



## BAILIWICK OF GUERNSEY LAW ENFORCEMENT

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### **MEDIA STATEMENT**

15/01/18

Statement from Patrick Rice, Guernsey Police Chief Officer

'I think I should start by explaining a little bit of the context around why we've invited you here today. As most members of the media know, we do not normally comment on rumour, speculation or unconfirmed reports in the media. However, what we have seen during the early stages of this investigation, in terms of those three elements, is fairly unprecedented in a local context.

'As such, we are holding this briefing to explain what we know, what we don't know and what we are seeking to establish. I will also respond to any questions you have.

'A common theme will likely emanate throughout my comments, and we have said it multiple times already; we are at this stage keeping an open mind about the potential direction of this investigation.

'This is a crucial point, based on both what we have established as fact at this stage and what we have not, and it is a point I would urge all members of our community to both understand and respect. Regurgitating rumour on social media does not make it fact, no matter how many times it is repeated and I would encourage a calmer approach than we have seen in recent days. People should also be mindful of the impact such speculation can have on those who have potentially lost someone dear to them.

'So let's start with what we know.....On the morning of Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January officers attended, alongside colleagues from the Fire Service, a secluded area near Petit Bot where a car had been burnt-out. Initial enquiries were carried out but as a result of the significant fire damage to the vehicle, a further detailed forensic examination was required. This examination was carried out by specialist Scenes of Crime Officers on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January, and they found what they suspected were parts of skeletal remains. We subsequently received confirmation yesterday that the material recovered is human skeletal remains.

'Also on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January, we received a report that 33-year-old Mikus Alps was missing and had not been seen since the early hours of Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January.

‘Officers have carried out a significant number of enquiries so far. We have conducted door-to-door enquiries in relevant areas, we have searched various premises connected to Mr Alps and spoken to people he was close to including those who saw and spoke with him last. A fire expert from the UK has visited the island to help with a further examination of the car. We have confirmed the identity markings on the car and the vehicle is registered to Mr Alps.

‘While it would be very easy to draw conclusions between the confirmation that skeletal remains were present and the vehicle being registered to Mr Alps, it does not mean that such an assumption is accurate. And I again come back to my original point, investigating officers are keeping an open mind and will continue to do so until the facts are determined. The identity of the deceased has not been confirmed.

‘A pathologist from the UK Home Office will visit the island as soon as possible and conduct a post mortem on the remains. Although it is anticipated this will be later this week, it will depend on exhaustive work currently being carried out to examine all of the burnt debris from the vehicle. The post-mortem will not confirm identity, but may help us better understand the potential cause of death. It is also hoped that the results of this examination will enable further tests to be carried out around identification. This could take a couple of weeks, although we will naturally attempt to have this work expedited if possible.

‘Since news of this investigation was first reported, we have received a letter purporting to be from Mr Alps. This was handed in to police headquarters. Once again, we are keeping an open mind in relation to this document and all necessary forensic tests are being carried out. This requires support from specialist handwriting experts in the UK and again will take some time, potentially several weeks. While sombre and reflective in content, at this stage we cannot prove or disprove whether this letter was written by Mr Alps and, if it was, draw conclusions from it without further investigation and supportive evidence.

‘We are continuing to speak to people close to Mr Alps and would again encourage anyone with information to contact us. Our family liaison officers will continue to work closely with Mr Alps’ family.

‘There are other, wider, issues that have been linked to this investigation via social media and reports emanating from the Ukraine in particular. While I am incredibly reluctant to be drawn on speculation or unconfirmed reports, I do believe it necessary to address some of the narratives that have been aired.

‘We are aware that Mr Alps has connections with a pro-Ukrainian and anti-Russian movement. We are aware of comments in the Ukrainian media attributed to a commander suggesting he knows the facts. Given that it is yet to be formally confirmed whether Mr Alps is alive or deceased, there is no concrete evidence at this stage linking his involvement with this movement to his car being found burnt-out. However, I would once again draw your attention to our primary position; that we are keeping an open mind about the potential direction of this investigation. In terms of the various hypotheses surrounding this case, the facts are that at this stage we are not ruling anything in or out.

‘While I cannot influence what appears in the media internationally or on social media, I am committed to ensuring our local community receives regular updates explaining the facts as determined by our investigation. I cannot stress enough that people should avoid jumping to conclusions or speculating on this case, as tempting as it may be to do so.

‘This is a highly complex investigation and there is much work still to be done as we try to establish the full circumstances. We cannot rush it but the community can be assured that we will go where the evidence takes us, not speculation on social media.’

**ENDS**

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