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MG11(W)

CPS Use Only

WITNESS STATEMENT

(Criminal Procedure Rules R16.2, Criminal Justice Act 1967 S9)

		URN	
Statement of	Nicholas McCORMACK		
Age if under 18	Over 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18')	Occupation	Group Manager (MFRS)
This statement (consisting of 4 page(s)) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it, anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.			
Signature	Signature	Date	1 ST November 2024
Signature of parent / guardian / appropriate adult	N/A	Relationship of parent / guardian / appropriate adult	N/A

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded ☐ (supply witness details on MG11 Back)

I am Nicholas McCORMACK and I reside at the address given to Merseyside Police. I am providing this statement in relation to a report that a potentially hazardous material had been found at No. 10 Old School Close, Banks, Lancashire, PR9 8SB.

I am currently employed as a Group Manager (GM) by Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS), and I have been employed by them for 27 years. Within my employment I am a qualified Detection Identification and Monitoring (DIM) Advisor, for which I have received substantial training to deal with major incidents including the use of (CBRNE) Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive material. My qualifications and accreditations include:

- Hazardous Materials Environmental Protection Adviser
- National Resilience HDIM Modules 1,2 and 3

These skills and knowledge allow me to provide an operational and tactical response, including decontamination, scene survey, analysis and monitoring operations. I am adequately trained to conduct Hot Zone (immediate hazard) analysis using a range of equipment, whilst wearing the appropriate level of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in response to a CBRNE incident.

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Following the arrest of a male suspected of multiple stabbings in Southport, and an initial search of the suspect's home address by police officers and subsequent photographic evidence taken of potential biological hazard production, MFRS DIM capability was requested to attend the address to assist Merseyside Police in conducting a CBRNE assessment. The request came in at approximately 0900hrs on Wednesday 31st July 2024, when I met Police Constable 6156 Antonia CARROLL in the Joint Control Centre (JCC), Bridle Road, Liverpool L30 4YD. I informed cover 1 Area Manager Mark Thomas that a DIM request had been received and he sanctioned the request. PC CARROLL informed me that this was a residential property and the address was No. 10 Old School Close, Banks, Lancashire. She showed me some photographs of what appeared to be a brown organic substance in a clear, rectangular tupperware container and cardboard boxes, which contained goggles, plastic sieves, a conical flask, and a pestle and mortar and filter paper. I contacted DIM Advisor, GM 3266 David WATSON and agreed that I would pick up the DIM vehicle from Aintree Community Fire Station, conduct vehicle and equipment checks, return to JCC to pick up PC 6156 CARROLL and proceed to the scene. GM WATSON drove straight to scene in his MFRS provided vehicle. I informed MFRS Fire Control of the DIM deployment. I returned to JCC at approximately 1000hrs to collect PC CARROLL. I left JCC at approximately 1130hrs and drove to 10 Old School Close under blue light conditions. I was accompanied by PC CARROLL. We arrived at 10 Old School Close at approximately 1200hrs.		

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On arrival, a police cordon was in place at the entrance to Old School Close and several uniformed Police Officers were present. The target property was a three bedroom, semi-detached residential house of modern construction.

A brief was held in the DIM vehicle. Present were Police Bronze Chief Inspector David MORGAN, GM David WATSON, PC Antonia CARROLL, PC 5634 Paul RYLAND and I. During the briefing we were informed that Police Officers had entered the property and discovered items that could potentially pose a significant hazard to health. Namely, a sealed, clear plastic Tupperware box that was discovered in a first-floor bedroom and a cardboard box, containing goggles, plastic sieves, a conical flask, and a pestle and mortar.

The brief determined that a team, comprising GM David WATSON, PC Antonia CARROLL, PC 5634 Paul RYLAND and I would enter the property. We were tasked to conduct a scene survey to establish a permissive working environment and attempt to identify the materials identified in the photographs and any other potential hazards within the property and to take photographic evidence.

The safety brief determined the level of Personal Protective Equipment appropriate to the risk would be full face respirator, Tyvek suit, protective boots and 2 layers of nitrile gloves.

Due to the sensitivities around the incident and the presence of the Press, it was decided to park the DIM vehicle in such a position as to shield our activities from neighbouring houses and to don PPE inside the property. This decision was also based on the fact that no ill side effects had been evidenced by residents nor previous emergency service entrants to the property. We were given clear instruction not to open the Tupperware box.

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At approximately 1300hrs on Wednesday 31st July 2024, the team made entry into the property via the front door and entered the living room, where we donned our PPE. The living room was very untidy, with various boxes, packages, clothes strewn throughout the room and general mess. A box, approximately 90cm by 60cm was in the middle of the room on the floor, containing approximately 10 brown glass bottles, with storm matches taped to the side with black gaffer tape. We donned PPE and set up a safe decontamination area for the removal of PPE and the safe disposal of contaminated items. We cleared a working area on the kitchen table, set up the Hapsite ID and calibrated the equipment. I undertook an initial sampling of the atmosphere, starting in the downstairs kitchen and making a methodical right hand search pattern throughout the ground floor and then up the stairs, continuing on a right-hand search pattern through the bathroom, rear bedroom, front left bedroom and finishing in the target bedroom. We used the following devices. GFG 460 gas monitors, which sample the air for oxygen levels, flammable gases and vapours, Carbon Monoxide, Hydrogen sulphide, Ammonia, Chlorine and Hydrogen Cyanide. Readings on the GFG 460 gas monitors showed no change from the atmosphere externally. There was no decrease in oxygen levels and all other readings remained at zero. ppbRAE 3000 Photo Ionisation Detector (PID), which samples the atmosphere looking for the presence of volatile organic compounds (VOC) via vapours or gasses. Readings on the PID averaged between 50 to 500 parts per billion (the device displayed a continually rising detection in the ppb range in fresh air; however, the device was functioning correctly in the detection of VOCs, confirmed via the bump test). The PID is incapable of determining the identity of the volatile organic gas or vapour in the air, only that something is		

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present. The readings obtained were consistent with background and no significant change was detected.

The Rados RDS 200 Universal Survey Meter and Electronic Personal Dosimeters. Readings for Gamma and Beta radiation were zero, indicating that the presence of radioactive material was unlikely.

We returned to the kitchen and conducted a slow and methodical visual search of the kitchen area and the downstairs living room. We did not open any sealed boxes and we did not move anything in the living room. There were various parcels and packages addressed to 10 Old School Close, Banks.

We all then returned to the target bedroom. Access was gained to this room directly from the landing and was the last bedroom on the right, off the landing. Through the bedroom door and to the right was a table with a computer keyboard and monitor on top. Directly facing the door was a wooden framed bunkbed. The flooring was a laminate with no carpet. To the left of the door was an airing cupboard. On the floor, against the left-hand wall at the foot of the bed, there were two open boxes, containing goggles, plastic sieves, filter paper, a conical flask, a bottle labelled as 'Isopropyl Alcohol' and a pestle and mortar that appeared to have been used.

Located on the floor and near to the foot of the bed, was a sealed, clear plastic Tupperware box. It contained an unknown brown suspected organic substance and there was condensation on the box. Located on the floor and just under the foot of the bed was a second sealed, clear plastic Tupperware box with condensation inside.

PC RYLANDS employed an 'Agilent Resolve' to identify the material but was unable to identify any organic material. Both GM Watson and I employed a 'MIRA DS' Raman Spectrometer to attempt

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'through barrier analysis' using 'Content Method Analysis'. This method did not yield any conclusive result either. A sample of a dry brown solid substance (Sample 1) was taken from the plastic sieve, and GM Watson and I returned to the kitchen to attempt to identify the substance. Analysis of Sample 1 complete using Hazmat ID indicated Potassium Permanganate with a similarity index of 0.926. The spectrum was a good match with no additional peaks. PC CARROLL took a photograph of the spectrum. GM WATSON attempted further Identification by using Mira DS, but insufficient quantity was available (an indication of Carbon Tetra Chloride was returned; however, the peaks were not a good match, and it indicated a possible mixture). The available material was limited, and it is possible that the sample used on the HazMat ID was a purer representation of the sample taken than that remaining in the vial for the Mira DS. We returned to the bedroom. GM David WATSON, PC Antonia CARROLL and PC 5634 Paul RYLAND were present. I looked under the bed and I saw a large black nylon type material holdall, approximately 120cm long, 60cm wide and 20cm deep, with a zip opener running the length of the bag. Inside the bag, I found an archery bow, approximately ten arrows, some archery paraphernalia and a machete in a sheath. All items appeared to be new and unused and the arrows did not have the flights attached. During the search of this room, a number of other items were identified. On the floor, at the foot of the airing cupboard was an opened packet of orange smoke flares. There was a sealed, addressed package to 10 Old School Close, Banks which, when opened by GM Watson, contained brand new sledgehammer. When I retrieved the black holdall from under the bed, I noticed a small, clear, rectangular plastic bag, located approximately 30cm from the foot of the bed, leaning against the wall of the front	

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elevation of the property. I retrieved it from under the bed. The bag was labelled 'Ricinus Zansibariensis' seeds. PC CARROLL took photographs of these items. The discovery of the clear plastic bag labelled 'Ricinus Zansibariensis', gave us cause to believe that brown organic substance in the Tupperware was an intermediate stage of Ricin production. We took a collective decision to cease the scene assessment, exit the property and seek further advice from the National CBRN Centre. The team safely undressed in the living room and exited the property at approximately 15:25hrs. I did not enter the property again, although I continued to provide on scene support and emergency evacuation to Merseyside Police Licensed Search officers, CBRN National Centre and the Metropolitan Police up to Friday 16th August 2024.	
Signature	
Statement taken by (print name)	DC 1097 Roy Bromilow
Station	Major Crime Unit, Operational Command Centre, Leeward Drive, Speke, Liverpool, L24 8DA
Date, time statement taken	1 st November 2024 hours at Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, SHQ, Bridle Rd, Bootle, Merseyside

