

**Independent Committee in relation to the
Fire at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po**

WITNESS STATEMENT OF

LAI HO-FAI, EDMUND

I, LAI Ho-fai, Edmund, Senior Superintendent of Police, Hong Kong Police Force, of the Tai Po District, No. 4 On Po Lane, Tai Po, New Territories, Hong Kong do say as follows:-

1. I am the Senior Superintendent (“**SSP**”), Deputy District Commander of the Tai Po District (“**DDC TPDIST**”), Hong Kong Police Force (“**Force**”) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. I have joined the Force for 27 years since about 1998 and was promoted to the present rank on 14 July 2024. My main responsibilities include assisting the District Commander of the Tai Po District in the implementation of Force and Regional policies which affect the efficient and effective delivery of police services within the Tai Po District, evaluating the effectiveness of such services, implementing appropriate measures to enhance effectiveness as necessary, and ensuring all aspects of the District administration run smoothly and efficiently.
2. I make this Witness Statement pursuant to the request of the Independent Committee (“**Committee**”) in relation to the fire at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po as set out in a letter from Messrs. Lo & Lo, Solicitors for the Committee, to the Department of Justice dated

19 January 2026 (“**19 January Letter**”) in which specific questions were raised in paragraphs 1 to 19 (“**Questions**”). Save where otherwise appears, the facts deposed hereto are within my personal knowledge or are derived from office files and records and sources to which I have access and which are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

3. I understand that the Force has produced to the Committee my witness statement (Pol. 154) dated 12 December 2025, as attached to the letter from the Department of Justice to Messrs. Lo & Lo dated 12 January 2026. I confirm that the contents of my said witness statement are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. In this Witness Statement, I shall address Question 19, a., i. to v. of the 19 January Letter, and my response at the initial stage of the Incident. Other Questions which are within the Force’s purview will be addressed in the witness statements of other relevant officers of the Force to the Committee.

Question 19., a., i.: Chronology of How and When Police Officers were deployed to Wang Fuk Court

4. In the Wang Fuk Court fire incident (“**Incident**”), I was the most senior police officer at the scene of the fire and acted as the Tactical Commander at the initial stage of the Incident. My responsibilities as the Tactical Commander were to formulate tactical response and contingency plans, to allocate resources, to give briefings to all Operational Commanders on the ground, to coordinate, command, control and deploy all resources on the ground, to monitor the situation and development and adjust the operational plan

accordingly, and to make tactical-level decisions in response to prevailing situations and changing circumstances.

5. At around 1525 hours on 26 November 2025, while I was working at my office, situated at 14/F, Tai Po Police Station, I was informed by Chief Inspector of Police YIP Pak-lun of the District Operation Officer, Tai Po District that there was a fire at Wang Fuk Court. Looking out from the window at the elevator lobby on my floor towards the direction of Wang Fuk Court, I observed substantial smoke. I immediately geared up and readied myself to proceed to the scene to assist and assume command.
6. At 1532 hours, Superintendent LAM Wing-sze, Acting Senior Superintendent, Operations, New Territories North called my mobile phone and informed that there was fire at Wang Fuk Court.
7. At 1535 hours, I departed from Tai Po Police Station and proceeded to the scene by boarding on Police Vehicle “AM 6417” with other police officers.
8. When I was proceeding to the scene, I learnt from the beat radio that police officers of the Emergency Unit (“EU”), the Police Tactical Unit (“PTU”) and the Traffic Unit of New Territories North Region, the District Traffic Team of Tai Po District, the Patrol Sub-unit of Tai Po Division were on the ground at earlier time.
9. At 1541 hours, I arrived on the road outside the public toilet at Yuen Chau Tsai Park. I saw that the entire buildings of Wang Cheong House and Wang Tai House were engulfed in flames from the lower

floors to the rooftop and surrounded by dense smoke. I immediately instructed officers to cordon the bicycle track at Yuen Chau Tsai Park towards the direction of Nam Wan Road, as I noticed some burnt scaffolding poles had fallen onto the track.

10. I then proceeded along the roadside of Tai Po Road Yuen Chau Tsai Section towards the Kwong Fuk Roundabout. I observed continuous flames, burning unidentifiable objects, and charred debris floating from Wang Tai House toward Wang Kin House. I also repeatedly heard crackling sounds and the noise of burning bamboo scaffolding, and saw bamboo scaffolding falling around the exterior of the buildings. While on the move, I did not hear any fire alarm.
11. At 1800 hours, I was relieved by the Regional Response Contingent Commander Chief Superintendent Mr LAU King-lun, Alan.

Question 19., a., ii.: Details of the tasks performed by the Force in respect of the fire

12. At 1544 hours, I met KWOK Chun-lok, Chief Inspector of Police, Enforcement and Control Division of New Territories North Region (Acting) at the Kwong Fuk roundabout. As the surrounding roads in the vicinity of Wang Fuk Court were congested, I instructed him to perform traffic management duties including implementing road closures and traffic diversions so as to ensure that all emergency vehicles could access the fire scene in support of the rescue operations.

13. At 1549 hours, I met LI Hon-man, Superintendent, Emergency Unit New Territories North (“**EU NTN**”) (“**SP EU NTN**”), YEUNG Ming-hang, Divisional Commander Tai Po Division (Acting) (“**DVC TPDIV (Ag.)**”) and LAM Kwong-choi, Assistant Divisional Commander (Operations) Tai Po Division (Acting) at Kwong Wang Street outside the car park of Wang Fuk Court. We immediately conducted emergency coordination to cordon and secure the scene, to facilitate and assist the Fire Services Department (“**FSD**”) in rescue, to coordinate the response by different police units on the ground, to provide updates on the situation, and to arrange evacuation and rescue operations inside Wang Fuk Court when the residents were on the ground. I directed SP EU NTN and officers of EU NTN as well as PTU officers to evacuate affected persons from the inner cordon area around all 8 buildings of Wang Fuk Court, car park of Wang Fuk Court and Tai Po Baptist Public School, and direct them to a safe area which was the open area of Kwong Fuk Estate. Meanwhile, officers from the Tai Po District would be responsible for manning the Forward Control Point (“**FCP**”) at Kwong Wang Street near the unnamed road outside Kwong Fuk Court and controlling the outer cordon (beyond Kwong Wang Street, Kwong Fuk Roundabout, Tai Po Road Yuen Chau Tsai Section, Plover Cove Road near Kwong Yau House). I learnt from DVC TPDIV (Ag.) that the FCP had been activated at 1515 hours whilst the Regional Command and Control Centre of the New Territories North Region (“**RCCC NT**”) had been notified of the telephone number of the FCP. I reiterated to DVC TPDIV (Ag.) that the duties of the FCP were coordinating crowd management at the scene, registering affected persons, answering family enquiries, deploying Tai Po District officers to monitor the casualties situation at the scene

and hospitals (including Alice Ho Miu Ling Nethersole Hospital, North District Hospital and Prince of Wales Hospital), and keeping contact with Police posts in all hospitals around Hong Kong so as to update information relating to the casualties.

14. Officers of Patrol sub-unit, Tai Po Division used police vehicle's public announcement system to instruct the residents to evacuate. Moreover, the officers of the Police Community Relations Office of Tai Po District ("**PCRO TP**") accompanied the Tai Po District Council member Mr MUI Siu-fung at the rooftop of Wang Fuk Court car park to urge the residents to evacuate by using a loudhailer.
15. After communicating with the aforementioned officers in paragraph 13 above, I immediately proceeded from the private road of Wang Fuk Court toward Wang Cheong House. Upon reaching the entrance of Tai Po Baptist Public School, I stopped to observe and assess the situation within the interior area of Wang Fuk Court, noting that Wang Cheong House and Wang Tai House were emitting heavy smoke and intense flames, with continuous flames drifting towards Wang Kin House. The scaffolding nets on the middle floors of Wang Sun House were also on fire. The sky was filled with floating flames and burning unidentified debris. The crackling sounds of burning bamboo scaffolding persisted. Officers of FSD were engaged in rescue operations, while I, along with the PTU officers assisted in evacuating residents on the ground.
16. After a few minutes, I realised that the location where my officers and myself were positioned was no longer safe, as debris was falling from the upper floors of Wang Kin House. We therefore retreated

to the area outside Wang Yan House. I continued to gather the latest information on-site for reporting, deployment, and command purposes. Subsequently, I observed the fire spreading to Wang Tao House and Wang Yan House.

Question 19., a., iii.: The manner by which the Force coordinated the deployment of its officers in relation to the Wang Fuk Court Fire

17. To safeguard and protect life and property is a core duty of the Force. For the Incident, once the fire broke out, officers of the EU NTN were immediately deployed by the RCCC NT and when the situation escalated, more manpower of the EU NTN and the PTU of various regions were deployed for reinforcement. As the most senior officer and the Tactical Commander at the scene, I devoted myself to secure the scene, facilitate and assist in rescue and coordinate the response face to face with senior officers of FSD on the ground. I formulated tactical plans to secure the area, evacuate affected person and assist the rescue by FSD and oversaw the implementation of the plans. I flexibly allocated available resources among Tai Po Police District and other police manpower at the scene, requested additional resources from the Higher Command such as the Mobile Command Unit and manpower due to the scale of the Incident. Throughout the Incident, I gave clear briefings to my subordinates and made decisions in response to the prevailing situations and changing circumstances.

Question 19., a., iv.: The manner by which the Force coordinated with other Government departments during the Wang Fuk Court Fire

18. I directed officers of the EU, the PTU and the Tai Po District at the scene to facilitate other Government departments such as FSD to support rescue operations, the Estate Management of Kwong Fuk Estate for evacuation of the residents of Kwong Lai House and Kwong Yau House which were close to Wang Fuk Court, and deployed the officers of the PCRO TP to communicate with the Home Affairs Department (“HAD”)’s District Services and Community Care Teams and a District Council member on the ground to provide immediate assistance to affected persons.
19. Police officers regulated traffic at the scene so as to ensure all reinforcing FSD vehicles could successfully enter the scene for firefighting operations. On site, I as well as my subordinates frequently visited the Mobile Command Unit of FSD to update FSD of the Force’s deployment. I also took down the direct contact numbers of the senior officers of FSD for effective communication on ground. I further coordinated the evacuation and timely rescue operations by instructing SP EU NTN and DVC TPDIV (Ag.) promptly. Moreover, DVC TPDIV (Ag.) who was also in charge of the FCP, deployed his patrol sub-unit officers in updating the casualty list by maintaining communications with FSD.
20. Officers of Tai Po District were deployed to the emergency shelters at Tai Po Community Centre, Tung Cheong Street Leisure Building, Fu Shin Estate Community Hall, and CCC Fung Leung Kit Memorial Secondary School in the Tai Po area. The police officers established visible presence to ensure access control and security, maintained order and crowd management to ensure the smooth operation, and maintained liaison with HAD and District Council

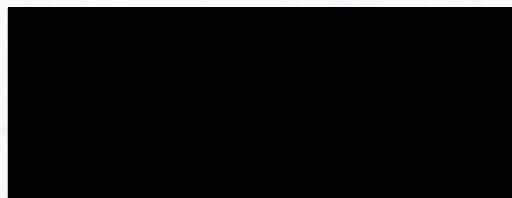
members for tendering temporary accommodation for the affected persons.

Question 19., a., v.: Any difficulties encountered by the Force in handling the matters above

21. Despite the scale of the fire and existence of unpredictable factors, the initial actions at the fire scene were conducted in order. The command structure was promptly initiated, which provided clear command and control.
22. Although it was a protracted fire scene and the officers of FSD and the Force were exhausted, the coordination in this major incident was achieved among emergency services personnel which formed an effective communication at the scene throughout. Priority actions focused on facilitating rescue operations, securing the area and evacuating residents.
23. That said, despite the deployment of police officers to maintain an updated casualty list by maintaining communications with FSD, it was difficult to ascertain a number of the identities and the condition of the casualties due to the lack of sufficient information. It was therefore hard for officers to answer enquiries from family members at the scene.
24. Members of the public at the scene were very emotional about the Incident. Officers deployed at the outer cordon area or emergency shelters had to handle the emotions of all affected persons.

25. I confirm that the contents of this Witness Statement are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

Dated this 24th day of February 2026.



LAI Ho-fai, Edmund