



MOD-83-0000256-A

Witness Name: Simon James Routledge

Statement No.: 2

Exhibits: SJR/1, SJR/2, CMG/2

Dated:

**In the matter of an investigation into the death of
Mr Muhammad Abdul Ridha Salim**

**SECOND WITNESS STATEMENT OF
SIMON JAMES ROUTLEDGE**

I, Simon James Routledge, will say as follows:-

1. I have been asked to provide a statement setting out what I can remember in relation to an incident that occurred on 5 November 2003 in Basra City, Iraq, resulting in the death of an Iraqi male whom I now know to be Mr Muhammad Abdul Ridha Salim. This is my second statement, which I have been asked to give by the Inspector in connection with documents I had not seen before.
2. The relevant background to this incident is set out in my first witness statement dated 28 July 2015.
3. On 5 November 2003 we were informed by a walk-in that around half a dozen gunmen had been seen going into a house about 2 or 3 blocks away from our camp in the Basrah South area, which I now know to have been the house of Mahmood Zuboon Dahsh Al-Akhrass (whom I shall refer to as 'Mr Zuboon'). The information which we were given by the walk-in did not suggest to us that he had seen an attack taking place on the house, but rather that a group of armed individuals had gone inside the house. The walk-in was an acquaintance of one of our interpreters, [REDACTED]. I do not now remember [REDACTED] full name. Our interpreters were locally employed

civilians. It is likely that Battalion HQ or Brigade HQ would have held a list of all locally employed civilians, however I do not know if any list has since been retained.

4. The Inspector has drawn my attention to a document entitled 'Watchkeeper's Daily Brief' ('WKDB'). [Exhibit SJR/1]. The WKDB would have been produced by the Battle Group Headquarters ('BGHQ') Ops Room in the Shatt Al-Arab Hotel. In the Ops Room, there would have been an Ops Officer on duty and a Watchkeeper. The WKDB covers the period from 18.00 on 5 November 2003 until 08.00 on 6 November 2003. 'Charlie' is the timezone. 'Bde AO' means the Brigade Area of Operations.
5. The Inspector has drawn my attention to the entry in the WKDB which states that 'At 0033hrs as the C/S approached the building they were fired upon.' I cannot remember exactly when, but I do recall rounds being fired from what I thought was high up in the building or from the roof of the target house. My perception was that shots were being fired in the vicinity, but not that we were being fired upon. The Ops Room would have been listening to reports coming in on the radio, so it is likely that if I or 2Lt SO13 had reported 'rounds fired' the Ops Room may have been misinterpreted that we were being fired upon.
6. I have set out the sequence of events after we arrived at the target location in my first witness statement. I entered the house shortly after the shot was fired by Sgt SO11. The Inspector has asked me whether I am certain that I saw an AK-47 lying next to Mr Salim when I entered the house. I can state unequivocally that I did. I cannot, however, remember whether there was a second AK-47 next to the second individual on the stairs. When I entered the house Mr Salim was lying against the stairs. He was then dragged away and propped against the wall, where SO14 the Combat Medical Technician ('CMT'), attended to him. Although I cannot recall if 2Lt SO13 or Sgt SO11 spoke to me straight away, having seen the AK-47 on the stairs next to Mr Salim and having heard shots when we arrived at the house, the reason why Sgt SO11 had shot Mr Salim was self-evident to me.
7. The Inspector has shown me the WKDB which states 'As the C/S entered the building 1 x UKM was walking down stairs carrying a weapon. He was engaged by 6 rds.' From my position outside the house, I only heard a single shot being fired. The

reference to six rounds may be an aggregation by the Watchkeeper of the shots which were also being fired when we arrived at the house.

8. The Inspector has asked me how long it took for the ambulance to arrive to take Mr Salim to hospital. He has drawn my attention to a document entitled 'Post-Incident Report' which records that the house was cleared at approximately 00.30 and the ambulance was called at approximately 00.56. I produce this document as Exhibit SJR/2. I seem to remember that there was a delay of approximately 20 minutes between clearing the house and calling the ambulance. From my recollection, it might have taken up to an hour from clearing the house to the ambulance arriving, but it certainly was not more than that. The house was not more than about five minutes' drive from the Shat-al-Arab Hotel, which was where the ambulance would have come from. The Inspector has shown me the witness statement of Mr SO14 provided to the IHAT dated 20 November 2014, in which Mr SO14 states that he repeatedly asked for an ambulance to be requested and deployed from the Shat-al-Arab Hotel. I remember Mr SO14 asking for the ambulance, but I do not remember it taking a particularly long time to come. The only delay would possibly have been in getting in touch with the Czech hospital.
9. The PIR records that 2xUKM were placed in an adjacent room to Mr Salim and then plasticuffed and held at the main gate. I do not actually recall Mr Zuboon being plasticuffed, but this would refer to Mr Zuboon and his nephew. This would have been standard practice until we had identified the individuals in the house and ensured that they did not have access to any weapons. Once we were sure that there was no threat inside the building they would have been uncuffed.
10. The Inspector has shown me the witness statement of Entesar Abdullah Al-Mahzem, the wife of Mr Zuboon, dated 18 February 2013, in which she states that soldiers forced Mr Zuboon and his nephew to the floor and pointed rifles at their heads. I do not remember well what happened at this stage, but it is highly unlikely that rifles would have been trained on the occupants if they were not armed. I do not remember the female who was present kissing any of the soldiers boots.
11. I have also been shown the witness statement of Mr Zuboon dated 18 February 2013, in which he states that destruction was caused to his house by the British soldiers. It

is true that after Mr Salim was shot, soldiers would have been searching the rest of the house to look for any concealed weapons and to make sure there was no further threat. I agree that the main gate and the front door were damaged, but I do not remember any further significant damage being done to the property.

12. After Mr Salim was taken away in the ambulance, I had a conversation with Mr Zuboon inside the house. By that point, I had spoken with 2Lt SO13 and it was clear to us that the situation at the house was not what we had been led to believe. I cannot remember the details of the conversation we had with Mr Zuboon, but he must have brought up details concerning a feud which his family were having with another family. I do remember that Mr Zuboon mentioned at least one armed attack which had taken place earlier that same evening which I recorded in the PIR, but I cannot now recall whether he also told us about a second attack earlier that day.
13. I can see from the PIR that after speaking with Mr Zuboon, I went to another house which had been identified as the house of the family with which Mr Zuboon's family was having a feud. I cannot remember whether we were accompanied by Mr Zuboon or any other members of his family or whether the address had been given to us through the interpreter who was with us (this would have been [REDACTED], the same interpreter who had previously taken the information from the walk-in). I would have been accompanied to the second house by my Rover group, but I cannot recall which individuals were in that group. The reason for going to the second house was to find out if that was where the information originally came from which led to the walk-in coming into camp.
14. When we got to the second house, we knocked on the door, identified ourselves, and asked to go into the house and talk to the inhabitants. There were two or three males in the house. I cannot recall exactly what was said, but I believed they confirmed that there was an ongoing feud with Mr Zuboon's family. It may have been that it was the same family who had carried out an attack earlier that evening, but we could not ascertain from the weapons at the house whether or not they had been fired recently. Ordinarily, we would have followed this up, but C Coy was due to leave Iraq over the next two to three days and so in this instance we did not do so.

15. The Inspector has drawn my attention to a letter which I wrote to Mr Zuboon, dated 9 November 2003. I produce this letter as Exhibit CMG/2. As a group, we felt that we had been wrongly led to mount an operation on Mr Zuboon's house and so we felt that we should express our condolences for Mr Salim's death which had occurred in unfortunate circumstances. At that time, it was routine to visit families of the deceased, and although I do not remember having any discussions with Mr Zuboon after the incident occurred, I must have done because I would have hand-delivered the letter to him. The Inspector has asked me whether I had spoken to or received a statement from Sgt SO11 [REDACTED] before I wrote the letter. I have been shown Sgt SO11 [REDACTED] statement dated 6 November 2003, in which he states that as he entered the fourth room in the house he saw two men armed with long barreled weapons coming at speed down the stairwell. He states that he fired one round because he believed that there was a contact underway.

16. I have been asked why I did not expressly state in my letter to Mr Zuboon that the men coming down the stairs were armed. I cannot remember whether I had already read Sgt SO11 [REDACTED] statement by the time I wrote the letter, but I would have received an account from him and it is likely that I had read his statement. Thinking about it now, I accept that I should have expressly stated in my letter that the men coming down the stairs were armed.

17. The Inspector has asked me whether I was aware before C Coy left Basra that Mr Zuboon had reported the incident on 5 November 2003 to the police station. I do not remember being aware that he had.

Statement of Truth

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true

Signed ... [REDACTED]

Dated 2 November 2015