

Witness Statement: Martin Appleby

I, Martin Appleby, of 5 Nevin Parade, Viewbank, Melbourne, Victoria, WILL SAY as follows:

1. I make this statement as a former safety and security officer employed by G4S at the Manus Island Regional Processing Centre ("MIRPC") between August 2013 and December 2013. I make this statement from my own personal knowledge except where expressly stated otherwise.

**Background**

2. My date of birth is 15/02/61 I am 53 years old.
3. I have worked in the field of security and corrections for the past 14 years, after transferring from hospitality. I have a Certificate IV in Correctional Practice, which means I am a fully qualified prison officer.
4. My first job in the security area was as a prison and escort officer for Corrections Victoria, escorting prisoners in and out of the Metropolitan Remand Centre. In order to undertake that role, I had training in firearms, defence tactics, baton tactics as well as occupational health and safety and medical training. After 2-3 years of on the job training, I obtained MY Certificate IV.
5. My role with Corrections Victoria gave me a fair amount of exposure to the various problems that can arise in a detention environment. I had to deal with multiple medical emergencies, sexual and violent assaults between prisoners, negotiations with prisoners who were protesting and at least one in-cell fire.
6. I crossed over to start working for G4S Australia in around 2009. They were looking for someone to put help with their prisoner transport contract with the Department of Justice. There were about 50 staff in the prisoner transport team, but none to my knowledge had any background in corrections. They were mostly just truck drivers. So I was employed to give them training in how to deal with prisoners.
7. This was my first experience of the way G4S cut corners in their training programs. I was given only two days to train the transport guys in defensive tactics, which I felt was really

inadequate. Plus the training I was giving them wasn't really designed for the job they had to do, because it concentrated on scenarios and tactics that assumed two officers were available to subdue someone, whereas often in transport, an officer would be dealing with a prisoner on their own for substantial periods while their partner was off completing the paperwork etc. I tried telling my manager this, and they did make some changes over time based on my recommendations but they still didn't concentrate sufficiently on one-on-one scenarios.

8. The company's drive to keep costs down was also apparent in other aspects of the job. For example, they didn't employ enough staff, with the result that those who were employed were expected to work very long hours. Our first vehicles would leave at around 5am and sometimes we weren't back until 9 or 10pm at night, with only one half-hour break during the day. There were a large number of vehicle break-downs mainly with air-conditioning during the warmer months in the vehicles for prisoners. I remember on one occasion we were transporting two female prisoners down from Shepparton in the middle of summer and we actually had to stop at a local police station to try to drop them off because the temperatures in the vehicle were so high that they were getting really dehydrated. We were also expected on occasion to transport V1 prisoners (ie "Violent1" – the prisoners who are considered the most dangerous) whereas we were only supposed to deal with the less dangerous classes of prisoners. V1 prisoners were transported by the S.E.S.G (State Emergency and Security Group)

#### **Transfer to Manus Island**

9. I first heard about the prospect of transferring up to Manus Island from the manager of G4S Transport, Allen Bazzina. He had previously managed the Maribyrnong Immigration Detention Centre, and ended up transferring up to work as the Director of off-shore processing at G4S on Manus. I thought it sounded like an interesting opportunity and good for my resume. It was well-paid - \$110,000 per annum. I had never worked outside of Australia and thought it would be a bit of an adventure.
10. I wanted a training-delivery position up there. They said they couldn't afford to employ me as an official trainer (which would have cost them \$125,000), but that they would effectively give me training duties even though I would be called a regular safety and security officer. I was happy with that, as I thought it was best to get my foot in the door and take it from there.
11. I transferred up to the MIRPC along with several others from the G4S Transport team in August 2013. Several of the managers from other facilities run by G4S in Victoria had already transferred up there by then, including the training manager from Port Phillip prison and the

centre manager from the Melbourne Custody Centre. We weren't told much beforehand about what it would be like, beyond basic details about things like the weather and what clothing to bring. I think if we had been properly briefed about what it was like, a lot of us might not have gone at all.

#### **Arrival at the MIRPC**

12. When I arrived at the MIRPC, I estimate that there would have been about 500 transferees held there. I was quite taken aback, as the accommodation set-up for them was much more primitive than I had imagined, particularly by Australian standards. Most were just in tents or old World War II huts that were made of tin with tightly packed double-bunk beds in them. Even at that point they were cramped and things got worse later on as the number of transferees rose significantly over the period I was there.
  
13. At that time, there were maybe 110 safety and security officers (SSOs) employed by G4S at the MIRPC. There were 4 training officers at any one time and we all reported to the Training Managers David Kemp and Diane Coleman, who in turn reported to the Centre Manager Dinesh Perera. He was in turn responsible to the General Manager, John McCaffery. The regional general manager for G4S was Kevin Pye.
  
14. The SSOs were made up of both ex-pats and local PNG guards. Around 96% of the ex-pats were ex-army personnel from either the Australian or New Zealand defence forces. The remaining 4% were from the police or security. To my knowledge I was the only one with training in corrections defensive tactics, so I was given more senior responsibilities.
  
15. The local PNG G4S guards, although they made up the majority of the SSOs, had virtually no experience in security of any sort. Most had previously been farmers, students or were unemployed. We were told that the ex-pat SSOs were responsible for managing any local SSOs that were on duty because they were very inexperienced and needed supervision.
  
16. There were also a number of other sub-contractors who were employed to provide various services at the MIRPC. A company called Eurest did the food – they were mainly ex-pats. Spic & Span did the cleaning and they were a PNG company I think as I don't recall that any of them were ex-pats. The Salvation Army were responsible for welfare and also for providing clothing to the detainees. There was also a company contracted to do maintenance work but I can't recall their name.

## **Training G4S personnel at the MIRPC**

17. When I had applied for the position on Manus, I had never been informed that I would be training PNG guards, but when I was rostered on my first official day I was handed the training and assessment role in delivering training to both ex-pats and PNG nationals.
  
18. As soon as I began the training sessions I realised that it was going to be a futile exercise because the majority of the PNG SSOs didn't speak English and I didn't speak Pidgin. We had plenty of interpreters working at the MIRPC, but they were all employed to speak the various languages of the Transferee population, not to facilitate communication between the guards. Initially, I couldn't even get them to understand my name. Eventually I gave them my nickname 'Apples' and that one finally got through and resulted in a lot of hilarity. But the communication we were able to have was that basic.
  
19. I spoke to the Training Manager about the situation, and we eventually managed to get 2 PNG navy personnel from the local base to come and act as interpreters during the training sessions. That improved communication a good deal, although since I don't speak Pidgin I couldn't vouch that they were accurately translating what I was saying.
  
20. The training package itself was also in my view clearly inadequate, particularly given the background of the local staff. I was expected to deliver training in defensive tactics in only 4 days when, in my view, it should have taken a minimum of 6 weeks. The training had not been well adapted to deal with the specific requirements of the situation – it was very much training designed for Australians working in Australia. I felt a lot more time should have been spent focusing on cultural differences and better explaining the cultural background of the transferee population. But instead, the first four hours of the program, for example, were spent explaining the history of G4S, which was really irrelevant to the job. I think we then went through personal hygiene and security and basic security awareness (eg. what to do if you saw a hole in the fence, and how to operate a fire extinguisher even though at that point we didn't have any). Then we covered the different codes (green for escape, black for a medical emergency etc.) and spent two days on various security scenarios. To the best of my recollection, there was nothing in the package I had to deliver that explained how to deal with mass protests or the type of riots that broke out at the Centre in February 2014.
  
21. I warned the Training Manager that the training package was insufficient to be able to deliver the correct training level to the PNG nationals. Diane Coleman agreed with me, but David Kemp was pretty dismissive and just said we had to do the best we could in the circumstances. Later on towards the end of my time there, I believe that one of the other more senior managers was doing some re-writing of the package, but nothing changed during the time I was there.

22. I felt that once the navy personnel were brought into help, the PNG staff understood the delivery of the training somewhat. But unfortunately when I saw what happened later on, it is clear that they hadn't been properly trained and I felt some responsibility for that.

#### **Conditions for Detainees at the MIRPC**

23. I have heard the word "inhumane" used about the conditions in which the transferees were expected to live at the MIRPC and I think that's probably the best description for them, especially for those living in the old World War II sheds like the P-Dorm. Expecting people to live packed like sardines into tin sheds in 35-40 degree heat with only four fans to cool the place down just shouldn't be allowed. It's just ridiculous. Some of the newer accommodations in Mike and Oscar were somewhat better, but the variation in the standard of the accommodation was itself a cause of tension between different groups of transferees.
24. There was virtually no shade in any of the compounds and despite the intense heat the guys weren't given any hats and very limited sunscreen. It was the Salvation Army's job to supply things like clothing. Most of the guys were just given thongs in the way of shoes and there weren't enough to go around. Razors were exchanged one for one each month which meant they went blunt and the guys couldn't keep themselves shaven.
25. There was limited running water at the facility, even when it worked, but it wasn't drinkable. All the detainees had to be given bottled water for drinking, but a lot of them were using that for cleaning themselves when they went to the toilet as well, because that was what they were used to, which meant that the quantity for drinking was inadequate. Plus it was always warm because the bottles were just left out on pallets in the sun, which meant they got really hot.
26. The toilets got filthy and weren't cleaned often enough. Most of the detainees weren't used to Western-style toilets, so that didn't help matters. Sewage was pumped out by small pumps and it didn't take long for the detainees to work out that if they dropped a cap into the toilets, it would cause grief and some of them did that I think as a way of protesting. The only hand sanitizer was for us staff -- the detainees didn't get any. We were only allowed to dole out very limited amounts of shampoo and soap to them, and even the toilet paper was given to them in individual sheets because management said they would just use it to block up the sewage system. So the detainees had to come and ask for toilet paper whenever they wanted it, which I found really demeaning and embarrassing. I've never seen anything like that -- they were treated as less than children.

27. The quality of the food at the facility was also shocking and cases of diarrhoea and food poisoning were rampant. Personally I refused to eat any of the hot food out of the bain-marie and just lived on salads. We had an isolation bay both for staff and for the detainees and both were constantly in use. We all made complaints to Eurest about the food but nothing really changed. I think the only change they made was to eventually put some hand sanitizer out near where the food was served.
28. There was also a lot of unnecessary grief and tension caused in my view by the way that the food was delivered to the transferees. In the Oscar compound for instance, there were around 400 transferees who had to queue for food, so often the line was 200 metres long and people had to queue for hours to get each meal. Breakfast was served every day from 7:30 to 9:30 and the catering staff would then switch the food off. So if the transferees didn't make it during that time, they didn't get breakfast. Due to the intensity of the heat a lot of the guys would stay up very late and then sleep in the cool part of the early morning, so many had difficulty making it into the queue in time for breakfast.
29. Those who were in bed because they were sick also missed out on meals, as none of the transferees were allowed to take food out of the tent to give to anyone else. If we discovered anyone doing this, we were supposed to take the food away from him and throw it in the rubbish.
30. Every day there were tensions and arguments about the queue and whether someone had taken someone else's place. I didn't see any really bad physical confrontations, but every day there was a bit of push and shove and people jostling for a place. It was exhausting work managing the queue as there was generally only one officer overseeing a queue of hundreds of guys and they had all been waiting a long time to get fed.

#### **Health of the Transferee Population**

31. I saw a lot of illness among the transferee population. The problems ranged from rampant diarrhoea, to fever and skin problems. There were also quite a few accidents because of the rough and uneven coral ground that the facility is built on. The entire island is made of coral, so the ground is essentially ground-down coral but with big residual lumps everywhere. No attempt was made to clear the ground of the facility to make it safer. So the transferees would regularly cut themselves on it, particularly because many didn't have proper shoes and the cuts would then get infections.

32. I would say the worst health problems I witnessed though were psychological. I regularly saw guys openly sobbing and having breakdowns. Over the course of my time at the MIRPC, it was also clear to me that many of the transferees were losing weight, even though they were supposedly eating the same food we were. Incidents of self-harm were virtually a daily occurrence. These ranged from more minor hunger strikes (generally lasting several days) to guys cutting themselves with razors or taking their shirts off and sliding along the sharp coral on the ground. On one occasion I had to physically pull a guy off one of the big tent poles because he was repeatedly hitting his head against it. Another time I came across a guy trying to self harm with his bed sheets. He was pulled down by his friends who said they would look after him and asked me not to report what had happened. The incidents of self-harm seemed to have ripple effect in that when one person started having a breakdown it seemed to push other detainees over the edge as well.
33. In some cases I think people resorted to deliberately cutting themselves just to get access to a doctor, because it was often really difficult for the transferees to get to see a medical officer. They always had to put in the request to the G4S staff member on duty and often individual G4S SSOs were making the call as to whether they would forward that request on to IHMS or not. I challenged other G4S guys about this a couple of times, as I didn't think we were qualified to make the call as to whether someone was sick enough to see a doctor or not.

### **Sexual Assaults**

34. I was aware of a number of incidents of sexual assault between detainees while I was at the MIRPC. I personally dealt with one guy who had been sexually assaulted in the Foxtrot compound. He was deemed to be a suicide risk by IHMS. So I and another SSO were brought in to bedsit him. The IHMS medical officer would just come in once a day and give him some pills and interact with him for about five minutes, so I ended up being his "psychologist" for the day even though I have no background in counselling because there was just no-one else for him to talk to. From what I understood he had been digitally raped by another detainee, although I think that the act had been walked in on before things could go even further. We spoke for about 12 hours and he told me his whole life story. He was an Iranian guy who owned a toy shop and whose shop had been burnt out. He told me about his kids and I told him about mine. His story really affected me.
35. I also had around four conversations from staff members regarding other incidents of sexual assault that I thought probably had some basis to them. I gathered that the assaults were generally taking place in the dormitories in the rooms. In the P-dorm, the beds were so close together that they were pushed up against each other and sheets were hung up around for privacy, which was understandable but made it difficult to know what was going on.

36. When we witnessed or heard about a sexual assault, we were supposed to remain with the victim until IHMS could be alerted. They would then make a recommendation as to how the person would be monitored. But to the best of my knowledge, there was nothing done to actually separate out the person assaulted from the general population. In a normal prison, there is always general population and protection. There was no such set up on Manus. As far as I know, the Iranian guy who I sat with who had been assaulted was just moved from the Foxtrot compound to the Delta compound, so while he was separated from his attacker, there was no guarantee he wouldn't be sexually assaulted again.

#### **Failures in Emergency and Security Procedures**

37. As a security officer, one of the things I found most frustrating about the management of the MIRPC by G4S was the lack of proper procedure and practice in the way security at the facility was managed. We were supposed to be ensuring a safe and secure environment both for the transferees and the staff working at the facility, but there were multiple obstacles that prevented us from doing our jobs properly.
38. First, there were no manuals or "post orders" anywhere at the facility. Generally in a prison, any time you go to a rostered position where you have never worked before, there should be a manual or a post order that tells you what to do in that position if an emergency arises. That is absolutely basic standard practice, but there wasn't a single post order anywhere on Manus. I raised this with management on several occasions, even via a written report. I know that two other officers were so concerned about this that they actually created post orders for particular positions and submitted them to the G4S Centre manager Dinesh Perera, but to my knowledge they were never implemented.
39. The second issue was head counts. They only ticked people off when they went to breakfast lunch or dinner, so if people stayed in bed because they were sick, or exchanged ID cards, there was no way of keeping track of this. This meant that at any given moment, we really had no idea of whether anyone was missing.
40. We also didn't have enough hand-held radios for all of the staff, and there was only one battery provided per radio so they were constantly running out of battery life. This meant that the G4S officers for their own safety had to operate within line of sight of each other. If I didn't have a radio and if I found myself in the midst of an assault or a medical emergency, I actually had to yell out to colleagues. The requests for more hand-held radios were made almost weekly by staff but we never saw them.



41. The fencing at the facility was also completely inadequate – just like school fences really. There were multiple incidents when people climbed over them or managed to get under them. When a fence got damaged, the maintenance contractor (a PNG labourer) would just hammer in a star picket, which is a metal picket about 6 feet 4 inches high in a star shape and then wire-tie the picket to the fence to keep the fence up. After the February violence, I was informed by a former G4S colleague that those star pickets were actually used as weapons during the riots (I am not sure whether by the transferees or those who were beating them).
  
42. There were also no proper fire or evacuation procedures. The fire manager only came on board in October or November 2013 and the fire truck was just sitting unused until he arrived. Fortunately we had no serious fires because the only thing we would have had to put one out would have been a hose that ran about 20 metres from any given point. Actually, there was a fire in the kitchen at one point, but they managed to put it out with blankets before it got serious.
  
43. One example that shows how poorly equipped the facility was for an emergency was an incident that took place in October 2013. One day, the PNG police, who were positioned permanently just outside the MIRPC, arrested a family member of one of the navy personnel. I happened to be standing out the front that day because I was about to go on leave and was waiting with my suitcases ready to go. All of a sudden, there was a big commotion outside the gates. As it turned out, the police had supposedly mistreated the guy who they had arrested and really annoyed his relatives in the navy. A large number of navy personnel came marching up the road to confront the police and there was a stand-off just outside the MIRPC. Some ex-pat G4S guys tried to intervene to calm things down and when they did this, both the police and navy personnel suddenly turned on the G4S staff and just came screaming towards the MIRPC. Afterwards we found out that they didn't actually come right into the Centre, although some rocks were thrown, but at the time we thought they were going to come straight through the gates.
  
44. We were all told to go quickly to the rear of the dining area and then every officer and ex-pat staff member were told to evacuate the Centre. We left the detainees locked up in the Centre and all made our way down to the beach area. Then no-one really knew what to do, so we continued down the beach. It was all a shambles because we didn't even have any two-way radios at the front and back of the line to communicate. Then all of a sudden someone at the front of the line suddenly shouted that we had to turn around and go back because apparently they had run into the PNG navy! So we all just turned around and made our way back to the Centre. In the meantime, I think someone had called the HMS Choules to alert the Australian navy to come and get us. That didn't eventuate because by then we realised that no-one had actually breached the front gate and the panic settled because the

PNG navy and police were still on the other side of the fence. But that incident really highlights how poorly equipped we were to deal with any sort of emergency.

### **Causes of the February Violence**

45. I was no longer working at the MIRPC when the violence broke out in February 2014. By then I had resigned and was back in Melbourne. But when I heard about what had happened, it didn't surprise me at all. I felt that tension had been brewing at the facility for many months due to all of the problems I have mentioned and it was almost inevitable that the situation reach a crisis point. In particular, there are several underlying factors that I believe have caused or fed into all of the other problems at the MIRPC.
  
46. The first major mistake I believe was transferring people to Manus before the infrastructure was in place to support them. This was obviously mainly a government decision, but I also think G4S shouldn't have agreed to take people until they had ensured the accommodation and facilities were there to house and look after them to a decent standard. This decision created some problems that were very difficult to fix once the transferee population was already in place, such as the variation in the standard of accommodation and services. The speed with which everything had to be done to get things ready for the first transfers also led to short-cuts being taken in things like training of the local staff which I have mentioned.
  
47. The second major issue was overcrowding. Between the time I arrived at the facility and when I left, the numbers of transferees had gone from approx 500 - 600 hundred to over a thousand. This massively impacted on every aspect of the transferees' daily lives, including having to queue for hours in the sun for food, not being able to easily get an appointment with a doctor, being packed into overheated dorms with no privacy etc. Again, I'm sure G4S was under a lot of pressure from Canberra to continue to take people no matter how many boats arrived, but as I understand it from a G4S colleague, G4S were also paid an allowance by the government for each transferee they took on, so they also had an incentive to continue to take people on irrespective of whether they had space for them.
  
48. The third problem was simply the length of time people were detained at the facility and the lack of information they received about when their claims would be processed or what was going to happen to them. This was probably the major cause of anger and frustration among the transferees.
  
49. On top of these fundamental problems, there were then in my view multiple failures in the way the facility was managed. I have already described some of these, such as the rigid rules about the way transferees had to queue for food and the quality of that food, the failure to

separate vulnerable detainees from the general population, the way it was left to individual G4S SSOs to decide whether transferee's medical requests were passed on to the medical staff and the lack of proper security and emergency procedures.

50. On the management side of things, I think one of the problems was that I think the Centre got too big for the people G4S had in charge of managing it. The overall southern pacific manager for G4S, called Chris Manning, only visited the Centre a couple of times to my knowledge. I think the Centre manager Dinesh Perera and the General Manager had free reign and they weren't experienced enough to deal with a facility of that size. It wasn't until November 2013 that they brought in someone to oversee them and by that time things were already out of control.
  
51. Personally, while I was at the Centre, I never witnessed any overt hostility between the local G4S guards and the transferees, although I did witness some ex-pat G4S staff verbally abusing detainees, particularly when they thought they couldn't speak English. However I definitely don't think that the local G4S SSOs should have made up the Incident Response Team (IRT) at the facility. IRTs are the squad who are meant to respond to and deal with emergency situations like riots. Normally it is where you would put your most experienced officers – people you were really sure of. The PNG SSOs, as I have mentioned, had very little experience and were given inadequate training. The ex-pat staff, by contrast, were made up of past army, correctional and police personnel who would have been much more capable of dealing with a volatile situation such as the one that arose on the nights of 16 and 17 February 2014.
  
52. I am also aware from conversations I have had with G4S staff who were present at the time of the violence that the IRTs were led on the night of the violence by Romeo 1, who had no experience with or training the PNG nationals previously, so didn't have an established relationship with them. I believe that is part of the reason why they lost control of the team on that night.

## **Conclusion**

53. While some of the management problems I have mentioned could relatively easily be addressed through, for example, implementation of proper procedures, I think the fundamental underlying problems with the MIRPC have no easy answers. Detaining large numbers of young men for long periods of time in sub-standard conditions in a poor country where people have many problems of their own is a flawed project and one that is bound to lead to tensions and violence. If offshore processing is to continue, then a completely new centre with proper infrastructure would be needed. But to my mind, offshore processing itself is inherently flawed. When you start involving other countries with different laws and

ways of operating, it all becomes a mess and no-one takes responsibility for ensuring things are done properly. I think the MIRPC is not a safe or decent place to hold people and it should be shut down and the people there transferred to a facility in Australia.

I believe the facts set out in this witness statement are true.

Signed .....

Mattie Appleby.

Date .....

31.5.2014