

OPUS2

Manchester Arena Inquiry

Day 143

September 9, 2021

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Thursday, 9 September 2021

(9.30 am)

MR MATTHEW HALL (continued)

SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Good morning. Just before we start, can

I --- and this applies to everybody --- it's nothing to do with the proceedings but I have developed a bad back.

I certainly don't wish to have any sympathy for that bearing in mind what some people in this room have gone

through, but it may be that I will want to take

a 5-minute break just to walk around. You will have

known judges who actually get around and walk during the proceedings, and I always find that vaguely

disconcerting, so what I would propose to do is simply

say I am going to take a 5-minute break, get up and walk out --- I don't want anyone to stand up, I will just go

out, walk around for 5 minutes, and then come back in,

so please don't disperse and we will just carry on. I

hope that is acceptable to everyone.

MR SMITH: Of course sir, yes.

SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.

Questions from MR SMITH

MR SMITH: Mr Hall, good morning.

A. Good morning, Mr Smith.

Q. May I begin by asking you, has the final analysis and the response by you to specific questions which you

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provided in writing on 4 August of this year taken into account all of the evidence given and the opinions expressed by North West Fire Control staff, GMFRS staff and, in particular, Mr Dark of the Fire Brigades Union?

A. Yes, to the best of my ability I have considered all of that evidence provided.

Q. Mr Dark has expressed very clear views, hasn't he, in relation to the importance of ensuring the safety of fire crews mobilised to an incident such as this?

A. He has, yes.

Q. One of the matters you were asked about yesterday, which we will come back to, and I want to ask you about, is from a non-legal point of view, in other words from your point of view as an expert in fire and rescue, clearly you have to have in mind, do you not, the safety of fire crews who are being deployed by the Fire Service to an incident?

A. Yes.

Q. The point you would make, I am sure, is that fire crews face risks to their safety, including the risk of fatality, on a daily basis?

A. That's correct.

Q. In other words, it's part of the work, it's part of their profession, isn't it?

A. Indeed, sir.

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Q. But do you agree that those risks are generally managed by training, preparedness and an understanding of what the crews are going into and how they have to manage the matter operationally?

A. I do, and additionally the provision of personal protective equipment as well.

Q. That would all form part of that, wouldn't it?

A. Indeed.

Q. Having the right equipment together with all those other matters?

A. Yes.

Q. But where you've got a situation in which a terrorist incident has taken place, an explosion has occurred causing multiple casualties, in other words a disaster on this scale, the risks then facing fire crews who are attending the incident are not capable of being predicted in the same way, are they?

A. Without an accurate risk assessment from the scene and a good level of situational awareness, it could be hard to predict the other risks that were present at the time, yes.

Q. So from the standpoint of somebody who is engaged in the deployment of fire crews mobilising to a scene, it's important, isn't it, that that person or persons who are involved in that process have an understanding of what

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the fire crews are being sent to?

A. It would help. I don't believe that that's always the case based on the initial information that comes in at the start of a call. As we discussed yesterday, situations like this, or indeed any incident, develop over a period of time as more information becomes available and more situational awareness is developed and a better understanding of the risk.

So initially, that information and intelligence to take a view on whether it's appropriate or not to deploy is limited, I would suggest, in the early stages.

Q. And that there will be, is this correct, some vital avenues of information that can come into the person or persons responsible for mobilising, one of which is the police response to such an incident and how it's being managed?

A. That's correct, yes, a very important piece of information.

Q. I'm sure you would agree that once you get your crews down there to the incident they are in a position to pass back information to senior officers and to the control room?

A. Absolutely, sir. It's crucial, as we discussed yesterday, to have resources at the scene as quickly as possible.

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1 Q. When you prepared your addendum report, and I'm not
 2 asking for this to go on the screen, I think it is
 3 sufficient if I read it out. I'm going to try to be
 4 efficient with the use of documents, but if you need to
 5 see a document, would you tell me, please, Mr Hall?
 6 A. I will, thank you.
 7 Q. In your addendum report at paragraph 18, which is
 8 {INQ034730/5}, I'm going to quote from that report if
 9 I may:
 10 "Sufficient and appropriate resources were available
 11 to NWFC to discharge their duties when evaluated against
 12 the service agreement in place with the GMFRS at the
 13 time. It is reasonable in my view to state that North
 14 West Fire Control were capable of responding
 15 sufficiently and appropriately to the attack."
 16 And no doubt that remains your view?
 17 A. It does, sir, yes.
 18 Q. In order to respond sufficiently and appropriately, my
 19 question is this: do you agree that North West Fire
 20 Control, in order to do that, required clear and
 21 unambiguous procedures to have been uploaded to its
 22 computer-aided dispatch system in the absence of any
 23 discretion in the control room to use its judgement when
 24 mobilising to an incident?
 25 A. Yes, I do agree, and my understanding is that's the

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1 purpose of having action plans agreed with the relevant
 2 Fire and Rescue Service so that the control room and the
 3 Fire Service are on the same page with the deployment
 4 requirements of any given incident.
 5 Q. So do you agree, therefore, that the importance within
 6 what I have just suggested and which you have agreed
 7 with, the important element is that where incident types
 8 are loaded on to the computer-aided dispatch system,
 9 they are capable of being identified with a keyword
 10 search readily?
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. And where explosion plans are loaded on to that system,
 13 when looked at and considered by the control room
 14 operator, they should be clear and unambiguous in their
 15 terms?
 16 A. I agree, sir.
 17 Q. You also made the point in your addendum report at
 18 paragraph 43 that in general control call handlers and
 19 operators follow cues to access the correct action cards
 20 based on information received from the caller.
 21 A. Yes.
 22 Q. You said that a decision to choose one over another is
 23 down to the individual assessment made at the time by
 24 the operator and/or the duty team leader, as on 22 May.
 25 A. That's my understanding, sir, yes.

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1 Q. This is distinct, isn't it, from the exercise of
 2 discretion?
 3 A. Yes, I believe it is. It's more a case of following
 4 process, I would suggest, rather than operating a degree
 5 of personal discretion in any way.
 6 Q. So if the team leaders at North West Fire Control were
 7 correct in their judgement as to what they were
 8 confronted with and their interpretation or attempts to
 9 interpret their responsibilities following the
 10 computer-aided dispatch plan, was it not a matter for
 11 individual assessment by them that neither plan,
 12 explosion nor "Bomb — general", applied to these
 13 circumstances?
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You are not being asked whether they are
 15 right in that assessment, you are just being asked
 16 whether it was up to them at that time to make that
 17 assessment.
 18 A. Thank you for that clarification.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I hope I'm right.
 20 MR SMITH: That's correct, sir.
 21 A. As the supervisor, my view would be that they are
 22 entitled to review that information coming in,
 23 especially as that information or intelligence was
 24 explaining the situation more clearly, so as I've said
 25 previously, things develop over minutes, seconds,

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1 minutes, and time in an incident like this. So it's
 2 reasonable to expect somebody of a supervisory position
 3 to be keeping an eye on that, if you will, and
 4 contributing in a positive way to making sure the
 5 response is correct or suitable at the time.
 6 Q. I suppose we can simplify this, really. Their task is
 7 to look at what is presented to them; is that correct?
 8 A. Yes.
 9 Q. And their task also involves the decision: is the course
 10 that I believe is presented by this material the one
 11 which I should be following?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I just want to ask something about that.
 14 So is the decision or judgement call or whatever to say,
 15 "Are we choosing the right action card to follow?" or is
 16 it, "What is the right action card or what other actions
 17 should we be taking?" ie should we be following an
 18 action card or should we be doing something different
 19 because the action card don't really cover it? Does
 20 that come into it, the last part, or not?
 21 A. I think it does. I think where I have some difficulty
 22 throughout this process, looking at this evidence, is
 23 the balance between how much weight should be placed on
 24 just following process, as in the first suggested
 25 computer-aided dispatch, if you will, and consequent

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1 action card. In this sequence of events was an
 2 explosion and my question has always been around why was
 3 that just not implemented then, and then, as we said
 4 yesterday, the concurrency of the other activities that
 5 had to happen at the same time.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: As I understand your evidence, and it's
 7 important we have this in context at the time, it is:
 8 yes, you can challenge it and see if you're doing the
 9 right thing, not putting people into danger, but you
 10 actually send them into the scene first, otherwise
 11 nothing happens?
 12 A. Correct, that's my view.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Then it was perfectly reasonable, as far
 14 as you're concerned, to ring up a NILO and say, "Was
 15 this the right action"?
 16 A. Absolutely, sir, and for the supervisors and control
 17 room managers of significantly higher levels to
 18 contribute to that whole process. It's part of the
 19 joint assessment of risk.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: If their concern is that they may be
 21 sending people into a dangerous situation, which
 22 firefighters should not be sent into, you are
 23 presupposing that they will have got the necessary
 24 advice before the fire appliances arrive at the scene
 25 where the potential danger may be. I may be pre-empting

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1 what you're going to say. So it depended on them
 2 getting the advice in time, didn't it, to turn people
 3 back?
 4 A. Absolutely, and I think as we discussed yesterday,
 5 around the joint decision model, the key trigger is that
 6 information and intelligence that comes in at the
 7 beginning to allow you to do that process, otherwise
 8 effectively you are doing an assessment of risk based on
 9 scant, at best, and inaccurate, at worst, information.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you, Mr Hall.
 11 MR SMITH: How long would it have taken, do you believe, for
 12 crews to have reached the incident scene, the arena,
 13 from Manchester Central once the bells had dropped?
 14 A. From my understanding of the evidence and the proximity
 15 of Manchester Central, where at least two of the
 16 appliances were due to be sent, had the initial PDA been
 17 dispatched, that's a matter of just a few minutes.
 18 Q. And it would follow, wouldn't it, that within that time,
 19 had the control room mobilised resources from
 20 Manchester Central and then sought information from the
 21 duty NILO, the overwhelming probability is that those
 22 crews would have reached the arena before any
 23 information as to the nature of the risk and the attack
 24 methodology had become available to the Fire Service?
 25 A. That's very likely, sir, but again, not wishing to

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1 repeat, but as we did discuss yesterday, the Fire
 2 Service response, and as you opened today, is one of
 3 responding to risk and responding to situations,
 4 operational situations, of a vast variety that have the
 5 potential to do harm to emergency responders. So that
 6 in and of itself, in my view, is not a reason not to go.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Can I just look at really whether
 8 it's the probability that the information wouldn't have
 9 arrived? If you ring the NILO and say, look, this has
 10 happened, give him that information, and say, we have
 11 dispatched in accordance with the explosion, if the NILO
 12 is taking the view, well, that is just too risky
 13 a situation, turn them back until I get the information,
 14 I'm not sure it would be a probability they'd have
 15 arrived first. Who can say? I assume your question was
 16 based on the NILO saying, "I'll go and speak to the
 17 FDO", and then get back and it may not be necessary --
 18 MR SMITH: It is, sir.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: -- but it's hypothetical, I agree.
 20 MR SMITH: It's certainly an important point to consider.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, absolutely. And I do understand
 22 it.
 23 A. If I may, sir, I think secondly, we've also heard from
 24 the potential officers who would have made up that first
 25 attendance from Manchester Square (sic) and it's their

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1 evidence that their training and ability to do a dynamic
 2 risk assessment at scene or at an RVP -- and we talked
 3 about the drive in yesterday and gaining situational
 4 awareness from the locality. They have a raft of
 5 options for that first incident commander, as it would
 6 have been, to assess that risk and send immediate
 7 messages for additional resources to augment that
 8 initial response and indeed to -- be that a METHANE
 9 message or any other way of passing back into North West
 10 Fire Control the information that they needed in a more
 11 accurate and, albeit quickly, risk-assessed way,
 12 it would be a view from the scene.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I say, I think that's all very fine,
 14 but we're talking about a potential terrorist attack and
 15 we're talking about the worry of getting into an ambush.
 16 A. Yes.
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So maybe that's not quite as good an
 18 answer in that situation when you're potentially going
 19 into an ambush.
 20 A. Indeed, sir, but at the time -- and this is the sort of
 21 the 22.40 moment --
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes.
 23 A. -- there were certain things that weren't readily known
 24 or communicated, so you have to go back to the situation
 25 of: do you respond then or do you wait and wait until

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1 such a point when you can and feel it's safe to go?
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I do understand. But we're actually
 3 looking at North West Fire Control and whether what they
 4 did was reasonable in the circumstances. Sorry,
 5 Mr Smith, I intervened.
 6 MR SMITH: That's the point I wanted to take up with
 7 Mr Hall. What we're looking at here are these words, in
 8 fact, taken from the evidence of Michelle Gregson or
 9 Janine Carden:
 10 "We don't know what we're sending our fire crews
 11 into."
 12 And that arises from the fear or the prospect that
 13 on arrival at a scene, the nature of which is unknown to
 14 the control room at that point, the crews could be
 15 subjected to secondary explosions and fatally injured in
 16 this situation in which there is no information at that
 17 time as to the nature of the risk, so that when you
 18 speak of a dynamic risk assessment, you do need
 19 information, don't you, in order to make that
 20 assessment?
 21 A. That's correct, sir, and the way you get that
 22 information is by — and I hope I haven't inferred that
 23 I'm implying people should just crash into a scene like
 24 that with no regard for or any kind of assessment of
 25 risk, but the purpose of having commanders of all

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1 agencies at the scene is so that that risk assessment
 2 can happen.
 3 We use phrases like risk assessment and so forth.
 4 What we're talking about here is the Fire and Rescue
 5 Service and control, because there's an onus within the
 6 JESIP arrangements for controllers to talk to each other
 7 and to share that information and share that situational
 8 awareness that they have. But it's equally for the fire
 9 commander who arrives at the scene or the incident to
 10 identify and communicate with their colleagues from
 11 police and the ambulance, or whoever else is on scene
 12 at the time.
 13 And whilst that information may not be wholly known,
 14 it may not be completely accurate, it is the basis of
 15 bridging that intelligence gap. I fully accept the
 16 dilemma that NWFC staff are in in that they can only
 17 understand and respond to the information that they are
 18 being given, be that from a call from a member of the
 19 public or another emergency service. But equally, where
 20 there is that gap, there's a responsibility to seek, to
 21 proactively seek that information from other sources if
 22 it's not immediately available.
 23 Q. Isn't that what the control room was doing at 22.40 when
 24 the call was made to Mr Berry? May I just put it —
 25 would it help if I read from the transcript of the call?

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1 A. That would help, yes, thank you.
 2 Q. I just remind you about what was said by
 3 Michelle Gregson:
 4 "We're receiving reports of an explosion at the
 5 Manchester Evening News Arena. It's already detonated.
 6 The police that we've got on the line are saying that
 7 it's a bomb. There's been 30 casualties reported so
 8 far. The rendezvous point at the moment is the car park
 9 outside the cathedral."
 10 And these are the important words, I would suggest:
 11 "I've just phoned you while we are still on to the
 12 police. Would it be all right for you to get in touch
 13 with them? Obviously we're not mobilising at the
 14 moment, so can you just speak to them and we'll hang
 15 fire?"
 16 A. Yes.
 17 Q. Now, bearing in mind that the control room was already
 18 in the course of an open line with GMP's control room,
 19 I have suggested to witnesses already, and it's clear
 20 from the evidence of Michelle Gregson, that what she was
 21 asking Mr Berry to do was to contact the force duty
 22 officer. Isn't that exactly what the control room was
 23 doing? They were seeking information at this critical
 24 moment before mobilising crews to a situation which they
 25 had no idea of the nature of the risk that those crews

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1 were to be confronted with?
 2 A. I agree in part, sir, not wishing to be unhelpful
 3 in that, yes, it's absolutely correct and I believe
 4 I said yesterday that I have no issue and no challenge
 5 with the decision to contact the duty NILO and to seek
 6 that additional information. In this case, within
 7 GMFRS, that was through the FDO, which was the intention
 8 to get that, I have absolutely no problem with that.
 9 My only observation on your last question is: there
 10 was already some information which would attract, in my
 11 view, and others may disagree, the mobilisation of the
 12 PDA, that being there was an explosion, known, there
 13 were casualties, known, it was a bomb that had gone off,
 14 known, and there was an RVP given to Fire Control by the
 15 police, known. Those factors, in my view, constitute an
 16 adequate amount of information, albeit far from perfect
 17 and far from clear of the full extent, accepted, that
 18 within the explosion action plan that PDA could have
 19 been mobilised to begin the initial scene assessment.
 20 Q. Before we leave this precise question and subject, ought
 21 we to add the fact that there was a risk of a secondary
 22 explosion to that list?
 23 A. I'm afraid regrettably, sir, there always is with
 24 a terrorist attack, potentially.
 25 Q. Should we not add it to the list that you've just

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1 recited?
 2 A. It wasn't added on the night.
 3 Q. No.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Let's assume we do. Have it in the back
 5 of your mind, anyway.
 6 A. I don't disagree, of course. It was a consideration.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: This is just me thinking as we're going
 8 along, so please forgive me if they're facile thoughts
 9 but the nomination of an RVP is absolutely critical by
 10 the police.
 11 A. Yes.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And that really has to be trusted as if
 13 they're actually sending all the emergency vehicles to
 14 an RVP, that the police are satisfied it's safe to do
 15 it.
 16 A. That's correct, sir, and as we discussed yesterday
 17 around the importance of the RVP, I know you can't deal
 18 with absolutes in a dynamic situation as such, but this
 19 is about the building blocks of resolving an incident,
 20 and a starting point is a nominated RVP and the trusted
 21 partner status between agencies is key.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 23 Mr Smith, I think we see where the issue is. It's
 24 obviously a complex issue, which I well understand, and
 25 there are a number of different factors involved.

1 MR SMITH: It's factually complex, sir.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It is, and the difference between you
 3 is: should they have gone before speaking to the NILO or
 4 should it have been after?
 5 MR SMITH: It is and that's a decision for you to make on
 6 the facts.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Absolutely.
 8 MR SMITH: Can I turn next to one or two aspects relating to
 9 the control room's approach to what was taking place
 10 aside from that which we've just been discussing.
 11 Returning to this point of the importance that the
 12 control room should have clear and unambiguous
 13 procedures uploaded to its system, do you consider that
 14 GMFRS' action plans, as uploaded on to NWFC's systems,
 15 were clear and unambiguous in their terms?
 16 A. At the time of the incident?
 17 Q. Yes, at the time of the incident.
 18 A. I think the evidence has shown, and certainly listening
 19 to the interpretation of those plans from the control
 20 room staff, there was room for different interpretations
 21 to be made. There was a gap, effectively. I think
 22 that's born out in the evidence by the apparent
 23 indecision about which was the appropriate line to take.
 24 I know there's been some difficulty, and I don't
 25 know if... We perhaps don't need that to be rehearsed

1 here because I know the chairman has commented already
 2 on which action cards were used or weren't used, and
 3 there has been some testimony that certain a course of
 4 action was taken which has since been changed since the
 5 inquiry started. But either way, it would appear, just
 6 perhaps on that evidence alone, there was room, or
 7 potential at least, for confusion between those cards as
 8 they existed at the time.
 9 It is also my understanding that since then, there
 10 has been a review and a revision of those action plans
 11 to address that in particular.
 12 Q. Could we put to one side for the moment what has taken
 13 place since?
 14 A. Of course.
 15 Q. Except for one aspect of that which I'll come back to.
 16 But my question is -- I believe you've answered it
 17 but I really would like a clear answer to it, if I may.
 18 A. I'll try.
 19 Q. Will you forgive me? I don't mean to be impertinent in
 20 any way.
 21 A. Not at all.
 22 Q. But do you agree that the plans as they were drawn and
 23 as loaded on to the system were not clear and
 24 unambiguous in their content?
 25 A. I would have to say, on reflection, yes, they were not

1 clear and unambiguous in their content.
 2 Q. So therefore, this requirement that it's important that
 3 the control room do have clear and unambiguous
 4 procedures uploaded to the system had failed, to
 5 a degree perhaps, but had failed in this instance,
 6 hadn't it?
 7 A. That has to be true, yes.
 8 Q. Do you recall that the evidence so far is that no one
 9 at the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service has
 10 ever instructed the control room staff in the course of
 11 training or guidance: if you get a terrorist attack
 12 starting with an exploded bomb causing many casualties,
 13 nonetheless you must follow the explosion action plan?
 14 That's the evidence of Mr Gaskell.
 15 A. That is -- yes, I agree, that is the evidence of
 16 Mr Gaskell, that that training wasn't given.
 17 Q. Have you been able to identify in the course of your
 18 review of the evidence and hearing the evidence in the
 19 inquiry whether any such training or guidance to that
 20 effect was given to the control room?
 21 A. I don't believe it was at the time, sir, no.
 22 Q. And do you agree that it was sufficiently important that
 23 in the context of the explosion and "Bomb -- general"
 24 action plans and the requirement for them to be clear
 25 and unambiguous that that instruction or training or

1 guidance should have been given?
 2 A. Yes, it should have been given, sir, and if I may,
 3 it would be of interest to understand the drafting of
 4 those original plans inasmuch as my view from the
 5 evidence is that for those to be achieved, and looking
 6 at the initials of the sign-off at the bottom of those
 7 as presented in evidence, I know that's not how they
 8 appear within the system, there is a GMFRS
 9 representative who has signed off on those plans.
 10 So my understanding, to be corrected if that's
 11 incorrect, is that all of those plans, even at the time
 12 of the incident, were done in a collaborative way
 13 between North West Fire Control and GMFRS, which may
 14 infer at least a tacit understanding of the differences
 15 required between the explosion and bomb action cards.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm going to explore that before you go
 17 further. Clearly, NWFC in as far as there is ambiguity
 18 in the cards, it would be open to them to raise it,
 19 although it may be GMFRS' responsibility. Insofar as
 20 the instruction is concerned if there is an explosion
 21 following a terrorist attack, you follow the explosion
 22 card, that would seem to be the responsibility of GMFRS
 23 rather than for NWFC to raise?
 24 A. Yes, I agree, sir. I think just referring back to an
 25 earlier comment, there's a difference between process

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1 and personal interpretation of the process.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes.
 3 A. I don't know, and perhaps GMFRS would fill that gap,
 4 whether the nature of that relationship was: once we've
 5 agreed these plans, if the explosion card is selected,
 6 just follow it. Whether that's explicit or implicit,
 7 I'm not sure.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I've got a slightly different point,
 9 what I was actually aiming for, which is this: it seemed
 10 to me that this particular action card should be one
 11 which is standard across fire services all over the
 12 country because the same would apply. So in any place,
 13 if there is an explosion following a terrorist attack,
 14 the action card should be identical. Is this learning,
 15 this knowledge, shared over all the different fire
 16 services or are you operating in silos?
 17 A. I think, right back in my overview report, there is no
 18 national fire service per se, so every chief fire
 19 officer has responsibility for how they deploy and use
 20 their resources. That said, we've heard evidence from
 21 Mr Wilsher, Mr Stephens in Wales doing a similar role in
 22 terms of advising nationally and the National Fire
 23 Chiefs Council. There's the joint operational learning
 24 and the national operational guidance. So major events
 25 like this — and as I recall from Mr Keelan's evidence

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1 also, a lot of the learning, if not all of the learning,
 2 has been uploaded into the joint operational learning.
 3 So I think your point is totally valid and I think
 4 there will be a view for the sector to decide that there
 5 may need to be a nationally agreed protocol on
 6 responding to any given incident type, including
 7 explosions following a terrorist attack.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's just sharing the learning, isn't
 9 it?
 10 A. Exactly.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Which is whether you're a national fire
 12 service or independent seems to be self-evident, and
 13 clearly some action cards are dependent on your
 14 locality, where you are.
 15 A. Yes.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's why you have different ones.
 17 A. Yes.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But for some, which must really raise
 19 the same issues on each one — for instance, did
 20 the London Fire Service have a similar action card to
 21 these or was theirs different?
 22 A. It would be similar, yes. I would have to check the
 23 current one, but the basic response would look very
 24 similar. I think this is the point of the learning
 25 portals and the joint operational learning, is to put

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1 that in the national space so every Fire and Rescue
 2 Service becomes aware — and I know this happened after
 3 Grenfell and after other major incidents — so people
 4 can learn the lessons.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, I am less concerned with what
 6 happens afterwards — of course I am concerned with what
 7 happened after, but actually I'm concerned with why it
 8 didn't happen before.
 9 A. I'm not sure I can answer that.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.
 11 MR SMITH: Could I take up with you the answer you gave in
 12 fact to the chairman concerning the initials on the
 13 bottom of each of these action plans and the nature of
 14 the way in which they were prepared.
 15 A. Yes.
 16 Q. The evidence of Janine Carden is that she was merely
 17 a notetaker, if you like, where her initials appear on
 18 the "Operation Plato — standby" action plan. But the
 19 initiative for the content of the plan and the amendment
 20 which she was, if you like, involved in to that limited
 21 extent was at the hands of GMFRS.
 22 Her initials do not appear on the explosion or "Bomb
 23 — general" action plans. They were in place at the
 24 time in the form in which they were created by GMFRS.
 25 In those circumstances, do you agree, if that evidence

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1 is correct, there is little, if any, scope for
 2 suggesting that the control room should have had an
 3 understanding of what GMFRS intended in the context of
 4 action plans which are not clear and unambiguous?
 5 A. Yes, I agree, and perhaps that highlights an
 6 opportunity, if not taken already, to close that
 7 particular gap and to have more engagement with NWFC to
 8 do so.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Smith, I'm sorry, I know it's not
 10 your job to answer questions, but perhaps we can make an
 11 exception here.
 12 MR SMITH: Of course.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Is it your case that there wasn't the
 14 opportunity for NWFC, if they had seen an ambiguity in
 15 an action card, not to raise that with GMFRS?
 16 MR SMITH: No, that wouldn't be my case at all.
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 18 MR SMITH: The existence of the specific point of contact
 19 in the form of Mr Levy would have facilitated with ease
 20 that dialogue.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.
 22 MR SMITH: But what we do have then, in the light of the
 23 answers you've given -- I don't want to spend very much
 24 time on this at all, Mr Hall, but what we do have is
 25 a "Bomb -- general" action plan which contains a number

25

1 of provisions, and it might just be helpful for
 2 Mr Lopez, if he would, to put this on to the screen.
 3 It's {INQ004360/1}.
 4 Can I stress, we've dealt with the point that
 5 I wanted you to deal with, Mr Hall.
 6 A. Understood, yes.
 7 Q. I'm not going to spend a long time on this, I just want
 8 to draw attention to one or two aspects of the plans.
 9 A. Understood, sir.
 10 Q. So what we can see is that following the initial action,
 11 which is to inform the duty NILO, in the fourth bullet
 12 point the rendezvous point has to be obtained from the
 13 NILO; is that correct?
 14 A. That's correct, yes.
 15 Q. And of course, this is on the assumption that this is an
 16 unexploded bomb?
 17 A. That's correct.
 18 Q. Which is the intention which lay behind this "Bomb --
 19 general" action plan?
 20 A. Indeed.
 21 Q. And the remaining actions relate to sending resources to
 22 the rendezvous point --
 23 A. Correct.
 24 Q. -- once established?
 25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. The explosion action plan, which is {INQ004404/1},
 2 merely states, doesn't it: send TRU, send pumps, without
 3 reference to any rendezvous point?
 4 A. That's correct, it does. You would infer that that
 5 would be sent to the incident. However, your point that
 6 you so clearly made around the factors of the amount --
 7 the information additional to the call that is present
 8 within control, in this circumstance on 22 May included
 9 information from the police at that point that there was
 10 a nominated RVP. I would expect that to be factored
 11 into this -- whether this card was used or not.
 12 Q. Would it be fair to say that you would expect it to be
 13 expressly written into the card?
 14 A. I think it would be very helpful if it was there, yes.
 15 If an RVP had been nominated, mobilise to the RVP,
 16 simple.
 17 Q. And if an RVP had been nominated by another agency,
 18 would you say, mobilise to the RVP nominated by that
 19 agency?
 20 A. Yes. That's the point where the multi-agency
 21 information sharing begins.
 22 Q. I don't want to unnecessarily complicate the facts, but
 23 the evidence of Mr Thomas, which you listened to this
 24 week --
 25 A. I heard some because I was travelling to Manchester

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1 while he was giving it.
 2 Q. -- this relates to some of your evidence as well,
 3 I think -- is that one agency cannot have the
 4 responsibility for determining the way in which another
 5 agency deploys its resources?
 6 A. That's correct, as we discussed yesterday.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It doesn't. Does it mean cannot?
 8 MR SMITH: I'm sure it doesn't mean cannot.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you. That's what we've been
 10 discussing whether it should happen or not.
 11 MR SMITH: It's a point which, with great respect to you,
 12 you engaged in yesterday and an important one and
 13 I thought this point might assist you in relation to
 14 that issue.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It does. It's the wording you used. If
 16 you were going to adopt "cannot" then I might have
 17 something to ask you about.
 18 MR SMITH: Exactly, yes.
 19 Clearly, everybody recognises, all agencies
 20 recognise that in practice this has never happened, that
 21 an organisation like GMP identifies a rendezvous point
 22 and the three agencies, if they are together in
 23 conversation, don't agree. I don't think anybody's been
 24 able to bring that to mind, have they?
 25 A. Not on the evidence and I have seen and heard, and in my

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1 experience that would be extremely unusual.
 2 Q. What I would like you to consider is circumstances in
 3 which another agency, the police, have designated
 4 a rendezvous point, have informed the control room, and
 5 we know that on the evidence which the inquiry has
 6 heard, Station Manager Berry, for the various reasons he
 7 has given, did not consider that that rendezvous point
 8 was appropriate.
 9 A. That's correct.
 10 Q. So where does the control room sit in relation to that
 11 situation? Are you saying that they should have
 12 deployed to the RVP nominated by GMP before informing
 13 Mr Berry that that RVP had been nominated?
 14 A. I believe I said yesterday in my view the key issue is
 15 concurrency, that they should have mobilised to the RVP
 16 as per the action plan in front of us now, whilst -- I'm
 17 not suggesting the same person has to do two tasks,
 18 there were resources to complete that task whilst the
 19 duty NILO was being spoken to and this is somewhat
 20 speculative because the conversation didn't happen, but
 21 the conversation could have been: all of the information
 22 shared from Michelle Gregson to Mr Berry, in addition --
 23 rather than, "Obviously we haven't mobilised", the
 24 simple addition would have been, "And we've mobilised to
 25 the RVP, if any of that needs to change, let us know".

1 So I think they could have done both, if that helps.
 2 Q. You made reference a moment ago to "as per the explosion
 3 action plan".
 4 A. Which of course doesn't state an RVP.
 5 Q. That's the problem, isn't it? And it should do,
 6 shouldn't it, if that's the situation that the control
 7 room ought to be following? In your view, and I have
 8 great respect for it, if I may say so, but it should be
 9 saying that, shouldn't it?
 10 A. I believe I've already agreed that, sir, yes.
 11 Q. And you would agree with that question?
 12 A. I would.
 13 Q. So what I would like your assistance about, please,
 14 before we move to the issue of health and safety,
 15 finally, is this: as far as the procedures are
 16 concerned, loaded on to the computer-aided dispatch
 17 system, are you saying that in your professional
 18 opinion, your judgement, North West Fire Control should
 19 have followed the explosion action plan?
 20 A. Yes.
 21 Q. Despite the fact that its content was not clear and free
 22 from ambiguity? Are you saying that as well?
 23 A. I think I've agreed that the content could have been
 24 clearer, but as I hopefully clearly responded earlier,
 25 the factors that were present, in my view, were

1 sufficient to warrant the deployment of the PDA based on
 2 that information and intelligence that they did have
 3 at the time.
 4 Q. What is your reasoning for saying that they should have
 5 deployed resources to the RVP?
 6 A. Because that was the nominated RVP from a lead agency in
 7 a terrorist act and for the primary driver -- a key
 8 purpose of the emergency responders is to save life and
 9 you cannot do that remote from the scene. You have to
 10 move towards the incident.
 11 Q. So are you working, I use that term in relation to your
 12 opinion, in the context of what was being done, are you
 13 working on the basis that this is a matter of judgement
 14 and discretion for the control room or are you working
 15 on the basis that, looking at the procedures on the
 16 computer-aided dispatch system, the procedures would
 17 have told them to do that?
 18 A. I'm working on the basis that the process of information
 19 into the control room procedurally indicates a course of
 20 action that, in my view, should have been followed,
 21 accepting that there may be some detail around the cards
 22 at the time that can be improved, and we've discussed
 23 that. But it's still my view that there is sufficient
 24 information and a large enough driver to begin the
 25 process of responding to that incident immediately, as

1 soon as that information is available.
 2 Q. So is it your view, therefore, let's take David Ellis'
 3 actions -- in fact, he hasn't selected the explosion
 4 action plan. I would just like to correct that
 5 assertion. He has selected the incident type, hasn't
 6 he?
 7 A. Yes.
 8 Q. And a sub-type has come up: EPO1. The incident type has
 9 then produced two action plans: high rise, because of
 10 the nature of the building --
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. -- built into the system, and explosion. And at that
 13 point, or at some point at around that time, he's sought
 14 advice from the team leaders. So that's what's
 15 happened.
 16 The evidence of the team leaders is that they did
 17 not follow either of the action plans for "Bomb --
 18 general" or for explosion, and they've given various
 19 reasons, but it's a common theme that they did not
 20 consider that the information coming into the control
 21 room fitted either plan. Do you have sympathy with that
 22 situation that they were in?
 23 A. I do have sympathy with the situation because I think,
 24 as we discussed yesterday at some length, the initial
 25 stages of any major incident for all parties are never

1 as clear as you would want them to be. There's
 2 decisions that are made that are sometimes reversed and
 3 there is pressure, very real pressure, on emergency
 4 services to respond in an appropriate way, and
 5 individual people will manage that pressure in different
 6 ways and individual people will make decisions based on
 7 how they see and interpret that information, which is
 8 why the reliance on training and some of this kind of,
 9 if you will, automation of response becomes absolutely
 10 key to remove some of those wicked dilemmas from people
 11 to have to do that as they go. Hence a predetermined
 12 attendance, for example, as a way to reduce that level
 13 of pressure and dilemma that exists in the early stages
 14 of an incident.

15 Q. It's as simple as this, isn't it: you would not point to
 16 any aspect of the procedures loaded on to the
 17 computer-aided dispatch system, would you, and say,
 18 "There you are, clearly it tells you, you should be
 19 mobilising to this scene, to the incident, or to
 20 an RVP"?

21 A. Related to this particular action card?

22 Q. Yes.

23 A. It says to send. There are five, six, directives to
 24 make an operational response. And from my recollection
 25 of Mr Ellis' evidence, there was also the pre-alert and

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1 a proposed initial attendance, which could have been
 2 actioned but was halted while this discussion was
 3 happening.

4 Q. I would ask the question before we leave this: send
 5 where?

6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think I've got that point.

7 MR SMITH: You have, sir.

8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm sorry.

9 MR SMITH: Will you forgive me? You're quite right, if
 10 I made say so, the point is clearly established.

11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes. So there are clearly inadequacies
 12 in the particular action cards we're talking about here
 13 and we will have a debate of whether it's sufficient to
 14 say it should have been the explosion card.

15 Is the inadequacy, in your view, caused by
 16 inadequate preparation of the action cards or is it
 17 actually you can't cover everything and until it's
 18 happened you'll never get the action cards right or
 19 a mixture of the two?

20 A. I think, again without wishing to be in any way
 21 unhelpful, I think it is a mixture of the two. If you
 22 say explosion to somebody, explosions are not uncommon
 23 in terms of an incident type, but they are caused by
 24 a variety of reasons. And therefore, the risk and the
 25 subsequent potential threat may be different from

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1 something that's occurred as a gas boiler explosion in
 2 domestic premises to a deliberate act of terrorism. But
 3 fundamentally, they are both still explosions howsoever
 4 caused.

5 So there's an argument perhaps to be had elsewhere,
 6 but an argument to say: well, it's an explosion,
 7 regardless of the cause, therefore the recommendation
 8 is that everyone responds in this way, at least in the
 9 initial stages, until further intelligence and
 10 information is gathered.

11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm going to ask one thing which you may
 12 want to come back on, so don't leave the topic at the
 13 moment.

14 It has been pointed out that the explosion card does
 15 not include something which would have to have the
 16 effect: send to either an RVP or to the scene. Would
 17 the lack of a mention of "send to an RVP" and the fact
 18 that an RVP was — it was apparent there was one in this
 19 case, should it lead an operator to doubt that the
 20 explosion card is the appropriate one? I've asked that
 21 appallingly, but do you understand what I mean by that?

22 A. I think so, sir.

23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'll try and be more clear if you need
 24 to. Should it be a relevant factor, not mentioning
 25 an RVP point, in deciding whether that card applies or

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1 not?

2 A. Yes, I think it should be included because then that
 3 becomes — the control room operator receiving that call
 4 has two options: if they are given the incident address,
 5 there's an option to mobilise to that; if there's
 6 a nominated RVP, if that is in place, then that's a
 7 further —

8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I see.

9 A. I think the two should be there.

10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You'll help me, I can't remember, was
 11 that something which the supervisors mentioned, the lack
 12 of, on the explosion card, having an RVP?

13 MR SMITH: No.

14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. Have you finished with that
 15 topic? By all means come back to it.

16 MR SMITH: I've finished with it effectively, there's one
 17 more thing that may be helpful.

18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Please ask it and then I'll do one of my
 19 short walkabouts.

20 MR SMITH: Of course. Now we have the advantage, don't we,
 21 of the change of definition MTFA to MTA?

22 A. That's correct, yes.

23 Q. Thereby removing the firearms element from the
 24 circumstances and allowing a control room to see an
 25 explosion in the context of terrorist action?

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1 A. That's correct, yes.
 2 Q. And that's a huge advantage, isn't it?
 3 A. It is. I think it's helpful for the inquiry to remember
 4 that these actions were taken at a time and place when
 5 the extant JOPs was operating under that title of MTFA.
 6 That implied, by definition of Operation Plato, that
 7 there was a firearms element attached to the attack and
 8 it was marauding. So there were factors that had to be
 9 considered by virtue of that on its own.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. Please don't anyone get up. I'm
 11 just going to wander back in in less than 5 minutes. If
 12 you're talking to each other, make sure you're alert to
 13 the fact that I'm coming in if you've moved your place,
 14 and don't get up when I come in either.
 15 (Pause)
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you, Mr Smith. I hope that wasn't
 17 too disturbing to anybody.
 18 MR SMITH: No, not at all.
 19 Can I turn to another matter now? That's the duty
 20 of care. In your second report, and I'll just give the
 21 reference without asking for it to go on the screen, at
 22 {INQ032503/28}, you said this in relation to Station
 23 Manager Berry:
 24 "In terms of the deployment of resources to
 25 Philips Park [you said] he was actually discharging his

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1 duty of care for GMFRS staff as a commander in the way
 2 he thought best."
 3 At paragraph 55, {INQ032503/12}:
 4 "I am satisfied that Mr Berry made his initial
 5 decision in good faith fulfilling the need for the
 6 safety of his staff."
 7 Does it follow that you are of the opinion that
 8 Mr Berry was properly entitled to take account of the
 9 safety of fire crews in making his decision to move
 10 resources to G18, Philips Park, rather than any other
 11 location?
 12 A. Yes. He does have a duty of care to do that and
 13 I think, from his evidence, but also as I have said in
 14 the report, I think that decision was based on his
 15 understanding or his interpretation, perhaps, of the
 16 information that he had been given as the best course of
 17 action to take until he could clarify the situation with
 18 his contact from the FDO.
 19 Q. So from an operational point of view, looking now not at
 20 Mr Berry's understandable worries, which everybody would
 21 have about the safety of fire crews, but from an
 22 operational point of view, in other words the importance
 23 the following correct operational procedures, was he
 24 entitled to take into account that risk to fire crews in
 25 making the decision that he did?

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1 A. Yes. It is one of the responsibilities of a commander.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, exactly, as any commander would.
 3 A. Indeed, yes.
 4 MR SMITH: Where does the control room fit in in terms of
 5 its duty of care and the responsibilities that it ought
 6 to be discharging in relation to fire crews?
 7 A. As I said yesterday and I'm not, nor would I ever
 8 pretend to be, anything near a lawyer, but in my very
 9 limited understanding of those relevant sections of the
 10 Health and Safety at Work Act, the duty of care exists
 11 where your actions may directly impact or affect another
 12 person who's not in your employ. It could be argued
 13 that decisions taken by control could directly impact
 14 and affect firefighters on the ground.
 15 But again, as we discussed yesterday, the way that
 16 that is resolved and, to my view -- again it is my view
 17 rather than a legal view -- the Health and Safety
 18 Executive accept the way to operate is that Fire and
 19 Rescue Services, once mobilised to an incident by
 20 a control room, will put in safe systems of work to
 21 reduce that risk to as low as reasonably practicable.
 22 Q. Yes. So what control measures would you identify which
 23 arise in this situation where the control room is
 24 considering mobilising to the scene of a terrorist
 25 attack with a risk of secondary explosion? What are the

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1 control measures?
 2 A. To share as much information as they have with the
 3 responding agency, in this case the phone call to
 4 Mr Berry and any mobilisation subsequent to that, but
 5 then equally the push and pull of information to seek
 6 further clarification from partner agencies, and by that
 7 I mean via their control room, supervisor to supervisor,
 8 which would deconflict and clarify that the incident
 9 they believe they need to respond to is the same or any
 10 additional information that those agencies may hold. So
 11 information in and of itself is effectively a control
 12 measure because it's building a more accurate picture
 13 for the response.
 14 Q. So that's a developing situation, isn't it? We're
 15 talking about at the point of mobilising.
 16 A. I suppose the control measure for control is to ensure
 17 that they have shared all of the information that they
 18 have at the time of that initial mobilisation and that
 19 the correct resources are identified and mobilised in
 20 accordance with the provided, agreed action plan or PDA.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: This is to an extent of matter of law,
 22 but I agree, you're asking for the practice. But if you
 23 mobilise, you are immediately creating an incident
 24 commander --
 25 A. Correct.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: — and you need to make sure the
2 incident commander knows all the relevant information
3 which may apply to risk —
4 A. Yes, sir.
5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: — that you're aware of; will that do?
6 MR SMITH: It will.
7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm sorry if that's short circuiting it,
8 but you know.
9 MR SMITH: I fully recognise, and I hope my questions have
10 made clear, that Mr Hall isn't being asked to deal with
11 legal issues.
12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No.
13 MR SMITH: We can address all that in due course. But
14 I would like, if I may, because of the public nature of
15 the proceedings —
16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You carry on.
17 MR SMITH: — and Mr Hall's involvement on the facts and his
18 opinion, just to deal with the issue arising under
19 section 3 of the Act.
20 If I tell you that the control room is required by
21 law to ensure the safety of persons not in their
22 employment, who may be affected by their undertaking —
23 A. Yes.
24 Q. — insofar as it's reasonably practicable for them to do
25 so. The non-legal question is this, and I stress

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1 non-legal, I hope: wasn't it reasonably practicable for
2 them to pick up the phone to Station Manager Berry and
3 to say to him effectively, "Will you speak to the force
4 duty officer before we mobilise resources"? And implied
5 within that, but in brackets if you like, is: we don't
6 know what's going on on the ground, we don't know the
7 nature of the risk, the danger for fire crews, we need
8 this information.
9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm really sorry, I'm going to slightly
10 short circuit this. There's not only a duty, of course,
11 to the fire officers in whatever way it arises, their
12 safety, there's also a duty to the members of the public
13 as well, both of whom are covered by the health and
14 safety — the requirement of health and safety, which
15 I don't want to get into in any detail. And as
16 I understand it, whether rightly or wrongly and with all
17 the concessions made to you in cross-examination,
18 Mr Hall is saying in his view, the particular balance
19 would have been met by sending them first of all by
20 deploying them and at the same time concurrently
21 speaking to the NILO and that creates the necessary
22 balance. In a way, I think he's given the answer.
23 MR SMITH: And in a way what I've done is ask a question
24 which underpins the closing statement.
25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, okay. I understand that.

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1 MR SMITH: I will leave the matter there. Thank you, sir.
2 What I would like to do, however, is to remind you
3 of the evidence of Mr Dark and ask whether you agree
4 with the answers he gave to two questions.
5 These are questions that I asked with which he
6 agreed and I'd like to know whether you agree with them.
7 The first is this:
8 "Do you agree that all control room operators..."
9 And for your note, sir, just in case you would be
10 helped by it, it's Day 72, pages 105 to 106
11 {Day72/105:1}:
12 "Do you agree that all control room operators
13 working in Fire Service control rooms are entitled to be
14 provided with procedures, including predetermined
15 attendance procedures, which are clear and unambiguous
16 in their terms [we've dealt with that] in order that
17 they can mobilise crews to emergencies in a manner which
18 meets the operational requirements of the Fire Service
19 but which does not expose firefighters to risks to their
20 safety [and these are the important words] which they
21 are not equipped to deal with?"
22 A. Yes, I would agree with that.
23 Q. The second question is:
24 "The Fire Brigades Union would expect [he was asked]
25 that control room operators should have the safety of

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1 emergency service responders, that is firefighters,
2 firmly in mind in mobilising resources to a situation
3 that has all the appearances of an unfolding terrorist
4 incident?"
5 Would you agree with that?
6 A. I would agree with that.
7 Q. Before we leave this subject finally, do you agree that
8 the fact of an explosion of this nature, as it was
9 reported to the control room, was reasonably capable of
10 giving rise to the opinion in the control room that they
11 were dealing with a terrorist incident?
12 A. Yes, I would agree based on the definition — the
13 clarification, rather, that the explosion was believed
14 to have been caused by a bomb.
15 Q. My next topic, shortly before I conclude my questions,
16 can be dealt with, I think, quite shortly. At
17 paragraph 102 of your second report, {INQ032503/40},
18 which we probably don't need on the screen, you'll tell
19 me if you'd like to see it, you said this:
20 "There was a reasonable working assumption, based on
21 the multi-agency guidance in place at the time, that the
22 key information would come to them, North West Fire
23 Control, as soon as it was known and therefore there
24 must be a good reason why it had not been communicated
25 up to that point."

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1 You made reference following that to the joint
 2 operating principle and identified in particular
 3 paragraph 4, which you will very firmly have in mind
 4 which we dealt with yesterday.
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Do you believe that North West Fire Control, in your
 7 professional opinion, the staff there, were entitled to
 8 consider in the light of that practice that there was
 9 a good reason why they were not receiving the necessary
 10 information from Greater Manchester Police about the
 11 nature of the response that was taking place?
 12 A. I have some difficulty with that on reflection because
 13 I believe there are other parts of that area of the
 14 report where I talk about the push and pull of
 15 information.
 16 Q. Correct.
 17 A. So whilst I accept that it is reasonable for North West
 18 Fire Control to expect key information to be
 19 communicated to them in a timely fashion when it's
 20 known, the absence of that information, having been
 21 initially informed, I would also expect some push and
 22 pull of that information back in to their partner
 23 agencies. I don't mean to be unhelpful, but it's almost
 24 both.
 25 Q. If I may say so, that is not at all unhelpful, you've

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1 made it very clear about the push and pull. But
 2 certainly it is the case, isn't it, that conventionally
 3 at this point, May 2017, the emphasis was upon control
 4 rooms being provided with information?
 5 A. Yes, that's correct.
 6 Q. And being reactive to the information they were provided
 7 with?
 8 A. Yes.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That has to be the primary way round,
 10 doesn't it? Because you wouldn't — you say push and
 11 pull. You don't necessarily know what you're — I can't
 12 remember which is which, really — pulling for, as it
 13 were: the police will know much better what to tell the
 14 control room, the control room are going to know what to
 15 ask for.
 16 A. Yes, and it's explicit within the joint guidance that
 17 the information holder, whoever that is, has a duty to
 18 communicate that information to their partners.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes.
 20 A. So I suppose the — forgive me, perhaps the push and
 21 pull is with that expectation then, having been notified
 22 of some information and then having a period of stasis
 23 where there is no more, there is — perhaps the impetus
 24 shifts to say: let's go back and find some more then.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm certainly not suggesting there isn't

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1 an obligation on control rooms to find things out if
 2 they have not been told it, it just seems that the
 3 person providing the knowledge, who has it, is the
 4 person who knows what he's providing or ought to be
 5 providing.
 6 A. Yes, I agree.
 7 MR SMITH: And your point, Mr Hall, is this, isn't it —
 8 I hope I'm correct in this, you tell me if I'm not —
 9 that with the passage of time, the obligation on the
 10 control room to seek information actively, in your view,
 11 starts to increase?
 12 A. Yes, that is my view, sir.
 13 Q. Do you agree, from all the information you've been
 14 provided with, that had North West Fire Control been
 15 invited to participate actively in Exercise
 16 Winchester Accord from the point of call, this was
 17 capable of providing valuable information for the
 18 control room, which in turn may have led them to being
 19 more proactive on the night of 22 May?
 20 A. Yes, I do agree, sir, and I believe I speak to that, to
 21 a degree at least, in the central issues report, the
 22 final report submitted to the inquiry about the
 23 importance of control rooms being involved from the
 24 beginning in exercising and training for that very
 25 purpose so that they are forewarned and forearmed of the

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1 kind of information and the potential for how these
 2 operations would play out in real time and in real life
 3 rather than being brought in at some point later in the
 4 process, if at all.
 5 Q. I would like to take you to a document which I would
 6 invite Mr Lopez to put on the screen because I believe,
 7 sir, now, this wasn't the case earlier, this has been
 8 redacted for sensitivity.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right.
 10 MR SMITH: If Mr Suter could check it first before it goes
 11 on the screen. It's {INQ000932/1}. It's North West
 12 Fire Control's major incident action plan.
 13 (Pause)
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think that's fine, isn't it?
 15 Thank you.
 16 MR SMITH: You'll remember, sir, that originally this
 17 editing had not been done.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I had momentarily forgotten, I'm bound
 19 to say. Thank you.
 20 MR SMITH: Have you had an opportunity of looking at this
 21 plan? It's a little out of date now in the sense that
 22 it needs to be revised to take account of changes,
 23 particularly in relation to the multi-agency Talk Group
 24 that has been introduced.
 25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. But this plan was devised by North West Fire Control,
2 you may remember, and became public in February 2018.
3 Without going through the full detail of this, in the
4 context of that which we've just been discussing, the
5 push and pull and the requirement for the control room
6 ideally to be more proactive in seeking information,
7 particularly with the passage of time, do you consider
8 that this action plan, devised by North West Fire
9 Control, affords the control room now its own procedures
10 for probing and obtaining more information in
11 circumstances such as those which arose on 22 May?
12 A. Yes, I do, and I'm sure, if followed, it would be of
13 great benefit to them for getting that information.
14 Q. One of the things you said in your report was that:
15 "This is an organisation made up of professional
16 people who are seeking to learn lessons from this
17 incident and ensure that improvements are made and
18 embedded in the event of similar incidents occurring in
19 the future."
20 Does this document support that conclusion?
21 A. It does, sir, yes.
22 Q. And are you aware that the head of North West Fire
23 Control, Sarah Wilson, was responsible for devising this
24 once she became aware of the Kerslake recommendation and
25 materials started to emerge about the extent of the

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1 failures on the night of 22 May?
2 A. I am not totally sure I was aware of that specific, but
3 I accept that that is indicative again of the
4 organisation learning and moving forward.
5 Q. It's something you would therefore commend; is that
6 correct?
7 A. I would, sir, yes.
8 Q. It's there for consideration?
9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I just ask a question about it?
10 Several of the requirements there, for instance the one
11 halfway down:
12 "If the Fire Service are not in attendance at the
13 incident ground, establish the location of other
14 emergency services..."
15 And then it goes on to say:
16 "Pass the following to the Fire Service incident
17 commander."
18 As I understand the position, if you haven't got
19 anyone at the incident, you haven't got an incident
20 commander.
21 A. As we discussed yesterday, yes.
22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Exactly. So that one and the next
23 one — I'm not blaming North West Fire Control for this
24 in any way at all, please, but it does look actually as
25 if those particular things can't be carried out on the

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1 present state of play without — when we're not
2 appointing the incident commander when you've got no one
3 at the scene.
4 A. I can't comment on what sits behind it, but perhaps
5 there is a tacit understanding that this is all
6 predicated on a mobilisation having been made.
7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's specifically not: if they're not in
8 attendance at the incident ground. It's predicated on
9 that.
10 A. Yes. Well, it goes back to the point of: do you have
11 a designated incident commander?
12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand that, but from what I heard
13 from you yesterday, although you think that
14 Mr de la Poer's idea is a good one for the group manager
15 to be the incident commander, that isn't actually in
16 effect at the moment.
17 A. Well, no.
18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Sorry, I'm incorrect, am I?
19 MR WARNOCK: Yes, you may recall from my questioning that
20 for an explosion incident a group manager is nominated
21 as the incident commander immediately and for a
22 Plato-style incident it is an area manager.
23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: This is not talking about just
24 explosions, as I understand it.
25 MR WARNOCK: It's an NWFC document, but just to clarify

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1 there are certainly circumstances where there is now an
2 incident commander before somebody is on the scene.
3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you very much. Anyway.
4 MR SMITH: Of course there are some very sensible
5 recommendations here, aren't there? I'll take you, for
6 example —
7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm not suggesting the contrary.
8 MR SMITH: No, I didn't take that for one moment, sir, as
9 a suggestion to the contrary. I just wanted to
10 underline the fact that if we move down to the second
11 main paragraph:
12 "Contact the police control room and request the
13 location of the multi-agency rendezvous point and advise
14 the Fire Service incident commander."
15 Of course, it has the complication of the commander,
16 but you will see, sir, that it engages with the issue of
17 the rendezvous point.
18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It absolutely does and it re-emphasises,
19 I think, the need, if it isn't already completely sorted
20 out by GMFRS, the situation of an incident commander
21 when no one is actually at the scene and getting that
22 absolutely sorted in all circumstances.
23 MR SMITH: Yes.
24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm not suggesting it hasn't been done
25 if it has. Thank you.

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1 MR SMITH: I would like to turn next to some relatively
 2 minor issues, if I may, in the context of what we've
 3 been discussing as a whole.
 4 The use of multiple incident logs. In your response
 5 at NWFC14, the response of 4 August, you made reference
 6 to the fact that the record of the incident was
 7 disjointed. Can I ask you to clarify in what respect
 8 the record was disjointed? Were you intending to
 9 suggest that log 9074 was in any way disjointed or was
 10 it a reference to the combination of information on four
 11 logs?
 12 A. It's the latter of those two, yes, quite simply the fact
 13 that the evidence given by the control room staff, as
 14 I recall it and have read, was that different logs were
 15 started at different times by different people and
 16 there's the potential for that fragmentation. I wasn't
 17 implying that the main running log was in any way --
 18 Q. That's the first thing I wanted to establish. If I can
 19 assist the inquiry, the evidence of Michelle Gregson is
 20 when she spoke to Group Manager Ben Levy at 23.12 and
 21 did not pass on information which is on log 9074, she
 22 was looking at log 9078, the Philips Park log, and that
 23 was independently established by reference to her
 24 details on that log at that time.
 25 So that's an example, isn't it, of an error by a

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1 control room operator, even an experience one?
 2 A. I think that speaks to my point, where using the term
 3 disjointed comes in, the ability to perhaps be looking
 4 at one log and not have readily available to you
 5 information that might be pertinent on another.
 6 Q. But I think you're familiar with the systems,
 7 computer-aided dispatch systems?
 8 A. Yes.
 9 Q. They are location-driven, aren't they?
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. So 9074 has as its starting point Hunts Bank, the
 12 postcode, and the Manchester Evening News arena. The
 13 Philips Park log has at its starting point the address
 14 at, I think it's Balcombe Lane, the Philips Park Fire
 15 Station. There is a danger, isn't there, if you seek to
 16 mobilise resources administratively, in other words not
 17 to deal with a fire, as happened with Philips Park,
 18 because it came under an administrative procedure --
 19 A. Mm-hm.
 20 Q. -- there's a danger that if you try to do this under the
 21 incident address, you can generate confusion in that
 22 regard?
 23 A. Yes, I would agree there's a potential.
 24 Q. The short answer is that the control room staff should
 25 be able to manage multiple incident logs; do you agree?

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1 A. Indeed, and they should be clear and readily accessible.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And they are all cross-related in some
 3 way?
 4 A. You can link each of the incident logs to a single
 5 incident, but they are nonetheless standalone logs.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand that, yes.
 7 MR SMITH: So for example, we touched upon yesterday with
 8 Mr Warnock's questions the issue of access to the
 9 incident logs by senior staff. A senior member of staff
 10 wanting to look at the incident can readily identify the
 11 log numbers from the screen; is that correct?
 12 A. That's my understanding of their system, yes.
 13 Q. Have you had an opportunity of comparing the iNet viewer
 14 display of the incident log to the one which is
 15 displayed from the printout from North West Fire
 16 Control?
 17 A. I haven't physically done that but I have seen that and
 18 observed it in the evidence that's been given that
 19 compares the two, yes.
 20 Q. It's quite a lot clearer on the iNet viewer, isn't it?
 21 A. Yes, it is.
 22 Q. Just some minor points of detail for, with great
 23 respect, correction, if I may. Merseyside did not form
 24 a joint control room with Merseyside Police, did it?
 25 What happened was that the two organisations share the

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1 same building and facility?
 2 A. That's correct. My implication was incorrect by stating
 3 it that way.
 4 Q. I think you dealt with the dirty bomb issue and the way
 5 in which information was passed to Mr Berry, so I won't
 6 go over that.
 7 But I think at paragraphs 105 to 107, page 42 of
 8 your second report, you recited that the team of NILOs
 9 and responders became aware that the Ambulance Service
 10 was using Manchester Central after Mr Lawlor had
 11 transmitted information from GMP Headquarters. In fact,
 12 Mr Lawlor didn't arrive until 00.05 and was in the room
 13 at 00.10, so it appears that they had that information
 14 before communicating with Mr Lawlor.
 15 A. I would agree and from recollection and reflection on
 16 that, the information exchange appeared to happen at
 17 Philips Park through the teams, and I believe a member
 18 of GMFRS whose wife was at or near the scene and that
 19 information was shared and discussed at that point.
 20 Q. Can I take up with you very briefly this issue of the
 21 benefits of the regional control room. Have you visited
 22 North West Fire Control's control room?
 23 A. I haven't, no.
 24 Q. But you are familiar with the technology that's in
 25 place?

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1 A. I am, yes.
 2 Q. In essence, it's a vast improvement, isn't it, on the
 3 situation 10 years ago?
 4 A. It certainly is, yes.
 5 Q. How would geographical familiarity with the area
 6 generally really improve the ability of this control
 7 room to respond to emergencies given the technology that
 8 they now have?
 9 A. I think, as you recall, the discussion we had yesterday
 10 with the learned chairman and the piece of work on
 11 reflecting on potential options for control rooms to be
 12 considered is something that may be ongoing and in terms
 13 of how that's best to achieve it or the pros and cons,
 14 I do agree, and was actually reflecting on this last
 15 night, that with the technology as it currently is, it
 16 greatly removes or at least potentially removes the need
 17 to have specific geographical knowledge in an individual
 18 person when the technology facilitates accuracy of
 19 location in the way that it does these days.
 20 Q. One thing that it can do and does is that it will
 21 automatically identify route hazards, will it not?
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. And will divert fire crews attending an incident through
 24 a different road route if they're going to be held up as
 25 a result of a hazard?

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1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. And that's something that the technology has a huge
 3 advantage in relation to?
 4 A. I think it does. I agree, sir, I think there's some
 5 more work to do around the role of technology
 6 versus technology used by humans and the interface there
 7 and the relationships between a responding agency and
 8 its control room. I think is something that's also
 9 worth exploring. Even with technology being as good as
 10 it is, it is still used by people and interpreted by
 11 people, but I do take your point, it's much better, yes.
 12 Q. Finally, can I touch upon recommendations, and I say
 13 "touch upon" because you're going to provide the
 14 chairman with your observations in writing. This is
 15 intended to assist, if I may.
 16 Training with the Fire and Rescue Service from the
 17 point of call and on a no-notice basis. Am I right that
 18 you attach considerable importance to the benefits
 19 arising from that?
 20 A. I do.
 21 Q. Secondly, clarity in the content of action plans?
 22 A. Vital, yes.
 23 Q. Thirdly, allocation of responsibility in the control
 24 room — this is not a GMFRS officer, a North West Fire
 25 Control employee. Allocation of responsibility in the

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1 control room to one person during a major incident with
 2 responsibility to collate and ensure the sharing of
 3 information with other agencies?
 4 A. An eminently sensible recommendation.
 5 Q. I think that's going to be touched upon by Mrs Wilson in
 6 a further statement that she's providing to the inquiry.
 7 A. Okay. I look forward to reading it.
 8 Q. It would have your support?
 9 A. Yes, it would.
 10 Q. Would you give me a moment, sir? I've just had an email
 11 message, which may touch upon the questions I'm asking.
 12 (Pause)
 13 It has been pointed out to me, going back to the
 14 major incident action plan devised by North West Fire
 15 Control, that this is only added to the log after the
 16 initial mobilisation, and the mobilisation will be to
 17 an RVP or to the scene. So what is contemplated is that
 18 this major incident action plan becomes added to the log
 19 after crews have been deployed. So there will be an
 20 incident commander on the ground who will be the most
 21 senior officer attending with those fire crews.
 22 Does that deal with the point you were raising, sir?
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I would need to look at the original
 24 document again to see, but I'll take all that on board.
 25 MR SMITH: It's information I have just been sent and was

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1 obviously considered to be helpful to you.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 3 MR SMITH: May I just thank Mr Hall for his answers.
 4 Thank you.
 5 MR DE LA POER: Sir, there is one matter arising out of this
 6 questioning which I propose to speak to Mr Smith briefly
 7 about over the break and then I anticipate that I will
 8 just ask Mr Hall one or two questions arising from his
 9 report with, I hope, sir, with your agreement, Mr Smith
 10 having the right to take it further if necessary.
 11 I don't think it will cause undue delay and, given my
 12 understanding that neither of the next two allocated
 13 slots are to be taken up, we are well ahead of where we
 14 hoped to be.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I'm grateful for that.
 16 Thank you. Quarter of an hour.
 17 (11.04 am)
 18 (A short break)
 19 (11.20 am)
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr de la Poer.
 21 Further questions from MR DE LA POER
 22 MR DE LA POER: Sir, thank you. I have spoken to Mr Smith
 23 and he knows the matters I'd going to ask about and even
 24 though it was his point he was developing, it may be,
 25 sir, you'll want to give him an opportunity after I have

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1 asked Mr Hall about this.
 2 Mr Hall, you were asked about the action plan and
 3 you've said that you think that the explosion action
 4 plan could be improved by having an RVP indicated as an
 5 alternative to scene.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And we've all seen it and it's plain that it didn't say
 8 that as at May 2017. What I would just like to take you
 9 to is your responses to the central issues questions.
 10 {INQ041857/8-9}.

11 We're looking here at your answer to NWFC1. The
 12 part that I would invite you to just focus upon is the
 13 second paragraph which goes over the page:

14 "The explosion card did not direct units to an RVP
 15 specifically, using the term 'scene' instead. This was
 16 explored in evidence given on Day 135 [and you give the
 17 reference to the transcript]. I submit the term 'scene'
 18 is sufficient. Deployment of ground—assigned tactical
 19 firearms commander resources to RVPs was business as
 20 usual and it is reasonable to expect that NWFC should
 21 have understood this."

22 Then you go on to speak more generally about the
 23 cards. It's really your phrase "the deployment to RVPs
 24 was business as usual" and to remind you that that's
 25 what you said at that stage and just to invite your

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1 comment as to whether you stand by that, whether you
 2 agree with that, and how that interacts with what
 3 Mr Smith was asking you about.
 4 A. Yes, I understand. RVPs are designated for a variety of
 5 incidents, not only this type of incident that occurred
 6 on 22 May. So what I intended to say there is that NWFC
 7 would already be familiar with the concept of deploying
 8 to an RVP. And perhaps in the discussion today, it's
 9 merely that having that explicitly stated on a card
 10 would ensure that that wasn't missed or wasn't in any
 11 way — so there's no confusion about whether they should
 12 deploy to it or not.

13 MR DE LA POER: Thank you very much indeed.

14 Questions from MR SMITH (continued)

15 MR SMITH: Could you just help us, Mr Hall, where does the
 16 word "scene" arise?

17 A. I think — and looking at that again on reflection,
 18 I think that was from the dialogue and the evidence
 19 given somewhat in contradiction or disagreement perhaps,
 20 if that's the right phrase, of my stated position about
 21 they should have deployed to the incident. There was
 22 some comment within the evidence of some of the NWFC
 23 people that they would not send firefighters straight
 24 into a scene.

25 So I recognise, having looked again today at the

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1 card, as stated, it doesn't actually say scene either.
 2 I accept that. I was trying to imply the difference
 3 between attending an RVP and going to an incident
 4 directly.

5 Q. So in terms of business as usual, we have the example of
 6 the "Bomb — general" plan, do we not —

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. — in which there are a number of references, as we have
 9 seen, to mobilising to a rendezvous point?

10 A. That's correct.

11 Q. But this doesn't diminish the point you're making, does
 12 it, that it would have been better to have had express
 13 reference within the explosion plan to potential
 14 deployment to an RVP?

15 A. I agree, it doesn't diminish that.

16 MR SMITH: Thank you, Mr Hall.

17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Fifteen all. Thank you.

18 MR DE LA POER: So then, Mr Cooper Queen's Counsel, please,
 19 on behalf of the bereaved families.

20 Questions from MR COOPER

21 MR COOPER: Mr Hall, I ask questions on behalf of the
 22 bereaved families and firstly we thank you for your
 23 carefully considered reports, which have helped to guide
 24 some of the questions that I'm going to ask you.

25 But before I move on to that, I want to ask you

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1 about a matter which is not connected to your report but
 2 I know that you've been given notice of and a matter
 3 upon which we had disclosure last night, no criticism of
 4 anyone, but you'll be aware that it has come to us at
 5 short notice. It concerns a presentation that you were
 6 involved in at the Centre for the Protection of National
 7 Infrastructure, I think in November 2016. You recall
 8 the issue I'm speaking to?

9 A. I do, yes.

10 Q. So we can get this in perspective, can we have the
 11 evidence of Mr Berry, please, which is Day 120, starting
 12 at page 187 {Day120/187:1}.

13 Have you reviewed this passage of evidence, Mr Hall?
 14 I only ask that question as to how quickly I can take
 15 it.

16 A. I will have seen it, but not in specific detail.

17 Q. Let's go through it together. This is how the matter
 18 arose. And we see at the top:

19 "The NILO course I attended..."

20 He thought it was October 2016, but he was wrong.

21 I was asking him some questions and I asked this at
 22 line 11:

23 "Question: Do I understand from that that in the
 24 NILO courses, not only were you told the UK was
 25 expecting an attack, but the likely target was thought

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1 to be Manchester and somewhere else?"
 2 "Answer: That's correct, and obviously we were at
 3 level severe at that time.
 4 "Question: Yes. So far we have analysed the fact
 5 that the nation was at severe level. But here I just
 6 want to drill down into the fact that not only were
 7 emergency services informed, and you were informed as
 8 far as fire is concerned, and other NILOs, but not only
 9 was the country under severe risk, Manchester
 10 specifically was?
 11 "Answer: That's the information I was being given.
 12 "Question: I'm going to be careful here because
 13 obviously none of us want to give succour to murderous
 14 terrorists so please feel free, without any criticism
 15 from anyone, to tell me if I am asking you questions
 16 that may be operationally sensitive. And a simple yes
 17 or no might assist. Was detail given in these courses
 18 that were attended by NILOs as to precisely what sort of
 19 risk or what venues might be at risk as far as
 20 Manchester is concerned?
 21 "Answer: No.
 22 "Question: No. Was, and again I can't see how
 23 it would be sensitive, it's historic now, but
 24 I understand from that answer that Manchester Arena was
 25 not mentioned in any of these courses as being a likely

1 target?
 2 "Answer: It was certainly never mentioned
 3 specifically.
 4 "Question: It was mentioned specifically?
 5 "Answer: It was not. Was not. It was more about
 6 the capacity or area of people, you know, in crowded
 7 places.
 8 "Question: Could it be said -- and I keep prefacing
 9 it with please tell me if I'm straying where I shouldn't
 10 go -- that during these courses in 2016, although the
 11 arena wasn't mentioned, the types of places that were
 12 mentioned, generically, would clearly have included
 13 places like the arena?
 14 "Answer: Yes.
 15 "Question: So it is correct to take away from this
 16 evidence, is it, that a year or so, maybe less, before
 17 Manchester Arena was bombed and 22 people lost their
 18 lives, those who were responsible for looking after us
 19 expected an attack in Manchester and expected an attack
 20 in a place such as the arena?
 21 "Answer: That was what I was being told, yes.
 22 "Question: Who was telling you this?
 23 "Answer: Some of the people who lectured on the
 24 course.
 25 "Question: I presume that's right?

1 "Answer: Yes.
 2 "Question: Can you tell us who these people were?
 3 Not names of course but their positions?
 4 "Answer: People who had specialisms, who had --
 5 "Question: Security people?
 6 "Answer: Yes.
 7 "Question: People from MI5, for instance?
 8 "Answer: Possibly.
 9 "Question: Possibly. Were the police lecturing at
 10 these courses in 2016?
 11 "Answer: Yes, there were multi-agency people
 12 talking.
 13 "Question: It's a short paragraph but I'm
 14 suggesting to you it's an important paragraph, 43:
 15 "'This is what is meant by the battle
 16 rhythm, an attack was expected.'
 17 And, from your evidence now, was expected
 18 in a place such as Manchester Arena in
 19 Manchester:
 20 "'It was thought this would be of a similar
 21 style to Paris, multi-seated, starting with an
 22 explosion.'
 23 "As a result of that knowledge, do you now,
 24 and I'm not asking for detail, do you know what
 25 steps were taken to protect places such as

1 Manchester Arena and alert people responsible
 2 for the safety of Manchester Arena as a result
 3 of this expectation?
 4 "Answer: I am not privy to that. I don't know.
 5 "Question: All right. You don't know whether they
 6 were warned by the security services, because if the
 7 security services are giving lectures about this to
 8 NILOs, one can assume they'll be telling
 9 Manchester Arena?"
 10 And the chair observed:
 11 "Okay, I don't think he has given that evidence.
 12 I am not sure whether he is not giving it because he is
 13 not meant to give it or because he doesn't know and so
 14 he said the police were --"
 15 And I state:
 16 "I think I'm asking a question about MI5 as well."
 17 And the chair observed:
 18 "You asked [about] security and he said 'maybe',
 19 I think, 'I don't know', or 'could be'.
 20 Then I go on.
 21 So I ask the question at the bottom of the page:
 22 "Question: So MI5, I presume?
 23 "Answer: Yes.
 24 "Question: One presumes that if they're giving
 25 lectures to NILOs, would you accept one naturally

1 assumes they're telling the arena owners, SMG, and
 2 ShowSec as well?"

3 And the chair states:
 4 "I don't think he can answer that."
 5 I'm just scanning down the page. I think we asked
 6 further questions on the same point. I will leave it
 7 there but that's the passage of evidence, Mr Hall, that
 8 occurred between me and Mr Berry.
 9 You were at that course, weren't you, in
 10 November 2016?
 11 A. I was, yes.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Was it November, the date? I'm actually
 13 asking.
 14 MR COOPER: November 2016. I think Mr Berry mentioned
 15 October, but I think we clarified it's November.
 16 A. That's correct.
 17 Q. November 2016. Mr Hall, what was your role at that
 18 event?
 19 A. I had taken up — that was the first course that I began
 20 in an independent role as the course — the lead for the
 21 course delivery.
 22 Q. And what were your responsibilities, in short?
 23 A. Essentially to liaise with the college, this is the Fire
 24 Service College where the course is held, and to
 25 facilitate effectively the running of the course, to

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1 ensure that all of the various sessions were linked
 2 together, that any learning from individual sessions as
 3 it related to the agencies on the course was explained
 4 or clarified.
 5 Perhaps it's helpful to just briefly look at the
 6 structure of the course, which is a range of external
 7 speakers from a range of agencies and capabilities and
 8 services who come and share elements of their
 9 organisational structure and practice and role and
 10 responsibility with the NILO delegates so that they can
 11 gain a clearer and deeper understanding of the capacity
 12 and capability of those organisations with a view to, as
 13 stated yesterday, the NILO role being an individual
 14 who's able to bridge an intelligence gap because of
 15 their enhanced understanding, if you will, of how other
 16 agencies operate and where the emergency services link
 17 into those agencies.
 18 Q. As we'll touch on a little later, NILOs have a distinct
 19 counter-terrorism role, don't they?
 20 A. They do.
 21 Q. This course itself, I can't think of a possible reason
 22 for it to be sensitive, but obviously take what caution
 23 you have to take, where was it held?
 24 A. It was held at the Fire Service College at
 25 Moreton-in-Marsh in Gloucestershire.

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1 Q. And it was a national conference?
 2 A. That's correct.
 3 Q. For people obviously all over the country, it wasn't
 4 Manchester-centric or anything like that?
 5 A. Not at all, no.
 6 Q. But the presenters at the course had considerable
 7 amounts of Manchester experience, didn't they?
 8 A. One of the course facilitators was a retired group
 9 manager from Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.
 10 Q. Was that Mr Thomas?
 11 A. That was.
 12 Q. Perhaps we could have his CV on the screen, please.
 13 I have checked with Mr Suter, this is perfectly
 14 permissible. {INQ042007/1}. I want to briefly look at
 15 that and focus on his Manchester job experience.
 16 There is the CV. Before we just look at it,
 17 Mr Hall, what was Mr Thomas' role at this event in
 18 November 2016?
 19 A. He was one of the facilitating faculty, so he would
 20 assist with any issues that the delegates had, some
 21 domestic and administrative issues that you get with
 22 running courses with people who are resident and away
 23 from their place of work or home, and where necessary he
 24 would facilitate a session. So he could — part of the
 25 role of the facilitators was the ability to deliver on

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1 behalf of other agencies their presentation so that we
 2 could ensure continuity in the course if those
 3 individual speakers were not available to attend.
 4 Q. I understand. Just looking at that first page, looking
 5 at the bottom of the page, for instance, he was a group
 6 manager (contingency planning), Greater Manchester Fire
 7 and Rescue Services. He was involved with the Civil
 8 Contingencies Act, he was — again, refer to what
 9 you will, for time I'm paraphrasing what's in there.
 10 National resilience.
 11 Over the page, please, Mr Lopez {INQ042007/2},
 12 a lead for inter-agency liaison. Greater Manchester
 13 Fire and Rescue Service management and delivery of MTF
 14 capability. Then again, we see his role during the
 15 London Olympics and then at the bottom we see:
 16 "Senior instructor, Greater Manchester Fire Service
 17 Training Centre."
 18 So he would, one presumes, know a lot about
 19 Manchester?
 20 A. I would presume that's the case, yes.
 21 Q. Did he make his own presentation or was he presenting on
 22 behalf of others?
 23 A. He was presenting in this particular instance, and
 24 forgive me, I haven't had sight of his CV.
 25 Q. Take your time, please. I only saw it this morning.

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1 A. It's not a problem because I can speak to this, I hope.
 2 He was asked, from his statement to the inquiry, that it
 3 was, in his recollection, 24 hours before the session,
 4 so he prepared the session that he delivered and made
 5 some slight amendments to the slides so he could use
 6 examples from his long operational experience within
 7 Greater Manchester to give examples to the delegates so
 8 that that would perhaps help contextualise the
 9 presentation for them rather than it just being somebody
 10 else's.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So he was giving somebody else's
 12 presentation, but he was personalising it using his own
 13 examples?
 14 A. That's correct.
 15 MR COOPER: We've had a recent statement signed as of
 16 yesterday, {INQ042004/1}.
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I have been handed them. I have to say
 18 I haven't had an opportunity to read them yet.
 19 MR COOPER: I'm not going to take you to it but it may help
 20 in due course.
 21 In terms of those attending this event, were there
 22 representatives from the security services?
 23 A. In terms of speakers?
 24 Q. Firstly in terms of attendees?
 25 A. No.

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1 Q. Were there speakers from the security services?
 2 A. On this occasion, no.
 3 Q. Were there speakers who would present information on
 4 behalf of the security services?
 5 A. Information that is open source and readily available on
 6 either the CPNI or the MI5.gov websites about structure
 7 and role. But it would be completely inappropriate and
 8 beyond probably the security clearance of even the
 9 delegates on the course for live intelligence to be
 10 shared with anybody in that setting.
 11 Q. I've got in front of me, and I think you also have
 12 a hard copy as well, and I know, sir, you do as well,
 13 the slides that were presented. For a number of good
 14 reasons relating to the ownership of those slides,
 15 we are not putting them on the screen, but I will refer,
 16 if I may, just to a few of them.
 17 Do you have them, Mr Hall, in front of you?
 18 A. I do, thank you, yes.
 19 Q. Again, I'm just focusing on what was discussed or what
 20 may have passed between speakers and delegates. The
 21 first page -- in fact it's page 2, please -- of
 22 substance. We have the CPNI, the Centre for the
 23 Protection of National Infrastructure. One of its
 24 functions is an understanding of the national security
 25 threat.

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1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. In short, what did that mean in the context of this
 3 event?
 4 A. In the context of the course?
 5 Q. Yes.
 6 A. The purpose of these slides is to provide an
 7 introduction into the role and function of CPNI and,
 8 correspondingly, the actions and responsibilities that
 9 they have and how that information may be of use further
 10 down the line in individuals' careers when they need to
 11 understand a particular event that might be happening.
 12 Q. Page 6, please, which is a slide headed "National risk
 13 assessment". If you can see, the second bullet point
 14 under "Hazard" we have "Predictable events", for
 15 example. "Predictable events", for example, is what it
 16 says. Did -- I should have asked, this presentation,
 17 this slided presentation, who was presenting it?
 18 A. This was from his statement -- because forgive me, my
 19 recollection of November 2016 specifically as to who
 20 presented which session... Mr Thomas' statement is that
 21 he presented this.
 22 Q. So Mr Thomas again, and we've established his Manchester
 23 credentials, is presenting this. As you have said, this
 24 took place in 2016.
 25 A. Indeed.

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1 Q. So it is hard, for instance, to remember, no doubt, the
 2 precise details of what went on.
 3 A. I'll try my best for you.
 4 Q. I'm sure, yes. But looking at this page 6, when
 5 Mr Thomas was presenting "Predictable" events", for
 6 example, can you remember what he said?
 7 A. No, I can't.
 8 Q. Would Mr Thomas, without going into detail, have been
 9 privy to what predictable events -- it's a yes-or-no
 10 answer for sensitivity purposes -- as to what
 11 predictable might have been considered predictable by
 12 the security services in 2016? Would he have been privy
 13 to that information?
 14 A. No, not in specific detail, no.
 15 Q. Not in specific detail. In general detail?
 16 A. In general detail because the UK threat assessment is
 17 discussed and understood, so the specifics -- for
 18 example, that we were at severe, that there was
 19 potential for attacks on crowded places, information
 20 that was generic, yes. Specific detail, no.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So anything not open source?
 22 A. Correct.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: There wasn't anything? Was there
 24 anything which was not open source?
 25 A. To the best of my recollection, there was no specific

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1 detail given about current or imminent threats. I just
 2 don't -- I've had no experience in the many courses that
 3 we've done where that information is ever shared in the
 4 setting like that. It would be completely
 5 inappropriate.
 6 MR COOPER: But for instance, that Manchester might have
 7 been a place of concern, might that have been said?
 8 A. Again, not specifically. The risks would be generic and
 9 it would be reasonable to extrapolate that any -- if you
 10 look at the specifics of crowded places for transport
 11 hubs, these things that are known as potential threats,
 12 you could equally apply that to any conurbation or major
 13 city in the UK, or elsewhere for that matter.
 14 Q. Let's see whether that holds firm on the slides or
 15 whether the slides get a little more specific.
 16 Page 9, please. In this presentation that Mr Thomas
 17 was presenting on page 9 we have:
 18 "What needs protecting most?"
 19 And the item that remains there is:
 20 "Crowded places. Sports stadia. Shopping centres.
 21 Arenas."
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. Again, and I'm not asking you to guess or trawl your
 24 memory from something that was in 2016, that would
 25 include, no doubt, from someone from Manchester,

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1 something like the Manchester Arena, wouldn't it?
 2 A. It may have been in his thinking but that would be
 3 speculative on my part. It's certainly a generic point
 4 around the types of crowded places that are indicated
 5 there.
 6 Q. If it remained a simply generic word, arena, without
 7 a reference to Manchester being made, maybe. But let's
 8 read on in the presentation that Mr Thomas was involved
 9 with and let's go to page 12, please.
 10 There's the name of a city there, isn't there, under
 11 "Threats and hazards"? What is the name of that city?
 12 A. It's Manchester.
 13 Q. Manchester. So again, we're building through this
 14 document, we've got a man who's presenting it, who is
 15 a Manchester man with Manchester experiences in the area
 16 of terrorism, MTFa and such. We've got a man who is
 17 presenting that places like arenas are under threat, and
 18 now under a section of threats and hazards he's
 19 specifically isolating, is he not, Manchester?
 20 MR DE LA POER: I'm sorry to interrupt, it's an important
 21 question which Mr Hall must answer, but I can see what
 22 the slide says. Have you got that in front of you, sir?
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I haven't brought them in, I'm afraid.
 24 MR DE LA POER: The difficulty, and I hope Mr Cooper will
 25 forgive me, because I'm certainly not trying to disrupt

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1 the point he's making, but people will find this
 2 difficult to follow because there are five photographs;
 3 is that right, Mr Cooper?
 4 MR COOPER: I'm going to deal with them.
 5 MR DE LA POER: Then let me sit down.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I make this clear as well,
 7 Mr Cooper. I remember the evidence being given by
 8 Mr Berry and the questions and obviously concern about
 9 whether there may have been specific information which
 10 made a warning about Manchester Arena to be given via
 11 the security services was a suggestion of Mr Berry. As
 12 far as I'm concerned, bearing in mind what is likely to
 13 be the security level at this particular conference,
 14 which I suspect is non-existent, I am quite happy and
 15 I will direct that questions and searches are made by
 16 security services and Counter-terrorism Police as to
 17 whether they were giving, directly or indirectly, any
 18 warning about the Manchester Arena.
 19 Of course, you don't have to accept what they come
 20 back with at face value, but I will ensure that that is
 21 asked, so it may be that something was done, that may be
 22 what we find, but I'm concerned not to necessarily raise
 23 questions of suspicion which might indicate Mr Hall is
 24 keeping something back from people.
 25 MR COOPER: Of course not, and I'm not making that

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1 suggestion of Mr Hall.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I know. I understand that we want to
 3 know exactly what was said. Let me make it clear,
 4 I have no information whatsoever about it, but I am
 5 quite happy for those enquiries to be made.
 6 MR COOPER: I'm grateful.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Indeed they can be made, as far as I'm
 8 concerned, openly and I will get back to you with any
 9 information which is supplied to me. You don't have to
 10 accept it and you can certainly challenge it, but I just
 11 want to make that clear.
 12 MR COOPER: I'm grateful, sir, and that will short circuit
 13 matters. You'll of course understand the concern the
 14 families have that if there was reasoned concern about
 15 Manchester, particularly Manchester Arena, why wasn't
 16 something done.
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I absolutely understand that concern and
 18 we will look into it. All I'm indicating is that as far
 19 as I am concerned, it will not require -- and don't take
 20 this pejoratively to you -- a cloak-and-dagger approach,
 21 as it were, as far as I'm concerned and I don't see any
 22 justification for --
 23 MR COOPER: I'm reassured, sir. Obviously one has to err on
 24 the side of caution, from our side of it, given,
 25 understandably, there are reasons for closed sessions.

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1 We wouldn't want it to slip into that, as it were.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And at the moment no one has given me
 3 any indication that it would need to be and, if there
 4 were, I would obviously need to know the reasons why and
 5 I would need to know, as with anything in a closed
 6 session, that national security — and be satisfied that
 7 national security was actually affected. I hope people
 8 accept that I would require satisfying.
 9 MR COOPER: Of course, sir, we do without hesitation.
 10 I will, though, clear up the matter that caused
 11 Mr de la Poer to rise, out of fairness both to him and
 12 indeed to the witness. The document I'm referring you
 13 to, Mr Hall — you've got it in front of you, haven't
 14 you?
 15 A. I do.
 16 Q. There are five photographs there under "Threats and
 17 hazards". There are four photographs which are not
 18 distinguishable as to where they are, although I'm sure
 19 those more informed than I will recognise the bridge,
 20 but certainly they haven't got any names on them.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: When you say — you mean you don't know
 22 where they are —
 23 MR COOPER: I don't know where they are —
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But somebody would?
 25 MR COOPER: Absolutely, and I'm sure the fourth photograph,

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1 the bridge, people will be howling behind me, why don't
 2 I know where it is, but I don't.
 3 But the one photograph which has a name on it — it
 4 looks like a photograph of Manchester Airport, doesn't
 5 it?
 6 A. That's correct, it does.
 7 Q. Only one other matter then, given the chair's helpful
 8 reassurance. There is — again, linking this
 9 presentation to Manchester, and with our suggestion
 10 therefore that Manchester would have been used as
 11 examples throughout this presentation, page 30, please.
 12 This links in, indeed, to page 20, where reference
 13 is made to a document from the Greater Manchester Fire
 14 and Rescue Services on page 20.
 15 On page 30 we have an individual there who is
 16 identified as Danny Harper and it's just got there "How
 17 easy". But I'm just asking you, is there any relevance
 18 as to why there's a second photograph there of the
 19 Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service? Do you know
 20 why that is relevant to Mr Harper's presentation?
 21 A. From my recollection, it would be a case study that
 22 Mr Thomas was familiar with the details of, that had
 23 occurred during his time within his service with
 24 Manchester Fire and Rescue — it's my opinion and
 25 perhaps Mr Thomas would clarify one way or the other —

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1 that he uses because he felt that it would have been
 2 useful to, at the end of this presentation, to give case
 3 study example of something that impacted on the rest of
 4 the presentation in terms of CPNI. I can't remember
 5 specific details, I'm afraid.
 6 Q. That's reasonable. Again, sir, I'm in your hands as to
 7 whether enquiries might be made as to what happened.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Absolutely. I'm not closing you down on
 9 these questions.
 10 MR COOPER: I know you're not.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: All I am trying to make clear is, as far
 12 as I am concerned, there is no aspect of national
 13 security concerned that has been made known to me which
 14 would mean that we don't need to go into this completely
 15 openly and you can ask what questions you like.
 16 MR COOPER: Thank you, sir.
 17 Just again to maybe assist with any direction
 18 further questions may take in the future, at page 26 —
 19 and this is the last page I'm referring to of this
 20 document, page 26 — again you may not be able to help
 21 us now, but help may be given on a future occasion,
 22 we have "Prevent guidance", we have "Statutory duty",
 23 "LA", "Health", "Education", "Police", and then in red
 24 letters with question marks: "Fire???" Naturally,
 25 I have no idea the relevance of that. Do you know why

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1 "fire" was presented in red with three question marks?
 2 A. I think, and again forgive me, this is from memory,
 3 I think it was probably or possibly due to the number of
 4 fire delegates and it was to then go on to debate where
 5 Prevent guidance and the statutory duties fell
 6 in relation to those other organisations at the time.
 7 But without recall of the complete delegate list of who
 8 made up that course, I couldn't be absolutely certain of
 9 that. I imagine it's emphasis to draw a conversation
 10 out around that issue.
 11 Q. Was the course recorded, audio recorded of it at all?
 12 A. No, not at all.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm going to entirely speculate now: if
 14 we're talking about the Prevent duty, which means
 15 interventions with people who may be likely terrorists,
 16 you can understand why local authorities are involved
 17 with that, health, education and police. There might
 18 actually be a query about whether the Fire Service
 19 in that form of the Prevent duty are actually involved.
 20 I only put that as a possibility.
 21 MR COOPER: We can clarify that. I'll move on. I'll move
 22 on now to —
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: As I make clear, I'm not closing you
 24 down.
 25 MR COOPER: You're not, sir, and I don't take it that way.

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1 I'll move to the questions I planned to ask when we
2 rose at the end of yesterday afternoon before we got the
3 disclosure we got.

4 I want to clarify, and we've had some evidence of
5 the facilities that the Fire Service had that could have
6 been deployed and that wasn't, but let's just refresh
7 our memory, if we can, by just looking at your report on
8 that point. It can be dealt with very simply by looking
9 at your second report, please, at paragraph 18. That's
10 your second report, your May report. Paragraph 18,
11 please.

12 This is just to understand exactly what was lost by
13 the Fire Service not attending promptly. Do you have
14 your paragraph 18, starting at your page 8, Mr Hall?

15 This is {INQ032503/8}. Paragraph 18:

16 "GMFRS had specialist capabilities available, namely
17 the special response teams (SRT) and technical rescue
18 units (TRU) as well as their own dedicated cadre of
19 national inter-agency liaison officers (NILOs) on duty.
20 The SRT and TRU capabilities were developed to enhance
21 the FRS response to an MTFA."

22 The acronyms are coming thick and fast here, I am
23 afraid, Mr Hall.

24 A. I apologise. They are unavoidable.

25 Q. Not at all:

1 "They consist of vehicles with additional equipment
2 [and we have highlighted and were aware of the
3 additional equipment] to respond to and operate within
4 the warm zone of an MTFA incident: enhanced first aid,
5 including trauma dressings; rescue stretchers, Skeds;
6 ballistic protective equipment; and rescue equipment
7 likely to be needed at a mass casualty incident
8 following a terrorist attack."

9 You deal with the training of individuals connected
10 to these units at your paragraph 19.

11 I can really put my question shortly and
12 I anticipate you'll agree with me. It was a great loss,
13 wasn't it, to the effort that this wasn't available
14 promptly when it should have been available?

15 A. Yes, sir, it was.

16 Q. Was it ever, as far as you are aware, deployed?

17 A. To my knowledge and based on the evidence I've seen and
18 heard, it was never deployed and in fact it was decided
19 that it was not necessary to be deployed.

20 Q. On the basis of what?

21 A. On the basis of the information received by the chief
22 fire officer from the Bronze commander or Mr Hynes
23 at the scene that they only required 12 firefighters and
24 not the MTFA capability.

25 Q. We're going to come on to that, as you'll anticipate,

1 but as you raise it now, I just want to ask you about
2 that. That was the number of firefighters that
3 effectively are sent out to a domestic house fire?

4 A. Potentially, yes.

5 Q. And as I say, we're going to come on to that in
6 a conversation later, but would you accept that it would
7 be highly unusual in an incident that occurred on 22 May
8 for it to be acceptable for a response from the Fire
9 Service to be akin to a domestic fire?

10 A. In my opinion, all available and adequate resources
11 should have been deployed at the earliest opportunity.

12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Sorry, we're talking about two different
13 things in a way. I think the point being made by
14 Mr Cooper is it's a huge missed opportunity not to have
15 got this vehicle there at the beginning right at the
16 start --

17 A. Yes.

18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: -- so it could actually help -- people
19 could help with getting people down the stairs and
20 things like that?

21 A. Indeed.

22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And at a later stage, as Mr O'Reilly
23 accepted, it would have been better had they sent the
24 specialist vehicles in. They had a limited amount they
25 could do at that stage but at least it would have been

1 there and being used in its proper way.

2 A. Yes, sir, I'd agree.

3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: If you didn't use it on that night, when
4 on earth are you going to use it?

5 A. Quite.

6 MR COOPER: It may well have been that had the equipment
7 been sent out on that particular night promptly and
8 quickly, the conversation between Mr O'Reilly and
9 Mr Hynes, however well intentioned, would not have been
10 necessary?

11 A. Indeed, I agree.

12 Q. I want to ask you just a little about resilience fora,
13 I think that's the plural of it.

14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Very good!

15 MR COOPER: They have no powers to compel, do they?

16 A. That's my understanding.

17 Q. And indeed, as far as the attendance of individuals on
18 these fora are concerned, the attendance can be sporadic
19 and sometimes erratic; would you accept that?

20 A. The evidence has shown that so far in the inquiry, yes.

21 Q. Resilience fora are important, aren't they, right at the
22 very beginning of these sort of events before the
23 tragedy even happens in terms of getting reactions right
24 and responses effective; would you agree?

25 A. Yes, it's an opportunity for any local area and LRF to

1 pre-plan and prepare for potential scenarios.
 2 Q. Do you have any recommendations or thoughts that you can
 3 share with us as to how perhaps the resilience fora can
 4 be reformed or changed or adjusted to make them more
 5 effective, maybe to give them more powers or more power
 6 of compulsion that people should attend at them and take
 7 them even more seriously than they're taken?
 8 A. I think that they should be encouraged to do so. If
 9 I may, I'm not totally sure I'm qualified to give a full
 10 answer to that at this stage, but it's certainly
 11 something I would consider and reflect on if that would
 12 be of assistance.
 13 Q. Of course. That's fair of you.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: What you can say is, from what you have
 15 seen of the evidence, do you consider that the
 16 Manchester resilience forum was actually meeting its
 17 full potential?
 18 A. I think from the evidence, and in particular that of
 19 Mr Argyle, who was the chair at the time of course,
 20 there were opportunities to do more, and I think that
 21 has been recognised and given in evidence to the
 22 hearing. Therefore, there was potential for better
 23 outcomes from the LRF, if that's fair.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Do you have any ideas, recommendations,
 25 and you can put them in writing later, of how you would

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1 improve that situation?
 2 A. I'm very happy to put some in writing later on, sir, but
 3 I think initially the key thing for me, like many of
 4 these structures, is organisational buy-in and just
 5 ensuring that the correct people at the correct level
 6 are encouraged, or perhaps mandated, to attend so that
 7 at least the body itself functions and then the
 8 workstreams that come out of that are continually
 9 reviewed and added to. I know some work has been done,
 10 so I'm not being overly critical of the current
 11 situation within GMFRS, but in general principles the
 12 ability for some attendance sometimes and not appears to
 13 be a starting point that could be addressed.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I wonder if it is a starting point or
 15 I wonder if the starting point is that if you make it
 16 that decisions made by the resilience forum as to what
 17 should be done to improve resilience are made
 18 compulsory, subject to certain ways of essentially
 19 appealing it, that actually makes it more effective, but
 20 it also makes people actually know they've got to attend
 21 because it isn't just a talking shop? I'm not
 22 suggesting it was just a talking shop, but it looks like
 23 it's an organisation with powers and that people
 24 therefore need to go and have their say.
 25 A. I agree, people tend to respond where their main focus

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1 is, so that's an option.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's natural if you're looking for
 3 what's the priority, it's the compulsory one.
 4 Thank you, Mr Cooper.
 5 You'll look at that anyway --
 6 A. I will, yes.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: -- when you're considering
 8 recommendations?
 9 MR COOPER: We're grateful.
 10 You have dealt in helpful detail about the JESIP
 11 failings that occurred and I'm not going to go over old
 12 ground; they appear in your document. But this is
 13 a failure, as far as you're concerned, in short, of
 14 implementation rather than of the JESIP principles
 15 themselves? That in short is your position, is it?
 16 A. In short I think so yes.
 17 Q. And again, if it is a failure of implementation rather
 18 than the principles themselves, does that come down to
 19 lack of training?
 20 A. I think potentially that's the case. I think from
 21 memory, we talked yesterday about the need to embed into
 22 business as usual and muscle memory for people, and that
 23 usually is helped by regular training opportunities so
 24 it becomes the norm in people's thinking and thought
 25 processes.

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1 Q. Would you accept, we'll deal with it in a little more
 2 detail, but would you accept as a general principle the
 3 level of training provided to the Fire Service
 4 in relation to JESIP was deficient in and around 2017?
 5 A. I think the initial training for JESIP is -- because it
 6 comes from the JESIP organisation, if you will, is ... is
 7 good and it gives sufficient information to do it.
 8 I think there perhaps is something to explore more
 9 around the continuation and refresher training of that
 10 over subsequent months and years, and then therefore the
 11 onus, if and where it exists on individuals, to refresh
 12 and retrain at regular intervals so they're maintaining
 13 their awareness. But I think the initial training
 14 per se gives a very good overview of the principles of
 15 JESIP.
 16 Q. You indicated the word "onus" on individuals to refresh
 17 their training. Experience tells us generally, not just
 18 in this inquiry, that sometimes people take that onus
 19 seriously, sometimes they don't. Is there not perhaps
 20 some form of stricter mandate or policing, for want of
 21 a better expression, of people who will undertake this
 22 further or continuing education to monitor it and ensure
 23 it is done? Is there room for that looking forward?
 24 A. I think there is and I think organisationally there's ...
 25 I'm trying to explain what I mean. Organisationally,

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1 all organisations at chief fire officer , chief constable
2 and the ambulance chief executive level have signed up
3 to the JESIP principles. So across the emergency
4 principles there's wholesale buy-in and agreement that
5 JESIP is a good thing and should be trained and taught
6 to their staff regardless of what agency that is.

7 I think where there's some difficulty is in the
8 practicality of, having undertaken your initial JESIP
9 training, then having the capacity within your normal
10 working day, week, shift, whatever that is, to revisit
11 and retrain. That's an issue for organisations to look
12 at: how do we ensure that our personnel, our staff, are
13 able to, whatever the period should be deemed
14 appropriate, undertake and have assessed where that's
15 appropriate, or at least verified that that training has
16 happened, whilst they are maintaining their day job
17 under the pressures that the inquiry's heard about in
18 terms of staffing numbers and capacity and capability of
19 busy organisations that have already experienced some
20 reduction in real term numbers?

21 So I think there's some work to do around that,
22 about how the practicality of that is delivered, but
23 I think the principle is having had your initial
24 training, there should be an organisational
25 encouragement, if not mandatory, however that's achieved

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1 for each organisation, that people continually review
2 and refresh their training at periodic intervals.
3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I just want to put a slightly different
4 angle on all this because it's a real problem and
5 a problem we have to grapple with in this inquiry.
6 Everyone says JESIP is a great idea, a great thing.
7 I don't know, I'm afraid, whether at Westminster and
8 London Bridge it was deemed to have operated properly or
9 not, but on lots of occasions when it's come to the
10 practice, when it's come to it actually happening for
11 real, it hasn't worked.

12 So we need to come up with something about this.
13 We've heard from firemen, paramedics and from police
14 that they do it actually on a regular basis, they go out
15 to some incident, a car crash even, a fire, and they
16 just cooperate. They sit round, make decisions together
17 and that works. We've heard that HART work well with
18 armed police, so all these specialist groups, and I have
19 no doubt the NILOs work well in those contexts too.

20 A. Yes.

21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So the specialists work well together.
22 People at the different levels, they work well together.
23 But when they put them together, they don't work. So
24 does that mean we need more training of everybody
25 together, do we need -- we've heard the evidence, there

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1 seems to be suspicion about what the role of NILOs
2 actually is within the Fire Service. Do we need to know
3 that everyone needs to come together and understand more
4 what they're doing? How do we get them all to operate
5 together in this sort of incident?

6 A. I think you can't replace training and repetition of
7 training. I don't just mean by rote, but in terms of
8 exposure to one another, to the agencies, to the
9 scenarios that could potentially play out. And perhaps,
10 as you've accurately stated there around some of those
11 specialist individuals, one of the reasons that is more
12 successful in my view is that they actually have more
13 structured time to specifically train together and work
14 together and understand tactics and all of those other
15 issues that go around that, and then the command
16 structure that's wrapped around that response, which is
17 largely directed at a specific type of incident
18 response.

19 So I think where perhaps there is an opportunity is
20 to take that model and to say apply that across the --
21 and I hesitate to use the term normal --

22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I know. Finding the right word is
23 really difficult, but non-specialist people.

24 A. The non-specialist response on a more regular basis.

25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And you train them all together?

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1 A. Yes.

2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So specialists and non-specialists they
3 understand each other.

4 Is that practical or is some chief fire officer and
5 chief police holding up their hands in horror and
6 saying, "How on earth do we get the time and resources
7 to do that sort of training"?

8 A. This is -- my point to Mr Cooper just then was exactly
9 that, and I think that is a very real world problem
10 because that's about abstraction, that's about somebody
11 either being given additional time as training time,
12 then there's the debate about is that done free of
13 charge then, is it contractual, is it -- those issues
14 which I'm sure we don't need to rehearse here in great
15 detail. But there is an issue there because people
16 fundamentally, organisations, are relatively lean now.
17 It doesn't lessen the importance of training, if
18 anything it heightens it, but the practicality is how
19 do you get those people released then for a meaningful
20 period of training and testing, but the principle,
21 I absolutely agree, is where it should be: everybody
22 trains together, debunk the myths, understand the roles.

23 This is not about operating in a cloak-and-dagger
24 way to use your expression, sir, this is about
25 understanding the capability that you have to deliver an

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1 effect and, most importantly, to deliver the effect
 2 where it's needed where the people are in extremis and
 3 need your help.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 5 MR COOPER: Given that helpful evidence, if I may say so,
 6 I was just thinking of a basic question and I was just
 7 wondering whether to ask it, but I'm going to ask it.
 8 We keep asking a lot about training, we hear about
 9 training. As far as fire is concerned, who, actually
 10 what body is responsible for delivering the training?
 11 Is it ad hoc locally, is there a national guidance? For
 12 instance, if we're barristers it's the Bar Standards
 13 Board or the Bar Council, which is a national
 14 organisation, which directs the training we should have.
 15 Is there any such similar thing as far as the Fire
 16 Service is concerned?
 17 A. There are national standards for incident command and
 18 the levels within that. Progressively there are
 19 national courses around hazardous materials, for example
 20 detection, identification and monitoring. These are key
 21 -- so we are still looking at specialist roles, by and
 22 large, apart from the incident command which applies to
 23 every commander. The NILO obviously is a national
 24 course and a national role.
 25 But I think, as we said yesterday, there is no

1 national fire service per se, there's the National Fire
 2 Chiefs Council and there's recommendations, there's
 3 national operational learning, there's joint operational
 4 learning, and there are recommended national courses,
 5 and yet within that, as a step down to the local level,
 6 most Fire and Rescue Services will also either have
 7 their own training centre, which may be staffed, may be
 8 outsourced externally to a training body or it may be
 9 staffed by their own in-house people, and that training
 10 will be conducted locally with the majority of courses
 11 that attract a national -- for example, a national
 12 resilience asset qualification will be done centrally
 13 and people will come from the UK to that.
 14 So two things exist, if that makes sense.
 15 Q. Is there any sense in considering whether training,
 16 particularly training as important and fundamental as
 17 JESIP and other allied issues, should be organised
 18 nationally and handed down to local and regional fire
 19 services in such a way: you must comply, this is
 20 a national training framework?
 21 A. Yes, there is, and there's evidence of that with the
 22 MTFFA training. The original iteration of that was we
 23 had a multi-agency faculty delivering the training with
 24 the Home Office OSCT governance of the project, but the
 25 delivery was sourced through fire, through NARU on

1 behalf of ambulance and the National Ambulance
 2 Resilience Unit, and, as it was at the time, through
 3 ACPO TAM through policing. JESIP itself is
 4 a multi-agency faculty that sits above -- for the
 5 development of that product, if you will.
 6 So those bodies do exist. I think the difficulty
 7 comes in how do you then maintain that locally across
 8 the whole of the UK or, you know, to a recognised
 9 standard is perhaps more difficult.
 10 Q. As far as the failure of JESIP on the night of 22 May is
 11 concerned, we repeat it with tragic familiarity, a lack
 12 of co-location, information vacuums, lack of
 13 communication, services and information not being
 14 shared, no identified use, for instance, of Talk
 15 Groups -- we're depressingly familiar with it. These
 16 are failures effectively of not so much the rank and
 17 file firefighter but the more senior firefighters in
 18 command and at high levels. Would you accept that
 19 that's right? Simply saying JESIP failures and grouping
 20 all firefighters into the bunch, as it were, of those
 21 that failed on JESIP -- in actual fact, the rank and
 22 file didn't fail, did they? It was the command and
 23 control and the management that failed.
 24 A. I think as I said yesterday, when we were talking about
 25 whether JESIP failed per se or whether it was not

1 applied, perhaps speaks to that and my view is that
 2 there were elements of JESIP that could have been
 3 applied that weren't. And then taken in a whole, one
 4 might conclude that JESIP failed. But I think I do
 5 agree that JESIP works by the component parts being used
 6 and used effectively and adequately and in a timely way
 7 for it to work properly.
 8 Q. I emphasise again, and I made it clear at the time and
 9 I make it clear now, our admiration and thanks maintains
 10 to many, many heroic people who were there at the time
 11 and I wouldn't want any of my questions to be
 12 misinterpreted.
 13 A. Of course.
 14 Q. A few questions, because most of it has been covered, on
 15 RVP. But as again we have established, GMFRS did not
 16 follow the police RVPs because they thought it was
 17 unsafe. That's where we really are, isn't it, as far as
 18 that's concerned?
 19 A. Effectively, a preferred RVP was identified by the
 20 person given that information.
 21 Q. And you said in evidence yesterday, Mr Hall -- I think
 22 I wrote it down accurately:
 23 "The agency with the best situational awareness
 24 should be trusted to supply the best RVP."
 25 A. Yes.

1 Q. I think I got what you said, which makes sense
 2 of course. Would you agree that of all the emergency
 3 services on the night, the situational awareness of
 4 GMFRS was the worst?
 5 A. I think it was a continuous challenge throughout the
 6 incident for GMFRS in terms of their situational
 7 awareness, and I believe many of them, if not all, that
 8 have given evidence have stated that.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's inevitable. The others had more
 10 people at the scene much.
 11 A. Yes.
 12 MR COOPER: If we just go through it, British Transport
 13 Police were there quicker because they had the
 14 situational awareness. GMP had a degree of situational
 15 awareness. And North West Fire Control got some
 16 important information, although we're going to suggest
 17 to you they didn't recognise it as important, but they
 18 got some important information from the police. But for
 19 whatever reason, and as the chair has isolated, mainly
 20 because the Fire Service weren't there, the fact is
 21 their situational awareness was the poorest?
 22 A. Yes, I would agree.
 23 Q. And yet, it seems that a decision was made by GMFRS not
 24 to follow those who clearly had better situational
 25 awareness?

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1 A. That decision was made based on their interpretation of
 2 the information they were given at the time, yes.
 3 Q. All right. Co-location you touched upon as far as
 4 co-location of Gold and Silver are concerned. You've
 5 dealt with, and I'm not going to traverse it again, the
 6 problems there and that there would be, I think you said
 7 in short, more effective strategic representation if it
 8 had met earlier and then the advantages would have been
 9 clear, wouldn't they?
 10 A. I think so, yes.
 11 Q. You didn't quite articulate what the advantages of
 12 co-location -- we can imagine what they are by common
 13 sense, but perhaps it's you that should give the
 14 evidence. What are the advantages then of co-location?
 15 A. It's probably your best opportunity to gain -- improve
 16 your situational awareness, going back to what we've
 17 just discussed. Also, there's a reassurance factor
 18 between agencies, the fact that you are physically
 19 together or at least communicating clearly if you're not
 20 physically -- you can still be co-located but not
 21 physically together, if you are doing that by means of
 22 communication, which is allowed for within the joint
 23 operating principles and the JESIP guidelines.
 24 It also enables -- the quicker you can co-locate,
 25 the quicker a strategic body, for example, can issue

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1 their strategy, the Gold strategy can be passed through.
 2 That's similar with the tactical coordinating group.
 3 I suppose in short the answer is that the quicker
 4 you are together, the more effective your joint
 5 emergency response will be and the more likely you are,
 6 in my view, to have a successful outcome because you're
 7 considering all of those factors. You're not acting in
 8 an emergency service silo, effectively, or single or
 9 even double agency silo.
 10 Q. In short, drawing your evidence together, why in your
 11 view did that co-location not take place?
 12 A. Predominantly because of decisions taken to locate
 13 in the places that they actually did, if that makes
 14 sense.
 15 Q. Really, as we develop your evidence, and as others have
 16 developed your evidence, the problems cascade from
 17 decisions made very early on?
 18 A. That's my belief, and I have stated that in evidence.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And no one recovered from mistakes,
 20 certainly in the Fire Service?
 21 A. Not satisfactorily, I think it's fair to say, sir.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Well, certainly not quickly.
 23 A. No.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So the fact of not going to an RVP meant
 25 they got no situational awareness. That could have been

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1 recovered from pretty quickly?
 2 A. Yes, it could.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But actually just wasn't?
 4 A. Yes. And I think you stated yesterday morning, sir,
 5 this is an outcome of -- whilst you can say there's not
 6 very much information at the beginning, the danger of
 7 not taking what action you can at that earliest point
 8 can lead to something that's really quite hard to
 9 recover from later on because you're missing those
 10 opportunities to build the situational awareness
 11 picture.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm pleased I said something so
 13 sensible.
 14 MR COOPER: One of the other reasons -- it's another topic
 15 I want to deal with -- is whether GMFRS are too
 16 encumbered, as I put it, by policies and procedures and
 17 whether that in some way hamstrung the way they reacted
 18 on the night in question. You'll be aware that that
 19 complaint or that criticism has come from a number of
 20 sources including firefighters.
 21 A. Mm.
 22 Q. Can I take you to one such source please of that, which
 23 we've highlighted. That's from Mr Simister who was
 24 at the time, 26 years, watch commander. Perhaps we can
 25 look at his debrief, one page, Mr Lopez. {INQ030902/4}.

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1 If you look at the bottom of that page, please,
2 Mr Hall, Mr Simister says this:
3 "Why are we hiding behind policies and procedures
4 when we have the capability? I could have told you all
5 the information we needed. I could have spoke to
6 a senior paramedic and the police and by not being there
7 I couldn't. You couldn't get in touch with the FDO
8 because he's busy and we've got nothing by the policies.
9 That needs to change."

10 There are numerous other officers, as you will be
11 aware, Mr Hall, who consider that they were moribund or
12 the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service is
13 moribund by its adherence to too many policies and
14 procedures. I'll be specific a little later. But in
15 general, do you accept there's a problem there? Do you
16 agree with Mr Simister for instance?

17 A. I saw and heard Mr Simister's evidence and I certainly
18 picked up the degree of frustration that he was, in his
19 view, unable to carry out the role that he would be
20 adequately trained and capable of doing so. Whether
21 that is purely due to procedures and policies, I'm not
22 sure. It's a common riposte when incidents happen and
23 are debriefed afterwards. Policies and procedures are
24 often blamed as the reason for things not happening, but
25 in and of itself that doesn't mean they're an

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1 encumbrance. In most cases they actually facilitate the
2 activities of an organisation, so you have policies, as
3 we were talking earlier about safe systems of work, one
4 of those effectively, for organisations like GMFRS, is
5 the fact that they have policies that are fit for
6 purpose. So I think it's perhaps how those policies are
7 applied at the time that may be the issue as opposed to
8 having many policies.

9 Q. It's interesting -- perhaps you're saying, it's like
10 JESIP, perhaps, it's an implementation issue?

11 A. Potentially, yes.

12 Q. For instance, Mr Berry refusing to let firefighters go
13 on to the concourse, even when he was there and he could
14 see paramedics there and unarmed police there in that
15 area. And it might be thought that policy and
16 procedure, his interpretation of them, stopped
17 firefighters getting there in there and assisting those
18 paramedics and unarmed police. Was that an example of
19 policy and procedure or its interpretation that got in
20 the way of the Fire Service on the night?

21 A. I think that was an interpretation, and from Mr Berry's
22 evidence and others', and I think actually in fact those
23 firefighters did deploy into the scene with or without
24 Mr Berry's consent in the end. But his evidence again
25 is that he was just seeking to carry out his duty of

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1 care by getting confirmation of where it was safe for
2 them to work because he was operating -- this is not
3 justification, this is his evidence as I understand
4 it -- he was operating under the fact that Plato had
5 been declared, therefore there were restrictions on who
6 could enter a warm zone, therefore he knew that the
7 GMFRS firefighters who had deployed with him were not in
8 an appropriate level of protection to operate in a warm
9 zone technically and therefore he wanted confirmation
10 where the areas they were going to operate were.

11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So that particular interpretation, that
12 particular policy, seemed to firefighters to be
13 ridiculous, so they just said, "Never mind what you say,
14 we're going in"?

15 A. Correct.

16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And as a result, the policy has actually
17 been changed to some extent. So that is an example of
18 actually the policy getting in the way because the
19 policy could be interpreted, as you've indicated just
20 now, in the way Mr Berry did so?

21 A. Yes.

22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But we need to get the policy right
23 first time, don't we really?

24 A. That would absolutely be the ideal, sir. I think, if
25 I may though, the context around the policy at the time

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1 that he was applying, and we have had this with
2 Mr Smith's questions earlier, we were talking or
3 envisaging an MTFA --

4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes.

5 A. -- so there were very, very good reasons why
6 restrictions were put around where emergency services
7 and teams would operate.

8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I well understand. It may be one of the
9 faults is that it shouldn't have been warm going cold,
10 it should have been cold where they were going into it.

11 A. Indeed, yes.

12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: There's another -- this is another issue
13 which I want to be raised and considered by this witness
14 and if I don't do it now, I shall forget it. Do you
15 mind if I do it now?

16 MR COOPER: Of course, sir.

17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It does arise out of the question of the
18 debrief. Looked at objectively, do you think that the
19 Fire Service debrief was satisfactory?

20 A. The one that's been submitted in evidence that we've
21 just looked at?

22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The general debrief. Was it done
23 properly?

24 A. No.

25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: This is important because an immediate

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1 debrief, quick debrief, when things are fresh in
 2 people's minds, they can actually remember it really
 3 clearly, should be the ideal time to learn the lessons.
 4 A. Yes.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The Fire Service have got plenty of
 6 experts who can come and look at it and do this. For
 7 those people who criticise the need for inquiries and
 8 the length of time we're taking, and all of rest of it,
 9 there would be less time for it perhaps if there was an
 10 effective rapid debrief.
 11 A. Yes.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Why was there not an effective and rapid
 13 debrief in this case?
 14 A. From the evidence, there was the immediate discussion
 15 back at Manchester Central where Mr Harris attended,
 16 which I think by anybody's estimation couldn't be
 17 described as successful in terms of harnessing the kind
 18 of information you're talking about.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand that one. I think
 20 a cooling down would be a good idea before we actually
 21 got to talk about it.
 22 A. Yes. Then secondly, there appears from the evidence --
 23 and I hope I haven't misinterpreted it -- that there was
 24 almost a reluctance to encourage people to discuss the
 25 incident. Partly, in my recollection of the evidence,

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1 some of that was around the potential for other
 2 inquiries happening, potentially criminal inquiries or
 3 other things that were going to be in train, so people
 4 were not to discuss together until those formal
 5 processes started.
 6 I think that's separate to and different to having
 7 a meaningful debrief on the activities that you took,
 8 which is very normal for any Fire and Rescue Service,
 9 I'm sure including GMFRS, to carry out operational
 10 debriefs following an incident because you need to --
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I don't personally understand why having
 12 a proper effective debrief, where people give their
 13 account of what happened as quickly as they can, could
 14 have some sort of derailing effect on a criminal
 15 inquiry.
 16 A. You would know far better than I, sir, regarding that.
 17 My comparator, I suppose, would be something around the
 18 PIP process, the post-incident procedure, if there's
 19 a shooting by armed police for example. I don't want to
 20 stray where I have no expertise at all, but from my
 21 limited understanding of that, there's a process that
 22 kicks in immediately whereby certain key bits of
 23 information are isolated and identified and feedback is
 24 given.
 25 Perhaps it's not a completely helpful example, but

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1 something along those lines where it was -- there needs
 2 to be a mandatory debrief process to understand the
 3 issues that happened within a time period, so perhaps
 4 within a week of the incident or whatever is a helpful
 5 time, and then consequently to that, that could actually
 6 become, thinking of the work with this inquiry, that
 7 would be a very helpful thing to be able to review as
 8 well (overspeaking).
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It would be enormously helpful and
 10 it would save a huge amount of time and it may be -- I'm
 11 sorry, Mr Cooper.
 12 MR COOPER: Not at all, sir.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It may be of some concern to people that
 14 what appears to me to be correct, and I may be
 15 incorrect, as so much has come out in this inquiry which
 16 has actually not appeared to have come out beforehand.
 17 I'm not taking any credit for that at all. What I'm
 18 saying is it may be that the debriefs were
 19 unsatisfactory. And if we are going to get lessons out
 20 of this, I know it's the College of Policing's design of
 21 debrief, which no doubt is a good design, but would
 22 you have any recommendations in relation to debriefs
 23 that you could put forward?
 24 A. I think following a model like that is very helpful.
 25 I think it would be -- you know, the recommendation to

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1 have it agreed across the agencies that -- there should
 2 be multi-agency debriefs and there should be
 3 single-agency debriefs, because it's very important for
 4 individual organisations, in fairness as GMFRS has
 5 already demonstrated, to learn lessons and apply them --
 6 and indeed NWFC. But some of that is in-house stuff
 7 that needs fixing or is good practice and best practice
 8 and needs to be shared. But there's also another piece,
 9 speaking to JESIP more, where all those agencies come
 10 together. So there needs to be an honest and open
 11 debrief and understanding of actions taken and there
 12 then needs to be the "so what", if you like, that comes
 13 out of that, what is everybody going to do, and that
 14 needs to feed back into the national bodies for learning
 15 and understanding.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. It's something I would like to
 17 look at, so as long as everyone is aware of that.
 18 MR COOPER: Just on the subject of debriefing, which the
 19 chair has raised, on a number of occasions, certainly
 20 when we've been preparing this, we've seen a number of
 21 different debriefs in relation to the same person.
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. Is that a desirable way of going about it or should
 24 there be one substantive debrief?
 25 A. I think if it's achievable, I think there would be

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1 greater clarity from one debrief at a point in time.
 2 There may be consequently be — because of what is
 3 exposed or discovered in that debrief process it may be
 4 felt there needs to be further debriefs to perhaps drill
 5 down more into some of that detail if it shows up
 6 organisational issues or generic issues that need
 7 further work.
 8 Q. Thank you. I want to go to another matter by again
 9 introducing it as it was introduced by another
 10 experienced firefighter . This is under the topic of
 11 risk aversion. I want to take you to, coincidentally
 12 enough, a debrief, and Mr Mottram, a crew manager's
 13 debrief, a short reference, {INQ004252/6}.
 14 There we see Mr Mottram is an experienced
 15 firefighter , a general attitude, and he says, fourth
 16 line:
 17 "Stop being so risk averse, as most of us joined the
 18 service to take risk to save lives , not stand back and
 19 let people suffer or die."
 20 He goes to add, just over halfway down, on my other
 21 chapter of questioning:
 22 "Think of our moral obligation, not just policy and
 23 procedures (operational discretion)."
 24 I particularly want to ask you under this heading
 25 about that observation:

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1 "Stop being so risk averse as most of us joined the
 2 service to take risk to save lives , not stand back and
 3 let people suffer or die."
 4 I want to ask you some specific questions on risk
 5 aversion. You have dealt with it yesterday, hopefully
 6 I'm not going to go over old ground, but I think where
 7 we are at the moment is that you accept
 8 Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service at the time
 9 of this tragedy were risk averse?
 10 A. In the actions taken on that night, yes.
 11 Q. You are not opining, or are you, as to whether they are
 12 generally risk averse?
 13 A. Absolutely not, as I hope I clarified yesterday.
 14 I don't believe that's true of firefighters generally or
 15 specifically for Greater Manchester.
 16 Q. I emphasise again, we've seen examples of some heroic
 17 and frustrated firefighters . All that is quite
 18 understood. On the night there was risk aversion.
 19 Where did that come from? It clearly, would you accept,
 20 didn't come from —
 21 MR DE LA POER: Mr Cooper, I am sorry for interrupting.
 22 Could we take this document down? Is that all right?
 23 MR COOPER: By all means. Have I missed something in it?
 24 MR DE LA POER: There is a good reason and I will explain
 25 that to you.

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1 MR COOPER: I think I referred to it on a previous occasion
 2 and I didn't realise there was a problem. Sorry.
 3 MR DE LA POER: Thank you very much indeed, Mr Cooper, I'm
 4 sorry for interrupting .
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I was about to explain, when you were
 6 saying about a central body to help with the training,
 7 of course barristers have the assistance of being
 8 trained by judges as they go along, which is always
 9 welcomed, no end.
 10 MR COOPER: And I hope it shows, sir.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Certainly.
 12 MR COOPER: Mr Hall, risk aversion. My question was,
 13 recalibrating , that the risk aversion on the night, that
 14 wasn't coming from the firefighter at the hard end, was
 15 it?
 16 A. Absolutely not, I think they were very keen — well,
 17 I don't think, their evidence shows that they were
 18 desperate to help, yes.
 19 Q. So where do you say risk aversion on the night occurred?
 20 A. I think as I've stated before, the decisions to move
 21 away from rather than towards the incident led to that
 22 and then the repeated opportunities to reverse that plan
 23 and move towards the incident that were there but not
 24 taken up, whether by genuinely held belief, lack of
 25 situational awareness or whatever else, resides at those

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1 opportunities to either make the initial decision and
 2 therefore subsequently change that decision, not with
 3 the firefighters .
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: This is clearly a very important issue.
 5 I have no trouble in understanding what you say
 6 essentially was the risk aversion demonstrated by
 7 Mr Berry in his actions at various stages.
 8 A. Yes.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But clearly, you are going wider than
 10 that and you're saying that the failure to get a grip
 11 and do something about it was — are you saying it was
 12 motivated to some extent by risk aversion? And if so,
 13 can you just explain that to me?
 14 A. I think from that point on — so Mr Berry's decision, as
 15 I understand his evidence, was he felt there was
 16 a significant risk and threat to firefighters that he
 17 didn't want to expose them to, so he wanted to
 18 effectively avert that risk by locating somewhere else.
 19 I think subsequent to that, there was not sufficient
 20 situational awareness developing within the remainder of
 21 that chain within GMFRS for them to countermand that.
 22 So the risk aversion point at the start was continued
 23 rather than challenged.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So we understand that they should have
 25 done something about it, to get the situational

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1 awareness —
 2 A. Yes.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: — and probably sending someone to the
 4 scene was the most sensible thing to do at a fairly
 5 early stage?
 6 A. Indeed.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So was that failure to do that motivated
 8 by risk aversion in your view and, if so, what's the
 9 evidence to support that?
 10 A. I don't know that it was specifically risk aversion
 11 because from the evidence of the other NILOs at the
 12 scene and the officers in the command support room,
 13 it would appear to be more about they just needed the
 14 confirmation or wanted the confirmation from the police
 15 about the FCP and they needed some more situational
 16 awareness about what was happening that they couldn't
 17 get because that information feed wasn't there.
 18 I don't know that any of them gave — were clear in
 19 their own evidence why they didn't countermand it, but
 20 the implication of their evidence was they felt they
 21 should have done but didn't.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 23 MR COOPER: I hope I don't sound too harsh in putting this
 24 to you, Mr Hall, but you say obviously, and I understand
 25 you weren't asked to look into whether the Fire Service

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1 were risk averse generally but whether they were risk
 2 averse on the night. But sadly, this was a major
 3 challenge, wasn't it, and this is what they are there
 4 for?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. It was a major incident when the last thing the public
 7 needed was a risk averse Fire Service, would you accept
 8 that?
 9 A. Yes, I would accept that.
 10 Q. And that's what they got, isn't it, on the night?
 11 A. They didn't get the attendance that GMFRS were
 12 reasonably expected to give.
 13 Q. Absolutely, but putting it more bluntly and addressing
 14 the evidence as you have given it, at the time of this
 15 major incident on 22 May 2017, the last thing the public
 16 needed was a risk averse Fire Service, wasn't it?
 17 A. Yes.
 18 Q. And that's just what they got, isn't it?
 19 A. The evidence would support that, yes.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper, I'm really sorry, we need —
 21 it is important, clearly, for me to make a finding.
 22 They've all apologised, all the commanders, and they are
 23 ashamed of how they behaved in that they didn't do more.
 24 When we're drilling down into the evidence, I can easily
 25 see how one can say — I'm not just having a go at

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1 Mr Berry — that Mr Berry was risk averse in what he
 2 did, and then we have to look and see whether he was
 3 right to do what he did.
 4 It's at the later stages that I want to drill down
 5 to the evidence which supports a suggestion that the
 6 failure to get a grip, the failure to act, was due to
 7 risk aversion in those who had the opportunity.
 8 MR COOPER: I do understand. Let me try and deal with that.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's why I was dealing with that with
 10 Mr Hall, really.
 11 MR COOPER: The Fire Service clearly didn't attend, as we
 12 know, for nearly 2 hours —
 13 A. That's correct.
 14 Q. — on the night in question. The policies and
 15 procedures set in place which prevented them from doing
 16 so were in part policies and procedures based upon risk
 17 aversion; would you agree with that? I'm just taking it
 18 step by step, I'm not ending there. Would you accept
 19 that?
 20 A. I don't know that I would accept that the policies and
 21 procedures were based on risk aversion.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Risk avoidance maybe? Something he can
 23 agree with. If you want to go further, of course you
 24 can.
 25 A. Certainly risk awareness.

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1 MR COOPER: Would you accept that that risk awareness, that
 2 risk avoidance, was very heightened as far as the Fire
 3 Service are concerned?
 4 A. I think given their understanding at the time, with the
 5 potential for a firearms threat, their understanding
 6 that there was something else happening that we know
 7 now, looking the other way, wasn't actually happening,
 8 may have kept them in a position of believing that
 9 threat and risk was there that hadn't been sufficiently
 10 reduced, which then led to this stasis, this stalling of
 11 approach, because in my opinion the evidence showed
 12 a genuinely held belief that something else was
 13 happening on the scene than actually was.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think we may be able to — sorry, I'm
 15 really thinking aloud — go slightly further. If one
 16 takes a view that the risk avoidance steps taken by
 17 Mr Berry really went far too far and amount to risk
 18 aversion, maybe you could say that commanders should
 19 have identified that fact at an earlier stage, that that
 20 initial decision was actually risk aversion, and it's
 21 their failure to deal with that initial risk aversion
 22 which maybe is the responsibility to some extent to
 23 Greater Manchester Fire Service generally.
 24 A. Yes, I think that's reasonable, and as we discussed
 25 yesterday, the critical questioning which GMFRS have

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1 introduced and refreshed since this tragic night would
 2 hopefully go some way to addressing that. But I think
 3 it was the lack of that critical questioning, which the
 4 officers who gave evidence admitted to, they didn't
 5 challenge, they didn't question, they didn't alter the
 6 original plan, which must have led to that.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So if you're not going to carry out your
 8 primary duty to the public, you at least need to be
 9 challenging to make sure there are very good reasons why
 10 not?
 11 A. Absolutely: now that we know this event is happening,
 12 why are we not there?
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: By all means take it further if you wish
 14 to.
 15 MR COOPER: If I can, sir.
 16 I'm going to put this to you -- again, I do so
 17 carefully: could it be that the Fire Service at that
 18 time were paying far more attention to the safety of
 19 their people, more significantly paying more attention
 20 to the safety of their people, than other services? I'm
 21 going to take you to a document in a minute on that.
 22 It's not just a wild question.
 23 I'll put it again: could it be that the Fire Service
 24 on the night of the 22nd were laying far more stress on
 25 the safety of their people than the public in comparison

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1 to other emergency services?
 2 A. I think that's a reasonable statement insofar as it's
 3 evidenced by their lack of attendance at the incident,
 4 whereas the other agencies were in attendance.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think we need to also factor in --
 6 this is just so if anyone's picking up on that sort of
 7 headline as it were -- clearly different forces had
 8 different information. So absolutely unarmed policemen
 9 went straight to the scene actually before they knew
 10 anything of what was going on and they were also sent to
 11 the scene because at least the FDO had some knowledge
 12 and knew about the armed police going in as well to
 13 clear the scene. So the police clearly had different
 14 knowledge from the Fire Service.
 15 MR COOPER: Yes. But I'm asking this question based upon
 16 a paragraph in a police report which I'm going to go to.
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And similarly, to an extent with NWAS,
 18 who went as far as they considered it safe for them to
 19 go.
 20 MR COOPER: Yes. I keep emphasising, because I know things
 21 can be taken out of context, I am dealing with policy
 22 and procedure, not individuals.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, no, I understand that.
 24 MR COOPER: Policy and procedure.
 25 If I can take you, please -- and we've given you

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1 advance notice of this for your observation -- it's
 2 a police report. {INQ035309/1}.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And we'll take a break after we've dealt
 4 with this.
 5 MR COOPER: Can we go to {INQ035309/27}, please, "Risk
 6 assessment". This is a police report of August 2020:
 7 "As we report only on police matters our comment on
 8 the role of the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue
 9 Service is limited. However, we have deliberated on the
 10 apparent disparity in approach to risk assessment
 11 displayed by the police officers and others, compared to
 12 GMFRS. Having read all the evidence, we believe that
 13 first responders (GMP, BTP and NWS) and members of the
 14 public, who entered the City Rooms, considered a risk
 15 assessment which appeared to include not only their own
 16 personal safety but also the substantial risk to
 17 casualties being left without urgent care. Their
 18 personal safety appeared to be regarded as secondary to
 19 the immediate need to protect life. The GMFRS risk
 20 assessment on the evening of 22 May 2017 appeared to be
 21 different and to be concerned primarily with ensuring
 22 the personal safety of firefighters alone. We have seen
 23 no evidence that the GMFRS risk assessment included the
 24 risk to casualties. This is relevant because in
 25 a multi-agency emergency response, the Fire Service are

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1 very well placed to lead on agreement of the JESIP
 2 shared risk assessment and they also lead on casualty
 3 rescue. The application of a different benchmark of
 4 risk between GMRF agencies may be a significant issue."
 5 So I'm not -- whilst of course respecting the
 6 observation of the chair about firearms and that,
 7 that is my question. My question is based upon the
 8 observation of the police report. Do you agree with
 9 those observations?
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. Do you know why --
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Hang on, sorry. I really need that to
 13 be justified. It's just because it's such an important
 14 thing.
 15 MR COOPER: I wasn't just going to leave it, sir.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That is said there without any
 17 evidential basis. Right? So they are saying that GMFRS
 18 had a different benchmark of risk, so their benchmark of
 19 risk is different?
 20 A. If I may, let me clarify my "yes" then if that's
 21 helpful. I agree that the risk assessments are
 22 apparently different because if you had all carried out
 23 the same risk assessments, it's reasonable to assume you
 24 would make similar actions in terms of attending the
 25 scene. Because that didn't happen, I think there is

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1 a difference. Where I've struggled with the evidence
2 and reviewing this, and with this in particular, is, as
3 you rightly say, sir, there isn't any written risk
4 assessment that I have seen that they could base
5 a statement like that on.

6 My understanding is that that statement, and having
7 discussed this to a degree, which I believe there's
8 a reference, not specifically to this, but it is
9 covered, the area of risk assessment, in the capping
10 report, that we did have in consultation with the police
11 experts and ambulance, we recognise there is a different
12 approach because of the outcome. So the dynamic risk
13 assessment taken by Mr Berry to initially move to
14 Philips Park could be indicative of moving away from
15 where help was most needed.

16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's the different benchmark of risk
17 which is the significant thing. That means
18 Greater Manchester Fire are prepared to accept a lower
19 degree of risk in rescuing the public than are the
20 police or NWAS. I think that's what needs
21 justification.

22 MR COOPER: Indeed. Not just the police and NWAS but also
23 the report mentions members of the public as well.

24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Absolutely — well, yes, sorry, that
25 sentence is for me the most significant one. We're not

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1 taking notice of the great degree of courage of an
2 enormous number of people. Do they use a different
3 benchmark of risk? You can say Mr Berry did maybe when
4 he sent people away when everyone else went towards the
5 scene, but GMRF agencies?

6 A. It's probably better for GMFRS to show what their
7 benchmark is. But generically speaking, for fire
8 services, it wouldn't be any different, because as we
9 discussed yesterday the core value is save life, reduce
10 harm and respond to emergencies. That's why they're
11 there. The risks may be — there are many different
12 risks depending on the incident. So I don't know that
13 they apply a different benchmark. There are different
14 responses. For example, a fire that's in the open,
15 in the middle of nowhere, with no life risk involved,
16 they would apply a different response in terms of the
17 amount of risk that they would expose firefighters to as
18 opposed to an incident that had people involved and
19 required rescue and life-saving.

20 So the balance of response shifts with the
21 commensurate risk. But that's not to say that their
22 risk is any different than ambulance or police services
23 to respond to the point of need.

24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Let's just take where this all
25 comes from. So you're always going to have to balance,

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1 aren't you, your duty, the primary duty to protect the
2 public and also a duty to preserve the safety, as far as
3 you can, of fire officers, police, et cetera?

4 A. Yes.

5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And as has happened when fire officers
6 have been sent into a situation to fight a fire where it
7 was palpably deemed to be unsafe, the inquiry would be
8 going on into the death of firefighters.

9 A. Yes.

10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And there have been a number of them.

11 A. Yes.

12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And you would then be giving your expert
13 opinion as to whether this was an unnecessary risk being
14 taken with the lives of firefighters. So that balance
15 always has to be struck.

16 So in striking that balance, do GMFRS strike the
17 balance too much in favour of protecting their own
18 firefighters rather than doing what they can to rescue
19 the public?

20 A. I wouldn't say so, sir, no. I believe their motivation
21 or their driver would be to rescue and to fulfil their
22 statutory function.

23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's individual firefighters. We're
24 talking about the people in charge essentially, the
25 organisation. As an organisation, does it?

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1 A. I haven't seen any evidence that encourages
2 decision-making and risk assessment that skews the
3 response in favour of GMFRS staff rather than the
4 public.

5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. We'll now, if it's all right by
6 you, Mr Cooper, break for lunch, and when we come back,
7 you can take this topic up and I promise not to
8 interrupt.

9 MR COOPER: Not at all, sir, very helpful.

10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We'll have an hour. Thank you.
11 (12.54 pm)

(The lunch adjournment)

12 (1.54 pm)

13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr de la Poer.

14 MR DE LA POER: Sir, before Mr Cooper resumes, and with his
15 permission and understanding, can I just say this: sir,
16 you raised earlier today the issue about the timing of
17 the debrief and whether that was in some way derailed or
18 less effective.

19 Can I just say that I'm very grateful to Mr Smith
20 Queen's Counsel, who has drawn my attention to two
21 documents, {INQ004197/1} and {INQ004210/1}, neither of
22 which need to go on the screen, where there is
23 information which may shed further light on it and, no
24 doubt, anyone wishing to make submissions to you in due
25

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1 course about that, you having raised it, will be able to
 2 consider those documents.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you. I'm grateful, Mr Smith.
 4 MR COOPER: Can we go back to the document we were looking
 5 at before the short adjournment, which is the police
 6 report, {INQ035039/28}. Just a couple more questions,
 7 Mr Hall, for you on that.
 8 There is one of the critical paragraphs, 2.18.3.
 9 Initially, you agreed with the sentiments expressed
 10 in that paragraph, but you nuance that a little now;
 11 is that right?
 12 A. On the issue of — I believe the discussion was around
 13 the level to which the risk assessment process or the
 14 weighting of risk was different between organisations as
 15 opposed to this specific paragraph, if I understand it.
 16 Q. Let me put it in context for you. Mr Lopez, could you
 17 take us to 2.18.1 {INQ035039/27}, please. So "Risk
 18 assessment":
 19 "As we report only on police matters our comment on
 20 the role of the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue
 21 Service (GMFRS) is limited. However, we have
 22 deliberated on the apparent disparity in approach to
 23 risk assessment displayed by the police officers and
 24 others ..."
 25 Would you agree that there is, firstly, a disparity?

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1 A. In terms of the effect, I would agree, yes.
 2 Q. What do you mean "in terms of the effect"?
 3 A. By that I mean that the police and the Ambulance Service
 4 did attend — following their assessment of risk they
 5 did attend the scene. Following GMFRS' assessment of
 6 risk at that time, they didn't attend the scene
 7 immediately.
 8 Q. Why do you think that GMFRS's assessment of risk was
 9 different to theirs?
 10 A. Because assessment of risk is made by individuals in
 11 possession of that information and they will at times
 12 come to different conclusions, which again is the point
 13 of having the multi-agency risk assessment, so you can
 14 deconflict and agree where possible on a joint
 15 understanding of risk.
 16 Q. So let's be clear about this: whose risk assessment or
 17 what body's risk assessment was GMFRS relying on so that
 18 there was disparity?
 19 A. They would be relying on their own risk assessment at
 20 that point.
 21 Q. By who?
 22 A. By the officer responsible, by Mr Berry.
 23 Q. But in interpreting Mr Berry's risk assessment, they
 24 also, other aspects of the organisation, also had a duty
 25 to test that assessment, didn't they?

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1 A. I agree, and as I stated yesterday, the process of the
 2 joint dynamic risk assessment or the joint decision
 3 model is not a static — risk assessment is not
 4 a once-only process, it's continual throughout the life
 5 of the incident. So there were opportunities to
 6 reassess that risk and challenge it, as I believe we've
 7 already discussed.
 8 Q. Therefore it's not just, is it, the risk assessment
 9 being different to the police and to NWS and indeed
 10 informally to the public, it was the fact that it wasn't
 11 assessed or reassessed, so it's not just Mr Berry, is
 12 it, it's more of a systemic issue?
 13 A. I have tried to be helpful in answering that question.
 14 Q. I understand that.
 15 A. In my view, the action taken following the risk
 16 assessment is that one thing, which was to relocate and
 17 to seek further information from the FDO. To move that
 18 on, you would have to have more information and
 19 intelligence to go through that process once again and
 20 perhaps arrive at a different decision.
 21 Q. Let me put it more bluntly. Putting Mr Berry to one
 22 side, as matters developed it became pretty clear as to
 23 the relative nature of the situation, a bomb had been
 24 detonated and that people were at the scene and going in
 25 there, whether it be members of the public, some members

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1 of NWS and the police. At that stage, people other
 2 than Mr Berry would know what was going on and could
 3 make a risk assessment, couldn't they?
 4 A. They could, and I think again, as we discussed
 5 yesterday, this is about — there's some evidence in my
 6 view of assumptions being made, namely that there
 7 actually had been a deployment to the scene, which was
 8 proven to be incorrect, and it's the point of carrying
 9 out the risk assessment is at which point at that
 10 timeline do individuals hold information which they may
 11 then use to vary that risk assessment. So there are
 12 opportunities to do that, but there's a lot invested
 13 in that one individual who has been tasked, effectively,
 14 to grip that incident.
 15 Q. It may be, as far as Mr Berry's concerned, the inquiry
 16 will make what it will of that, but there are also
 17 ongoing risk assessments that can be made by others;
 18 that's the point I'm putting to you.
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. Mr Berry may make one, but others were clearly making
 21 other risk assessments as time went on, weren't they?
 22 A. Yes, I don't disagree.
 23 Q. Those others were equally affected, would you agree, by
 24 the Fire Service's approach to risk?
 25 A. The generic approach to risk, the risk assessment

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1 process, is a generic process and --
 2 Q. Forgive me, I interrupted.
 3 A. Forgive me, I'm having a little difficulty trying to
 4 think of a different way of answering --
 5 Q. It may well be I'm putting the question in a convoluted
 6 way. I'm simply suggesting to you that the disparity in
 7 approach to risk assessment didn't just apply to
 8 Mr Berry, it applied to others in the organisation, the
 9 organisation generally as well, didn't it?
 10 A. Of those officers involved on the night, yes.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can we just summarise where we've got
 12 to? I'm really not interrupting, I'm just summarising.
 13 MR COOPER: I understand.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You accept that Mr Berry appears to have
 15 been risk averse or made the wrong risk assessment?
 16 A. Yes.
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You agree that once he'd done that,
 18 there was an obligation on others to challenge that
 19 assessment --
 20 A. Yes, sir.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: -- and take a grip and change it and do
 22 something different? What I'm not sure, and as you've
 23 agreed to it perhaps you could help me, if we go over
 24 the page {INQ035309/28}:
 25 "The application of a different benchmark of risk

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1 between GMRP agencies may be a significant issue."
 2 Do you happen to know whether they're referring to
 3 that benchmark on the night of the 22nd or generally?
 4 A. I respectfully think that's a question for the police
 5 experts to say what was in their head without trying
 6 to --
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's just that you agreed with the
 8 paragraph.
 9 A. And I am reflecting on that.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: What were you agreeing to, that night or
 11 generally?
 12 A. I specifically think from sentence 1 of 2.18.3 that the
 13 GMFRS risk assessment on the evening of 22 May, so
 14 I draw from that that we are still event-focused here --
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We'll see what the police experts have
 16 to say. You're quite right, that is properly addressed
 17 to them primarily.
 18 A. Thank you, sir.
 19 MR COOPER: On the subject of risk assessment -- I'm going
 20 to come on to North West Fire Control separately
 21 a little later, but let's deal with risk assessment as
 22 far as their risk assessment/risk aversion, as far as
 23 they're concerned now. If I can take you to your
 24 document, your list of central issues, please, the
 25 25-page document, which is {INQ041857/1} and to NWFC15,

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1 please.
 2 It's page 14 of 25 if it helps you {INQ041857/14}.
 3 There you see what you say:
 4 "Was NWFC's approach to risk appropriate? Please
 5 consider this by reference to the following matters..."
 6 Let me ask you in general: it's your view, isn't it,
 7 that NWFC also had a flawed approach to risk, if that is
 8 a helpful expression for you to agree with?
 9 A. I think, yes, the evidence shows, as far as I'm
 10 concerned anyway, that perhaps there was an overdue
 11 weighting within that risk assessment which led to a --
 12 as has been discussed in evidence and been heard of
 13 their view about the potential for exposing firefighters
 14 to risk.
 15 Q. Would you describe that, as far as North West Fire
 16 Control is concerned, as risk aversion?
 17 A. I think, again, based on outcome, as in what was the
 18 effect of that risk assessment, I would have to say yes.
 19 Q. And that risk aversion was based upon aversion to risk
 20 to employees, firefighters effectively?
 21 A. Those not under their employ, technically.
 22 Q. Pardon?
 23 A. Those not under their employ, as in their actions may
 24 endanger or put those that weren't under their employ at
 25 risk.

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1 Q. In other words, firefighters?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The risk aversion, if we're talking in
 4 practical terms, for them is not being prepared to risk
 5 sending fire officers in without the agreement before
 6 that of Mr Berry, the NILO?
 7 A. Yes.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes.
 9 MR COOPER: We'll come on to this a little later, but North
 10 West Fire Control had no command structure, did it?
 11 A. Controls generically don't have a command function, sir,
 12 no.
 13 Q. Its role, important, please, I don't want to be
 14 misinterpreted, was to receive information and hopefully
 15 disseminate?
 16 A. Yes, and that role is essential in a Fire and Rescue
 17 Service being able to discharge its duties.
 18 Q. And in your view, I'm simply asking you questions now on
 19 attitudes in relation to risk, do you think North West
 20 Fire Control should be given more of a control function
 21 rather than simply a disseminator of information?
 22 A. No, not necessarily. I think, as we discussed with
 23 Mr Smith earlier, I think there are opportunities for
 24 the relationship between any control, and in this case
 25 NWFC and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service, to

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1 develop a better understanding of the expectations when
 2 a situation like this develops so that they can
 3 understand the kind of activities a Fire Service will
 4 carry out and therefore perhaps, as a result of that, be
 5 more assured that their initial actions that are not
 6 potentially going to put firefighters at risk.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: For definition purposes, bearing in mind
 8 they send firefighters to the scene, why is that not
 9 a control function?
 10 A. It's a control function, it's not a command function,
 11 sir. Because they're not in command of the resources
 12 that are sent, that's the officers responsible for those
 13 appliances or those supervising.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. Thank you.
 15 MR COOPER: I'll come back to North West Fire Control in
 16 a block later. I want to move on to another topic, if
 17 I can, and that's the tri-service communications issue.
 18 You'll recall this matter, Mr Hall, this was
 19 a matter that relates to a tri-service communication
 20 tool, which didn't exist on the night, but very soon
 21 after there was a meeting about it over a cup of coffee
 22 in a café and it was agreed thereafter. You're aware of
 23 this issue, I assume?
 24 A. My understanding is that the capability was available on
 25 the night, it wasn't used, and subsequently a means to

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1 ensure it was used was resolved very shortly after, yes.
 2 Q. A tri-service communication was mandated by JOPs in
 3 January 2016 and it was certainly, as far as
 4 I understand it, not operational —
 5 A. That's my understanding, but it was available.
 6 Q. — at the time.
 7 Well, you say it was available, but there was no
 8 liaison or discussion between agencies as to whether it
 9 should or shouldn't be used and there was a meeting
 10 a few days later and that agreement was made in
 11 15 minutes. You're aware of that?
 12 A. I am aware of that evidence, yes.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The facility was there, but they hadn't
 14 actually pressed the "go" button.
 15 A. Indeed, sir, and also work was ongoing to implement
 16 that. It hadn't actually been implemented by that date.
 17 MR COOPER: It was mandated, you'd agree, wouldn't you, by
 18 JOPs in January 2016?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It was to do with a memorandum of how it
 21 operated, this particular one, which hadn't been
 22 completed.
 23 MR COOPER: And that was completed effectively in 15 minutes
 24 over a cup of coffee in a café — and I am not actually
 25 making that up. That's right, isn't?

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1 A. That's what we've heard, yes.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I hope you're not!
 3 MR COOPER: When I say "making it up", I mean being florid
 4 in my metaphors.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right, okay.
 6 MR COOPER: I think I was a few times ago about Danish
 7 pastries ...
 8 Of course I'm not making it up. That's actually
 9 what was —
 10 A. Yes, I remember the evidence.
 11 Q. Does it surprise you, and I'll start from that basic
 12 position, that it took so long for that step to be
 13 taken, a step which was so easily activated?
 14 A. I think it's disappointing and it has been acknowledged
 15 as such by those involved.
 16 Q. But does it surprise you that that actually happened?
 17 A. Yes, I think there's always been — well, from memory,
 18 at the time when the JOPs were introduced, as we've
 19 heard many times in the evidence over the last 2 days,
 20 the priority of all agencies communicating together as
 21 quickly as possible in a robust way, particularly after
 22 the declaration of an Operation Plato, is an essential
 23 component in ensuring an appropriate response. So it
 24 should have been a priority in any area where that
 25 declaration or those specialist teams existed to have

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1 that in place, yes.
 2 Q. Using that situation as but an example of something
 3 which was mandated by JOPs in January 2016, it clearly
 4 could have been of significant use during this tragedy.
 5 Is that in any way indicative of how the agencies were
 6 working or not working together at the time of the arena
 7 tragedy?
 8 A. I don't believe so. My reason for saying that is that
 9 there was evidence submitted to the inquiry that all
 10 agencies were working together to resolve that issue,
 11 but there may have been a number of — or there were
 12 a number of, be that technical or other reasons, why
 13 that hadn't been accomplished by the time of the
 14 incident.
 15 Q. The technical or other reasons were unacceptable,
 16 weren't they? That's what I'm trying to get to here.
 17 That situation that occurred in relation to a critical
 18 tool did not happen because of inefficiency at the very
 19 least, would you agree?
 20 A. That may well be the case, but there were other options
 21 available. The mandate under JOPs is to provide
 22 three-way communication and in the original version it
 23 recognised there may be various different ways of doing
 24 that, it might be by a static open link, it might be by
 25 an Airwave link, it might be by a telephone line. There

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1 are other ways of generating a three-way call so it's
 2 the three-way communication that is key, perhaps more so
 3 than the particular technical mechanism used to achieve
 4 that, if that makes sense.
 5 Q. And the fact that that wasn't available on the night is
 6 then probably even more startling as far as you're
 7 concerned?
 8 A. In my view it was available on the night.
 9 Q. It wasn't utilised?
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. In a nutshell why do you conclude it wasn't utilised?
 12 Simply forgotten, not trusted?
 13 A. I don't think it was considered early enough in the
 14 piece. There is some evidence that the inquiry has
 15 heard that one of Mr Fletcher's actions from GMFRS when
 16 he was making his way to or preparing to go to the
 17 command support room was to ask or instruct -- ask the
 18 question of NWFC and ensure that that communication
 19 channel was open and available. But at the time in --
 20 at that point where it probably would have been most
 21 helpful it wasn't done immediately and that may have
 22 been through lack of training or awareness or somebody
 23 just forgot that that was important, I don't know.
 24 Q. I see. I want to come on to NILOs now. Again, it will
 25 involve, as it must, Mr Berry's work on the night. But

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1 let me ask just a few questions about the
 2 responsibilities on Mr Berry on the night. Can I take
 3 you to your second report, please, page 34,
 4 paragraph 87.
 5 Do you paragraph 87, Mr Hall?
 6 A. I do, yes.
 7 Q. You say:
 8 "In his role as duty NILO there was a lot invested
 9 by NWFC and GMFRS in one officer, far from the incident
 10 with a 22-mile journey underway."
 11 I'll come on to the distances and the journey in
 12 a moment. Would you accept that there was a risk that
 13 any duty NILO, let alone Mr Berry, might be overwhelmed
 14 by the duties placed on them that night?
 15 A. I think there's always a potential for an individual to
 16 be overwhelmed by circumstances operationally. I think
 17 that's just a human factor. I think in this case there
 18 were other compounding factors that made his position
 19 more difficult.
 20 Q. Can you develop that, please?
 21 A. The fact that having made the decision -- so to
 22 contextualise: as the duty NILO you would expect to be
 23 notified of an incident of this type and there would be
 24 certain actions that would come out as a result that you
 25 would begin to take.

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1 A decision is made whether or not, unless the
 2 mobilisation is clear, that you are going to a scene,
 3 and this is now the case within GMFRS but at the time
 4 wasn't stipulated. The duty NILO can make some
 5 decisions around how they're going to support the
 6 incident.
 7 One of those decisions is a consideration of your
 8 current position and where can you be most effective.
 9 Because the duty NILO, as opposed to other NILOs on
 10 duty, has effectively a coordination role for that
 11 response and to make some decisions and make the initial
 12 contact to be able to say, "In light of what I now know,
 13 you're going there, you're going there, we're going to
 14 do this".
 15 So all that taken together, the decision to then
 16 proceed to Philips Park or to the incident, as is also
 17 given in evidence, was in his mind that he never thought
 18 he'd actually get to Philips Park, he'd be redirected
 19 onwards, led to his decision to mobilise to fulfil that.
 20 And then the compounding that I referred to is the fact
 21 that then what ensued after that was a particularly
 22 challenging drive to get to where he was trying to go
 23 to, which I believe in my view, and I believe based on
 24 his evidence, significantly impacted on his ability to
 25 function within that role, which may be interpreted as

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1 overwhelmed, but I don't think that in and of itself is
 2 just because of the role of the NILO. I think there
 3 were circumstances around that which made his particular
 4 experience in trying to do that piece of work very
 5 challenging.
 6 Q. As I say, I will come on to the geography in a moment,
 7 but just going back to your paragraph 87, it's just the
 8 way you express yourself, and I make no criticism of it,
 9 it's potentially revealing:
 10 "In his role as duty NILO there was a lot invested
 11 by NWFC and GMFRS in one officer."
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. One reading of that, and it may well be I'm overreading
 14 it, one reading of that might be that there was too much
 15 invested in one officer by two organisations.
 16 A. I can see how you might read it that way. In my view,
 17 the work invested in that officer, although it is a lot,
 18 because you're looking for key pieces of information,
 19 you're expecting him or her to contact the person that
 20 has more information, as in the FDO in this case, and
 21 then to give advice back into NWFC about mobilising
 22 options. And with the plan as it was written at the
 23 time that's a pivotal, almost like a fulcrum of activity
 24 that has to happen through this individual for the rest
 25 of the organisation to proceed from that point.

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1 So I think that's what I'm trying to intimate there,
 2 that there's an awful lot invested in that particular
 3 function, and if it fails or if it doesn't work in some
 4 way, then that potentially skews the rest of the outcome
 5 further on down.
 6 Q. That's what in essence, certainly in part, happened
 7 here, isn't it?
 8 A. I would agree, yes.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And if it had been an incident commander
 10 appointed earlier on, that -- I mean, for most of us
 11 sitting here listening to the evidence, the idea that
 12 a man is essentially commanding the incident, because
 13 that's what he's doing, while driving 22 miles, getting
 14 lost and taking an enormously long time to get there, it
 15 seems quite extraordinary that no one took it over.
 16 A. Yes, I don't disagree, sir.
 17 MR COOPER: I'll come on to, following on from the chair's
 18 question, on the issue, as I was going to, of incident
 19 commander, who should be and who it was understood
 20 should be incident commander and on-scene commanders.
 21 Let me start with a general question. There was
 22 a lot of confusion at the time, wasn't there, about who
 23 would be incident commander, what their role was and
 24 when they should start within that role? A lot of
 25 confusion within the Fire Service, wasn't there, at the

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1 time?
 2 A. There was, and I think that's potentially down to the
 3 model of response that was chosen. The fact that there
 4 wasn't an attendance at the scene initially with
 5 a geographically located incident commander probably
 6 would have, in my opinion, obviated the majority of
 7 those issues that later happened.
 8 The fact that you effectively had a muster point of
 9 GMFRS resources with additional senior officers in the
 10 form of the three NILOs, you had a quite unusual, in
 11 Fire Service terms, set-up. What I mean by unusual, if
 12 it helps, is that it's not unusual to muster resources
 13 at a given point, you might have a marshalling area or
 14 you might have an RVP, and you would normally nominate
 15 an officer to be in charge of that area but that would
 16 be separate to and other than the main incident.
 17 I think in this particular case some difficulty
 18 arose over the fact that you had a mobilisation on
 19 behalf of -- from NWFC in the pumps requested by
 20 Mr Berry. You had officers in attendance at that
 21 location, so the NILOs to supplement the response, and
 22 you had Mr Berry whose intention, as I understand it,
 23 was at the very least to join them there but probably
 24 already be redirected by the time he had made his way,
 25 and yet you had nobody at the incident to effectively

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1 command the incident. So I think there's an anomaly
 2 here in the -- I can understand the difficulty in
 3 identifying an incident commander when you're
 4 effectively not at an incident to deploy the command
 5 model, if that makes sense.
 6 Q. You describe -- as I say, we'll go into it in a moment
 7 -- a situation in relation to an incident commander,
 8 what they should do, who that incident commander should
 9 be, whether they be on the ground. The whole thing
 10 actually on the night just melted down, didn't it? The
 11 system, as far as the Fire Service was concerned,
 12 in relation to incident commander was just in meltdown,
 13 wasn't it?
 14 A. It was never satisfactorily resolved until much later in
 15 the incident.
 16 Q. Well, again, I might be accused sometimes of using
 17 hyperbole but would you accept that on the facts of this
 18 case the whole system in relation to who or what was the
 19 incident commander, so far as the Fire Service are
 20 concerned on the night of the 22nd, was in meltdown?
 21 A. It was certainly a confused picture, yes.
 22 Q. Let's look for instance at the time at what the thoughts
 23 were on who shouldn't be an incident commander. It's
 24 right, isn't it, that the Chief Fire Officers
 25 Association were of the view that a NILO should not

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1 ordinarily be an incident commander? That's right,
 2 isn't it?
 3 A. That's correct.
 4 Q. And I can take you to it, but I won't unless we need to,
 5 to save time, but for those that want to see that that's
 6 {INQ019308/1} at paragraph 2.5.
 7 So the expression, and I'm repeating it verbatim:
 8 "As far as the chief fire officers are concerned
 9 a NILO should not ordinarily be an incident commander."
 10 Does the word "ordinarily" there add clarity as far
 11 as people in the field are concerned?
 12 A. Yes, I think so, because the guidance, when you look
 13 at the role of the NILO, it's clear that the role is
 14 primarily a tactical adviser to the incident commander.
 15 So ordinarily, they would not be the incident commander.
 16 However, to be a NILO you would also be a qualified
 17 incident commander at a level commensurate with your
 18 rank. So you have the ability to take command and
 19 command an incident should that be required. For
 20 example, if you turn up at an incident where you're
 21 a tactical adviser, but there may be an officer in
 22 charge of a more junior rank and the incident is
 23 escalating and you are therefore both qualified and
 24 arguably duty-bound to take command of that incident.
 25 So it can't be ruled out but it's not the ordinary way

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1 of a NILO responding to an incident.
 2 Q. What's the difference between an incident commander and
 3 an on-scene commander?
 4 A. That's, as I understand yesterday -- the on-scene
 5 commander phrase is taken from the JOPs guidance and
 6 that is the person who is designated at the scene of
 7 an MTFA to manage the resources at either the RVP or the
 8 FCP to deploy forward from the cold into the warm zone.
 9 That's a specific role and I described it yesterday
 10 under the national incident command model as effectively
 11 a sector commander. So if it was a fire and you had
 12 a building with four sides, that building may be divided
 13 up into four sectors and, because of the physical
 14 difficulties with managing each sector, where there
 15 might be different activities going on concurrently, the
 16 incident commander would nominate a sector commander to
 17 take responsibility for the resources in that sector.
 18 The on-scene commander in the case of an MTFA is
 19 effectively that person.
 20 Q. Is this a distinction only made as far as the Fire
 21 Service is concerned?
 22 A. No, there's on-scene commanders for police and for
 23 ambulance as well. They may just use different officers
 24 because the rank structures --
 25 Q. So it's conceivable as far as fire is concerned that

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1 there be an incident commander and an on-scene commander
 2 working together at the same incident?
 3 A. Working together at the same incident yes, but not the
 4 same person.
 5 Q. Not the same person. What is the view on whether NILOs
 6 should be on-scene commanders?
 7 A. Within the Fire Service, that role lends itself very
 8 well because they are the point of contact -- at least
 9 under the JOPs guidance, they're the people for fire who
 10 are liaising with police and the ambulance. They're
 11 also the people who do the MTFA training, they are also
 12 the people who have probably worked and exercised most
 13 closely with the specialist response as we have
 14 discussed earlier this afternoon.
 15 So it's reasonable for that person, with their
 16 training and understanding of JOPs and those procedures,
 17 to be the on-scene commander.
 18 Q. But not an incident commander?
 19 A. Not in the case of an MTFA, no. It's normally supported
 20 by the standard incident command, who would be in the
 21 cold zone.
 22 Q. Let me understand this: when the Chief Fire Officers
 23 Association say that NILOs should not ordinarily be
 24 incident commanders, what is the rationale behind the
 25 fact that they should not ordinarily be incident

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1 commanders?
 2 A. Because the NILO role is one of tactical adviser. It's
 3 a role that reaches out to get information and bridge
 4 the intelligence gap, to feed back in to assist the
 5 incident commander in making their decisions. So it's
 6 not an active command role, it's a liaison role between
 7 the other agencies involved in that incident.
 8 Q. And a NILO isn't capable of doing that?
 9 A. Capable of which?
 10 Q. Being an incident commander.
 11 A. They absolutely are. I thought I'd said that. They are
 12 qualified to be an incident commander, but the role --
 13 if deployed as a NILO, your role is one of tactical
 14 advice and the incident command will be made up from
 15 other officers as qualified commanders.
 16 Q. Is this not just unduly confusing policy again, perhaps?
 17 A. I don't believe so, no. I believe it's very
 18 straightforward and understood.
 19 Q. What would have been wrong with Mr Berry, for instance,
 20 if he'd been first on the scene, or anyone first on the
 21 scene, who happened to be a duty NILO, also being an
 22 incident commander? What would be the problem with
 23 that?
 24 A. There wouldn't have been a problem with it. He could
 25 have proceeded down that line and he could have decided

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1 that, actually, if they were going to the scene he was
 2 going to take initial incident command and he could have
 3 delegated another NILO to take that duty role, that
 4 wouldn't have been an issue. But the likelihood is if
 5 the mobilisation had played out as a standard response,
 6 those resources would have brought an incident commander
 7 with them.
 8 Q. Practically, the fact is on the night of the 22nd, there
 9 was a significant delay before an incident commander was
 10 either designated or self-appointed?
 11 A. That's correct.
 12 Q. And that was Mr Levy at 23.50, if I recall.
 13 A. As I recall, yes. The timing I'm not sure.
 14 Q. He designated himself, or whatever, as an incident
 15 commander and that's unfortunate, not Mr Levy
 16 designating himself, but the fact it took so long for an
 17 incident commander to be appointed or recognised.
 18 That's a problem, isn't it?
 19 A. It's challenging, yes.
 20 Q. It's a problem caused again due to policy and procedure
 21 as understood by the Fire Service, isn't it?
 22 A. I don't make that correlation directly, I think the
 23 policies and procedures support both incident command
 24 and the role of the NILO. I think the application of
 25 the policy on the night and some of those decisions

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1 taken, as already given in evidence, made that more
 2 difficult than perhaps it needed to be.
 3 Q. The fact is until 11.50, when Mr Levy took some
 4 responsibility, no one had stepped up to be incident
 5 commander as far as the Fire Service are concerned;
 6 that's right, isn't it?
 7 A. That's correct, there wasn't a designated incident
 8 commander.
 9 Q. Yes, but no one stepped up to do it, did they, until
 10 Mr Levy did?
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's arguable that de facto Mr Berry was
 12 doing it, but he certainly wasn't in a suitable position
 13 to do it and it should have been taken over by somebody
 14 else; is that fair or not?
 15 A. I think it is fair, yes. I do refer to that, that the
 16 opportunity was missed to hand over responsibility once
 17 he recognised the plan wasn't working.
 18 MR COOPER: This is serious, isn't it? We're talking about
 19 communication, we're talking about communication,
 20 situational awareness and important matters relating to
 21 how we can help people as quickly and as soon as
 22 possible. The fact that there was no incident commander
 23 or no one took the initiative to be incident commander
 24 until just before midnight is serious, isn't it?
 25 A. Yes, it is serious.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I just tell you how I'm currently
 2 thinking to see whether you agree with this? There is
 3 a serious gap in time and that was contributed to by the
 4 fact that no one took hold of the situation and no one
 5 got a grip of it. That was at least contributed in part
 6 by the fact that there was no incident commander.
 7 A. Yes.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's more serious because that seems to
 9 be the fact that there was no incident commander is in
 10 fact in accordance with the policy at the time, the
 11 policy did not allow specifically for somebody else to
 12 take over if no one had arrived at the scene. There's
 13 nothing that said: if you don't have someone at the
 14 scene, appoint an incident commander?
 15 A. On that point I agree, as we discussed yesterday.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's the seriousness of it as well.
 17 It's a policy failure --
 18 A. Yes.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: -- as well as in practice?
 20 MR COOPER: Thank you, sir.
 21 All this, as you've touched upon, Mr Hall, is
 22 exacerbated by the fact that at the time Mr Berry is
 23 coming from 22 miles away?
 24 A. Yes. Correct.
 25 Q. Would you agree that that -- I don't speak for Mr Berry

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1 directly -- situation should never arise again? If
 2 a duty NILO is responsible for his or her locality,
 3 wherever it may be in the country, they should live
 4 close to that locality, shouldn't they, and know it?
 5 A. I understand the point. I believe that would reduce the
 6 likelihood of that situation arising. There have been
 7 policies in fire services in the past where if you are
 8 an operational senior officer, you have to live within
 9 certain geographical boundaries. My understanding
 10 is that isn't applied everywhere and there are various
 11 reasons for that, not least the price of housing and
 12 other issues depending where you're serving in the
 13 country. The reality is people live where they live, so
 14 if the organisation allows that to be how their senior
 15 officers mobilise, then I think the way to perhaps
 16 guarantee it's less likely to happen -- and I believe
 17 this is what happens now -- is it adopts a position and
 18 a policy of the nearest officer goes.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The fact of the matter is I don't know
 20 the extent of GMFRS, but you could well have somebody
 21 who is near to the scene of a potential fire who is
 22 quite a long way away from the scene of another
 23 potential fire, so it doesn't seem to me necessarily
 24 that you have to say you have to be within a certain
 25 range -- as I said, I don't know how far GMFRS goes.

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1 What has to happen is that somehow you need to have
 2 a policy which enables whoever is going to run and play
 3 an important part in getting this thing going and
 4 getting the response going, they either need to be close
 5 enough to do that or they need to hand over immediately
 6 to someone else.
 7 A. Yes, and that personal recognition that you're probably
 8 going to be significantly delayed is part of your own
 9 risk assessment about how you use that information.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Leave aside the delay, a 22-mile journey
 11 is quite a long way to go to get to a fire or an
 12 explosion.
 13 A. Yes.
 14 MR COOPER: The added problem to that, which the inquiry
 15 will already be seized of, is while whoever is driving
 16 22 miles, they're not able to concentrate on taking
 17 operational decisions and important decisions or
 18 certainly not being able to apply themselves properly if
 19 they're concentrating on their driving as well.
 20 A. It's very challenging. And having responded as a senior
 21 officer on my own in a car on many occasions it is
 22 a very challenging place to be because you probably have
 23 a radio or two, you may have a pager, people may be
 24 trying to phone you, you're also trying to concentrate
 25 on the road and drive safely and arrive and think about

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1 what you are going to do when you get there. Yes, it is
 2 a challenging environment.
 3 Q. And as the Chief Fire Officers Association say in their
 4 document, {INQ019308/5}, they just simply say:
 5 "The duty NILO needs to be on the scene as soon as
 6 possible."
 7 A. Yes.
 8 Q. Should there not be more specific mandation that if you
 9 cannot be on the scene within at least a reasonable
 10 period of time, then do your own risk assessment, and
 11 make it more imperative perhaps that there's a time
 12 limit to this, it can't drag on? Should it be more
 13 specific? I got there in the end with my question.
 14 Should it be more specific perhaps than simply "get
 15 there as soon as possible"?
 16 A. I think that would be ideal to say that you need to be
 17 in attendance within whatever that agreed time period
 18 is.
 19 I think, to reflect the chairman's earlier point,
 20 there is some difficulty in incidents happening where
 21 they happen, so the predictability that you would always
 22 be able to meet that time frame is more challenging.
 23 But certainly perhaps some more emphasis on the need to
 24 assess how likely or how long it is going to take you to
 25 make that response and then whether there's a more

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1 suitable officer who could take that on from you if you
 2 weren't able to meet that, yes.
 3 I do believe, and perhaps others who are current in
 4 the hearing may know, but I believe that GMFRS now go to
 5 nearest officer mobilising to scene as opposed to just
 6 necessarily the person who might be on the rota.
 7 Q. It shouldn't necessarily just rely on one person, should
 8 it? For instance you can have a number of duty NILOs,
 9 can't you, for the same incident?
 10 A. You have a number of NILOs on duty, as there were on the
 11 night of the 22nd, yes.
 12 Q. So there could have been maybe two or three Mr Berrys,
 13 as it were, on the night, so the fact that Mr Berry was
 14 delayed by 22 miles shouldn't necessarily have brought
 15 the process to a grinding halt, should it?
 16 A. No, it shouldn't. Had he, and it is speculative
 17 inasmuch as it didn't happen, recognised that and handed
 18 it over earlier in the piece than another NILO would
 19 have been very clear, rather than assuming he was on his
 20 way and going to be there shortly, it would have been
 21 clear that wasn't going to happen and they could have
 22 perhaps taken more positive action.
 23 Q. Is there, for instance, room to consider, again as we
 24 all say, heaven forbid it should happen again, something
 25 as serious as this or even half as serious as what

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1 occurred at the arena, that there is a facility for two
 2 duty NILOs to be simultaneously instructed so that they
 3 can share the burden right from the start?
 4 A. Yes. There are a variety of possibilities. It will
 5 come down to the resources available for that agency
 6 at the time then because not every — due to — just the
 7 resources available and the numbers of trained people in
 8 certain roles, not every Fire and Rescue Service has
 9 a uniform number of people. So a large metropolitan
 10 Fire Service is very likely to have significantly more
 11 flexibility in how it deploys those resources than
 12 another area that might only have one or two
 13 specialists.
 14 Q. Greater Manchester at the time could easily have
 15 provided another duty NILO, couldn't they, to assist,
 16 had it been the policy, to assist Mr Berry?
 17 A. Yes, and Mr Berry specifically requested additional
 18 NILOs because he knew he would need support in executing
 19 his plan.
 20 Q. But no one considered whether Mr Berry himself needed
 21 direct support as the duty NILO? It's down to him, is
 22 it, to raise his concern?
 23 A. I think there is an onus on the individual officer to
 24 recognise that they need support, yes.
 25 Q. In terms of those that undertake work such as NILOs and

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1 particularly, as we're talking about them at the moment,
 2 one of the concerns raised by a number of witnesses
 3 is that the experience and qualifications of people that
 4 take these positions may be more desk-bound experience,
 5 I put it bluntly, than operational experience. Do you
 6 have a view on that as to whether there should be more
 7 operational experience available to people in these
 8 important positions rather than — and I'm not trying to
 9 decry desk-bound work, it's important, but rather than
 10 simply desk-bound experience?
 11 A. I do have a view. Based on my experience, the NILOs are
 12 also selected from officers who hold incident command
 13 qualifications commensurate with their rank and are
 14 operational officers as opposed to individuals who don't
 15 carry out an operational role. I believe, if I could
 16 refer back to evidence and a statement you made some
 17 time ago, Mr Cooper, you were talking about everybody
 18 starts somewhere. And people have a variety of exposure
 19 throughout their career, some of which may be spent in
 20 an area like fire safety or that area, but that doesn't
 21 preclude them nor does it reflect on their ability to be
 22 a successful operational commander.
 23 Q. Right.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm going to take a short gap at some
 25 stage. Is this convenient?

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1 MR COOPER: This would be convenient.
 2 (Pause)
 3 MR COOPER: One very self-contained question, but again
 4 an issue that's arisen. We've heard how the fire team,
 5 as it were, was being put together during the course of
 6 this ongoing event on 22 May by people thinking, and I'm
 7 not criticising because obviously one uses one's
 8 experience, but people thinking of people they knew who
 9 they called and they contacted and they called in on
 10 a rather ad hoc basis as people were going to the scene.
 11 Do you have any views as to whether perhaps --
 12 whether or not that worked or not at the end of the day,
 13 whether there should be a more structured system in
 14 putting a team together for events like this?
 15 A. My understanding of the evidence as it was presented and
 16 seen is that there was in existence on the night an
 17 adequate team, as you state it, for the response to any
 18 incident, including of this type, and by that I mean the
 19 structures that were in place. We've already discussed
 20 the NILOs that were on duty, the front line fire
 21 appliances, the specialist resources and the senior
 22 officers nominated against an existing rota to be the
 23 duty group manager, the duty APO, the duty PO,
 24 et cetera. So in my view, in my opinion, GMFRS had
 25 a commensurate structure in place.

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1 What then happened, on my understanding of the
 2 evidence, was that certain individuals, as they became
 3 aware of the incident, offered their services to assist,
 4 recognising that this was a unique and challenging
 5 incident for Manchester, and professional discussions
 6 were had around where they would best fit, for example.
 7 So I think that's -- and I don't wish to be
 8 obtuse -- slightly different from saying it was cobbled
 9 together --
 10 Q. I don't think I used the word cobbled, I used the word
 11 ad hoc, and I'm not suggesting that the individuals
 12 gathered were not anything other than esteemed,
 13 experienced people and it worked. But the question I'm
 14 putting to you is that that system worked on that night,
 15 but given the nature it was undertaken (sic), how
 16 unstructured it was, is there not room for it not to
 17 work, the wrong people could be called upon, someone
 18 might not answer the phone? It's the system that I'm
 19 asking about, not necessarily on the night whether the
 20 team weren't a good team, I'm not asking you questions
 21 about that. Should there not be a more structured
 22 system whereby one individual is responsible for putting
 23 the team together to ensure that on all occasions it was
 24 as good or otherwise as the team put together for
 25 Manchester Arena?

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1 A. Yes, and I think every service would certainly strive to
 2 have robust rotas that addressed any incident type. The
 3 way you achieve that is not about personalities and
 4 individuals and, as I hear you say, this is not what
 5 this is about, but you make sure that those individual
 6 people who necessarily have to populate a rota are
 7 adequately trained, experienced and qualified to do
 8 those roles. Then by doing that, you remove the
 9 personality element out of it and you're not relying on
 10 the A-team, if you will, it's a generic response
 11 regardless of time of day, regardless of which day of
 12 the week or regardless of the week of the year. And
 13 that's about having adequately populated operational
 14 rotas with properly qualified people on them.
 15 Q. So you're satisfied in short as to the process, if I can
 16 use that word?
 17 A. Yes, I am.
 18 Q. All right. I want to ask you now about something in
 19 your report and it may well be the best way of dealing
 20 with this is simply asking you whether you adopt what
 21 you said in your report. Your second report, please.
 22 Can I take you, please, to page 44. Paragraph 111.
 23 This deals with the conversation that Mr O'Reilly
 24 had with Mr Hynes. I want to read with you what you say
 25 in your statement and ask whether you adopt it. You say

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1 this, paragraph 111:
 2 "According to statements, each time any request to
 3 send these resources forward..."
 4 And let's get some context for that, turn back to
 5 43, please:
 6 "At several points during this deployment phase,
 7 NILOs and officers, both at the RVP and CSR, checked to
 8 clarify or challenge why specialist resources that were
 9 available were not being sent, but only their
 10 firefighters in normal PPE with no specialist training
 11 or equipment."
 12 Then we carry on:
 13 "According to statements, each time any request to
 14 send these resources forward was suggested it was denied
 15 or overruled by the CFO on the grounds that he had
 16 received what was needed directly from NWAS and that was
 17 all that was required to be sent."
 18 You go on to say:
 19 "The CFO also states that he wanted to reserve the
 20 specialist resources in the event of another attack
 21 in the GMFRS area. It is not uncommon to keep assets in
 22 reserve as a contingency and the CFO is, of course, at
 23 liberty to organise his resources as he sees fit, but in
 24 my opinion, given that mutual aid arrangements were in
 25 place with neighbouring fire services, and its own GMFRS

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1 officers were now requesting additional resources from
 2 the scene, his refusal to sanction this seems unusual.
 3 It may well be that the CFO was relying on the
 4 information he had received from his NWS colleague and
 5 therefore discounted the requests from his own GMFRS
 6 officers, but the effect of his decision was to make the
 7 GMFRS response less adequate and effective by
 8 withholding specialist trained and equipped resources
 9 from the scene.”
 10 That's your paragraph 11 (sic) and I simply ask you,
 11 do you adopt that?
 12 A. Yes, I do.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And indeed, Mr O'Reilly agreed with
 14 hindsight he should have sent specialist resources
 15 there.
 16 A. Yes.
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Apart from the delay because Mr Berry
 18 wasn't sure that the non-specialist people should go in,
 19 and in fact the non-specialists did go in and it
 20 fortunately was perfectly safe for them to do so, did
 21 the fact of not having the specialist resources there
 22 actually affect what the Fire Service eventually did to
 23 help on this occasion?
 24 A. I think from my understanding of the evidence of their
 25 activity when they actually were committed I think the

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1 answer to that is probably no.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Because what they did was they moved
 3 people out and got them to ambulances. I'm not running
 4 that down.
 5 A. Yes. And were primarily offering assistance where
 6 needed and taking direction to assist with the walking
 7 wounded, I believe, as it was described, to go to the
 8 ambulance loading point and assist in that way. I think
 9 if you wound the clock back and had they arrived earlier
 10 when there was perhaps more or other activities that
 11 could have been undertaken, then I would probably answer
 12 that in a slightly different way.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. It may be Mr Cooper's coming to
 14 this and if so I'm sorry for pre-empting it, but put
 15 neutrally, the evidence suggests that the atmosphere
 16 in that command room was not the greatest between these
 17 senior officers.
 18 A. Yes.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm not proposing to go into whose fault
 20 it is, who is right and who is wrong. Do you think that
 21 lack of a good atmosphere and cooperation between them
 22 all affected in any way the response on the night?
 23 A. I don't actually, sir, think it affected the response on
 24 the night. I think there was, again hopefully
 25 neutrally, what may be described as strong professional

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1 disagreement.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, okay. So that led to the bad
 3 atmosphere?
 4 A. That's not the same thing as — had the outcome been
 5 that there was such disagreement that nobody went at all
 6 then perhaps yes, but that didn't happen.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think it actually goes beyond strong
 8 professional disagreement, that's my impression, but you
 9 don't think it had any — it's regrettable and it
 10 certainly might affect a situation, but it didn't
 11 actually on that particular night?
 12 A. I don't believe it did on the night, sir, no.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 14 MR COOPER: I would like to ask you some questions now
 15 specifically about North West Fire Control. A specific
 16 question first before we look in any detail at that
 17 organisation.
 18 Overall, on what you know about this case, do you
 19 agree that there should perhaps be a force duty officer
 20 for all major incidents in the control room?
 21 A. In the fire control room?
 22 Q. Yes.
 23 A. A force duty officer?
 24 Q. Yes.
 25 A. From the police?

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1 Q. I beg your pardon, an equivalent from the Fire Service.
 2 A. Oh, I see.
 3 Q. If I use the equivalent, forgive me.
 4 A. An operational officer supporting the function?
 5 Q. Yes, indeed. In the control room?
 6 A. I understand, sorry. I have seen, experienced and done
 7 that role on occasion myself and I think there is
 8 significant benefit, especially when there's
 9 a significant or series of challenging incidents playing
 10 out.
 11 Because of the earlier discussion we had around the
 12 control not having a command function, what it adds —
 13 where it adds value, in my view, is it enables support
 14 of the control room managers with the voice — the
 15 operational voice in the room, if you will, about
 16 perhaps when there are difficult decisions of priority
 17 and resources, as they're becoming more limited, or
 18 prioritising one mobilisation over another, for example.
 19 Whether, again, coming back to resourcing, whether
 20 every Fire and Rescue Service has the capacity to
 21 resource that effectively is a question for the sector.
 22 But in principle, I think there's a good symbiotic
 23 relationship there, and again if nothing else, it also
 24 allows developments of professional relationship between
 25 the control room and the operational staff.

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1 Q. Thank you.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So what are we talking about? In NWFC
 3 we have four areas.
 4 A. Yes, four Fire and Rescue Services.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: They're going to each have an officer
 6 there?
 7 A. I think as Mr Keelan, as I recall, in his evidence --
 8 because they had at the time of his evidence officers
 9 from GMFRS working within North West Fire Control,
 10 I think that's probably a discussion for the region to
 11 decide where is the most value added for that. And
 12 again, it would be resourcing, so can Cumbria resource
 13 that in the way that Greater Manchester can? It's
 14 a question for them obviously.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: They would be there to give guidance
 16 rather than direction? Do I understand what you're
 17 saying correctly?
 18 A. Yes, I think to add operational support to an incident.
 19 So for example in this case, had that information come
 20 in early -- sorry, not early, but had that individual
 21 been in the control room at the point of call, there
 22 could have been a professional discussion which may have
 23 obviated some of the issues that then subsequently
 24 happened. As in will we send, won't we send, what will
 25 we send, if you see what I mean, that kind of support.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: If you were able to answer yes or no,
 2 this would be helpful --
 3 A. I will try, sir.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: -- guidance only or there to direct the
 5 staff?
 6 A. Direct, actually. In my own experience -- now, I don't
 7 know the legalities of that, but my experience is, and
 8 we're not talking a dictatorship here but, "We're
 9 sending that there".
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: He's the man in charge, put it that way?
 11 A. Yes, essentially. That's not as unique as perhaps it
 12 sounds initially. If you think about what happens on
 13 the incident ground, an officer who needs to -- the
 14 phrase in the Fire Service is to make up, to increase
 15 the attendance at an incident, will send a message
 16 effectively ordering the resources that they require.
 17 It's an assistance, an attendance message. But that
 18 invariably, unless there's nothing to send, and I can't
 19 envisage that happening, it's not -- control won't come
 20 back and say why or no. So there is a sense of
 21 directing, even already, in the normal business.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I just need to know if we're making
 23 a recommendation or considering a recommendation of that
 24 whether it was -- what basis it was on. Thank you.
 25 MR COOPER: I may be wrong but the police have a similar

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1 situation, don't they, with a force duty officer in the
 2 control room?
 3 A. Yes, and there's somebody who exerts -- in fact in the
 4 Met it is called the grip, the grip chief inspector.
 5 It's somebody who is able to be across the information
 6 and intelligence and exert operational grip at the
 7 earliest point to say, "This is the course of action".
 8 Others may take that up and deliver the effect but it's
 9 this person who is able to grip that right at the
 10 earliest point, yes.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The reason to actually identify it is
 12 we've got people employed by different people here so
 13 you need to know who's in charge?
 14 A. Quite, yes.
 15 MR COOPER: Another, perhaps, piece of assistance that such
 16 an individual could be is interpreting and understanding
 17 information that's coming in so that those at North West
 18 Fire Control, doing their best, who may miss the
 19 importance of a message, this command individual be able
 20 to say, "Wait a minute, this is important, don't miss
 21 that"?
 22 A. Yes, quite.
 23 Q. As we know, on the night of the 22nd, that was one of
 24 the problems, important pieces of information, the
 25 significance of which were being missed?

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1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. And having such an individual as we're postulating with
 3 you would have at least gone a long way to stopping that
 4 happening, wouldn't it?
 5 A. Yes, I believe it would. It would have helped at least
 6 yes.
 7 Q. I want to deal with issues in relation to whether North
 8 West Fire Control as a unit are the best -- is the best
 9 regime to be serving the region.
 10 Just a little bit of history if we can. Can you
 11 confirm that North West Fire Control comes from
 12 a programme which was introduced by the government to
 13 turn everywhere in the country into regional centres?
 14 That's how it started, there was a government programme
 15 to turn every area into a regional centre?
 16 A. Yes, the regional control centre project.
 17 Q. For reasons we don't need to go into, that was
 18 a complete failure and it was abandoned, wasn't it?
 19 A. It wasn't adopted, yes.
 20 Q. Cash incentives, in fact, were offered to certain
 21 regions to use the premises that in fact had already
 22 been built and would be useless if they weren't used?
 23 A. There was an opportunity for Fire and Rescue Services
 24 and controls to use those very new and state-of-the-art
 25 buildings, yes.

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1 Q. These state-of-the-art buildings, such as that that
 2 North West Fire Control work in, were built in
 3 anticipation that the general programme was going to
 4 take off?
 5 A. I believe that's the case, yes.
 6 Q. So effectively, North West Fire Control comes from
 7 a failed initiative, encouraged with a cash incentive to
 8 use buildings which were already erected and that would
 9 have been white elephants without that?
 10 A. I'm not sure you're asking me a question I can answer.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm not sure he is. That sounds like
 12 a political statement to me.
 13 MR COOPER: Not really.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Certainly not hyperbole, I'd never
 15 accuse you of that!
 16 MR COOPER: You know me better than that!
 17 Nonetheless, it's right to say, isn't it, that North
 18 West Fire Control are only one of a very few entities
 19 in the country that operate this way?
 20 A. That's my understanding, yes. There are some Fire and
 21 Rescue Services that utilise the building, but they will
 22 be single service rather than regional, London being an
 23 example.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: How many are there, do you know? If you
 25 don't know, can you find out?

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1 A. In terms of who is using it as a model?
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Regions, I don't know.
 3 A. Regions? It was trying to be nine, I think.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: How many are there? We've got North
 5 West Fire Control. Who else have we got?
 6 A. I'm sorry, sir, I don't know. I can find out for you.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 8 MR COOPER: One is London?
 9 A. London has moved or did move some time ago now. It uses
 10 that building which was the product of the
 11 regionalisation.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Do they always have the same single
 13 control room, they've just moved location?
 14 A. Yes, that's right.
 15 MR COOPER: You've been taken to, and I'm not going to take
 16 you through them exhaustively, the pros and cons of
 17 a system such as operated by North West Fire Control and
 18 we've heard evidence from others on it. They no doubt,
 19 you say, have the advantages of Google or whatever to
 20 help people plot their routes and not get lost, that
 21 sort of thing.
 22 A. The technology is adopted by all emergency services, and
 23 it changes and develops rapidly, yes.
 24 Q. You have been giving evidence about how North West Fire
 25 Control have this facility to ensure that people don't

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1 get lost and that sort of thing. Do you see where I'm
 2 going on this? How well did that assist Mr Berry?
 3 A. Well, I'm not -- I don't know whether he does, and
 4 perhaps that can be found out, but I don't believe that
 5 that an officer travelling on their own in their own car
 6 would necessarily have the same data equipment fitted to
 7 their car and he may well have been navigating on his
 8 own navigation system.
 9 Q. So to a degree the advantage -- one of the advantages
 10 you give of technology and the wonders of geographical
 11 assistance that North West Fire Control can give is only
 12 relevant if you're in a fire engine?
 13 A. That would be the initial fit and then some services use
 14 fleet cars, as opposed to private or personal cars, and
 15 they may also have a fit. There are other technological
 16 solutions where some of that information, including
 17 route mapping, can be sent to mobile phones. I don't
 18 know if that is the case everywhere -- indeed, I don't
 19 know if that is the case in Manchester.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: But is that what we are -- whether
 21 they're the right idea or not, is that what we're
 22 talking about, the equipment NAWAS has, or are we talking
 23 about equipment which allows them to see the location
 24 that they are sending people to? Or is it said they
 25 could send them a route?

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1 A. The technologies are there for both. To know the
 2 automatic vehicle location or officer location, be that
 3 by Airwave or by vehicle mapping, is one issue and then
 4 the identification of a safe or expeditious route and
 5 the sending of that information to that vehicle is
 6 another thing and those technologies are both --
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 8 MR COOPER: This is all fine and dandy, as they say in
 9 Wolverhampton.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Not just in Wolverhampton, fine city as
 11 it is.
 12 MR COOPER: Thank you, sir.
 13 This is all fine and dandy, as it were, but most of
 14 the country are served by a regime or a system which
 15 isn't like North West Fire Control, which provides all
 16 these services as well, I presume; is that right?
 17 A. Yes. I'm... I'm trying to...
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think the issue to which this goes is:
 19 is the advantage of being locally based, as it were, as
 20 great now as it may have been in the past? As
 21 I understand it, you're saying because everyone's got
 22 the same thing then actually it isn't so much?
 23 A. Yes, sir.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand the argument for saying
 25 having somebody local helps. The other question is, if

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1 I'm going to recommend that we go back to where we were
 2 I would be recommending dismantling what we've got and
 3 that would need to be taken into account as well.
 4 MR COOPER: I understand that, sir. What we're attempting
 5 to do by these questions is perhaps at least just to
 6 recognise that North West Fire Control is an exception
 7 to the rule rather than the rule.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I understand that's important.
 9 Of course what you are recommending, Mr Hall, is
 10 ideally, as indeed others have as well, is you put all
 11 the control rooms for all localities for an area all
 12 together.
 13 A. I think that would help, yes.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's quite interesting that you're so,
 15 if I may say, keen on putting everyone in the same room
 16 so they can come and get each other where, as you
 17 accepting really with all these new communication
 18 systems and things like that, being able to talk
 19 directly is less important than it might have been in
 20 the past.
 21 A. I do agree, sir, but I think there's the other factor,
 22 as I mentioned earlier today, that the technology is one
 23 thing in and of itself, but however good that is, that
 24 has to be utilised by humans. And the human factor for
 25 me is as important in building a robust and effective

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1 team and those professional relationships as it is in
 2 having great technology that's available.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I get the point.
 4 MR COOPER: You have dealt with — and there's no need for
 5 me to go through them in depth — the failings as far as
 6 you're concerned in relation to North West Fire Control
 7 in your 25—page document ranging from control room
 8 coordination was neither adequate nor effective, JESIP
 9 failings, lack of information management, a lack of
 10 challenge on information received, such as the examples
 11 you have given.
 12 But in your second report, I won't take you to it,
 13 but it's there for those who want to see it, page 30,
 14 paragraph 78, you describe the attitude of North West
 15 Fire Control as passive. Do you use the word "passive"?
 16 A. Mm.
 17 Q. What do you mean by passive?
 18 A. It's in the context of the majority of the previous
 19 phases you've just — examples you've just given. This
 20 is primarily almost like a comparator between the other
 21 control rooms at the time that were experiencing
 22 a considerably higher call volume and activity and the
 23 lack, in my view, of the evidence of this push and pull
 24 and activity of going and seeking out, as I've already
 25 discussed today, the other information that's

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1 potentially available.
 2 So it's passive not in the sense of in any way
 3 disinterested or unengaged but passive in perhaps in its
 4 activity level if that makes sense.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: They should have been going out to get
 6 information when it wasn't coming to them?
 7 A. Correct.
 8 MR COOPER: Can I put it another way: reactive rather than
 9 proactive?
 10 A. I would like them to be reactive and proactive,
 11 actually: reacting to what they had and proactive about
 12 what they didn't.
 13 Q. But substantially reactive rather than proactive?
 14 A. Yes, that's a good way of putting it.
 15 Q. On the subject of training, you've dealt with that in
 16 depth, but can I put this to you, just bluntly, and it'd
 17 be quicker and easier. Would you accept that
 18 substantially, North West Fire Control were frozen out
 19 of any training they should receive by GMFRS and treated
 20 as a poor partner in terms of training?
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think it's probably going further than
 22 you probably can on the evidence. They did have some
 23 training. I don't think it's fair to say they were
 24 frozen out completely.
 25 MR COOPER: I don't mean frozen out completely, I'll put it

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1 again prosaically, back of the room, when we've got
 2 time, in a corner, a chat, that sort of training.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The training which wasn't there, as we
 4 have heard, is that they weren't part of training with
 5 everybody else on the call—out procedure, so they never
 6 got to experience what they were really going to have to
 7 do —
 8 MR COOPER: I was going to come on to that specifically as
 9 not being called out to exercises.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You think training generally was
 11 lacking?
 12 MR COOPER: I mean the general attitude to North West Fire
 13 Control was as the poor partner when it came to
 14 training.
 15 What do you say about that?
 16 A. I think it's probably fair to say on the evidence I have
 17 seen there were opportunities missed to engage with
 18 them. Now whether that was because they were being
 19 deliberately treated as the poor partner would be for
 20 others to say, but there would certainly be
 21 opportunities where they could have been more readily
 22 engaged or opportunities given, or taken indeed, to
 23 carry out more training.
 24 Q. Was that a cultural issue perhaps in terms of the
 25 relationship between GMFRS and North West Fire Control?

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1 How did it come about?
 2 A. I don't know that it was actually a cultural issue.
 3 I think sometimes GMFRS wouldn't be alone in this.
 4 I think sometimes the control function, because it tends
 5 to happen separate to the operational function, can be
 6 at times, by those planning the training, overlooked or
 7 perhaps not engaged with earlier enough in the piece to
 8 make a meaningful contribution.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It may be they just think all they've
 10 got to do is take a phone call, look at a card and press
 11 a button and that's all they need to do, so you don't
 12 need much training?
 13 A. Yes, just a lack of understanding of the importance of
 14 having them in at that early point, yes.
 15 MR COOPER: And on a more specific issue, a matter the chair
 16 touched on a moment ago about the lack of inclusion of
 17 North West Fire Control in exercising and important
 18 exercises like that, events like that, we've heard
 19 evidence that that was the case. What's your view on
 20 that?
 21 A. I think, as the evidence shows, the individuals
 22 responsible for some of that training have admitted that
 23 they could have done more to ensure that that did
 24 happen, so yes, I think that's vitally important.
 25 Q. We hear about matters such as that, and there are other

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1 matters as well, as people say, not you personally, but
 2 it's said, "Yes, I can spot that now. Yes, I can see
 3 that". But this is not complex stuff, is it? It's not
 4 good enough, would you agree, for North West Fire
 5 Control to simply say, "Oh, I can see that now, it
 6 should have happened"?
 7 These are basic things that should have been spotted
 8 before 22 May 2017: train North West Fire Control
 9 properly, include them in exercising. I just use that
 10 as an example. It's not good enough, is it? I'm not
 11 saying you're saying it, but it's not good enough, is
 12 it, for North West Fire Control to simply say, "Ah yeah,
 13 we spot that now, we'll sort it out"? It should have
 14 been spotted at the time, shouldn't it?
 15 A. If there's a testing and exercising regime in place then
 16 it arguably could have been spotted at the time.
 17 Whether that was missed or whether they didn't feel they
 18 were included, but my understanding from the evidence --
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Hall, forgive me, I'm just going to
 20 cut across you, if you don't mind, because I think there
 21 may be a simple answer.
 22 A. Yes.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: If you need training to do a job
 24 properly, if the training was inadequate then it should
 25 have been done before you started going?

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1 A. Absolutely, yes.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 3 MR COOPER: And simply a failure of recognition of need when
 4 that recognition was blindingly obvious at the time;
 5 would you agree?
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Shall we just say obvious?
 7 MR COOPER: Obvious, yes.
 8 A. Yes.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
 10 MR COOPER: I just want to take you to conclusions, please,
 11 in your second report, page 47, paragraph 122:
 12 "Having considered the evidence provided and
 13 analysed the Fire Service response to the arena attack,
 14 I can arrive at no other conclusion but to state that
 15 the overall Fire Service response, certainly within the
 16 first 2 hours of the incident, was inadequate and
 17 ineffective. GMFRS were delayed in arriving at the
 18 scene and were therefore unable to render assistance to
 19 casualties and engage in meaningful joint working with
 20 partner agencies in the early stages. The specialist
 21 resources available (SRT and TRU) were withheld from
 22 deploying forward and so were unable to add any value to
 23 the incident resolution."
 24 In a nutshell, that's your position, isn't it?
 25 A. Yes, it is.

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1 Q. Nick Mottram, a firefighter since 1998 and crew
 2 commander said, at reference -- no need to go to it --
 3 {INQ004252/1} this:
 4 "I can honestly say that I can't think of any aspect
 5 of the incident that went well."
 6 Referring to the Fire Service. Would you agree with
 7 him?
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Don't take too much trouble over that.
 9 You could say moving the beds out to the ambulances went
 10 well, but I think we all know that --
 11 MR COOPER: I think we know what Mr Mottram meant.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes. They never got there when they
 13 could do anything useful.
 14 MR COOPER: Sir, in that case, I have no further questions.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you very much. I'm grateful.
 16 MR DE LA POER: Well, sir, we have achieved what we set out
 17 to achieve.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So you obviously gave too much time to
 19 everybody!
 20 MR DE LA POER: No, everybody has been extremely efficient.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm very grateful. Thank you very much
 22 for getting through all your questions in time.
 23 I'm extremely grateful to you, Mr Hall, you've been
 24 very patient with us, thank you very much, and you have
 25 produced for us very comprehensive reports, for which

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1 we're grateful .
 2 MR DE LA POER: Sir, as to tomorrow, can I invite you to
 3 direct that we reconvene at 9.30 when we will be hearing
 4 from the two experts in relation to ambulance.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, thank you. Okay, 9.30 tomorrow.
 6 (3.19 pm)
 7 (The inquiry adjourned until 9.30 am
 8 on Friday, 10 September 2021)
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