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1 was it?  
2 A. No, sir.  
3 Q. Were you surprised that the CFO made that mistake?  
4 A. The CFO -- he was very proactive in -- we had a thing  
5 called red 1, responding to heart attacks and things.  
6 He was very proactive in first aid and making sure that  
7 all the firefighters received training in the use of  
8 defibrillators and such. But a trauma technician that  
9 we carried on -- we tried to have one on every  
10 appliance, but it didn't always work out that way. The  
11 trauma techs were trained to a slightly higher level so  
12 they could apply Guedel airways and things and manage  
13 airways. So they were trained to a more technical level  
14 than the average firefighter.  
15 Q. So the answer to my question, which was, were you  
16 surprised that the CFO made that mistake, is?  
17 A. Um... Was I surprised? I suppose the answer is yes,  
18 sir, but there's a context behind that.  
19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Before you move on from that, I'm  
20 obviously very concerned what goes on and is said in the  
21 inquiry doesn't actually increase, if there are any,  
22 divisions between firefighters. We certainly have had  
23 at least one communication to the inquiry from  
24 a firefighter rather resenting the fact everyone is  
25 saying they can't deal with trauma and pointing out that

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1 they deal with it on a fairly regular basis and  
 2 perfectly competently.  
 3 A. Yes, sir.  
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So can we just make clear, if you agree,  
 5 but only if you agree, that when you're talking about  
 6 being trauma trained you're talking actually about  
 7 specific training to deal with people damaged by bombs  
 8 going off and things like that?  
 9 A. No, sir. The MTFA crews were trained to deal with and  
 10 apply appropriate medical care for bombs and ballistic  
 11 injuries. Trauma technicians are trained to the same  
 12 level as a firefighter but then they go on a hospital  
 13 placement or out with a paramedic and they learn the  
 14 slightly more technical things to do with life—saving  
 15 interventions. Every single firefighter does receive  
 16 a form of trauma training and dealing with crash  
 17 injuries, burns and oxygen therapy, things like that.  
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And deals with it every day of the week?  
 19 A. Every single day of the week, yes. Every firefighter  
 20 has an element of trauma exposure, yes.  
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I hope that does set the record right.  
 22 MR GREANEY: Extremely helpful. I haven't quite finished  
 23 with this issue about what the chief said about trauma  
 24 training. The position is that you knew he was wrong,  
 25 didn't you?

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1 A. Breaking it down into the way the chair has just broken  
 2 it down, into that element the chief was right, looking  
 3 on reflection now, because he was right in the fact that  
 4 everyone's had trauma training but not every firefighter  
 5 was a trauma technician.  
 6 Q. But at the time, and I understand that, but at the time  
 7 you thought he was saying something that was wrong?  
 8 A. I did, yes.  
 9 Q. And you weren't the only one. We heard from Mr Fletcher  
 10 yesterday that that was his view. But no one seemed to  
 11 have challenged him and said: chief, you're wrong about  
 12 that. These are senior firefighters, they're grown  
 13 adults, and so when we ask ourselves the question, why  
 14 did none of them challenge something that they believed  
 15 to be wrong, what is the answer?  
 16 A. I don't know, sir. All I know is I did challenge it.  
 17 Q. Third, as we have seen, the guidance expected, bearing  
 18 in mind of course the limits of any guidance, that any  
 19 deployment decisions would be those of the incident  
 20 commander.  
 21 A. Absolutely, sir, yes.  
 22 Q. And yet here his decisions were being reversed or  
 23 subverted by the CFO in the CSR, weren't they?  
 24 A. Yes.  
 25 Q. Is that something that should or should not have

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1 happened?  
 2 A. At the end of the day, I suppose... The chief fire  
 3 officer is the chief fire officer and he may have got  
 4 more information than I had available. But I've never  
 5 known an order or something being countermanded of an  
 6 incident commander. If the incident commander says,  
 7 "I'm making pumps five", you make pumps five and that's  
 8 his tactical plan, so I would always run with the  
 9 incident commander.  
 10 Q. Lets be frank, on that particular night in relation to  
 11 those decisions, you were completely behind the  
 12 decision—making of Mr Levy, weren't you?  
 13 A. I was absolutely behind him, sir.  
 14 Q. The specialist resources of GMFRS had real value to  
 15 bring, even at that point gone midnight?  
 16 A. It was very, very late into this event, but I still  
 17 think they had some value, yes.  
 18 Q. Because after all, there were still injured people there  
 19 and is it your view that the decision the CFO made that  
 20 they shouldn't been deployed was just simply wrong?  
 21 A. That would be my opinion, sir.  
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Were you pointing out as well, "This is  
 23 a warm zone or may well be a warm zone and we can't send  
 24 firefighters in there, we need to send specialist  
 25 people"? Because that was the eventual problem when

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1 they got there.  
 2 A. I didn't actually stress that. I think that discussion  
 3 did take place, I think with Paul Etches, but I can't  
 4 corroborate that. By sending the MTFA resources forward  
 5 in my opinion that gave us wiggle room. So if it was  
 6 a warm zone, we could deploy them, if wasn't a warm  
 7 zone, I could deploy them. So it gave us wiggle room by  
 8 sending appropriately trained people forward.  
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And as it turned out, that ultimately  
 10 was the mistake that the chief made — we will hear what  
 11 he has to say about it, but it was the mistake because  
 12 when they got there they couldn't go in because it was a  
 13 warm zone.  
 14 A. That are turned out to be the case, sir.  
 15 MR GREANEY: Issue 5 and then we will return to the  
 16 chronology. Your feeling at the time and afterwards was  
 17 that your deployment was being dictated by Mr Hynes as  
 18 opposed to by the incident commander?  
 19 A. Absolutely, sir.  
 20 Q. And you thought that was wrong?  
 21 A. Absolutely, I do.  
 22 Q. In the end —  
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I just want to come back to that.  
 24 I understand your view about that, but at least Mr Hynes  
 25 was there.

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1 A. He was there, he had an element of information, which  
 2 was fantastic, but I am still not clear today if he knew  
 3 what our training and our capability and what we could  
 4 bring to the party was.  
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I well understand that.  
 6 MR GREANEY: Thank you, sir.  
 7 I'm very near the end of my questions now. In the  
 8 end, as we know, it was Mr Berry who deployed to the  
 9 scene, not Mr Levy, and do you know why it was that  
 10 Mr Levy didn't go to the scene?  
 11 A. I can't recall. It would be normal, if there is such  
 12 a thing as normal, that a station manager would go  
 13 generally, three pumps, but this was an extraordinary  
 14 incident. Both officers are of equal standing with  
 15 regards their leadership and command element, so  
 16 either — that wouldn't have made any impact to me,  
 17 which officer went forward.  
 18 Q. This is a genuinely open question: was there any sense  
 19 in which Mr Levy was not being sent as a punishment for  
 20 pushing back?  
 21 A. If there was, I never picked up on that at all, no,  
 22 I never — that's the first I've even heard that raised.  
 23 Q. You spoke to North West Fire Control yourself at 00.18.  
 24 We'll listen to the audio of that call and have the  
 25 transcript on the screen. The audio is {INQ004394/1}.

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1 The transcript reference is {INQ001163/1}.  
 2 (Audio played)  
 3 Again this is you ensuring that all decisions go  
 4 through North West Fire Control?  
 5 A. Indeed.  
 6 Q. As we heard in that call, you were told that there had  
 7 been an RVP of the cathedral car park at an early stage  
 8 and, I can probably detect from the look on your face,  
 9 that was that the first you knew of that?  
 10 A. At that point, yes.  
 11 Q. What was your feeling when you discovered that that RVP  
 12 had been given at an early stage?  
 13 A. Disappointment and quite gut-wrenching, actually.  
 14 Q. Once at the scene, we know from Mr Berry he made  
 15 a request, which has been described as a request to send  
 16 everything. Did you become aware of that in the CSR?  
 17 A. I did, yes.  
 18 Q. What happened within the CSR as a result?  
 19 A. It was a bit confusing. If I can say in normal times,  
 20 sir, it's a fairly ridiculous message. "Send  
 21 everything" doesn't mean anything to me. It's not  
 22 a recognised sequence of events, it's not a recognised  
 23 message.  
 24 Q. Most of your colleagues seem to have shared the same  
 25 view. But did you and others in the CSR nonetheless

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1 consider the something ought to be done in response to  
 2 that message?  
 3 A. Yes.  
 4 Q. What was that?  
 5 A. I think we — well, we had to get resources to go  
 6 forward. But we needed to clarify exactly what he  
 7 needed going forward and the route again is through  
 8 Control. But I was still at that point — just get  
 9 something forward, basically.  
 10 Q. Did you have it in mind to send forward specialist  
 11 resources non-specialist resources or both?  
 12 A. I would have sent both.  
 13 Q. In the result, what happened at that stage?  
 14 A. I know there was messages going in the background but we  
 15 resulted — basically sending 12 firefighters or three  
 16 fire engines forward, as I remember.  
 17 Q. In fact, I'm looking at paragraph 91 of your statement,  
 18 I'll remind you of what was said, paragraph 17. If you  
 19 now have a different recollection, then so it is. You  
 20 were talking about, I think, the decision to deploy  
 21 further resources in response to the "send everything".  
 22 A. Different resources, sorry.  
 23 Q. And you said in your statement:  
 24 "This decision was overruled by the chief and  
 25 ACFO Harris as they had already deployed resources and

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1 there was a reluctance to use the MTFAs teams."  
 2 A. I'm with you, sorry about that. I'm up to speed. We'd  
 3 already got three pumps, Andy Berry had asked us to send  
 4 everything you've got, in which case we wanted  
 5 clarification of what he wanted sending. John Fletcher  
 6 had got clarification via possibly radio, it might have  
 7 been his phone, but he got clarification that he was —  
 8 pumps and whatever else we had at the holding area. And  
 9 then it was stopped because we'd already sent resources  
 10 forward, we don't need to send any more.  
 11 Q. So in the result, still the MTFAs specialist response did  
 12 not go forward.  
 13 A. No.  
 14 Q. Throughout the period that followed, you continued to  
 15 liaise with North West Fire Control and with your  
 16 colleagues in the Fire and Rescue Service and it's not  
 17 necessary to go through all of that, but it's clear from  
 18 the communications that you continued to play your part.  
 19 Is it the position that you did so also the next day,  
 20 when your expertise in dealing with collapsed buildings  
 21 was called upon to assist the police operation?  
 22 A. Yes, sir.  
 23 Q. As I'm certain you'll be aware, we have heard from many  
 24 firefighters who were at Philips Park and then at  
 25 Thompson Street that night, who have expressed their

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1 frustration at not going forward, at least not in the  
 2 a late stage. And they have expressed their anger,  
 3 sometimes mellowing into sadness, that the Fire and  
 4 Rescue Service did not play their part that night. Are  
 5 those sentiments that you share?  
 6 A. Absolutely, sir.  
 7 MR GREANEY: With very considerable thanks to everybody for  
 8 bearing with me, and in particular to the stenographers,  
 9 whose patience I have definitely tested, can I suggest  
 10 that at this stage we have a break?  
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And if they have any complaint, could  
 12 they please send it to you? We'll have a quarter of  
 13 an hour. Thank you very much.  
 14 (11.47 am)  
 15 (A short break)  
 16 (12.08 pm)  
 17 MR GREANEY: Sir, in fact there are two very short points  
 18 I am just going to ask the witness about before I turn  
 19 to Mr Smith.  
 20 The first is this: at 00.18, you discovered for the  
 21 first time that at an early stage a rendezvous point of  
 22 the cathedral car park had been nominated. In fact, we  
 23 know that that had been communicated by NWFC to Mr Berry  
 24 at 22.42.  
 25 If you don't feel able to say, please tell us, but

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1 I think you will. If you had been informed at 22.42  
 2 that there was a designated RVP, what would you have  
 3 done?  
 4 A. At what point — when would I be phoned as to what we  
 5 were being informed of?  
 6 Q. You couldn't have been phoned as the duty NILO, but if  
 7 you had been given that information in a position of  
 8 responsibility, that is to say able to direct resources  
 9 to where of you thought was appropriate, what would  
 10 you have done?  
 11 A. The rendezvous point was the point to go to. It was as  
 12 simple as that.  
 13 Q. And the second issue. Your long service spanned both  
 14 the period after the introduction of North West Fire  
 15 Control and the period before North West Fire Control  
 16 when there were different control room operations or  
 17 arrangements. Do you have a view about whether the NWFC  
 18 arrangements were better than those previously in place,  
 19 worse than those previously in place or the same in  
 20 terms of quality?  
 21 A. I do have a view, yes.  
 22 Q. Would you express that view for us?  
 23 A. My view was when we were a dedicated Manchester Control,  
 24 not a north-west regional Control, the operators were  
 25 far more intimate, far more familiar with the topography

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1 and far more familiar with the resources and the  
 2 officers that were responding to the incidents.  
 3 Q. What practical benefits did that situation tend to  
 4 generate?  
 5 A. To have local knowledge and a greater understanding of  
 6 the topography, there seemed to be more staff, they  
 7 would have known the strengths and weaknesses, they  
 8 would have known on a number of occasions when there had  
 9 been, say, a gas explosion somewhere, for instance,  
 10 a house or something, I may have been off duty, my  
 11 role — I was always on call because of my role as urban  
 12 search and rescue commander. I would get a call from  
 13 one of the call operators saying, "This has happened,  
 14 dah, dah, dah". Nine times out of 10 I would respond to  
 15 that incident. That is because they were intimate with  
 16 the officers and the skill sets the officers had.  
 17 MR GREANEY: Thank you very much for answering those further  
 18 questions.  
 19 Sir, unless you have anything arising out of them,  
 20 I'm going to invite Mr Smith first of all to ask his  
 21 questions on behalf of North West Fire Control.  
 22 Questions from MR SMITH  
 23 MR SMITH: Mr Nankivell, could I take up with the last point  
 24 that Mr Greaney raised in relation to a comparison  
 25 between the control room as it was on the night,

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1 operated by North West Fire Control, and what might be  
 2 described as the old days?  
 3 A. Yes, sir.  
 4 Q. Looking at Mr Greaney's question for a moment, "What  
 5 practical benefit would have been afforded by the old  
 6 system?", can you think of any practical benefit on the  
 7 night of 22 May that would have been provided had the  
 8 old system been in place?  
 9 A. My recollection of the old system — but the new system  
 10 was driven by action cards and quite restrictive, and if  
 11 I can use the analogy, if your computer says no, that's  
 12 what kind of what happens. And then they revert to  
 13 ringing, in this case, the NILO or ringing the duty  
 14 group manager for advice. My recollection in the old  
 15 regime is that rarely happened: a phone call came in and  
 16 a response was dispatched.  
 17 Q. Under the old system, was it the case that contact, for  
 18 example by telephone, from the control room to a senior  
 19 Fire and Rescue Service officer would take place more  
 20 readily or more often than under the current system with  
 21 the use of incident types and action cards?  
 22 A. Yes, there was a lot more personal communication in the  
 23 older system than the new one.  
 24 Q. Could it be said, therefore, Mr Nankivell, that the  
 25 personal contact between the control room and the duty

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1 NILO on the night may therefore have been more  
 2 reminiscent of the old system than the new one?  
 3 A. Only in the fact that they were exchanging information.  
 4 I think — and this is supposition, I guess now, but  
 5 under the old system if we'd received notification of an  
 6 explosion, the old Control would have responded to  
 7 explosion. Under the new system, that created — there  
 8 was a confusion over how they should respond. I don't  
 9 think — it may have done, but I don't think that would  
 10 have happened under the old system.  
 11 Q. Of course, one advantage of the old system was that the  
 12 control room would have been located, is this correct,  
 13 at one of the Fire and Rescue Service centres or  
 14 buildings?  
 15 A. It would have been — it was at Fire Service  
 16 Headquarters, sir, yes.  
 17 Q. But of course, at that time of night, some time after  
 18 10.30 let us say, if the old regime had been in place,  
 19 would there have been a presence from Fire and Rescue  
 20 Service officers next door to the control room?  
 21 A. Not ordinarily, sir. Under the old, there was — the  
 22 shifts were bigger so there was a lot more operators on  
 23 the evening, and also in those days we didn't have or  
 24 didn't need a command support room, so the command  
 25 support room was only brought to bear once we went to

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1 the regional control.  
 2 Q. So would the situation have been the same if the Fire  
 3 and Rescue Service was operating under the old system on  
 4 22 May in the sense that the responding officers would  
 5 have been remote from the control room?  
 6 A. They would have been, yes.  
 7 Q. Off duty, on call, if you like?  
 8 A. Yes.  
 9 Q. But not at the control room?  
 10 A. They wouldn't have been at their place of work, they  
 11 would have been at home, yes.  
 12 Q. One of the things that you have been asked about is the  
 13 observation you made to Mr Alan Goodwin for the purposes  
 14 of the Kerslake Inquiry and that you would have done  
 15 things completely differently. That was in the context,  
 16 wasn't it, of using G16 Manchester Central as a place  
 17 perhaps to muster appliances, had that been deemed  
 18 necessary, rather than Philips Park?  
 19 A. Yes, sir.  
 20 Q. Have you been through the sequence of communications  
 21 that North West Fire Control have prepared and that  
 22 Mr Greaney has been making reference to today?  
 23 A. I think I've seen most of them, yes, sir.  
 24 Q. In terms of the call that was made to the duty NILO at  
 25 22.40 by the team leader Michelle Gregson, are you

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1 familiar with the information that she passed to Station  
 2 Manager Berry at that time?  
 3 A. I'm familiar with the information that she passed — or  
 4 I was passed at that time, but I don't know what was  
 5 said to —  
 6 Q. Could I take you, please, to pages 5 and 6 of the  
 7 sequence just so that we're clear about this.  
 8 {INQ041473/5-6}. You will see there, Mr Nankivell,  
 9 in that opening paragraph the start of the provision of  
 10 information to Mr Berry.  
 11 Could you just read that to yourself? We've been  
 12 through it several times.  
 13 (Pause)  
 14 Then we need to follow that on to {INQ041473/9}  
 15 because we've interposed various events in the course of  
 16 that call.  
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Could you just stop there? I'm sorry to  
 18 interrupt, but while it's on. Can you say — Mr Berry  
 19 saying, "Right, we would normally muster them at one of  
 20 the stations wouldn't we", is that actually correct?  
 21 They are being told the RVP is cathedral car park which  
 22 you said you'd have sent them to.  
 23 A. Yes.  
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Is it a good reason for not doing that  
 25 that we would normally muster them at one of the

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1 stations?  
 2 A. Bearing in mind that we'd been given a rendezvous point,  
 3 I can't see any — unless the... The only thing he may  
 4 be alluding to, and I can't speak for Andy, was probably  
 5 a forward control point, possibly, which would be  
 6 Manchester Central or a fire station.  
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I am really sorry to interrupt,  
 8 Mr Smith. It was just while it was on.  
 9 MR SMITH: Not at all, sir.  
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And you want to go to another page now?  
 11 MR SMITH: If we could go to {INQ041473/9}. We see the  
 12 balance of the call there. If we could pick that up at  
 13 22.41.58. That's the remaining part of the transcript.  
 14 If you could hold the information from both parts of the  
 15 transcript that you've been through now just for  
 16 yourself to deal with the next question, I'd be  
 17 grateful.  
 18 If you had been provided with that information at  
 19 that time, would you have done things differently to  
 20 Station Manager Berry?  
 21 A. I think it's fairly easy for me to say that and I know  
 22 it would be perceived as hindsight but I'm fairly  
 23 confident I would have done things differently.  
 24 Q. Can you assist the inquiry with the steps you would then  
 25 have taken, even with the assistance of hindsight,

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1 obviously, in those circumstances on receiving that  
 2 information?  
 3 A. Out of the phone calls, there's a couple of key points  
 4 for me. One was a rendezvous point that had already  
 5 been established which I would deem as a safe zone, a  
 6 safe area as deemed by the police. That is key to me.  
 7 It was mentioned that the bomb had gone off, so it had  
 8 exploded, so that's another key information for me that  
 9 there was a bomb, but it's actually exploded so it's not  
 10 a bomb any more. And also, there's a bit of additional  
 11 information that could have been made available.  
 12 I don't know what it is because Andy said I don't need  
 13 to know that, just get the pumps moving. So there were  
 14 three elements there that would have prompted me to  
 15 change my decision.  
 16 Q. Well, what we do know is that was information coming in  
 17 from a member of the public and the offer was made,  
 18 clearly, to convey that information, but your position  
 19 is that you'd have said, "Let me have that information";  
 20 is that right?  
 21 A. Yes, and sometimes we get multiple calls from the public  
 22 and I've attended incidents -- for instance, a car on  
 23 its roof on fire, leaking petrol -- and when we've got  
 24 there, it's steam coming from the engine or it's water  
 25 leaking from the radiator. So sometimes information

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1 from the public is unqualified information. You should  
 2 never disregard it; you just put it into part of the  
 3 equation.  
 4 Q. Would you have proceeded on the basis that if Greater  
 5 Manchester Police had declared a rendezvous point of the  
 6 cathedral car park they would only do so if they were  
 7 satisfied that it was a suitable place to rendezvous?  
 8 A. I would think it would be remiss of them to put us  
 9 anywhere else, so I would say yes to that.  
 10 Q. So that's how you'd have proceeded?  
 11 A. Yes, sir.  
 12 Q. And it is a regrettable fact, isn't it, that nobody  
 13 informed you of the proposed location of that rendezvous  
 14 point until much later, as Mr Greaney has established?  
 15 A. Indeed, sir.  
 16 Q. What I would like to do is take you to the call at 22.52  
 17 which involved yourself --  
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Smith, I'm going to interrupt you,  
 19 I apologise.  
 20 MR SMITH: Please don't apologise, sir.  
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We know what Mr Berry has said about  
 22 sending the fire engines to the fire station and you  
 23 wouldn't have done that. Would you have rung the FDO?  
 24 A. I have never had any contact, I wouldn't have his number  
 25 and I wouldn't know how to get hold of the FDO. He

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1 wouldn't know me from Adam.  
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.  
 3 MR SMITH: That has just reminded me that there is one more  
 4 question I would just like to ask you about the 22.40  
 5 call if you had been in that position. Is there any  
 6 doubt in your mind that if you had given the instruction  
 7 at 22.40 or shortly afterwards to North West Fire  
 8 Control, "Send X number of pumps and crews to the  
 9 rendezvous point", they would have done it?  
 10 A. If they'd asked me to do that or...  
 11 Q. No, if it had been your view at 22.40 that that is what  
 12 should have happened and you had said to North West Fire  
 13 Control, "Please send the pumps forthwith to the  
 14 rendezvous point at the cathedral car park", knowing  
 15 Control as you did at that time, is there any doubt in  
 16 your mind they would have complied with your  
 17 instructions?  
 18 A. I think most of the Control know me and I think the  
 19 answer to your question is yes, they would have done  
 20 that.  
 21 Q. So if we can turn now to page 22, please, of the  
 22 sequence of communications {INQ041473/22}. We're going  
 23 to pick up in fact at the bottom of page 21, Mr Lopez  
 24 {INQ041473/21}.  
 25 There at the bottom of page 21 is the start of North

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1 West Fire, Control's call to you. If we go over to  
 2 page 22. What we can see are the words:  
 3 "The rendezvous car park."  
 4 Mr Nankivell, I'm not suggesting for one moment that  
 5 you're responsible for cutting the operator off. But  
 6 it's clear, isn't it, that at that point the operator  
 7 was seeking to give you information about the  
 8 rendezvous?  
 9 A. Um... Yes, I guess reading that, yes, sir, I would say  
 10 yes.  
 11 Q. I want to help you, please, about another aspect of the  
 12 information that was coming in. If we move on from  
 13 there and we look at {INQ041473/23} and follow that down  
 14 and pick up on page 23, towards the end of that call  
 15 there is reference to a paramedic Bronze commander  
 16 at the scene.  
 17 You've provided the inquiry, through Mr Greaney,  
 18 with your explanation of the fact that you didn't really  
 19 attach significance to that at the time; is that  
 20 correct?  
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: My understanding was you just didn't  
 22 notice it.  
 23 A. I failed to notice it, sir, yes.  
 24 MR SMITH: That's really my clumsy way of putting the  
 25 same --

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's fine, just so people know what  
2 we're talking about.

3 MR SMITH: But it's plain you didn't attach significance to  
4 it at all for whatever reason. What I would like to do  
5 is to take you on in the sequence of communications,  
6 please, to pages 26 and 27 {INQ041473/26-27}.

7 If we go to page 26, at the bottom of page 26, we'll  
8 see at 22.55.22, the incident log 9074, and then going  
9 over to page 27, it records the fact:  
10 "Paramedic Bronze commander is at scene."  
11 What is apparent from Joanne Haslam's call to you  
12 is that she mentions the fact that another message has  
13 come up towards the end of the call, just at the end,  
14 and she's plainly reading, I would suggest, from the  
15 incident log.

16 I want to take you, because I think this is  
17 important from the inquiry's point of view generally, to  
18 {INQ041473/24}, the very bottom. The time is 22.54.02.  
19 This is a call from Greater Manchester Police to North  
20 West Fire Control. It's a call which has been in  
21 progress since 22.32, and the line is open still with  
22 North West Fire Control.

23 If we turn to {INQ041473/25}, we can see that that  
24 information, "The paramedic Bronze has just arrived on  
25 scene", that's the point at which Greater Manchester

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1 Police pass that information to the control room, but  
2 I would like to take you on next, please, to this.  
3 Greater Manchester Police say in answer to North West  
4 Fire Control:  
5 "And whereabouts is he? Is he at the RV point for  
6 the car park?"  
7 "No, I think he's actually at the scene. All NWAS  
8 to attend booking office. I think they're at the  
9 booking office. That's where the main explosion has  
10 been. That's where they are asking everyone to go.  
11 That's where all the NWAS -- all the ambulance crew have  
12 been sent to the booking office, so that's where this  
13 has all happened..."  
14 Would you look at the right-hand column, please, and  
15 go back to {INQ041473/24}, Mr Lopez:  
16 "Information provided by GMP [and over to  
17 {INQ041473/25}]. That's where they're asking everyone  
18 to go. That's where all the NWAS, all the ambulance  
19 view have been sent."  
20 That was not entered on to incident log 9074 and  
21 we're going to come to another entry in a moment.  
22 If that information, Mr Nankivell, had been provided  
23 to you at the time, would you have considered it to be  
24 significant?  
25 A. I think it was -- yes, I think the simple answer is yes,

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1 it would be significant. I'm still unclear that we've  
2 got a paramedic that's a Bronze commander on scene at  
3 that time. That was all, sir.

4 Q. But that information that I have drawn your attention to  
5 in the right-hand column --  
6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. -- would have been plainly of significance, wouldn't it?  
8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. And what would it have assisted you in relation to?  
10 A. I think it paints a picture that there's at least  
11 somebody from an ambo environment actually on the scene  
12 and I would (inaudible) from that that it was -- part of  
13 the ambulance command structure was actually on scene,  
14 so the ambulance was setting up a command structure.  
15 Q. Would that have assisted you in determining whether any  
16 amendment or alteration to the current Fire and Rescue  
17 Service response should then have been made?  
18 A. Yes, I think that would have given -- not me  
19 particularly but I would have done something with that  
20 information had I picked up on it. Again, that's quite  
21 strong information that perhaps North West Fire Control  
22 maybe could have emphasised to the incident commander  
23 because that information would have been really useful  
24 for the incident commander at the time.  
25 Q. Then if we go to page 30 in the sequence, please

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1 {INQ041473/30}, to the time of 22.58.08 and pick up  
2 incident log 9074 again. You will see it was not until  
3 that time that this information was entered, by which  
4 time the call to you from North West Fire Control had  
5 terminated just a few minutes before.  
6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Plainly, therefore, this was valuable information that  
8 might have influenced the Fire and Rescue Service's  
9 response, do you agree?  
10 A. I agree, sir.

11 Q. Do you have experience of what it's actually like in  
12 a control room for a control room operator to be  
13 listening, typing, and speaking, possibly all at the  
14 same time?  
15 A. I could only assimilate it to myself proceeding to an  
16 incident on blue lights while doing -- answering radio  
17 calls, answering the phone and finding my way through  
18 places I've never heard of.  
19 Q. But does this perhaps indicate, dealing with the point  
20 that the chairman raised today, that there could be  
21 value in senior Fire and Rescue Service officers opening  
22 the incident log on laptops, perhaps just before they  
23 actually leave home or wherever they are located, and  
24 checking the content of the incident log to see whether  
25 there is any information there that hasn't actually been

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1 conveyed by telephone?  
 2 A. I think, yes, but it would depend on what role they were  
 3 being deployed as. If they were time crucial or time  
 4 critical, then again opening a laptop takes time and  
 5 consumes more time. Any information is valuable.  
 6 Q. As far as these incident logs are concerned,  
 7 Mr Greaney's drawn your attention to 9074, which is the  
 8 principal log, if I can call it that, 9078, which is the  
 9 log that was created to send appliances to G18  
 10 Philips Park, and then of course we know there was  
 11 a third and a fourth log created on the night, the next  
 12 one was the command support room log, and then a log  
 13 created for the movement of appliances to the arena. So  
 14 that's the number of logs.  
 15 But could I just ask you to reconsider some of the  
 16 evidence you've given about the difficulties that would  
 17 be experienced in bringing a log up on the screen and  
 18 perhaps not appreciating whether it's the correct log  
 19 that you should be looking at? You may wish to take it  
 20 from me, but log 9078, which relates to Philips Park,  
 21 starts immediately on the first line with the location  
 22 at Philips Park and the mobilisation of appliances there  
 23 follows on. Do you agree that in those circumstances  
 24 it would be obvious if you picked that log up from the  
 25 identification number that you aren't actually looking

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1 or wouldn't be looking at the incident log relevant to  
 2 the report of the incident?  
 3 A. On reflection, it should be obvious, sir, but -- yes, it  
 4 should be obvious, sir.  
 5 Q. Now I would like to ask you about something in your  
 6 statement at paragraph 105. I don't know whether you  
 7 need reminding of it, but it's page 19 of your  
 8 statement. At the time when you made the statement you  
 9 said that you were still unclear in relation to the  
 10 reasons why there was no PDA effectively to the  
 11 incident.  
 12 A. Yes, sir.  
 13 Q. Have you been following the evidence in the last week or  
 14 two?  
 15 A. Yes, I have.  
 16 Q. Do you now understand, despite some initial confusion,  
 17 that it was the view of the team leaders at North West  
 18 Fire Control that none of the action plans actually met  
 19 the circumstances which they were confronted with at the  
 20 time? In other words, do you now understand that from  
 21 the evidence you've heard?  
 22 A. I understand it from the evidence I've heard, yes.  
 23 Q. I'm not asking you to enquire into that reasoning. In  
 24 those circumstances, can we just assume that that was  
 25 their state of mind for the purposes of my question. In

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1 those circumstances, do you agree that it was  
 2 a reasonable course for them to take, if that's correct,  
 3 to contact the duty NILO for advice?  
 4 A. Based on the teaching or training they'd had, yes, that  
 5 was possibly a good call or a call to make.  
 6 Q. You went on in that paragraph to say:  
 7 "It was not the NILO's role to dictate whether the  
 8 predetermined attendance is sent."  
 9 Presumably you still adhere to that, do you?  
 10 A. To a degree, yes.  
 11 Q. Well, that may be correct, but what I would like you to  
 12 consider, please, Mr Nankivell, is that once advice was  
 13 requested from the duty NILO, once that situation had  
 14 been achieved, it was open, wasn't it, to the duty NILO  
 15 to say, "Whatever happens, I want you now to send those  
 16 appliances straight to the arena or to the RVP"?  
 17 A. Absolutely, sir, yes.  
 18 MR SMITH: Thank you for your help.  
 19 A. Thank you, sir.  
 20 MR GREANEY: Thank you very much, Mr Smith.  
 21 Sir, Mr Horwell on behalf of Greater Manchester  
 22 Police has been good enough to tell me that he no longer  
 23 has questions, as has Ms Roberts on behalf of the  
 24 Ambulance Service, and so I'll turn next to Mr Cooper  
 25 and ask him to make a start and to find a convenient

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1 point at about 1 o'clock.  
 2 Questions from MR COOPER  
 3 MR COOPER: I would like to take you back -- I represent the  
 4 families on these issues -- and can I take you, please,  
 5 to paragraph 37 in your statement. {INQ026736/7}.  
 6 There we see:  
 7 "The thinking about a terrorist attack I expected an  
 8 attack with a knife, someone in a lorry driving at  
 9 people and/or an acid attack. I was not expecting  
 10 a bomb in the UK. Intelligence in the UK is good and  
 11 there had been no bombs in the country since the  
 12 Manchester bomb in 1996. This was left field and  
 13 unexpected."  
 14 A small point, not quite right. In fact, very  
 15 sadly, today is the 15th anniversary of the 7/7 bomb,  
 16 isn't it? So there was an incident there as well in  
 17 2005.  
 18 A. Yes.  
 19 Q. And can I take you, on top of that, and then my question  
 20 will come, please, Mr Lopez, to Kerslake,  
 21 {INQ023518T/3}, please.  
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You're quite right to remind us that  
 23 it's the 7/7 anniversary.  
 24 MR COOPER: If we look towards the bottom of that page, we  
 25 see your responses to Kerslake:

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1 "So a bomb going off in Manchester was not -- it  
 2 wasn't a shock in the fact that it happened, it was  
 3 a shock in that I wasn't expecting it, you know, it was  
 4 one of them things that -- I thought we'd sort of moved  
 5 on from bombs in city centres really, in fairness."

6 What made you think that, as it were, "We'd moved on  
 7 from bombs in city centres"? I do understand that the  
 8 prevailing tactics of these murderers was different.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. But what made you think that we'd actually moved on from  
 11 that?

12 A. I just think that the sort of intelligence was or my  
 13 perception of the intelligence service was so advanced  
 14 now that they would have got wind of anything like that.  
 15 But I think the fact that things had happened in France  
 16 and in Berlin, if I remember, in Germany. And with  
 17 probably the days of -- the issues with  
 18 Northern Ireland, I just didn't -- it's just something  
 19 I think we -- it is quite hard, is my understanding, to  
 20 make a bomb and I just thought that intelligence now had  
 21 moved on and we were far more ahead of the game than  
 22 that.

23 Q. I'm certainly not suggesting that you individually were  
 24 complacent, but would you accept there was a general  
 25 complacency at the time about expectation of this sort

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1 of bomb, of this sort of atrocity?

2 A. I would not -- no, I would say that certainly from --  
 3 and I think it's probably evident in this process that  
 4 the NIOs were certainly more expecting of a bomb attack  
 5 than I was. I think that would be fair to say.

6 Q. We've certainly seen evidence of a knowledge that  
 7 Manchester was to be expected to receive such an  
 8 atrocity and that indeed Manchester Arena itself should  
 9 expect to be at the receiving end of such an atrocity.  
 10 Did this not maybe cause a reassessment at the time  
 11 before 22/5 that this sort of lone-wolf attack was still  
 12 very much a reality?

13 A. It obviously was very much a reality, yes, sir.

14 Q. And I suggest again, was there a general element of:  
 15 well, let's keep our eye on the ball, as we see it, with  
 16 Paris-style attacks, but our eye was taken off the ball  
 17 when it came to this sort of attack?

18 A. I wouldn't say from a -- I can only speak from  
 19 a Manchester Fire point of view, that I don't think our  
 20 eye was taken off the ball. I just think my own  
 21 perception of the news and things that are happening in  
 22 the news, it was a shock to me that this had actually  
 23 happened on our watch.

24 Q. Because you'd accept, wouldn't you, that terrorists  
 25 should be expected, appallingly, to do the unexpected?

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1 A. I think that's fair, yes.

2 Q. And perhaps we didn't factor in enough or that you and  
 3 your colleagues didn't factor in enough that basic  
 4 principle, that terrorists should be expected to do the  
 5 unexpected?

6 A. I think the NIOs had done what they'd done with the  
 7 information they'd got, but it's impossible to train for  
 8 something like that, sir, it's just impossible.

9 Q. All right. I want to deal with the CSR now again,  
 10 please, the command support room. I think you were  
 11 telling us this morning that when you first arrived  
 12 there, effectively there were lights on but no one at  
 13 home?

14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think the lights were off.

15 A. The lights weren't even on. Paul Etches was in  
 16 attendance but that's what he would have been met by.

17 MR COOPER: You spoke, before you arrived at the command  
 18 support room, didn't you, to, for instance, the chief,  
 19 Mr O'Reilly?

20 A. Yes, I did.

21 Q. And indeed Mr Keelan as well, didn't you? You don't  
 22 remember it, I'll come back to that, but it's recorded  
 23 that you did.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Could they not or should they not perhaps have taken the

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1 initiative with all their experience to think, well, I'm  
 2 going to step in and open the command support room?  
 3 Should it have been left to you given that the chief and  
 4 indeed Mr Keelan knew?

5 A. Well, I'd already informed the chief that that was  
 6 already happening anyway, so the command support room  
 7 was opening regardless of what I was told, I was opening  
 8 it anyway.

9 Q. You in fact, as we heard earlier on, called Mr Keelan,  
 10 didn't you, at 23.35? We've seen the schedule.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. And that call lasted for 1 minute and 32 seconds. Did  
 13 you tell Mr Keelan at the time about the occurrence of  
 14 this atrocity?

15 A. I really and honestly cannot ever remember making that  
 16 phone call, sir, so I wouldn't be able to corroborate if  
 17 I did or didn't.

18 Q. Let's try and infer. You're calling Mr Keelan obviously  
 19 and the thing that's on your mind is that an atrocity  
 20 has occurred at Manchester Arena, I presume.

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. So it would be inexplicable if you hadn't told  
 23 Mr Keelan?

24 A. I wouldn't have called him for anything else.

25 Q. Absolutely. You can't remember what Mr Keelan said back

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1 to you?  
 2 A. I can't recall the call at all, no.  
 3 Q. We know from his own statement that as a result of your  
 4 telephone call he went back to bed. That's what he did.  
 5 A. Right, sir.  
 6 Q. He just went back to bed again. Does that surprise you?  
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think it depends what was said to him.  
 8 Mr Keelan clearly is going to answer for that himself.  
 9 It does depend a bit what's said (overspeaking).  
 10 MR COOPER: Having established, if I may, what would have  
 11 been said to him was that there's an atrocity occurred  
 12 in Manchester --  
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's fair enough.  
 14 What role would you expect Mr Keelan to have played  
 15 in what went on thereafter?  
 16 A. I've done it in the past, sir. There's another  
 17 assistant chief officer, Tony Hunter. I generally tried  
 18 to ring one or the other just as an additional resource  
 19 and get them -- just to get them informed, so we've got  
 20 -- if they suddenly get a phone call from the media or  
 21 something they are not caught unawares.  
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Would you have been asking him to do  
 23 anything (overspeaking)?  
 24 A. No, just informative it would have been, sir.  
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.

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1 MR COOPER: Would you have expected him to, given the  
 2 enormity of what you'd told him, do something a little  
 3 more than go back to bed?  
 4 A. I don't know where he was at that time when I made the  
 5 call.  
 6 Q. In bed.  
 7 A. Well, most of the times we get fire calls, most of us  
 8 are in bed.  
 9 Q. Of course. But I'm suggesting that when you get a call  
 10 of this severity, are you surprised to hear that he went  
 11 back to bed?  
 12 A. I suppose I am surprised, yes, sir.  
 13 Q. I want to ask you a little more about the command  
 14 support room, and for that I will take you to, please,  
 15 {INQ026722/6}, Mr Lopez.  
 16 If we look at that, we see the second bullet  
 17 point -- and this is your response -- let's go to the  
 18 top of it, please, so Mr Nankivell can appreciate what  
 19 document this is. Go to the first page {INQ026722/1}  
 20 and scroll, please.  
 21 As you see, Mr Nankivell, this is your response to  
 22 that debrief questionnaire. Back to the original page,  
 23 please, {INQ026722/6}:  
 24 "What would be your key recommendations for future  
 25 similar events?"

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1 And the second bullet point:  
 2 "DO NOT [in capitals] try to manage an incident from  
 3 afar, ie the CSR."  
 4 Can you perhaps, and again the emphasis is in  
 5 capitals, explain to the chair, please, a little more  
 6 about how you felt about that, about managing an  
 7 incident from afar?  
 8 A. Yes, sir. The point that I would emphasise on that is  
 9 that the tactics on the ground must be dictated by the  
 10 people on the ground and strategy can be dealt with from  
 11 afar. But the people that are actually on the ground,  
 12 making possibly life decisions (sic) must be made by the  
 13 people on the ground, not people that haven't got that  
 14 view.  
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Subject to the qualification you gave  
 16 before, when we looked at this direction --  
 17 A. Yes, sir.  
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: -- if someone thinks it's going entirely  
 19 wrong and lives are being put at risk, I'm not  
 20 suggesting that was happening here, you'd expect them to  
 21 do something about it, not just say, "Nothing to do with  
 22 me, it's on scene"?  
 23 A. It's the absolute responsibility of everybody to --  
 24 we've got to really ... you know, a really good incident  
 25 command training and things, so we normally pick that

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1 stuff in from training. But I actually 100% agree with  
 2 you, sir: if I saw something going wrong that just  
 3 looked wrong, and it put people's lives at risk, I would  
 4 have to make a decision and intervene.  
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Did you have on the night sufficient  
 6 senior officers to do what was necessary? This is  
 7 a different thing from the last question. Did you have  
 8 sufficient senior officers doing things on the night or  
 9 were you short of people?  
 10 A. No, we had at that time sufficient officers, sir.  
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: In fact you thought you had one too many  
 12 with Mr Harris, perhaps?  
 13 A. Absolutely, sir.  
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.  
 15 MR COOPER: In fact, what you're suggesting here,  
 16 Mr Nankivell, and I'm certainly not implying a criticism  
 17 in this question, is that should be the norm for the CSR  
 18 but if lives are at risk, they should forget policy and  
 19 go with common sense?  
 20 A. Yes, you're right, but this is -- there isn't a policy  
 21 about commanding from the CSR, that is a guidance  
 22 document, but as I go -- managing from afar can be a dangerous thing to do.  
 23 Q. Would you agree then that perhaps the role of the  
 24 command support room, and I'm not trying to denigrate  
 25

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1 it, it's important, but their role is to receive and to  
 2 dispatch?  
 3 A. Information, sir. Yes.  
 4 Q. To receive information and to dispatch information?  
 5 A. Yes, sir.  
 6 Q. That's their role effectively?  
 7 A. Effectively.  
 8 Q. Important, please understand that, but that's their  
 9 role. Thank you.  
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I just clear this up while we're on  
 11 the CSR? The creation of the CSR happened concurrently  
 12 with setting up NWFC and getting rid of your own control  
 13 room?  
 14 A. Yes, sir.  
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: What's the relation of those two things?  
 16 Was one because of the other or is it just coincidental?  
 17 A. No, one followed from the other. As I remember, North  
 18 West Fire Control was made up from operators from  
 19 different regions, so one was — they weren't familiar  
 20 with the — the demographics and the topography of  
 21 Greater Manchester and also my understanding was at the  
 22 time there was less operators — I can't remember how  
 23 many operators were on on the Manchester Control, but it  
 24 was somewhere in the region of 10 —  
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Less than you had? Okay.

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1 A. — and North West Fire Control I think was somewhere in  
 2 the region of three, so I think —  
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So it's filling the gap created by the  
 4 replacement of the control room by NWFC?  
 5 A. Exactly, sir, yes.  
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Thank you.  
 7 MR COOPER: You spoke a moment ago of the incident commander  
 8 and I want to take you to a little on that, please. If  
 9 we go to the Kerslake interview, which is  
 10 {INQ023518T/40}.  
 11 The interviewer starts the process in this series of  
 12 questions with this:  
 13 "I've got a naive question. Sometimes...  
 14 irritating, occasionally, of bringing out something. So  
 15 one of your colleagues has said that — explaining to me  
 16 that the incident commander role isn't activated really  
 17 unless you're at the scene. You have to be at the scene  
 18 to be incident commander."  
 19 And you say, "Yeah". And you stand by that,  
 20 I presume?  
 21 A. In general terms, yes, sir, but sometimes appliances may  
 22 be stood by, ready to be deployed at a strategic holding  
 23 area or somewhere, and there would be a delegated  
 24 incident commander with those appliances.  
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Whether it was right or wrong to go to

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1 Philips Park, you needed an incident commander there,  
 2 didn't you?  
 3 A. We did, yes.  
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right.  
 5 MR COOPER: We'll read on:  
 6 "Yeah, okay."  
 7 And the interviewer says in a rather intemperate  
 8 way —  
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I wouldn't allow you to ask this  
 10 question.  
 11 MR COOPER: I wouldn't dream of asking it. But you see what  
 12 he says:  
 13 "Why the hell didn't somebody just go to the scene?"  
 14 Over the page {INQ023518T/41}:  
 15 "It's beyond me, I don't know, I wish — I wish —  
 16 again, because I'm a command support room officer, I  
 17 can't — we have an ethos that we don't make decisions  
 18 from the command — you are there purely for support."  
 19 "Yeah because it's support isn't it?"  
 20 "That's all it is. In this particular incident, you  
 21 find yourself starting to make decisions and falling  
 22 into that trap."  
 23 "Yeah."  
 24 "And what we needed was — the only way we were ever  
 25 going to make any kind of decision, informed decision,

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1 was have somebody, whether it was a watch manager on  
 2 a fire engine or a station manager in his car, liaising  
 3 with somebody, or a NILO, or anybody going forward to  
 4 make those decisions and give us some ground truth, was  
 5 the only way we were going to get that real information.  
 6 And it wasn't until eventually we got Andy Berry and  
 7 three pumps down there that information started to  
 8 flow."  
 9 And indeed, the bottom part of that page  
 10 Mr Greaney's already taken you to. I presume you  
 11 readily endorse what you said in what I have just read  
 12 to you as well?  
 13 A. Absolutely, sir. Absolutely 100%.  
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Is ground truth your own phrase or is it  
 15 one used regularly in the Fire Service?  
 16 A. I would say it's something that's used throughout the  
 17 Fire Service, I think, sir.  
 18 MR COOPER: Over the page, Mr Lopez {INQ023518T/42}. You  
 19 deal with your approach to Philips Park and you have  
 20 already given evidence on that.  
 21 Then interviewer 1 says this:  
 22 "In your MTFA protocols, is the NILO made the  
 23 incident manager?"  
 24 You say:  
 25 "No, the NILO, any specialist officer, whether it's

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1 NILO or hazmat, or you know, a BA."  
 2 What's a BA?  
 3 A. Breathing apparatus.  
 4 Q. "Whatever -- whatever their speciality is, they're there  
 5 to support the incident commander. So something like  
 6 this is needed -- well, initially it doesn't matter,  
 7 a watch manager would have been fine. If we had had  
 8 a pump there with eyes on, but when he called in  
 9 resources, we would have got more resources in, and the  
 10 more resources you bring in, the higher ranking officer  
 11 takes charge of that."  
 12 Again, do you wish to add anything to that?  
 13 A. No, I don't demean -- we've got some outstanding watch  
 14 managers and I've been a watch manager myself and when  
 15 a watch manager gets on scene, they generally make the  
 16 right call. They know that if they ask for more  
 17 appliances or help, that's generally the right call.  
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But it immediately sets up a command  
 19 system, a command and control system?  
 20 A. It puts a command structure in place from the get-go,  
 21 sir.  
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So once you're there at the scene that's  
 23 immediate. What's not so apparent perhaps is when  
 24 you have a situation when you have stood away from the  
 25 scene.

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1 A. Yes, sir.  
 2 MR COOPER: Reading at the bottom:  
 3 "So if we're looking at support, you're there to  
 4 support the front line, you've got an action card and  
 5 you've got North West Fire Control that says, 'Notify  
 6 NILO', that has effectively passed responsibility for  
 7 what is needed in support to the NILO, do you think? So  
 8 if -- they were expecting the NILO to be asking for  
 9 staff?"  
 10 You say this:  
 11 "In this case, yeah, in this case that's what  
 12 happened. I don't think -- and again I've got an issue  
 13 with NILOs because I think that when they hear, I don't  
 14 know, explosion, say they don't -- my vision is quite  
 15 like this. I'm quite open on it, because I respond to  
 16 collapsed houses and I respond to earthquakes. I'm  
 17 quite open with all this. But the NILOs -- and not all  
 18 of them, but they're -- they've become a bit tunnel  
 19 vision ..."  
 20 I put this in fact to Mr Fletcher yesterday and  
 21 I referenced this:  
 22 "But they've become a bit tunnel vision on if it's  
 23 an explosion, it's probably a bomb, probably  
 24 a home-making bomb device or whatever, and they get very  
 25 tunnel vision with it, and to the point now where

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1 they -- they are seen by certainly myself and other  
 2 officers that they're the..."  
 3 And you go on to develop that.  
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The rest of your sentence was deemed to  
 5 be irrelevant and sensitive, but it is quite difficult  
 6 to understand what you're saying without it, but anyway.  
 7 Can you explain all that to me? I'm afraid I don't  
 8 actually follow what you meant.  
 9 A. The point I was probably trying to get across is that  
 10 I've responded to numerous explosions in my career, some  
 11 of those unfortunately have been fatal, and some have  
 12 not. But we respond to an explosion and at the time  
 13 I've been to scenes where there's been no house left  
 14 where this explosion has taken place. It could have  
 15 been somebody making a bomb in their garage or it could  
 16 have been a gas explosion, but at the end of the day we  
 17 responded to a gas explosion or an explosion to a device  
 18 or whatever. And if -- that's what -- if we had  
 19 responded to explosion we would have got the same  
 20 outcome but the NILOs, because of their training and  
 21 their probably greater knowledge, shall we say, they  
 22 then become quite -- they are quite focused on MTFA and  
 23 terrorism-type events and terrorism-type responses.  
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Therefore they are more cautious because  
 25 they could be going into a trap?

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1 A. Correct, sir, yes.  
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's not unreasonable, for them for  
 3 more cautious, is it?  
 4 A. Not unreasonable at all, no. And I know the... As  
 5 I said before, I'm ex-military, I know the dangers of  
 6 explosives, but I am of the firm opinion that once  
 7 a bomb has gone bang (sic), once it's gone bang, it's  
 8 now an explosion and I then have to take a risk.  
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And you go in whatever the risk to not  
 10 only you but the people you're leading?  
 11 A. I've had many sleepless nights, sir, when I've had to  
 12 deploy resources into areas, I've deployed into areas  
 13 myself, and I've not been able to tell my wife or my  
 14 kids. So I've put myself in great danger and I have had  
 15 many sleepless nights where I have put my crews or the  
 16 people under me into areas of danger but  
 17 unfortunately --  
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And I'm sure they're prepared to take  
 19 the risk too because they are those sort of people.  
 20 A. Absolutely. Unfortunately, that's part and parcel of  
 21 signing up to an emergency service: it can be  
 22 a dangerous environment.  
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.  
 24 MR COOPER: Just before the luncheon adjournment, subject to  
 25 the chair's discretion, {INQ023518T/8}, please.

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1 Let's go to the last line on {INQ023518T/7}, please,  
 2 last two lines:  
 3 "Because he would see an officer go in to assume the  
 4 role of command because there wasn't an actual incident  
 5 commander for this, at this stage, which was again  
 6 something that to me is -- that is a massive failing."  
 7 Do you endorse that?  
 8 A. I do, sir. You need a leader and we didn't have an  
 9 incident commander at that point.  
 10 MR COOPER: Would that be a convenient moment, sir?  
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Certainly. 2 o'clock. Thank you.  
 12 Is that long enough for you?  
 13 A. Yes, fine, sir.  
 14 (1.02 pm)  
 15 (The lunch adjournment)  
 16 (2.00 pm)  
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper.  
 18 MR COOPER: Mr Nankivell, let's continue, please. Mr Lopez,  
 19 could I ask us to go to document {INQ001140/1}. It's  
 20 a little bit of traffic between Mr Nankivell and NWFC.  
 21 It's just right in the middle of that document,  
 22 please, it's timed at 23.36. You say this -- I'll  
 23 introduce it by NWFC:  
 24 "I don't think John Fletcher's fair away. I've just  
 25 spoken to John so..."

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1 "Yeah. He's... what I've, I've told him and I've  
 2 told Ben, don't make any decisions cos they're not on...  
 3 Ben... they'll kind of run away with it and put  
 4 resources in the wrong basket..."  
 5 So it's that sentence, "because they'll run away  
 6 with it and put resources in the wrong basket", can you  
 7 help articulate what your precise concern was there,  
 8 please?  
 9 A. The exact context -- reading it, I know my thoughts were  
 10 I wanted resources at the arena. I was probably already  
 11 in the mind that I didn't want resources at  
 12 Philips Park, to be honest with you. I didn't  
 13 articulate that I didn't want resources at Philips Park  
 14 because that would have been interfering with the  
 15 tactical plan. I can't remember the exact context that  
 16 that was said in.  
 17 Q. Have a think if you can. I know it's difficult and  
 18 we've come a few years yet on, but the expression:  
 19 "They'll kind of run away with it and put resources  
 20 in the wrong basket."  
 21 That's quite a specific concern, if I may put it to  
 22 you, that you express there. Have a think. What did  
 23 you mean by that?  
 24 A. That comment is referring to the NILOs doing their NILO  
 25 thing without communicating it to the rest of the world.

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1 Q. The consequences of the NILO doing their NILO thing is  
 2 they'll put resources in the wrong basket; is that  
 3 right?  
 4 A. Probably not a good choice of words. The NILOs know  
 5 what to do and they would have -- whatever they did,  
 6 they would have done it for the right reasons to support  
 7 Greater Manchester. But the wrong basket...  
 8 Q. I'm sure they would. No one's suggesting that anyone  
 9 has done anything deliberately to hurt anyone, let me  
 10 make that very clear. But the suggestion that they'll  
 11 put resources in the wrong basket is potentially quite  
 12 a serious concern and I would like you to articulate, if  
 13 you can, what your concern was at 23.36 about what the  
 14 NILOs might do.  
 15 A. I think that Philips Park was the wrong basket, sir.  
 16 Q. Can I suggest it means something like: because they'll  
 17 send resources to the wrong place?  
 18 A. I think Philips Park was the wrong place, sir.  
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I say that I, and I'm sure everyone  
 20 here, understands the difficulty of being asked, as it  
 21 were, about individual words in what was a fast-moving  
 22 thing. But I think we can understand your concerns and  
 23 one of them you expressed to me was actually thing just  
 24 not going through the right procedures so they are  
 25 recorded.

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1 A. Yes.  
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You've explained people were being sent  
 3 to Philips Park and, as far as you were concerned, that  
 4 was not the right place.  
 5 A. That's exactly right, sir.  
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.  
 7 MR COOPER: Can I take you please to {INQ001230/1}. It is a  
 8 matter the chair has asked of on a number of occasions  
 9 and it's just to put it in the context of why you didn't  
 10 and your colleagues didn't have the NILO numbers readily  
 11 available. Here is a communication timed at 23.33.08,  
 12 you and NWFC:  
 13 "Have you got -- do you have all the contact  
 14 telephone or pager numbers for all the NILOs?"  
 15 "For the NILOs around Philips Park?"  
 16 "No just -- all the NILOs for Manchester."  
 17 "I could ask if we have a -- we do have, we can go  
 18 into each individual one, find out who's got the NILO  
 19 skill and go to each individual one and find their  
 20 actual pager contact details. We will have them but not  
 21 as a group page, but I can ask if we do."  
 22 Would it not have been perhaps helpful if all the  
 23 things that NWFC were suggesting there were done well  
 24 before they were urgently needed on 22 May?  
 25 A. Yes, I think that they would definitely have their phone

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1 numbers, that's 100%, I can guarantee, because they  
 2 would have them as flexi duty officers . But I don't  
 3 know if they would be able to identify that they were  
 4 NILOs per se, but that group message could be put in  
 5 advance certainly yes.  
 6 Q. And more specifically to you, would you not think it  
 7 might have been helpful for a man in your position  
 8 at the time to have had those details without having to  
 9 ask NWFC?  
 10 A. I would have had those details in the command support  
 11 room sir, but I wouldn't have been able to send a text  
 12 message out or something to the pagers. I would have  
 13 done it through Control, even if I'd the ability , but it  
 14 was Control would put a message out to their pagers.  
 15 I could have got the phone numbers from my board -- my  
 16 board in the control room has their call sign, it has  
 17 the person's name, and it has their contact telephone  
 18 number on it.  
 19 Q. I'll move on. Again a series of questions I've asked  
 20 other witnesses and it's basically on how the team was  
 21 being put together. I suggested to a number of other  
 22 witnesses that the selection of the team, however able  
 23 they may have been, was rather ad hoc, do you know what  
 24 I mean, other people asking other people to attend  
 25 whilst they're driving to the scene? Do you understand

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1 what I'm suggesting?  
 2 A. I understand, sir, yes.  
 3 Q. Is that normally the way it's done that a -- I'll stick  
 4 to my expression, a rather ad hoc way of assembling  
 5 an important team for a catastrophic event?  
 6 A. I have never known it before but I have never, ever  
 7 responded to an incident of this nature before.  
 8 Q. Usually, and we all totally accept -- I say that, I do  
 9 certainly on behalf of those we represent -- that this  
 10 was a very unusual, to put it mildly, event that was  
 11 happening on the night. Are you saying that in normal  
 12 circumstances, a significant fire with people's lives at  
 13 risk, teams wouldn't be put together like this, there'd  
 14 be more of a centralised way of doing it?  
 15 A. Do you want a one-word answer or would you like me to  
 16 expand on it?  
 17 MR COOPER: I am in the chair's hands, but --  
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Let's try one and we'll expand if need  
 19 be.  
 20 A. The answer is yes. I can expand.  
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's the duty people, isn't it?  
 22 You have a team on duty and they would be the people  
 23 that would normally do it?  
 24 A. Yes.  
 25 MR COOPER: So apart from obviously keenness of many brave

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1 people to want to get involved and help, why was it done  
 2 this way? Why was it left to, no doubt, right-minded  
 3 people to contact their colleagues and say, "Come  
 4 along"?  
 5 A. I just think that probably John Fletcher's skill set and  
 6 Mick Lawlor's skill set, they're quite unique in the  
 7 roles that they had. There's only one person can hold  
 8 a single position and they rightly thought that they  
 9 could bring something to benefit the response.  
 10 Q. They are all off duty, weren't they?  
 11 A. Those two individuals were, yes.  
 12 Q. So what would have happened, for instance, if they  
 13 hadn't been around, they hadn't answered the phone, they  
 14 were in bed or on holiday? It was a little bit risky,  
 15 wasn't it, relying on that?  
 16 A. We didn't rely on it because it wasn't built into any  
 17 plan, but when it came to bear, it bore fruit from  
 18 having Mick going into police headquarters and it bore  
 19 fruit with John being sat next to me.  
 20 Q. I am sure that may well be the case but my question is  
 21 based on -- it was lucky they were able to pick their  
 22 phones up, wasn't it?  
 23 A. It was lucky yes.  
 24 Q. And should an event like this rely on luck?  
 25 A. Absolutely not, no.

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1 Q. So is there a better way, for instance, should, god  
 2 forbid a catastrophe like this happen again, for people  
 3 of the calibre, no doubt, of Mr Fletcher and colleagues  
 4 or their equivalents, I might add, to be definitely and  
 5 readily available on a list of emergency call?  
 6 A. I think that's fair to say, sir. Yes, sir.  
 7 Q. Is that happening now?  
 8 A. I retired 2.5 years ago so I don't know.  
 9 Q. Forgive me, of course you have, yes.  
 10 All right. A lot of decisions, in fact all the  
 11 decisions, were being made again ad hoc, weren't they,  
 12 between these groups of people coming together, pooling  
 13 their experience no doubt, but there was no coordinated  
 14 and structured decision-making route either was there?  
 15 A. It was very fragmented.  
 16 Q. Was that, particularly at the early stage of this  
 17 catastrophe, confusing?  
 18 A. Um... It certainly created gaps in the acquisition of  
 19 knowledge and information, yes.  
 20 Q. Again was this perhaps a symptom of the ad hoc way  
 21 perhaps the team was being put together in an  
 22 unstructured way?  
 23 A. I think that'd be fair comment, sir, yes.  
 24 Q. I'm trying to learn -- this is not hammering people,  
 25 trying to learn (overspeaking) help your colleagues in

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1 the future --  
 2 A. Absolutely, yes.  
 3 Q. -- and the citizens of whatever town or city.  
 4 Would you have expected to have been told promptly  
 5 of any difficulties in trying to make contact with the  
 6 FDO?  
 7 A. I would have expected at some point that I would have  
 8 been informed of -- my whole teaching and understanding  
 9 of the whole MTFA role was that the NILO role is that  
 10 they have this hotline to the FDO and the FDO always  
 11 picks up, so if there were difficulties in that, I would  
 12 have assumed, yes.  
 13 Q. On the subject -- continuing on the subject of  
 14 coordination, could I ask you again to look at  
 15 {INQ023518T/25-26}.  
 16 At the bottom of page 25, you say this:  
 17 "It's the lack of -- it's who's the ambulance  
 18 leader. I don't really think -- the impression I get,  
 19 there was no actual coordination amongst the ambulance  
 20 crews. I think they were just -- they didn't know --  
 21 the crews were coming from all over the north-west."  
 22 Over the page, please:  
 23 "They didn't know which ambulances were where. They  
 24 didn't know who was deploying them. It just seemed to  
 25 be they were just coming in, going out, coming in and

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1 going out. There was no -- there didn't seem to be any  
 2 control over the ambulance crews to me."  
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Just before you ask your question, do  
 4 you mind?  
 5 MR COOPER: Of course.  
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Obviously, this is you in fire talking  
 7 about ambulances. What knowledge did you have about the  
 8 ambulances on that particular night?  
 9 A. Just what Al Topping had been feeding me from Central,  
 10 from the ambulances coming in out of Manchester Central.  
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So they're going backwards and forwards  
 12 and you didn't know whether they had been called forward  
 13 or they were just going at random or he didn't know?  
 14 A. No.  
 15 MR COOPER: I was going to clarify that obviously because if  
 16 the basis of the information is flawed then it's not  
 17 worth developing.  
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's what they're talking about.  
 19 MR COOPER: That's the impression you were given and that's  
 20 what you heard?  
 21 A. Exactly.  
 22 Q. Did that in any way affect how you -- I say "behave",  
 23 professionally behave -- what you did or what you  
 24 thought of doing?  
 25 A. No. I think that I've always managed my incident

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1 grounds in a controlled manner, I've always had  
 2 a structure. If there is no structure then there is no  
 3 coordination. If there's no coordination, you have  
 4 a lack of control. So I didn't -- the way the ambulance  
 5 responded was not the way I wanted us to respond.  
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: On the basis of what Mr Topping told  
 7 you?  
 8 A. On the basis of what Mr --  
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We have been told by the ambulance  
 10 service that it was rather more structured than that --  
 11 A. I'm sure it was, sir.  
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: -- and they were calling people forward  
 13 as and when they had spaces for them.  
 14 A. Yes.  
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.  
 16 MR COOPER: I am just reading through because much of what  
 17 I was to ask has been covered, so that's why I'm  
 18 pausing, sir. I am just making sure I haven't missed  
 19 anything.  
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Take your time.  
 21 (Pause)  
 22 MR COOPER: I want to ask you a little more about the chief,  
 23 about Mr O'Reilly. I know you were very clear that in  
 24 your view he wasn't a bully.  
 25 A. Absolutely, sir.

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1 Q. But you've told us, and I've compiled a list, I can take  
 2 you to each reference if I need to, but the list is  
 3 gathered from {INQ000277/2} onwards of words you use  
 4 in relation to him. We can go to each one if you want  
 5 to but I will be corrected if I'm wrong and I will try  
 6 and use time efficiently.  
 7 You describe him intermittently as: intimidating,  
 8 follower orientated, not approachable, "a chief that  
 9 goes round us all", you refer to a lot of anger. Then  
 10 a little later in a document {INQ000276/4} you refer to  
 11 him as bombastic.  
 12 Take it from me, the definition of a bully in the  
 13 Oxford Dictionary is a person who habitually seeks to  
 14 intimidate those they perceive as vulnerable.  
 15 Given the précis I have just read of your words of  
 16 Mr O'Reilly, he's a bully, isn't he?  
 17 A. I never felt bullied. If I've used the word  
 18 "bombastic" -- I don't remember using that word, it's  
 19 not the sort of word I use, but if I have used that, I  
 20 must have done but I don't remember using that word.  
 21 Q. Let me correct that: it was Mr Etches that used that  
 22 word.  
 23 A. That would be more -- I know that's not my words.  
 24 Q. Would you agree?  
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Let's just for a moment -- if we're

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1 talking about a bully, we're talking about a person who  
 2 deliberately picks on people who they perceive to be  
 3 weak, to intimidate. You have said he's intimidating.  
 4 Did he pick on people, to your mind, who he perceived to  
 5 be weak and therefore likely to give in to intimidating  
 6 behaviour?  
 7 A. I never saw anybody bullied or picked on and I certainly  
 8 didn't see anyone bullied or picked on that night.  
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But he's a forceful personality who uses  
 10 his forceful personality to get his own way, maybe?  
 11 A. He's a big character that was in a very responsible  
 12 position, yes.  
 13 MR COOPER: Can I suggest to you that the role of a leader,  
 14 just because you are a big character in responsible  
 15 position, any appropriate leader, certainly in the 21st  
 16 century, does not use his strength of character to  
 17 intimidate people. That might be the 19th century  
 18 definition of a leader but it is not a modern definition  
 19 of one, is it?  
 20 A. Possibly not.  
 21 Q. Can we at least agree that he was a little old-fashioned  
 22 in his interpretation of leadership skills?  
 23 A. I can't agree. I think he had his management style and  
 24 that was his management style.  
 25 Q. I'm going to suggest to you that however one might want

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1 to dress it up, and let me accept what the chair said  
 2 yesterday that bully is one word, there may be other  
 3 words, this man, I'm asking you, did this man use his  
 4 position to intimidate people of lesser rank?  
 5 A. No, he didn't use that to intimidate people, no.  
 6 Q. And perhaps was that one of the reasons why a number of  
 7 people didn't challenge him?  
 8 A. All I know is I did challenge him and I didn't get any  
 9 recourse afterwards for challenging him.  
 10 Q. Because if you do challenge him, he'll bang the table,  
 11 and I suggest to you that was in a fit of anger, he  
 12 bangs the table and cuts down discussion, doesn't he?  
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm really sorry, but I'm not sure  
 14 that's an accurate reflection of the evidence. As I  
 15 understand it, he comes back in, you're talking to  
 16 someone on the phone and he goes like that (indicating).  
 17 It may be a bang but he's not actually contradicting  
 18 anyone in that precise moment, although he goes on to do  
 19 that.  
 20 A. Yes, sir.  
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm sorry, Mr Cooper.  
 22 MR COOPER: Not at all, sir, I did indeed hear that evidence  
 23 this morning as far as this witness is concerned. Can  
 24 I develop that with one question? Are you sure that was  
 25 an interpretation of it or did he simply bang the table?

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1 A. I was talking to Ben Levy on the phone. John Fletcher  
 2 was taking messages regarding Plato at the time. The  
 3 chief had just walked into the room from taking a phone  
 4 call and my interpretation was and still is that he  
 5 wanted my attention. I think that's what my original  
 6 evidence said on day 1: he wanted my attention.  
 7 Q. It's not going to assist the chair with me pressing  
 8 that.  
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We'll see if there's other evidence.  
 10 MR COOPER: I understand that.  
 11 In essence, and again I can take you to Kerslake  
 12 where you say this, was your feeling that you'd spent  
 13 years and years in training — these are your words in  
 14 fact — you had spent years and years in training,  
 15 getting the knowledge, and you felt completely  
 16 dismissed?  
 17 A. That's fair to say, sir, yes.  
 18 Q. For the chair's reference that's page 22 of the Kerslake  
 19 interview.  
 20 Ben Levy ultimately was removed from his position  
 21 that night, wasn't he?  
 22 A. In what respect?  
 23 Q. He was told to stand down, wasn't he, as incident  
 24 commander?  
 25 A. No, he wasn't told to stand down as incident commander.

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1 He was told when — at the point we were sending  
 2 resources forward and the chief said, "No, we were going  
 3 to send three pumps and an SM". I then said, "Did you  
 4 hear that Ben? Stand down", meaning don't send the fire  
 5 pumps or the MTFA forward.  
 6 Q. So was Ben Levy at any time that night removed from his  
 7 position?  
 8 A. Not as far as I'm aware, no.  
 9 Q. Because that would have been inappropriate, wouldn't it?  
 10 A. That would have been inappropriate, yes.  
 11 Q. Let me take you now, before I finish, to just some  
 12 references as to your debrief and observations. Do you  
 13 agree that the emergency response of Greater Manchester  
 14 Fire and Rescue Service fell down significantly during  
 15 the course of this night?  
 16 A. I'd agree, sir.  
 17 Q. Can I take you please to {INQ026722/3}.  
 18 There again, succinctly, it's your document:  
 19 "From your own perspective what aspects of  
 20 Operation Newtown did not go well?"  
 21 Just simply look down that list, if you may, please,  
 22 Mr Nankivell, and develop any of those that the chair  
 23 can clearly see in front of him. Are there any of those  
 24 bullet points you'd wish to develop in terms of your  
 25 concerns as to what happened that night?

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1 A. I think the MTFA unit's not been deployed and  
2 utilised — I think all of them, really.

3 Q. Thank you. If I can please, Mr Lopez, take us to  
4 {INQ000277/3}.

5 Again, you articulate right at the bottom of there  
6 a few other observations:

7 "Lack of inter—agency comms."

8 And again:

9 "We didn't send [in] resources ..."

10 Again a communication issue, that was one of the  
11 problems, one of the big problems?

12 A. Yes, comms is always an issue on every walk, really.

13 Q. Again, if I can take you to INQ03 —

14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can we go back a page, sorry?  
15 {INQ000277/2}. Just so I recognise the document.

16 MR GREANEY: This is a note that derives from the Kerslake  
17 interview of which we have the transcript, in fact. So  
18 we ought to rely on the transcript, not upon this note.

19 MR COOPER: In that case —

20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Obviously we will look at the  
21 transcript.

22 MR COOPER: That's far better of course.  
23 {INQ030902/18}, please. There in the middle under  
24 "Dean":  
25 "What John F said is we would have gone in, we would

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1 have gone in together, and that structure was not in  
2 there. Everything was out of kilter on the night.  
3 Communications were poor and I will say that if anything  
4 comes out of it, we send someone straight to Silver."

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. Would you like to develop that very briefly?

7 A. Yes. The information vacuum we were in, bearing in mind  
8 that I know now that Plato was called even before I was  
9 contacted — if we'd had — to me, we didn't really get  
10 starting getting any valuable evidence until Mick Lawlor  
11 was deployed to Silver and then eventually we started to  
12 get a bit more information, so it would be about  
13 deploying somebody straight to Silver, so we're in the  
14 loop if you like.

15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm slightly concerned about the loop  
16 and being there. You said about having someone at  
17 Silver. You've also said really the only way to get  
18 information was to have someone on the scene, physically  
19 on the scene.

20 A. Different kinds of information, sir.

21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, I know that, but it's just in the  
22 day when telecommunications and communications are meant  
23 to be extremely effective and extremely good, why can it  
24 only work if you're there?

25 A. I think it's been proved that the FDO was uncontactable.

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1 But if we'd had somebody there, we would have been able  
2 to tap them on the shoulder or read their computer or  
3 done something with it.

4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I thought you were saying really, as  
5 a general rule, you need to get someone at the scene.

6 A. At the scene — that's the only way we're going to get  
7 any tactical truth to formulate our, Greater  
8 Manchester's attack plan. For the bigger picture  
9 information of what the other resources are doing, safe  
10 zones and suchlike, then the Silver command would be the  
11 best route for that strategic information.

12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Had there been decent communications  
13 going on, we know that police officers had been on the  
14 scene, right from the start, BTP officers. We know that  
15 ambulance people were there pretty quickly. It wouldn't  
16 have seemed to be impossible for that information to  
17 have been successfully communicated to fire without them  
18 actually having to send someone there to find out.

19 A. Not beyond the wit of man, no, sir.

20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I was going to use that phrase. So why  
21 are those things just not — communications were not  
22 good on the night? I'm not blaming you, please  
23 understand that.

24 A. I understand, sir. The simple thing is if we'd have  
25 sent a PDA or something to the incident, we would have

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1 been in a far stronger position.

2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: In the circumstances?

3 A. In the circumstances.

4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you, Mr Cooper.

5 MR COOPER: Just a few matters for your observation and  
6 comment, which the chair may find of use.

7 The FBU in 2015, whilst I'm not competing with  
8 Mr Greaney for the longest question, I'll read what they  
9 say and ask whether you agree with it. The FBU  
10 suggested in 2015 the following:

11 "The ever—increasing non—response work being carried  
12 out by middle and strategic managers is severely  
13 impacting on the time they have available to dedicate to  
14 their own operational preparedness. They are  
15 under—prepared to deal with the full range of  
16 foreseeable risks that can be expected to occur at  
17 incidents in the areas where they work. The FBU called  
18 for a national minimum standard for operational training  
19 to be provided to flexi duty officers in relation to  
20 foreseeable risks within each Fire and Rescue Service  
21 and time be made available for individual officers to  
22 develop their own operational preparedness."

23 Would you agree that that's a sensible proposal?

24 A. It's certainly a proposal, sir, yes.

25 Q. It certainly is.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: For myself, I am not sure what the FBU  
 2 is getting at there. It may be they're saying,  
 3 actually, because middle managers don't have enough  
 4 operational experience, they're doing admin jobs all the  
 5 time, they are not being — not foreseeing risks so  
 6 they're sending people into risky situations, or it may  
 7 on the other hand be the other way round. I'm not  
 8 actually quite sure which way it goes.  
 9 MR COOPER: I can't give evidence, but I would suggest it's  
 10 the latter. It's an open question.  
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Middle management are risk averse?  
 12 MR COOPER: Yes.  
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Do you think middle management are risk  
 14 averse in the Fire Service?  
 15 A. I don't, sir. As a group manager I still responded to  
 16 incidents on a fairly regular basis. Station managers  
 17 in some parts of Manchester, if I can use the term, get  
 18 hammered, they are out continuously on various incidents  
 19 of different sizes. And risk averse is not something  
 20 I would associate with any Fire and Rescue, but  
 21 particularly Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service,  
 22 bearing in mind that we have (inaudible) on the streets  
 23 of Manchester, saving people. So risk averse does not  
 24 come into my equation of the firefighters or the  
 25 officers that's serving in it.

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1 MR COOPER: (Overspeaking) —  
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Sorry, calling you risk averse as  
 3 firemen is probably the biggest insult you could give to  
 4 fire officers?  
 5 A. Absolutely, yes.  
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's like calling a judge unfair. It  
 7 goes rather against the job in a way.  
 8 A. Yes, sir.  
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It doesn't mean it doesn't happen,  
 10 but — yes, okay. So you'd hate the idea of being  
 11 thought of as being risk averse.  
 12 A. Absolutely, yes, sir.  
 13 MR COOPER: But sometimes is the adherence to policy that  
 14 may or may not be found to be a problem for the Fire  
 15 Service, forcing people in the Fire Service to be risk  
 16 averse against all their instincts?  
 17 A. That policy — quite possibly a policy or a procedure  
 18 may prevent firefighters doing what they want to do,  
 19 yes.  
 20 Q. One last question of you which you may have  
 21 a contribution to make upon: would you agree that for  
 22 major incidents, in the early stages someone who can  
 23 command needs to be in the control room to assist the  
 24 proper and efficient functioning of that control room?  
 25 Someone with experience of rank be in the control room?

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1 A. Where was that comment from, sir?  
 2 Q. This is a proposition I'm putting to you. A number of  
 3 witnesses we've asked about this matter, and it's  
 4 effectively having someone of rank and experience in the  
 5 control room, who may well be able to assist in the  
 6 control room because that's, after all, where all the  
 7 information is coming in. It's a positive suggestion  
 8 I'm putting to you, not one of criticism.  
 9 A. I think it is absolutely a positive and it has been done  
 10 on certain occasions when we've had riots or Bonfire  
 11 Night.  
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We've heard that.  
 13 MR COOPER: It simply remains for me, Mr Nankivell, on  
 14 behalf of those we represent, to thank you for your  
 15 candour today. Thank you.  
 16 MR GREANEY: Finally Mr Warnock.  
 17 Questions from MR WARNOCK  
 18 MR WARNOCK: One short issue, Mr Nankivell. It's  
 19 in relation to the questions you were asked about  
 20 Mr Dave Keelan. Do you know if he was on duty on the  
 21 night of 22 May?  
 22 A. I'm fairly confident he was not on duty. We normally  
 23 have one principal officer nominated.  
 24 Q. That was my next question. If he had been on duty,  
 25 given his rank, what role would you have expected him to

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1 play on the night?  
 2 A. Principal officer.  
 3 Q. Did you need another principal officer?  
 4 A. No, sir.  
 5 Q. You have told the inquiry that self-deployment is not  
 6 something that is approved of within the Fire Service,  
 7 and you have given reasons for that. Is one reason to  
 8 maintain operational resilience?  
 9 A. It would be a reason, sir, yes. It wasn't one that  
 10 sprang to my mind earlier, but it would be a reason,  
 11 yes.  
 12 Q. The aftermath of an incident like this may go on for  
 13 days, mightn't it?  
 14 A. Indeed, sir.  
 15 Q. The inquiry has heard evidence that the Fire Service  
 16 continued to support Greater Manchester Police in  
 17 operations across Manchester in response to the attack  
 18 over many days following the 22nd. Are you aware of  
 19 that?  
 20 A. I was one of the persons involved in that, sir.  
 21 Q. Right. And in those circumstances, is it important that  
 22 officers who are not on duty at the time the event  
 23 happens are available and rested and able to attend for  
 24 duty when required over those following days?  
 25 A. Where possible, sir, yes.

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1 MR WARNOCK: Thank you.  
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Just before you finish on that, I do  
 3 want to have it made clear about Mr Keelan: he wasn't on  
 4 duty, but were you suggesting to him in any way that he  
 5 should come in and do a job of any sort?  
 6 A. No, sir.  
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Was there anything for him to actually  
 8 come in to do rather than perhaps getting in the way?  
 9 A. No, nothing, sir.  
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Did no one ever suggest to you that you  
 11 should be getting him in or he should be there on the  
 12 scene or somewhere?  
 13 A. No, sir, never.  
 14 MR WARNOCK: You may be aware of this, because you were  
 15 still on duty until 5 am. Did there come a point when  
 16 he was called into duty early on 23 May to attend the  
 17 strategic coordinating group or are you aware of that?  
 18 A. I'm not aware of that. He probably would have come on  
 19 duty at 8 o'clock in the morning the following morning  
 20 anyway as part of his day job.  
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think we may hear, he took over from  
 22 Mr O'Reilly, is that right, at something like 5 o'clock  
 23 in the morning?  
 24 MR WARNOCK: I think it was 4.45, something like that.  
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You'll know better than I will.

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1 Thank you.  
 2 MR WARNOCK: Thank you very much, Mr Nankivell.  
 3 MR GREANEY: Sir, I don't have any further questions.  
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm sure this has been a really  
 5 difficult experience for you. You seem very calm in the  
 6 witness box but I'm sure you're not calm underneath and  
 7 for somebody who's had a distinguished career such as  
 8 you've had, when you're retired, to try and explain what  
 9 went on, which was, I think everyone will agree, a  
 10 disastrous night for Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue  
 11 Service. It must be difficult, so thank you for doing  
 12 it.  
 13 A. Thank you.  
 14 MR GREANEY: Sir, the next witness will be Mr Etches, who  
 15 will be called by Mr de la Poer. So we will need,  
 16 earlier than we would normally have it, a short break so  
 17 those arrangements can be made.  
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Ten minutes — or do you want a quarter  
 19 of an hour?  
 20 MR GREANEY: I think 10 minutes will be fine, sir.  
 21 (2.38 pm)  
 22 (A short break)  
 23 (2.51 pm)  
 24 MR DE LA POER: Sir, good afternoon. We are joined by  
 25 Mr Etches. I wonder if we may begin by him being sworn.

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1 MR PAUL ETCHES (affirmed)  
 2 Questions from MR DE LA POER  
 3 MR DE LA POER: Please could you state your full name?  
 4 A. Paul Anthony Etches.  
 5 Q. You joined Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service  
 6 in April of 1990; is that correct?  
 7 A. It is, sir.  
 8 Q. In 1996 were you riding an appliance that responded to  
 9 the terrorist attack in Manchester?  
 10 A. I was, sir.  
 11 Q. So did you have experience of being involved in  
 12 a capacity of a firefighter to the response to that  
 13 terrible atrocity?  
 14 A. Yes, sir.  
 15 Q. Did you subsequently progress through the rank structure  
 16 as it then was?  
 17 A. Yes, sir.  
 18 Q. And did you attain the rank of station manager in 2006?  
 19 A. Yes.  
 20 Q. Following that, did you have a period of time in the  
 21 corporate communications department?  
 22 A. Yes.  
 23 Q. And between 2011 and 2014, were you the rank of station  
 24 manager and based in the training centre?  
 25 A. Yes, sir.

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1 Q. Were you subsequently promoted in 2015 to the rank of  
 2 group manager, still within the training centre?  
 3 A. Yes, sir.  
 4 Q. And then you'll have to help us with this term because  
 5 it's not one that we have come across, but I take it  
 6 from your witness statement: in 2016 you described  
 7 yourself as being borough manager responsible for seven  
 8 fire stations.  
 9 A. Yes, sir. It was the borough manager at the time for  
 10 Manchester, so Manchester, which was the seven stations  
 11 across Manchester within that borough.  
 12 Q. Just help us with the term borough manager. Is that  
 13 a rank —  
 14 A. It's equivalent to group manager.  
 15 Q. In January 2017, were you promoted to area manager?  
 16 A. Yes, sir.  
 17 Q. And did you, in that promotion, attain the role of head  
 18 of prevention based at headquarters?  
 19 A. Yes, sir, I think I picked that role up around about  
 20 January of 2017.  
 21 Q. In April 2017, did you become the head of operational  
 22 training at the training centre? If you're not certain  
 23 and I can see you pausing, I have sought to capture the  
 24 information from your witness statement, but I'm far  
 25 from infallible, so perhaps I can invite you to open

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1 your witness statement and we'll see if I've made an  
 2 error in that.  
 3 A. Yes, it was — I moved back into area manager for  
 4 training from head of prevention in early ...  
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: January it says here in your statement,  
 6 in paragraph 14.  
 7 MR DE LA POER: That is the area manager is head of  
 8 prevention, it may be it's a typo on my notes. Can you  
 9 just say, from the best of your recollection rather than  
 10 me suggesting a date to you —  
 11 A. Certainly, sir. For clarity, it would have been early  
 12 in 2019 when I transferred into head of operational  
 13 training.  
 14 Q. So your role at the time of the Manchester Arena attack  
 15 was as head of prevention, was it?  
 16 A. Yes, sir.  
 17 Q. In parallel to some of that chronology that we've just  
 18 been through, did you hold the role of NILO?  
 19 A. I did, yes.  
 20 Q. Were the relevant dates for our purposes starting in  
 21 September 2012 and handing back that role in  
 22 January 2017 upon promotion to area manager?  
 23 A. Yes, sir.  
 24 Q. And the simple explanation for that, recusing yourself  
 25 from the role, is that area managers are not NILOs;

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1 is that right?  
 2 A. Yes. They've not got capacity within the role to  
 3 continue that reference.  
 4 Q. Plainly a lot of your experience, would you agree,  
 5 particularly at a senior level, was not based directly  
 6 in command of incidents but was away from incidents;  
 7 is that fair?  
 8 A. Um... Sorry, can you clarify the away from incidents?  
 9 Q. We have seen that you were in the training centre  
 10 between 2011 through to 2015, so not based at  
 11 a fire station as a station manager, responding as  
 12 station manager to incidents. I'm not suggesting that  
 13 you had — we are going to come to your operational  
 14 experience in a moment but your role did not appear,  
 15 certainly in that station manager role, to be based in  
 16 charge of a fire station but rather at the training  
 17 centre?  
 18 A. Yes.  
 19 Q. Is that fair?  
 20 A. Yes, there was a period of time from undertaking the  
 21 role initially within training centre to becoming  
 22 a station manager within the corporate communications  
 23 where it was a staff and specialist role.  
 24 Q. Yes. But here — and what I want to see if we can get  
 25 to is the extent that you had experience of either live

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1 play exercises or incidents of equivalent seriousness in  
 2 a command role.  
 3 We'll start with the first of those. Were you the  
 4 tactical commander for the MTFA exercise at Manchester  
 5 Airport on 15 December 2014?  
 6 A. Yes, I was, sir.  
 7 Q. Did you find that experience beneficial to your  
 8 learning?  
 9 A. Very beneficial to learning and development within the  
 10 role, yes, sir.  
 11 Q. Did anything that you learnt through your participation  
 12 in that impact on the way in which you conducted  
 13 yourself on 22 May 2017?  
 14 A. Inasmuch as my experience of working as a NILO within  
 15 the tactical environment, and that was one of a number  
 16 of exercises which were rehearsed, the training, for the  
 17 live scenario. So it influenced my understanding of  
 18 what was happening and how things would in my  
 19 anticipation start to roll out in line with standard  
 20 procedures.  
 21 Q. Obviously we're talking about 2014 now, which was before  
 22 the substantial roll-out of JESIP. From a multi-agency  
 23 working point of view, did you yourself experience any  
 24 personal learning about how that could or should work in  
 25 practice or how it might go wrong?

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1 A. From that particular exercise, yes, there was... the how  
 2 it was envisaged to work out from a co-location, working  
 3 collectively as part of the NILO and the MTFA response  
 4 didn't work in the way that it was envisaged, it was  
 5 planned to work beforehand.  
 6 Q. Did it nonetheless work well or were there shortcomings  
 7 in the —  
 8 A. There were shortcomings from a multi-agency response  
 9 perspective.  
 10 Q. We are focusing here on the Manchester Airport in  
 11 15 December 2014, which I do appreciate was some  
 12 substantial period of time ago. But to your mind, just  
 13 looking back on what you took away from being tactical  
 14 commander at that incident, where do you think there  
 15 were areas of improvement so far as joint working was  
 16 concerned?  
 17 A. I think what it highlighted at that point around areas  
 18 for improvement, sir, was very much the... It was  
 19 evident in that scenario, the challenge that firearms  
 20 officers faced in the priority of neutralising the  
 21 threat, that they'd moved forward through the exercise  
 22 scenario very dynamically. So the learning from the  
 23 exercising in some respects was how do we improve that  
 24 co-location in such a dynamic scenario where the  
 25 objective was clearly to neutralise a threat.

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1 Q. Having taken a period of time to reflect on that  
2 exercise, and this is before we get to  
3 Winchester Accord, which we're going to come to in  
4 a moment, what were your personal conclusions about how  
5 co-location could be improved given the challenges that  
6 you had seen first-hand that the firearms response would  
7 face?  
8 A. I think my reflection at that point in time was that  
9 much as the theoretical application of co-location --  
10 that it was very evident that it was very difficult  
11 in the early dynamic stages to be able to actually  
12 physically carry out that co-location because of the  
13 differing priorities of that incident type.  
14 Q. Did that incident leave you with any sense that there  
15 was a need to be proactive in obtaining information from  
16 a Fire and Rescue point of view?  
17 A. Not necessarily from that incident, and I don't know  
18 whether that's because the incident was started from  
19 a particular get-go, if you like. It wasn't mobilised  
20 from agencies coming together from separate instances,  
21 so the way the exercise was designed, it was very much  
22 the agencies were collectively together and then it was  
23 move forward to neutralise. I don't know whether it was  
24 the set-up of the exercise. It felt that they just  
25 continued to move through the scenario and ourselves and

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1 NWAS were somewhat left behind, if that's the right  
2 word, sir.  
3 Q. Well, plainly there was some water to go under the  
4 bridge between that exercise and 22 May, and there are  
5 perhaps two key moments that I want to draw your  
6 attention to.  
7 After that exercise, JESIP as a concept was begun to  
8 be rolled out in earnest across the various emergency  
9 services. Were you aware of that at the time?  
10 A. Yes. Yes, sir, and I think when I -- I might stand  
11 corrected but I think when I did my training, my initial  
12 NILO training in 2012, that JESIP as a concept was there  
13 or thereabouts, it just hadn't been necessarily rolled  
14 out at scale. So we were already trained and thinking  
15 in that space of JESIP at that point.  
16 Q. But then subsequently, as I understand the JESIP  
17 chronology, it is around 2015 that the P converts from  
18 programme to principles and we've certainly seen  
19 evidence from 2015 police officers, for example, were  
20 receiving JESIP training and I think that is also true  
21 of GMFRS.  
22 A. Yes, sir.  
23 Q. So that's the first milestone if you like from  
24 Manchester Airport. Perhaps even more significantly,  
25 Exercise Winchester Accord in the summer of 2016.

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1 Again, you were involved in a command capacity in that  
2 exercise; is that right?  
3 A. Yes.  
4 Q. What would you describe your command capacity to be?  
5 A. The command capacity was working within the Silver  
6 command function at police headquarters, very much  
7 co-located in that environment with other partner  
8 agencies. And my role was to contribute the fire  
9 response into that environment and monitor the situation  
10 and progress as well.  
11 Q. So you were embedded in the GMP Silver suite; is that  
12 right?  
13 A. Yes, sir.  
14 Q. Perhaps in a not dissimilar way to Mr Lawlor when he  
15 arrived on the night of 22 May. Is that a fair  
16 equivalence?  
17 A. I don't know whether -- obviously on the night of  
18 Winchester Accord there was an open invite for people to  
19 go. It was a pre-rehearsed environment, so there was a  
20 lot of different partners in the room, but in principle  
21 yes.  
22 Q. Was that a command role, as you would understand that  
23 term within Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service?  
24 A. No. No, sir. I can elaborate on that later if you  
25 would like.

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1 Q. I'd like you to, please.  
2 A. It's the different ways -- and I'm sure the chairman has  
3 picked up on it, the different descriptions of command  
4 between fire and police. So certainly within that  
5 environment, it was very clear that there were police  
6 commanders who were giving direct instruction down from  
7 the room through Gold, through Silver, down through to  
8 the operational/tactical levels.  
9 From a fire perspective, command of the incident was  
10 at scene, and the Silver and subsequent Gold role was  
11 more in a multi-agency partnership, information-sharing  
12 space than physically commanding what was going on, on  
13 the scene.  
14 Q. A liaison role?  
15 A. It could be described as a liaison role, sir.  
16 Q. We've heard evidence from a number of witnesses about  
17 Winchester Accord and in particular the timing of the  
18 Fire and Rescue Service and NWAS being called forward.  
19 I've used the word "timing" to describe it as neutrally  
20 as I can. What was your perception about that issue?  
21 A. The perception of the issue, sir, on the evening was  
22 that we knew that we had our capability at a particular  
23 holding point and were awaiting communications for them  
24 to move forward, to co-locate, to then begin operating  
25 in the -- within the procedures, in the recovery of

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1 people, the MTFA capability, and my perception was that  
 2 there was a lengthy delay in that communications, asking  
 3 them to move forward.  
 4 Q. If you are embedded in the GMP Silver suite, and you are  
 5 there presumably as a spokesperson for the Fire and  
 6 Rescue Service to feed into the situational awareness of  
 7 GMP from a GMFRS point of view, did you at any point  
 8 in that incident speak up and say, "When do you want us  
 9 to move forward? Should we come forward now?", or  
 10 anything to that effect?  
 11 A. No, because I'm not quite sure that we were aware of  
 12 what activity was actually taking place and at what  
 13 point they decided that they were going to move forward.  
 14 So there were regular multi-agency briefings, if you  
 15 like, that were set through the evening. But I'm not  
 16 quite sure where the decision to push the button on GMP  
 17 moving forward came from, whether it came through from  
 18 the ground, from the exercise element of it, or it  
 19 actually was a decision that came through the command  
 20 route through GMP.  
 21 Q. You've used the word "delay", which suggests that  
 22 something that should have happened earlier didn't. Do  
 23 you think that's the right word?  
 24 A. No, in hindsight, sir, possibly not, because the  
 25 delay -- it wasn't so much the delay, is that what felt

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1 like what happened was quite akin to what I'd  
 2 experienced at the airport previously, that police had  
 3 moved forward to carry out their primary objective of  
 4 neutralising the threat and, for whatever reason, we  
 5 hadn't moved along with them. So they moved forward to  
 6 carry out their activity but we never got the  
 7 opportunity to move behind them in the space to carry  
 8 out the recovery and the procedures under the MTFA.  
 9 Q. I would just like to look into that a little bit more  
 10 because -- and I'm interested to know what you knew on  
 11 the night. One explanation for the period of time  
 12 elapsing is because within the terms of the exercise,  
 13 GMP officers were engaged in a firefight with terrorists  
 14 or that there was some sort of event going on, which  
 15 meant that -- of some duration which meant it wasn't  
 16 appropriate for GMFRS and NWAS to be called forward.  
 17 Equally, an alternative may be that all of that had  
 18 finished, there was then a period of time that elapsed  
 19 during which GMFRS and NWAS could have been called  
 20 forward but they weren't. Did you have a clear sense on  
 21 the night which of those two potential scenarios or even  
 22 a third, if there's one I've overlooked, resulted in  
 23 this period of time passing?  
 24 A. No, I don't think there was.  
 25 Q. That wasn't clear to you?

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1 A. No.  
 2 Q. Bearing in mind that you were embedded in Silver, and  
 3 I appreciate this is a live exercise which has its  
 4 limitations, do you think that's something that should  
 5 have been clearer to you at the time? That if you are  
 6 to serve the Fire and Rescue Service and keep them  
 7 abreast of what's going on, you being in Silver gives  
 8 you a unique opportunity to find out directly from GMP  
 9 and relay that?  
 10 A. Yes. I think that is the role. And I just think on  
 11 reflection, on the night, and this isn't an excuse,  
 12 I can't quite recollect the sequence of the multi-agency  
 13 activities and that sharing of information and I go back  
 14 to my best recollection of it was that we were...  
 15 I don't think we were made aware that they'd moved  
 16 forward as part of the exercise from within the room.  
 17 Q. So that information, if I've understood you correctly,  
 18 trying to reflect back your answer -- an element of GMP,  
 19 those on the ground, knew they'd moved forward but that  
 20 wasn't relayed back to Silver? Is that what you're  
 21 saying?  
 22 A. It may have been relayed back but I don't think the  
 23 sequencing of that multi-agency briefing amongst the  
 24 partners, which... They were planned but they were  
 25 controlled by GMP, who were in charge of that room. So

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1 I genuinely don't know whether, as they moved forward on  
 2 the ground, at what point the next multi-agency briefing  
 3 was in the room to say that they'd now moved forward.  
 4 Q. I understand. We'll perhaps look at it in a different  
 5 way because, whatever the detail of it, once you had  
 6 concluded your involvement in Exercise  
 7 Winchester Accord, did you think that communication had  
 8 gone well or not as between GMFRS and GMP?  
 9 A. No, I didn't think it had gone well.  
 10 Q. You didn't think it had gone well. So whether that was  
 11 true or not, objectively speaking, you left that  
 12 exercise thinking: there's a communication issue that  
 13 arose in this situation as between GMP and GMFRS?  
 14 A. Yes. My first assumption around that was not  
 15 necessarily within that environment, but within the  
 16 environment of the tactical stage that they were  
 17 operating in inasmuch as we had people on standby with  
 18 NWAS ready to move forward so the breakdown in  
 19 communications, in my view at that point of time, was  
 20 within that operational/tactical environment rather than  
 21 within the command room because I think the  
 22 communication in the command room was -- the rhythm was  
 23 around the regular multi-agency briefings rather than  
 24 similar to what -- akin to Manchester Airport, there was  
 25 a move forward, a gap, and the communications on scene

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1 was the observation around the breakdown.  
 2 Q. Having played that liaison role, which is a term I've  
 3 used and you've accepted is an apt description, did you  
 4 think that that role provided an opportunity to address  
 5 some of the communication issues or did you think that  
 6 communication issues were somehow not capable of being  
 7 fixed by that person in that role speaking to GMP?  
 8 A. I think in hindsight, it could have provided some  
 9 clarity on communications. I think closer working  
 10 within there, more regular briefings on who was doing  
 11 what and when. There was certainly the capability  
 12 within that room to have better communications and  
 13 whether that was through more frequent briefings,  
 14 updates, but I can't deny that there was the opportunity  
 15 within the room to have better communications.  
 16 Q. Did you play any part in GMFRS's attempt to address the  
 17 issues that arose as a result of Exercise  
 18 Winchester Accord, as had been identified?  
 19 A. I certainly proactively fed into the debrief process to  
 20 try and identify and pinpoint some — what I believed to  
 21 be some ideas and suggestions around bridging some of  
 22 that gap.  
 23 Q. Can you help us in broad terms what you thought at the  
 24 time was a way to bridge that communication gap?  
 25 A. I'd have to look at the submission if possible, sir.

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1 Q. The submission you made to Exercise Winchester Accord?  
 2 Let's park that for the time being, I wasn't proposing  
 3 to bring that up at this stage or at all, but it may be  
 4 we can come back to that if that's something you feel  
 5 you need to refer to, so I certainly don't want you to  
 6 speak off the top of your head if you're not confident  
 7 about your answers.  
 8 What I would like to do now is turn to 22 May. You  
 9 were the duty assistant principal officer that night;  
 10 is that right?  
 11 A. Yes, sir.  
 12 Q. And often referred to as the APO?  
 13 A. Yes.  
 14 Q. Can you just summarise for us, please, what you believed  
 15 on 22 May 2017 the role of the APO was?  
 16 A. Yes, certainly. The role of the APO, as I saw it, was  
 17 a strategic role, which looked at the impact of  
 18 incidents, demands, across the whole of  
 19 Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, was made  
 20 aware of anything that was going to impact on our  
 21 ability to deliver our function around that, and also  
 22 the role is where there are key issues or incidents  
 23 which need escalating up for awareness, sometimes for  
 24 guidance, sometimes for decision, and a filter in some  
 25 respects to the principal officer.

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1 Q. Let's now look at the chronology and we'll start just  
 2 before you became involved, and I'm seeking these  
 3 answers from you because of your perspective as a former  
 4 NILO.  
 5 A. Yes, sir.  
 6 Q. North West Fire Control contacted the duty NILO,  
 7 Andy Berry, at 22.40.  
 8 A. Yes, sir.  
 9 Q. They contacted the duty group manager, Dean Nankivell,  
 10 at 22.52.  
 11 A. Yes, sir.  
 12 Q. And they contacted — and then Group Manager Nankivell  
 13 contacted you at 22.57?  
 14 A. Yes, sir.  
 15 Q. Just looking at those timings, and if necessary we can  
 16 go into some of the decision-making behind them, in your  
 17 role of APO that night, is that an escalation that  
 18 was — firstly, was that appropriate?  
 19 A. Yes, sir, very much so.  
 20 Q. Did it happen at an appropriate speed?  
 21 A. In my view, yes, because there was obviously key  
 22 information that was being passed within the space  
 23 between those calls.  
 24 Q. We know, for example, that the period between  
 25 Mr Nankivell being notified and him notifying you, he

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1 was — spent almost entirely occupied on the telephone  
 2 to North West Fire Control being given information?  
 3 A. Yes.  
 4 Q. Others I'm sure will ask you if I don't, but do you have  
 5 a view on whether or not it was appropriate for North  
 6 West Fire Control to contact the duty NILO rather than  
 7 a predetermined attendance?  
 8 A. Yes, I have a view. I think given that initial  
 9 information that was coming through — and I know —  
 10 I've clearly been following the discussions around the  
 11 action cards and various pieces, but I think given that  
 12 information and having the awareness of the role of the  
 13 duty NILO, I do think it was an appropriate to call.  
 14 Q. It was appropriate?  
 15 A. Yes, sir.  
 16 Q. That takes us down this line then. You retired from  
 17 Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service in July of  
 18 2020; is that right?  
 19 A. Yes, sir.  
 20 Q. Which means that you were still a serving officer when  
 21 the bomb action card was changed, directing that should  
 22 a bomb detonate, the explosion action card, which moves  
 23 immediately to a predetermined attendance, bearing in  
 24 mind your answer that it was appropriate for the NILO to  
 25 be contacted following this exploded bomb before

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1 a predetermined attendance was sent, did you have  
 2 anything to say about the fact that the subsequent  
 3 change to the bomb action card appears to require the  
 4 opposite response?  
 5 A. No, I think ... The change was around clarity to make  
 6 sure that we got people down on the scene, given the  
 7 right action card and following the right route. But  
 8 the question around on that night, based on the  
 9 information that was coming through around the number of  
 10 casualties, I do think that it was appropriate to  
 11 contact the NILO. Clearly, there are other pieces  
 12 around that decision, around mobilising and whether we  
 13 should or shouldn't have sent people down immediately to  
 14 the scene, but I still believe that in that situation,  
 15 the NILO is a key piece of our response.  
 16 Q. Do you agree that the effect of the amendment is if  
 17 North West Fire Control were presented with exactly the  
 18 same information that you have said justifies them  
 19 contacting the NILO, the effect of the change is that  
 20 they wouldn't do that but rather they would send units  
 21 straight to the scene?  
 22 A. Yes, and I think in an ideal operational response, it's  
 23 to get units as quickly as possible to the scene but  
 24 also ensure that we gain as much information around that  
 25 incident type as we can. I make that based on -- we now

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1 know that the tragic incident at the arena was an  
 2 explosion, but there's still an element of--in built  
 3 training and exercising which -- it may well still be an  
 4 explosion but there may be other risks associated with  
 5 that explosion as well. So I think linking the NILO in  
 6 at the earliest opportunity gives -- it just gives more  
 7 information.  
 8 Q. Should not the action plan have been amended to call the  
 9 NILO if the bomb detonates rather than go to the  
 10 explosion action card and immediately send people?  
 11 A. I think, sir, there's always a risk. To save life is  
 12 about getting people down there as quickly as possible.  
 13 There's still a risk from secondary devices, from other  
 14 potential incidents that may happen. I don't think  
 15 there's any -- personally, I don't think there's any  
 16 perfect response to that scenario. You need to  
 17 understand as best as possible what that scenario and  
 18 what that risk and those challenges are that are being  
 19 faced.  
 20 Q. I'm not proposing to ask you any more questions about  
 21 that, Mr Etches. Instead we'll just move forward again,  
 22 drawing on your experience of some years as a NILO.  
 23 You will be familiar, I am sure, with the content of  
 24 the telephone call from North West Fire Control to  
 25 Station Manager Berry?

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1 A. Yes.  
 2 Q. So you will know that, among other things, he was told  
 3 that GMP had identified the cathedral parking area as  
 4 a rendezvous point.  
 5 A. Yes, sir.  
 6 Q. Had you received that information as a NILO, which you  
 7 were until 4 months before this incident --  
 8 A. Sir.  
 9 Q. -- we'll start with this: what would your response have  
 10 been so far as you think you can strip away hindsight  
 11 and...  
 12 A. I ... I would have considered the RVP and I would have  
 13 also simultaneously wanted more information around that  
 14 to try and quickly establish the validity, to discount  
 15 any further potential risks to operational crews. It is  
 16 very difficult to balance in a dynamic situation where  
 17 we know that North West Fire Control can mobilise very,  
 18 very quickly. How long have you got to make a decision  
 19 to determine whether you accept everything that's fully  
 20 100% safe or you want some checks and balances in there?  
 21 So if I could sum that up, it would be proceed with  
 22 some form of caution or further information.  
 23 Q. Let's just look at the phase you used there:  
 24 "Fully 100% safe."  
 25 That isn't ordinarily the Fire and Rescue Service's

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1 attitude to risk, is it?  
 2 A. No, but I think the indications that we had around this  
 3 incident type were that in the early stages it was more  
 4 than what it subsequently turned out to be inasmuch as  
 5 an explosion of a bomb.  
 6 Q. In terms of what initial call, that's what Mr Berry was  
 7 told, the active shooter reference didn't come until  
 8 later. So again, just focusing upon that and perhaps  
 9 asking a final question on this topic, I hope, is there  
 10 any reason to not proceed to a rendezvous point given by  
 11 the emergency service partner who has primacy for this  
 12 incident?  
 13 A. No, there's no reason not to proceed, sir. No, there's  
 14 no reason not to proceed in that situation. I think  
 15 going back to the fact that the NILO was informed of it,  
 16 it was about those checks and balances to make sure --  
 17 Q. So is the order of events then, if there is no reason  
 18 not to proceed, mobilise, while you are mobilising I am  
 19 going to see if I can get some more information?  
 20 A. I would say so, sir.  
 21 Q. I would like to turn now to the call that you had with  
 22 Mr Nankivell. It was 22.57. We'll bring up part of the  
 23 transcript as it appears in the North West Fire Control  
 24 sequence of communication document. {INQ041473/27},  
 25 please, Mr Lopez.

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1 We can see a duration of 2.05 minutes, the call from  
 2 Mr Nankivell to you. We've already heard his account of  
 3 it. You were at home at the time?  
 4 A. Yes, sir.  
 5 Q. Were you awake at the point that his call came in?  
 6 A. Yes, I was.  
 7 Q. To the best of your recollection, what did he tell you  
 8 in that 120-second or so telephone contact?  
 9 A. I can't remember verbatim, but I think the first of the  
 10 discussion was: are you aware of this incident? To  
 11 which I wasn't. My first thought, when -- and I know  
 12 this isn't in there. My first thought when I received  
 13 the call was initially whether this was a live exercise.  
 14 That was my first call, which wouldn't have been an  
 15 unbelievable situation that it was a live exercise  
 16 in that case. I think, as we discussed for a couple of  
 17 minutes, I just wanted to validate that it wasn't a live  
 18 exercise and it was actually an incident.  
 19 So we quickly agreed, let's both go away, find out  
 20 a little bit more information and then speak as quickly  
 21 as we possibly could.  
 22 Q. We know that at 22.55, so less than 2 minutes before the  
 23 call started with you, as it was some way into 22.55  
 24 that he received this information, that Group Manager  
 25 Nankivell was told that the Bronze paramedic commander

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1 was on scene. Did he tell you that?  
 2 A. Not to the best of my recollection, sir.  
 3 Q. Is that a piece of information that you would have  
 4 regarded as significant at the time?  
 5 A. It would have been significant inasmuch as it would have  
 6 sort of precluded the next call in some respects around  
 7 what we were going to do around it. But yes, it would  
 8 have been significant, sir.  
 9 Q. Did Group Manager Nankivell tell you that the Fire and  
 10 Rescue resources had been directed to Philips Park?  
 11 A. I don't recollect whether it was in the first call.  
 12 I think it was the second call when we'd agreed to speak  
 13 again and I think -- again, the sequence of events...  
 14 I think the second call was when he'd contacted, whether  
 15 it was Mr Berry, and informed me that the response,  
 16 specialist response and the capability was en route to  
 17 Philips Park.  
 18 Q. At that stage, in that second call, did Mr Nankivell  
 19 tell you that the Bronze paramedic commander was on  
 20 scene?  
 21 A. Not that I recollect, sir.  
 22 Q. I would like you to put alongside each other two pieces  
 23 of information. In that second call your recollection  
 24 is that you were told that units were going to  
 25 Philips Park. Your units.

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1 A. Yes, sir.  
 2 Q. If he had also said in that conversation, "NWSAS have  
 3 a Bronze commander at the scene", would those two pieces  
 4 of information have struck you as being potentially in  
 5 tension or requiring further investigation?  
 6 A. Only to the extent that I would have anticipated that --  
 7 if I can take the first piece of information, if I can,  
 8 around the capability to Philips Park. Knowing what  
 9 I knew around the locations and where those vehicles  
 10 were travelling from, that seemed logical based on not  
 11 knowing other information at that point in time, such as  
 12 the RVP.  
 13 The Bronze commander on scene would have been the  
 14 next stage of that, so we know we've got our appliances  
 15 going to a given location. Then we need to confirm with  
 16 that Bronze commander on scene: are you at the forward  
 17 control point? Because that's the piece of information  
 18 that we would then be looking for.  
 19 Q. Would you not be wanting to know where the NWSAS  
 20 rendezvous point was?  
 21 A. Yes, but again, I think that would have been... The  
 22 Bronze commander on scene, wherever that was, really  
 23 that would have been that indicator that that's the  
 24 rendezvous point, that they're there at a rendezvous  
 25 point, we need to get down there now, we need to get our

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1 resources together and that's the direction we should be  
 2 heading. As I said, I don't recollect being made aware.  
 3 I apologise if I was.  
 4 Q. It hasn't been suggested by Mr Nankivell, I should say,  
 5 that he did tell you, although he didn't express himself  
 6 with absolute certainty on the point.  
 7 You've indicated that your view was that  
 8 Philips Park was an appropriate place or perhaps an  
 9 unsurprising place to you for resources to be sent to.  
 10 Did I understand that correctly?  
 11 A. Yes, sir. If I could just qualify that based on my  
 12 understanding of the incident type that was developing,  
 13 given that short time window and just starting to pick  
 14 up things off the media and suchlike, we were dealing  
 15 with an MTFA terrorist-type activity. I knew the  
 16 location of our specialist responders and my view was  
 17 that at that point in time it would have been those  
 18 specialist responders that would have been our first  
 19 response to that incident.  
 20 Q. Did you have a sense at that time that nearly 30 minutes  
 21 had passed between the explosion and Mr Nankivell  
 22 contacting you?  
 23 A. No. No, I didn't. To be honest, sir, I think I would  
 24 have... I was anticipating that it was almost  
 25 simultaneous action, that very quickly the call's gone

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1 in, as it ordinarily does, and then it's cascaded  
 2 through quite quickly. So I was a little bit surprised  
 3 that there was that time lapse.  
 4 Q. Should you have asked, "How long ago did this happen"?  
 5 A. Yes, I think so, sir, I think in hindsight yes, clearly  
 6 that would have been valuable information to know at  
 7 that point.  
 8 Q. Again if we put two pieces of information alongside each  
 9 other, on the one hand the incident was — the explosion  
 10 was approaching 30 minutes old and, on the other hand,  
 11 your resources were going to a site 3 miles away from  
 12 where that explosion had taken place.  
 13 A. Yes, I can see that perspective, sir. I go back, and  
 14 I know it's not for sharing, but also knowing the  
 15 locations of that specialist response team and where  
 16 they're travelling, they're travelling towards the  
 17 incident rather than away from it.  
 18 Q. I understand. But there was a location closer to the  
 19 incident that they could have travelled to, which I'm  
 20 sure you were aware of, namely Central?  
 21 A. Yes.  
 22 Q. Which no doubt you'd immediately have realised when you  
 23 were told it was related to the arena was the closest  
 24 Fire and Rescue station to that explosion?  
 25 A. Yes, sir.

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1 Q. We'll just bring up some timings because you have spoken  
 2 about two calls with a call back after the first one.  
 3 {INQ041473/34}. We can see at about 6 minutes after  
 4 your call ended with Mr Nankivell that there is a 0.2  
 5 second — a 2-minute call, forgive me, not a very long  
 6 one at all, and before I ask for your comment on that  
 7 we can go to {INQ041473/37} of this document, please.  
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Is it 0.2 of a minute?  
 9 MR SMITH: Yes, it is.  
 10 MR DE LA POER: Yes, it is. We can see 1.05 for that call  
 11 at 23.09, so rather longer.  
 12 Is it your recollection that there was one call just  
 13 before 11 o'clock and a subsequent call or do you recall  
 14 two calls?  
 15 A. My recollection was two calls, the first call from  
 16 Mr Nankivell and then the second one when we agreed —  
 17 I don't know whether that's one of us trying to contact  
 18 the other or ...  
 19 Q. It may be because of its duration that it would have  
 20 gone to your answerphone, but it certainly wasn't  
 21 a period of time that very much information could be  
 22 conveyed in?  
 23 A. No.  
 24 Q. So shall we work then — do you think it's a reasonable  
 25 assumption that that second call occurred at 23.09?

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1 A. Yes, sir.  
 2 Q. Which is exactly 10 minutes after the first call that  
 3 you had with Mr Nankivell ended?  
 4 A. Yes, sir.  
 5 Q. So let's just have a look at that period of time. What  
 6 did you do once you had finished speaking to  
 7 Mr Nankivell for the first time?  
 8 A. As a whole, sir, I think I asked — my wife was at home  
 9 at the time. We put the TV on, so again I was conscious  
 10 of trying to convince myself that this wasn't a live  
 11 exercise and there was something to validate that, and  
 12 then just prepared for what was in my mind was setting  
 13 off on the road to the command support room.  
 14 Q. Were you attempting to obtain some situational awareness  
 15 from the television?  
 16 A. Yes, sir.  
 17 Q. Not an overly formal way of describing it, but that  
 18 was — you were thinking: I need to know more and that  
 19 is a source of information?  
 20 A. Yes. Whatever channel it was, Sky News or something,  
 21 just that — just validated that something had happened.  
 22 Q. Did you receive that validation?  
 23 A. Yes, sir.  
 24 Q. So you could see that it was real?  
 25 A. Yes, sir.

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1 Q. Did you have access at home to iNet?  
 2 A. I would have had access through a laptop, yes.  
 3 Q. Did you know how to use iNet to look at the logs?  
 4 A. Yes, sir.  
 5 Q. Did you attempt to look at the North West Fire Control  
 6 logs before you left your home?  
 7 A. No, sir.  
 8 Q. Would that not have been the best source of situational  
 9 awareness?  
 10 A. I think it would have given me some, in hindsight,  
 11 I think — there's clearly information on there which  
 12 would have helped in that picture. I think my priority  
 13 was probably to verbally speak to North West Fire  
 14 Control and try and get the information relayed from the  
 15 off the log while I was en route rather than take the  
 16 time to interrogate it.  
 17 Q. You had, as it turned out, a 10-minute period, so it  
 18 appears from the telephone records. You had thought to  
 19 yourself, I need further information, and you had  
 20 thought to switch on the television. I'm just trying to  
 21 understand how it wasn't within your muscle memory as  
 22 APO, the moment you are notified of, I am sure you  
 23 would, the most serious incident you have been involved  
 24 in since 1996, almost certainly, that you didn't  
 25 immediately think: the best source of information for me

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1 is whatever information North West Fire Control have  
 2 taken from the other emergency services or the public?  
 3 A. No, sir, I think -- I don't think it's sort of muscle  
 4 memory, standard practice for me to do that in that  
 5 situation. Yes, I could have done, I could have looked  
 6 at it, I could have gained some information, but it  
 7 wasn't at the forefront of my mind because what was in  
 8 my muscle memory of mobilising to incidents all time was  
 9 the valuable information that you can get fed from North  
 10 West Fire Control whilst you're en route to either the  
 11 incident or the command support room.  
 12 Q. We'll come to that and I don't wish to conceal that from  
 13 within this line of questioning because in fact you did  
 14 call North West Fire Control at 23.11, didn't you?  
 15 A. Yes, sir.  
 16 Q. We'll come to that call in just a moment. What we know  
 17 now you would have been able to see had you gone on to  
 18 the Ellis log, 9074, is that the police had people in  
 19 numbers on the scene, both GMP and BTP. You'd have seen  
 20 that the paramedic Bronze was on the scene and that at  
 21 about quarter to 10 (sic), five ambulances were recorded  
 22 as being inbound to the scene. You'd have seen all of  
 23 that so that when Mr Nankivell spoke to you at 23.09 and  
 24 told you for the first time that all your units were  
 25 going to Philips Park, the context would be very

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1 different, do you agree?  
 2 A. The questions would have been different, I think that  
 3 would have been the thing, sir: are they going to  
 4 Philips Park, have they got the forward control point?  
 5 There would have been more dialogue because we'd be  
 6 looking at the natural progression. You may say: why  
 7 are they going to Philips Park, why aren't they going to  
 8 scene? Because we've got that information straightaway.  
 9 It wasn't in the forefront of my mind to check the log  
 10 because at that point in time I'm not thinking of  
 11 directing that activity that I have just been made aware  
 12 of. I'm assuming that that activity is being directed  
 13 by commanders working with partners at the scene on the  
 14 ground.  
 15 Q. I understand that, but you are there as the duty  
 16 assistant principal officer.  
 17 A. Yes, sir.  
 18 Q. And if you thought, I'm sure you will agree with this,  
 19 that a commander was making a decision that might cost  
 20 lives, in that role, as APO, you would question it,  
 21 wouldn't you?  
 22 A. Yes, sir, absolutely.  
 23 Q. At the conclusion of your call with Mr Nankivell at  
 24 23.09, what did you decide you would need to do?  
 25 A. Proceed to the command support room. I think we both

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1 agreed the scale -- we had got enough initial  
 2 information of the type of incident we were dealing  
 3 with. My -- I was confident, more than confident, that  
 4 Dean was liaising with the right people at the time and  
 5 starting to put things in place as the duty group  
 6 manager does, and to start progressing to the command  
 7 support room to establish what the impact of this was  
 8 going to be on the service.  
 9 Q. Let's turn to the call that you make en route. We'll  
 10 bring up the transcript. The call involves  
 11 Rochelle Fallon and it is {INQ034353T/1}.  
 12 I'm sure you've had an opportunity to review this  
 13 transcript ahead of today?  
 14 A. Yes.  
 15 Q. In summary, is it plain from the transcript that you are  
 16 in fact driving at that point, given what's said between  
 17 you and Ms Fallon?  
 18 A. Yes.  
 19 Q. Do you inform her that you are on the way to the CSR?  
 20 A. Yes, sir.  
 21 Q. I would just like to focus on one thing that you said,  
 22 23.13.00. You say:  
 23 "All right. I -- we -- had anything back from  
 24 anywhere? I've just spoke into Dean Nankivell and  
 25 obviously I think at the moment we've just got standbys

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1 at Philips Park."  
 2 When you said, "Had anything back from anywhere?",  
 3 what information, if anything, were you expecting to be  
 4 given by Rochelle Fallon?  
 5 A. That's the type of communication I was referring to  
 6 before, so I'm seeking further information. Ordinarily  
 7 that might be: yes, we've got an informative message,  
 8 we've got an assistance message, so something from North  
 9 West Fire Control which is giving me an update of  
 10 current situation of an incident.  
 11 Q. Having asked that question, you then make a statement  
 12 before Ms Fallon answers it. Do you see that?  
 13 "I've just spoke to Dean Nankivell and obviously  
 14 I think at the moment we've got standbys at  
 15 Philips Park."  
 16 A. Yes.  
 17 Q. Was your question expecting to elicit from Ms Fallon the  
 18 information that we have just discussed that was  
 19 recorded on the log from 22.38?  
 20 A. Yes, I think potentially I was seeking more information.  
 21 I think, clearly, I've been informed -- they were just  
 22 getting more information from ambulance and police and  
 23 we got that update around the fatalities at that point  
 24 in time. It started to paint the picture. I'm not sure  
 25 I was seeking more at that time in my role. I suppose

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1 one of the things I'm thinking now, in that space,  
 2 is that the crews will be moving down to scene, we'll  
 3 have the forward control point, we will start soon if  
 4 we're not already operating in that space.  
 5 Q. That's your expectation at 23.11?  
 6 A. Yes. I don't know what how quick it would take  
 7 ordinarily the crews or the timelines and suchlike from  
 8 a Philips Park perspective if actually they were going  
 9 to get there. But from that information I would  
 10 anticipate that we would be starting to move down to  
 11 scene to support and respond.  
 12 Q. Do you think in your role as APO about to open the CSR  
 13 you should have asked in terms, "What is the latest  
 14 information about where ambulance are, what is the  
 15 latest information there is about where the police  
 16 are?", or any questions around co-locating?  
 17 A. I am not going to dispute that that would have been  
 18 valid information to ask, sir. It wasn't at the  
 19 forefront of my mind at that point in time to ask that  
 20 because I want to get to the command support room to  
 21 look at the impact and I would never have anticipated  
 22 that that information wasn't being shared at a tactical  
 23 level, as I say, through the NILO, through the existing  
 24 communications and relationships.  
 25 So I didn't necessarily see it in my place to be

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1 starting to seek that information, and rightly or  
 2 wrongly, I had an assumption that that would be  
 3 information that was being shared at a tactical level.  
 4 Q. I do understand. I framed my question as APO because  
 5 obviously you have a particular function you have told  
 6 us about as APO, which is why I think it is important  
 7 that consideration of whether or not you should have  
 8 asked that needs to be in that context; would you agree?  
 9 A. Yes, sir.  
 10 Q. At 23.21 you contacted a gentleman by the name of Robert  
 11 Lafferty?  
 12 A. Yes, sir.  
 13 Q. You identify him in your statement as the duty CSR  
 14 officer?  
 15 A. Yes.  
 16 Q. And why did you want Mr Lafferty to turn out?  
 17 A. To assist in supporting the command support room,  
 18 knowing how we'd set it up previously in roles as duty  
 19 group manager and that admin support facility, if you  
 20 like, within the room is really, really vital. Another  
 21 piece of that is that they had within the room the  
 22 ability to activate things like recall to duty, should  
 23 we need to bring people back in. So to support the room  
 24 from some of the skills that -- the admin/clerical  
 25 skills that I didn't necessarily have.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Would he be able to also activate the  
 2 room, set it up, get it going, get the computers going?  
 3 A. Potentially, yes.  
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think he either has the skills to do  
 5 that or he doesn't.  
 6 A. Yes. Certainly to turn everything on, sir, yes.  
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It seems on the face of it quite strange  
 8 that senior officers arrive -- I think you were the  
 9 first on the scene, were you?  
 10 A. Yes, sir.  
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It was dark when you arrived, you have  
 12 to turn the lights on?  
 13 A. Yes.  
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That you don't have someone, someone  
 15 like Mr Lafferty, who could have been activated earlier,  
 16 got there, got it all ready so you hit the ground  
 17 running?  
 18 A. I don't disagree, sir, and I think again, it's --  
 19 I think as I'd set off, I was going through things  
 20 systematically, the priority was North West Fire  
 21 Control, and then trying to get some support in the  
 22 room. It was... how we did things, if you like, just as  
 23 far as bringing people into the room at that time. Yes,  
 24 we would have benefited by -- if I'd made that call  
 25 earlier to get somebody on the way.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Would it have been your  
 2 responsibility -- I wasn't actually blaming you for it  
 3 in any way, I just wondered whether there was  
 4 a procedure which --  
 5 A. No, I think it ... The procedure, as best as I remember  
 6 it, sir, is that whoever's setting that room up has got  
 7 that ability to call in that support if needed. There  
 8 have been occasions where the room's been set up and  
 9 we haven't needed it because it's been a different  
 10 incident type.  
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's not the end of the world, is it?  
 12 A. No, sir, but I think -- picking up on your point, would  
 13 it have been advantageous to make that call earlier,  
 14 yes.  
 15 MR DE LA POER: One possibility is when you told  
 16 Rochelle Fallon at 23.11 that you were setting up the  
 17 CSR that there would have been a facility for her to  
 18 press a button and for a page to go out or a message to  
 19 go out to the CSR officer deploying them a whole  
 20 10 minutes earlier than by the time you got round to  
 21 calling them.  
 22 A. I fully accept that. There's improvements that could  
 23 have been made in that process.  
 24 Q. At 23.36, you called GMFRS media officer.  
 25 A. Yes, sir.

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1 Q. Why did you call them?  
 2 A. I think, (1), because I recognised the role, having done  
 3 the role, and the information and the contacts that you  
 4 can get. I viewed that as being quite a big piece of  
 5 the jigsaw, the media, how would that support us within  
 6 the command support. To make them aware of the  
 7 incident, because I wasn't sure of the cascade element  
 8 with the new media. Historically, when I did the media  
 9 liaison role there were triggers where you would get  
 10 notified at six pumps and ten pumps, whatever, and you'd  
 11 either attend or you'd contact to try and get a picture  
 12 of what was going on.  
 13 So the first call was probably more out of courtesy,  
 14 having done that role, to make sure they were aware of  
 15 it.  
 16 Q. You were probably still driving or just about to leave  
 17 your vehicle because, to the best you can, you time your  
 18 arrival at the CSR just 4 minutes later at 23.40;  
 19 is that right?  
 20 A. Yes.  
 21 Q. As the chairman has just referred to, and you have  
 22 agreed, the whole place needed switching on?  
 23 A. Yes. The first thing was raising the attention of  
 24 a security guard and unlocking the building and then  
 25 entering the building and starting to turn things on, as

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1 alluded to, yes, sir.  
 2 Q. In your witness statement you describe the CSR as  
 3 functioning at about 23.45. Do you think that's right,  
 4 given the jobs that you have described having to do?  
 5 A. No, I think on reflection I don't know whether that was  
 6 me thinking I was in the room and I managed to turn the  
 7 lights on, but in fairness I don't think it would be  
 8 possible to get it functioning in that period of time.  
 9 So I may stand corrected on that time. I would say --  
 10 when they say "functioning", it was probably functioning  
 11 when myself, Dean, maybe John was in the room at that  
 12 time, where we started to get things together and were  
 13 starting to get the picture of who's at the incident,  
 14 what does it look like. I would suggest in hindsight  
 15 that's a bit ambitious if I was saying it at that time.  
 16 Q. We'll just track the arrival of people as you've just  
 17 identified it. You said that the next person to arrive  
 18 after you was Group Manager Fletcher; is that right?  
 19 A. Yes, it was.  
 20 Q. And then Group Manager Nankivell?  
 21 A. Yes. I think they were in relatively quick succession.  
 22 Q. And Assistant Chief Fire Officer Harris and finally  
 23 Chief Fire Officer O'Reilly?  
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I thought we heard that Mr Nankivell and  
 25 Chief Officer O'Reilly --

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1 MR DE LA POER: They walked in together, yes. I'm simply  
 2 taking it from the account given in this witness's  
 3 witness statement. If that's wrong, you...  
 4 A. Yes, I may stand corrected, but I think there was  
 5 a delay, I think I have picked up on, between the chief  
 6 fire officer and ACFO Harris, which I didn't recognise  
 7 at the time, but I think from other statements I've  
 8 heard there was more of a delay than them arriving  
 9 together?  
 10 Q. Are you saying your recollection as recorded in your  
 11 witness statement might not be --  
 12 A. I think the timings -- the order is there or  
 13 thereabouts, but the timing of people actually coming  
 14 through might be slightly out.  
 15 Q. After those senior officers, Mr Lafferty arrived;  
 16 is that right?  
 17 A. Yes.  
 18 Q. Just sticking for a moment with the personalities. Were  
 19 you expecting to see the chief fire officer or Assistant  
 20 Chief Fire Officer Harris?  
 21 A. I think potentially I was expecting to see the chief  
 22 fire officer because Dean had mentioned to me in either  
 23 the first or second call that he had made him aware. So  
 24 there was maybe half anticipation. I didn't necessarily  
 25 think he would have gone straight to that room. But

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1 I think I now subsequently know that there was  
 2 a discussion between Dean and the chief fire officer but  
 3 I didn't know that at that time that that discussion had  
 4 taken place. I wasn't expecting to see ACFO Harris in  
 5 the room.  
 6 Q. We will come back to conversations as they unfolded, as  
 7 you appreciate they are of importance to this  
 8 investigation, but I'd just like to deal with the set-up  
 9 of the CSR.  
 10 Did you, using the computers that were available,  
 11 log-in to the North West Fire Control logs of this  
 12 incident?  
 13 A. I can't recollect whether I did it personally or whether  
 14 they were on, they were switched on. My recollection  
 15 was maybe that they were all live and already logged on.  
 16 There was some sort of generic log-on within the room  
 17 once you turn the computers on. I can't recollect  
 18 whether I personally did it.  
 19 Q. Even if the machines automatically logged on, an  
 20 operator needs to search for the incident, don't they,  
 21 in order to tell the computer what information to bring  
 22 up?  
 23 A. Yes, sir, yes.  
 24 Q. And it's really that second stage, not just having the  
 25 computers on but accessing information that North West

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1 Fire Control has entered, did you do that?  
 2 A. I can't recollect doing that in the early stages of that  
 3 incident and searching to go through -- I may well have  
 4 done but I can't recollect .  
 5 Q. Do you think that that is an important first stage in  
 6 setting up the CSR, somebody at an early stage  
 7 acquainting themselves with what information has been  
 8 entered on the log?  
 9 A. Yes, it is . The early stage and the priority is around  
 10 the resources and what we've actually got down at scene  
 11 and what that impact is on the response of the rest of  
 12 the service .  
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Where do you get that information from  
 14 about what's down at the scene?  
 15 A. Ordinarily a telephone call back from North West Fire  
 16 Control is generally the quickest way or was the  
 17 quickest way: can you just let us know who's there, who  
 18 have we got, what the roles are, clarify who's been sent  
 19 as what. And then I think, as has been alluded to  
 20 previously, then make sure that the visual board  
 21 represents who's attached to that incident and then the  
 22 next priority is to start to think what have we got left  
 23 and where we may be left wanting is something else --  
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Nankivell described that he would be  
 25 the person doing that, putting it on a whiteboard of

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1 some sort.  
 2 A. Yes.  
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.  
 4 MR DE LA POER: So I think where we have settled, you tell  
 5 me if I'm wrong about this, Mr Etches, is you don't have  
 6 a recollection yourself of having consulted any of the  
 7 North West Fire Control logs in the early stages of the  
 8 CSR?  
 9 A. I genuinely can't recollect, sir .  
 10 Q. Again, we know that had you consulted log 9074, you  
 11 would have immediately seen all of that information,  
 12 which I'm not going to rehearse again, about where your  
 13 emergency service partners were and of course by this  
 14 stage we are looking at a period of 75 minutes or so  
 15 since the explosion .  
 16 A. Yes, sir .  
 17 Q. And by this stage, your resources, 75 minutes  
 18 post-explosion, are still 3 miles away?  
 19 A. Yes, sir .  
 20 Q. So don't you think that if you had looked at the log,  
 21 that log, and seen that information, that might have  
 22 stood out in your recollection as being quite an  
 23 unsatisfactory state of affairs ?  
 24 A. Yes, absolutely, sir . I think it's... On arriving at  
 25 the command support room, and I don't know at what point

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1 I found out that the crews were still located at  
 2 Philips Park, so ...  
 3 Q. I think I can help you with that if -- that's a welcome  
 4 introduction. I don't want to stop you saying anything  
 5 you want to say.  
 6 A. It's just around the priorities of arriving in the  
 7 command support room and what the demand was on the room  
 8 at that point in time.  
 9 Q. Let me see if I can help. At 23.42 you make the first  
 10 of a series of calls to Group Manager Meakin.  
 11 A. Yes, sir . I don't know whether I... Yes. I don't know  
 12 whether he phoned me or I phoned him but we spoke.  
 13 Q. It doesn't matter for present purposes because you were  
 14 saying you weren't sure of the timings about Philips  
 15 Park. We know that at the time of that call, Mr Meakin  
 16 was at Philips Park and he had already been told by  
 17 those at Philips Park that they had seen ambulances at  
 18 Central.  
 19 A. Yes, sir .  
 20 Q. Do you recall him communicating that to you?  
 21 A. Yes, sir .  
 22 Q. So even setting aside the issue of the information  
 23 in the log, you learned before 23.45 that the ambulances  
 24 were a substantial distance closer than your resources  
 25 to the scene?

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1 A. Yes, sir . If I may, that's that demand piece and  
 2 I think, just to go back to -- and I fully accept that  
 3 there was information within the log which would have  
 4 been valuable, but that timeline from walking through  
 5 the doors at 23.41, speaking with Carlos at 23.42, and  
 6 he's then told me that (1) they are still at  
 7 Philips Park and (2) that other resources are closer to  
 8 the scene, so I'm starting to get that piece. The bit  
 9 in hindsight potentially from that log we could have  
 10 closed that gap to say, "We've just seen on the log  
 11 there's an RVP". So there's a whole myriad of things  
 12 that could be done, but at that point I think the fact  
 13 that he'd confirmed that there was responders down at  
 14 Central, the priority was to move them from where they  
 15 were to Central, to try and move them forward.  
 16 Q. If we pause here for a moment. You now have in your  
 17 possession, information that 75 minutes or so, certainly  
 18 over an hour, post-incident, co-location had not  
 19 occurred.  
 20 A. Yes, sir .  
 21 Q. And your priority, you tell us, was to seek to achieve  
 22 that co-location?  
 23 A. Certainly to support the ask, which was: we need to move  
 24 down, we need to move on. I'm not quite sure -- and  
 25 again I make this because I picked up on something last

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1 week — whether Mr Meakin was under the impression that  
 2 the command support room had been open longer than it  
 3 was because there was a statement from North West  
 4 Fire — I think they informed him it was open at 23.30.  
 5 So I don't know whether he thought we'd been in there  
 6 longer and therefore should have had more richer  
 7 information. My view was we were minutes into walking  
 8 through the door to try and get a better picture of what  
 9 had gone on.

10 Q. Who did you think was the incident commander at this  
 11 point?

12 A. I thought Andy Berry was the incident commander at that  
 13 point.

14 Q. Where did you think Andy Berry was?

15 A. Philips Park.

16 Q. You thought he was at Philips Park?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Did you say to Mr Meakin, "Put Andy Berry on the phone,  
 19 we need to get this incident moving"?

20 A. No, not particularly because I don't know — I think  
 21 Carlos was phoning, Mr Meakin was phoning to see whether  
 22 we... All the energy was around communication with GMP  
 23 to see whether we from that functioning room had any  
 24 information that we could say, "Where's the forward  
 25 command point? Have we got comms with GMP?" So the

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1 energy was in using the room to facilitate that channel  
 2 for communication rather than direction.

3 Q. I suppose, Mr Etches, the question that some might ask  
 4 is: here you are, area manager, a very senior rank  
 5 within the Fire and Rescue Service. You are within the  
 6 command structure, the predetermined command structure  
 7 that night as assistant principal officer, you are being  
 8 told the ambulance are much closer to the scene than our  
 9 resources, why didn't you just say, "Go now, go to  
 10 Central"?

11 A. I think there was a three-way conversation at that  
 12 point. I think there were other people in the room that  
 13 were seeking the information that was being fed from  
 14 Carlos. I might be wrong, I might be wrong, in  
 15 hindsight it would have been "Just go". I genuinely  
 16 can't remember the whole dynamic in the room at that  
 17 point in time. I can't believe that I wouldn't have  
 18 said, "Just go", if he'd say, "We need to move on". The  
 19 only piece of that jigsaw is we need to move on because  
 20 we need more information. But if it was just to go to  
 21 Central, then I think the discussion went, "We need to  
 22 get down as soon as possible", but I don't know whether  
 23 there was any wider and further discussions or  
 24 restrictions in that happening. But I take on board  
 25 what you say, sir.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I ask a couple of things? We heard  
 2 from Mr Nankivell, you may have heard it yourself, that  
 3 he felt it necessary to say to people, "Any  
 4 communication is to go through NWFC so it gets on the  
 5 log".

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's how everything is recorded and  
 8 anybody wanting to know what's going on can see it on  
 9 the log. He had the impression that it was something of  
 10 a failure within people generally in GMFRS of not always  
 11 going through NWFC; would you agree with that?

12 A. Yes, sir, there are occasions on that, yes.

13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Would you also agree that there  
 14 is perhaps a tendency among the senior officers  
 15 themselves not to use the log enough?

16 A. Yes, potentially, sir. Yes, potentially. I think  
 17 Mr Nankivell alluded to different methods of  
 18 communication and I think we maybe saw some of that on  
 19 the night, WhatsApp groups and there was other pieces of  
 20 information that have now come to light. So yes,  
 21 I agree. I think there's a point to learn there,  
 22 definitely.

23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So the other thing is really following  
 24 on from what's just been asked. We've had the  
 25 impression from some people that when they heard that

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1 people had gone to Philips Park rather than  
 2 Thompson Street, let alone the RVP, but people didn't  
 3 know about that, that people were saying, "What on earth  
 4 are they doing there?" It just didn't make sense. If  
 5 that was being said, and you'll have to tell me whether  
 6 people were saying that generally, whether that's even  
 7 more supportive of the fact that actually when you get  
 8 there you should just say, "There is no sense in them  
 9 being where they are, at least get them up to Thompson  
 10 Street while we wait for information"?

11 A. Yes, sir, I agree. I think —

12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Was that happening? Were people saying,  
 13 "What on earth are they doing there"?

14 A. That was certainly the impression that was being relayed  
 15 back from the crews that were at Philips Park —

16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Never mind the crews. You know the  
 17 situation, you're a very experienced man. Wasn't it  
 18 something that struck you: what are they doing at  
 19 Philips Park? If not, just say so.

20 A. Yes, sir. I just go back to the point around the  
 21 specialist response teams. I'm still in the space at  
 22 this point in time that this is an MTFA-type incident  
 23 and I picked up en route through media around  
 24 active shooters, gunshots being reported, so when I get  
 25 to the command support room, my view is, as APO, we are

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1 dealing with an MTFA incident and we've got quite a bit  
 2 more to learn here around what the picture is  
 3 developing. Subsequently that wasn't, but --  
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand that, you don't know  
 5 everything at the time. But there may be a risk to go  
 6 to Thompson Street, is that what you're saying?  
 7 A. Not necessarily a risk, more around the assumption that  
 8 there would have been things in play with the force duty  
 9 officer, with the forward command point, the standard  
 10 operating procedures for NILOs, fully anticipating that  
 11 to be in play. I think -- this isn't a defence, but  
 12 what we now know of the incident type we were dealing  
 13 with is that the action to move away from Central didn't  
 14 reflect the incident type, so for whatever -- Mr Berry  
 15 took the decision to rendezvous at Philips Park. But it  
 16 didn't play out in the way that we anticipated it  
 17 playing out. So the information that was coming back  
 18 from the crews that had been at Thompson Street, that  
 19 were now at Philips Park, that was being fed back, and  
 20 the more information that was developing, yes, it was  
 21 absolutely right to get back there as quickly as  
 22 possible.  
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, just let me say this: it's not  
 24 a matter of a defence, it's an explanation, so we  
 25 understand what was going on. You're not being required

201

1 to defend yourself.  
 2 A. Yes, sir.  
 3 MR DE LA POER: Acknowledging that you did not have anything  
 4 close to a complete picture, Mr Etches, did you not have  
 5 the one piece of information that was decisive in this  
 6 situation, namely that Thompson Street was safe enough  
 7 for the ambulance and therefore presumably safe enough  
 8 for Fire and Rescue?  
 9 A. Yes, sir.  
 10 Q. Help us then why it took approximately 20 more minutes  
 11 for that movement to go, so far as you are able to speak  
 12 to what was going on in the CSR?  
 13 A. I think, sir, you'd have to look at all of those  
 14 conversations that were taking place in the command  
 15 support room and with whom and whether there was  
 16 resistance from other people in the room to move  
 17 forward, whether they wanted more information or not.  
 18 My understanding -- there was numerous conversations  
 19 going on with different people. This isn't a defence in  
 20 any way, shape or form, but there was more communication  
 21 going on in the room and you started to become excluded  
 22 from some of that communication in terms of who's asking  
 23 what, where.  
 24 Q. What was your position to anyone who would listen to it  
 25 from 23.42?

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1 A. To move down to Central.  
 2 Q. Who was speaking against that position?  
 3 A. I don't fully know, to be honest, sir, I don't fully  
 4 know of all of the sequences of conversations and  
 5 communications and I can't fully recollect why there  
 6 wasn't just, "Go to Central", straightaway. We had the  
 7 discussions. I genuinely can't remember all of the  
 8 sequencing of events and I was surprised at the length  
 9 of time when we looked of how long it had taken from the  
 10 telephone call to physically getting people down to  
 11 Manchester Central.  
 12 Q. Because if we just look at it from a different  
 13 perspective, your Fire and Rescue Service has a standard  
 14 response time of 6 minutes?  
 15 A. Yes.  
 16 Q. At the point of this conversation, approximately  
 17 75 minutes had elapsed, yet it took a period over three  
 18 times longer than your standard response time, after  
 19 that 75 minutes, in order to actually get people moving  
 20 towards the incident. Do you agree those timings are  
 21 essentially accurate?  
 22 A. Yes, sir.  
 23 Q. And it's really just for us, from your perspective  
 24 within the CSR, to understand how that delay, paralysis,  
 25 whatever word you want to use, occurred bearing in mind

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1 your position was, as APO, "Go immediately".  
 2 A. Yes, and I... I wish I could recollect the conversation  
 3 with Mr Meakin at that time. I also wish I could  
 4 recollect other conversations that were happening in the  
 5 room. I can't realistically explain what that delay was  
 6 caused by. The request to move, to go to Central, was  
 7 realistic, it was "yes", but for some reason within that  
 8 room, that environment, there was a delay in approving  
 9 that decision to move to Central.  
 10 Q. I've given you an opportunity, I hope a fair one, for  
 11 you to give your account, bearing in mind that you have  
 12 said in terms that just don't have the recollection to  
 13 allow you to provide an explanation for it.  
 14 I'm going to move on to the point at which  
 15 mobilisation occurs to Thompson Street, which no doubt,  
 16 given your position 20 minutes earlier, was an enormous  
 17 relief to you?  
 18 A. Yes, sir.  
 19 Q. That takes us to just after midnight. What, if  
 20 anything, did you think was going to happen once those  
 21 crews reached Thompson Street?  
 22 A. They would find out more, they would liaise with NWAS,  
 23 who we knew were down there. I think we'd specifically  
 24 asked for GMP, an officer from GMP to attend to try and  
 25 get -- rally everybody back together to get them down.

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1 And realistically , from that point on, I'm still  
 2 thinking that we are deploying our specialist response  
 3 teams and our NIOs down to scene.  
 4 Q. Did you expect them even to stop at Central or were you  
 5 expecting them to drive straight through? What was your  
 6 expectation about those specialists?  
 7 A. The decision was to relocate everything to Central.  
 8 Whether we were going -- whether they were going to find  
 9 out more information when they got to Central that gave  
 10 them that richer picture of where people were actually  
 11 working from, ambulance crews, and for them to take that  
 12 decision, then I was anticipating when they got to  
 13 Central, they'd find that golden piece of information  
 14 that said, right, this is where we now need to go to.  
 15 Q. Had anybody thought to look at the logs to see if  
 16 a rendezvous point had been previously identified?  
 17 A. I ... Whether people did look at the log, I don't think  
 18 it was specific that we were looking at that. I think  
 19 we passed that phase of that RVP from the initial  
 20 stages. Thompson Street was where we were aware or they  
 21 were aware there was further activity and they wanted to  
 22 get down to Thompson Street to find out more information  
 23 to be able to move forward.  
 24 Q. At this point, as the teams are en route to  
 25 Thompson Street, who, if anyone, was the incident

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1 commander to your mind at that time?  
 2 A. I can't remember. I knew that Ben, Mr Levy, had  
 3 designated himself to be the incident commander.  
 4 I can't recollect whether that was done from  
 5 Philips Park or on arrival at Manchester Central.  
 6 Q. The latter as I understand it. Someone will correct me  
 7 if I'm wrong about that.  
 8 A. My understanding would have been at that point in time  
 9 it was still Mr Berry.  
 10 Q. Was the incident in fact being commanded from the CSR in  
 11 practice?  
 12 A. Not at that point I don't think. I go back to -- not  
 13 sure what the delay... I don't know whether there  
 14 was... I don't know whether the restriction on not  
 15 moving to Central was as a result of not having comms  
 16 with GMP or whether we were just going down there. It  
 17 was really peculiar to be in that situation where it  
 18 felt like there was a command element within the room.  
 19 To this day, you know, the... I've never had the  
 20 opportunity to discuss with colleagues what some of that  
 21 thought process was and what those timelines were and  
 22 what those discussions were to put that into place. But  
 23 it didn't feel like at that point in time it was being  
 24 led from the command support room.  
 25 Q. Did there come a point in time when it did?

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1 A. There came a point in time where the deployment of  
 2 resources and particular types of resources were  
 3 controlled from the command support room.  
 4 Q. Was that following Mr O'Reilly's conversation with  
 5 Mr Hynes?  
 6 A. Yes. Yes, sir.  
 7 Q. We've covered this with Mr Fletcher and Mr Nankivell,  
 8 I just want to seek to obtain your perspective on it.  
 9 Did you hear any conversation or discussion around  
 10 whether or not standard -- with no disrespect to them --  
 11 firefighters were the right resource to be deployed?  
 12 A. I was party to conversations that they weren't the right  
 13 resources to be deployed and we should have been  
 14 deploying our SRT teams.  
 15 Q. Did you in fact have a unique perspective on the  
 16 capability of the specialist resources when it came to  
 17 the provision of first aid?  
 18 A. I wouldn't say unique within the room because certainly  
 19 John and, I'm pretty sure, Dean in his role would have  
 20 been aware of the capabilities of that. But I was  
 21 certainly more than aware what that capability was  
 22 historically.  
 23 Q. What you say at paragraph 70, turn it up, which might be  
 24 thought to give you some authority on the subject:  
 25 "Furthermore I was personally instrumental in

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1 pulling together resources which the MTFA crews have to  
 2 deal with ballistic wounds and ensuring the SRT crews  
 3 had specialist training to work alongside NWAS in the  
 4 warm zone. In 2015, following MTFA training with NWAS,  
 5 we identified that we could provide a greater level of  
 6 specialist trauma training for MTFA crews. This was  
 7 organised with Simon Watson of NWAS's HART team, who  
 8 at the time was the training manager. The training  
 9 covered trauma packs, immobilisation, assisting the  
 10 paramedic both at scene and at the casualty clearing  
 11 point, and also triage. I knew that the SRT training  
 12 and medical equipment may assist the emergency  
 13 response."  
 14 A. Yes, sir.  
 15 Q. You've told us you spoke up against the idea that  
 16 non-specialists be sent. Have I understood that  
 17 correctly?  
 18 A. Yes, sir.  
 19 Q. And who were you speaking up against?  
 20 A. It was Mr O'Reilly.  
 21 Q. What did you say to Mr O'Reilly about the capability of  
 22 the SRT as compared to non-specialist firefighters?  
 23 A. There was two elements to the discussion as I recollect.  
 24 The first element of it was around the decision to  
 25 mobilise at the request of NWAS, and I think it was

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1 Mr Hynes, the initial response. That was around: we  
 2 should be sending our SRTs because of the potential  
 3 around the warm zone working and the type of incident  
 4 that we felt we were dealing with.  
 5 There was then a discussion that arose around  
 6 a request that they don't need to be trauma techs, so --  
 7 all our firefighters were trauma technicians.  
 8 Q. Who said that?  
 9 A. The point was made around all the firefighters being  
 10 trauma technicians was from Mr O'Reilly.  
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That word, trauma technicians or trauma  
 12 trained?  
 13 A. My recollection was technicians, but I will stand  
 14 corrected if it was... I don't know if others heard or  
 15 others have correlated that. My recollection was  
 16 technician.  
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: There can be a difference, can't there?  
 18 As I understand it, on standard appliances you will have  
 19 one trauma technician, but the others will have had some  
 20 trauma training which will be boosted by assistance and  
 21 some training passed on from the trauma technician?  
 22 A. Yes, quite possibly, sir. I think the discussion was  
 23 more -- in the first instance was around specialist  
 24 response teams into the environment around the working.  
 25 The second piece of the discussion was when we started

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1 to get some information back around casualty.  
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So one is -- and this was raised, was  
 3 it, at the time -- working in a warm zone?  
 4 A. Yes, sir.  
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Which you can only use SRT for?  
 6 A. Yes.  
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right.  
 8 MR DE LA POER: The second part of the discussion, whatever  
 9 word the chief used, did you think he was accurately  
 10 describing the capabilities of the people he was  
 11 speaking about?  
 12 A. No. No, and... In fairness, I don't know what the  
 13 conversation was with Mr Hynes around the request for  
 14 standard --  
 15 Q. Could I stop you there? I appreciate you weren't privy  
 16 to that conversation. I just want to focus upon what  
 17 the chief said, and you have told us that your  
 18 recollection is trauma technician, whatever words he  
 19 used you have told us you disagreed with what he was  
 20 saying, the capability of the people he was talking  
 21 about. You have told us you spoke out against it. What  
 22 did you say to the chief?  
 23 A. I can't remember the exact words. It was around that we  
 24 need to be sending the SRT because not all our  
 25 firefighters are trauma -- and it may have been

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1 technician or trauma trained.  
 2 Q. What did the chief say in reply?  
 3 A. To the best of my recollection, it was around -- we  
 4 don't need -- there are two pieces: one, that they're  
 5 all trauma trained or trauma technicians. The other  
 6 piece was around: we don't need to send our specialist  
 7 response team. Whether that was as a result of the  
 8 discussion with Mr Hynes and the task that was being  
 9 asked at scene, I'm not quite sure.  
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Assuming it is apparent to everybody  
 11 that people in the SRT have special training which they  
 12 do with NWAS and the HART team for this sort of  
 13 occasion, an MTFA or potential MTFA, in a way why not  
 14 send the SRT?  
 15 A. I'd love to know, sir.  
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No explanation was given you as to why  
 17 not?  
 18 A. No.  
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.  
 20 MR DE LA POER: I'm not keen to increase the temperature,  
 21 but you have described at various points some words  
 22 which are or have been attributed to you, which I would  
 23 just like to deal with. I can take you to then  
 24 references or it may be that you will recollect using  
 25 them or it may be that you will be uncertain.

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1 It has been attributed to you that you have said  
 2 that Mr Nankivell was despairing or in despair as  
 3 a result of this conversation.  
 4 A. If I've said that, then I stand by that, sir.  
 5 Q. I'd rather, bearing in mind the reliability potentially  
 6 of that recording, just to see whether or not that  
 7 accurately captures your impression of how he was as  
 8 a result of that conversation.  
 9 A. Yes, I think that accurately captures...  
 10 Q. Another word, again, which has been ascribed to you, and  
 11 I'm not suggesting the record is correct, but it's there  
 12 in black and white amongst the materials, is that you  
 13 have described the chief as bombastic. Is that a word  
 14 that within your ordinary vocabulary?  
 15 A. I wouldn't say so. If that has been captured, I would  
 16 suggest that's probably more my own feelings, heat of  
 17 the moment, without being able to defuse what happened  
 18 that night. I wouldn't personally say that's a true  
 19 reflection of the chief fire officer. We have different  
 20 styles of command and management, but that's not  
 21 ordinarily a word I would have used. If it's been  
 22 picked up, it's probably because of frustrations and  
 23 anger that I had at that point in time as well.  
 24 Q. I would rather capture your opinion, uncoloured by  
 25 emotion. I don't need to go into the detail of it, but

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1 was, to your mind, the chief's leadership appropriate or  
 2 inappropriate on the night?  
 3 A. I ... I've reflected on this hugely over a number of  
 4 years and I think ... I can see his frustration in what  
 5 hadn't happened as the chief. I see that. So being  
 6 directive and taking control, I can absolutely see that  
 7 side of it. As we now know, there was a whole catalogue  
 8 of -- I'm not going to say ifs, buts and maybes, but  
 9 there was a whole series of unknowns that rise to  
 10 a point where the chief fire officer of the service is  
 11 looking and his response -- it hasn't met his  
 12 expectations or our requirements.  
 13 So do I think it was inappropriate on that night  
 14 that he demonstrated that almost hierarchical style?  
 15 Not necessarily. On reflection, do I think as  
 16 a collective we could have had a much more conducive  
 17 working environment within that room by sharing amongst  
 18 ourselves exactly what each one of us knew in a more  
 19 team-like approach? Then absolutely.  
 20 Q. Was the atmosphere in the CSR that of a dysfunctioning  
 21 group?  
 22 A. I can't say that it wasn't dysfunctional because  
 23 we weren't all agreeing with the actions. So it wasn't  
 24 a -- there was resistance to decisions that were being  
 25 made within that room. So I can't say that it

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1 was functional and serving the purpose that it should  
 2 have done from a support perspective.  
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Let's see if I can get a proper view.  
 4 The chief made the wrong decision as far as you are  
 5 concerned and you may well be right about that because,  
 6 when it came to it, the firefighters who were sent were  
 7 prevented from doing what they were meant to be doing  
 8 there because they were being required to go into a warm  
 9 zone and they weren't equipped for it, which you  
 10 predicted. So he made the wrong decision as far as  
 11 you're concerned?  
 12 A. Yes, sir.  
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: There may be reasons for making the  
 14 wrong decision, but he made the wrong decision, and he  
 15 made the wrong decision in the teeth of advice from you,  
 16 Mr Nankivell, Mr Fletcher. Was there anyone in the room  
 17 supporting his view?  
 18 A. No, sir. Maybe Mr Harris.  
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.  
 20 A. Maybe.  
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'd momentarily forgotten about  
 22 Mr Harris. Do you remember him expressing a view in  
 23 favour of what the chief was saying?  
 24 A. No. We -- no, we wanted to deploy the SRT at that point  
 25 in time.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And from time to time it got reasonably  
 2 heated?  
 3 A. It did, it did.  
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: People often don't act functionally when  
 5 they're being heated rather than calm. But it's not  
 6 actually a matter which you can stand around for a lot  
 7 of time discussing, could you?  
 8 A. No, sir. I've been asked around the approach and  
 9 I do -- I've balanced it. Would I in that situation --  
 10 we've all got that ability, because of what we do, to  
 11 command and do that and I think that's what he did. The  
 12 outcome from it wasn't as conducive as it could have  
 13 been to... Maybe a more... There's different  
 14 approaches to command, isn't there?  
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Let me try and cut through this. The  
 16 job of leaders is to lead, but the job of leaders is to  
 17 get it right as well, and you are more likely to get it  
 18 right if you listen to other people's views?  
 19 A. I think that's an accurate summary, sir.  
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.  
 21 MR DE LA POER: Two more passages from what you've said in  
 22 the past that I'll ask you about, as I'm sure it's on  
 23 others' minds. This I have a much greater degree of  
 24 confidence in the accuracy of because it's from  
 25 a transcript. {INQ023508T/1}. This is your

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1 participation with a Kerslake discussion, which also  
 2 involved Mr Meakin, Mr Levy and Mr Berry. I'm sure you  
 3 recall it.  
 4 If we can go, please, to {INQ023508T/27}.  
 5 If you need to establish the context, please do so.  
 6 You say at the top there:  
 7 "Just to put that into context then, the  
 8 discussion -- and that happened within the command  
 9 support room with the chief was: why are we not sending  
 10 the SRT because they are trained in more advanced  
 11 medical? The response that came back was: all our  
 12 firefighters are trauma technicians, which was  
 13 fundamentally wrong."  
 14 Then Mr Levy said:  
 15 "Yeah, yeah, he challenged me."  
 16 Then you say:  
 17 "You know, it was almost like you say 'It's black',  
 18 'No, it's not, it's white'. There is -- there was  
 19 a culture and I'm sure that's come through."  
 20 Then there's overspeaking and what you may have been  
 21 about to say isn't captured, but again I'm interested  
 22 now not in capturing what may have been said in the heat  
 23 of the moment but what your cold light of day assessment  
 24 is. Can you help us what you were referring to when you  
 25 said, "There was a culture"?

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1 A. Yes. I can't remember the context of that word and  
 2 whether "culture" is referring more to -- I'm pretty  
 3 sure it's referring more to the culture of the command  
 4 support room on that night than broader culture. The  
 5 reference there to saying it's one thing and being  
 6 challenged that, no, it's not, it's not right, that was  
 7 how it felt in that room on that night, that trying to  
 8 offer constructive support was not being accepted.  
 9 Q. The other matter I wanted you to just deal with, again  
 10 as I'm sure others are interested in it, page 50.  
 11 {INQ023508T/50}.

12 Mr Goodwin, one of the Kerslake team members, says:  
 13 "In terms of that model then, it just seems that on  
 14 the night the CSR became a real unnecessary cog  
 15 in that."  
 16 And you say:  
 17 "No. Two people in the CSR became an unnecessary  
 18 cog."  
 19 Which two people were you referring to, please,  
 20 Mr Etches?

21 A. For me, that would have been Mr Harris and Mr O'Reilly.  
 22 Q. Why were you characterising them as unnecessary cogs?  
 23 A. I think it was a bit of -- I suppose, looking at that  
 24 again, it was a little bit leading into it, and I think  
 25 it's a bit harsh to make that statement. Just for

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1 context, that environment within that particular meeting  
 2 with the Kerslake team was very challenging, it was very  
 3 emotive, following the initial outcomes that colleagues  
 4 had had.  
 5 It ... It probably goes back to me... And you  
 6 referred to it, I think, before, sir, around the  
 7 dysfunctional element of the command support room.  
 8 I was angry, I'm still angry. We've never really ironed  
 9 out exactly who knew what, decided what, and why, within  
 10 that room after all this time.  
 11 Q. Finally, this, to complete the picture. I think you  
 12 were present with ACFO Harris when he went to Central  
 13 Station?  
 14 A. Yes, sir.  
 15 Q. And all that I wish to ask you to confirm about that  
 16 was, as we've heard from others, can you confirm that  
 17 that was an extremely challenging and high temperature  
 18 environment?  
 19 A. Yes, sir, incredibly.  
 20 MR DE LA POER: We've heard, I'm sure, a satisfactory amount  
 21 about that.  
 22 That concludes my questioning of this witness, sir.  
 23 I have tested the patience of the stenographers by 3 or  
 24 4 minutes, and indeed all of the staff, and you, sir, by  
 25 going past 4.30, but I wonder whether that might be

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1 a convenient moment.  
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think we'll forgive you 4 minutes.  
 3 MR DE LA POER: I'm very grateful.  
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm sorry to have to get you back again  
 5 tomorrow.  
 6 A. That's fine, sir.  
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: 9.30 tomorrow. Thank you.  
 8 (4.35 pm)  
 9 (The inquiry adjourned until 9.30 am  
 10 on Thursday, 8 July 2021)

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