



MOD-83-0000262-A

Witness Name: SO11

Statement No.: 1

Exhibits: SO13 1

Dated:

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

WITNESS STATEMENT OF

SO11

I, SO11, 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.
2. At the time of the incident, I held the rank of Sergeant ('Sgt') and was the Platoon Sergeant of 7 Platoon ('7 Pl'), C Company ('C Coy'), 1st Battalion 1 King's Regiment ('1 KINGS'). My Platoon Commander was 2Lt SO13. The Officer Commanding ('OC') of C Coy was Major Routledge.

3. By 2003, I had already served 11 years in the British Army. Prior to my deployment in Iraq, I had done 4 or 5 tours in Northern Ireland but had no other experience of service overseas. I was fully aware of the Rules of Engagement at the time.
4. Following my tour of Iraq on OP TELIC 2, during which the incident resulting in the death of Mr Salim occurred, I again deployed to Iraq and also to Afghanistan.
5. I suffered an accident whilst serving in Afghanistan, as a result of which I broke my neck. I was carrying excessive weight at the time. Due to my injury, I was sent home sick in 2011. Once I returned home, I began thinking of all the traumatic experiences I had been through and began to suffer from stress. The stress left me feeling unable to leave the house. I found myself in complete isolation and was eventually diagnosed with severe Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.
6. I was discharged from the Army in April 2014.

The incident in November 2003

7. I have a clear recollection of the events of the 5th of November and the early hours of the 6th of November that resulted in the death of Mr Salim.
8. At some stage on the 5th of November, I was briefed by Maj Routledge that my men and I would be going out from Camp Cherokee on a search and arrest operation. We were told that there had been a 'walk-in' earlier that day who had said that up to 15 men had been seen entering a house with small arms, RPGs and grenades. We were going to conduct a search and arrest operation at that house, which was not far from the Camp.
9. I don't think we had really done a search and arrest operation quite like this before. I certainly don't remember doing one like it.
10. I did not see the 'walk-in' myself. I didn't know how reliable the information was; I was just going by the orders we received from the OC. We were expecting to encounter 10-15 armed enemy men.
11. I remember going out on the operation with 7 Pl at night. I remember Kingsmen Hayes, Jones and Morrison, and I also remember my second in command, Cpl Wright,

and the Platoon Commander, SO13. I cannot remember who else was with us, but I do know that we went to the house as dismounts in the back of a Snatch vehicle. I think there may have been a Warrior going out with us, but there certainly were other Snatch vehicles. I'm not sure whether there might have been another platoon going out with us.

12. The house had high cast iron gates, about 6 or 7 feet high, as well as walls going right the way around the house. There was a large lock on the gates which stopped us from getting access straightaway. I dismounted from the front of the Snatch and checked the lock, and then we used one of the Snatch vehicles to drive through the gates. Because of the intelligence we had been provided with about the nature of the threat in the house, it was important to get access quickly; I didn't want the lads to be exposed outside for any length of time.
13. I cannot remember if we were briefed as to whether to conduct a 'hard knock' or a 'soft knock' on the house.
14. Once we were through the gates, there was a courtyard. I was in the lead as we moved across the courtyard. We ran because we would have been exposed to possible small arms fire. However, I am sure that we were not fired upon as we moved across the courtyard.
15. I reached the front door of the house, paused for 5 seconds and then kicked it in. This was obviously a hard knock. I decided to do that because the intelligence we had been given was that there would be around 15 men with weapons in the house. The longer we took to get in, the longer it would have given those men to get ready to assault us.
16. I did not hear any noises from inside the house whilst I was standing outside the front door. However, once we were in the building, we heard 5 rounds of automatic fire.
17. As I went through the house, I had two Kingsmen with me. Their names were Jones and Morrison. I am not sure what their first names were. One might have been Ryan Jones, but I am not sure. It certainly was not Trevor Jones.
18. As to the layout of the house, I do not really remember this myself. However, the Inspector has shown me a diagram labelled 'Incident Sketch Plan' (Exhibit SO13/1)

and I have been taken through the route that is marked out on that diagram. This has helped me remember the path that I took: from the gate into the courtyard, into the hall, and then into Room 2, heading towards the stairs. I went into each room on the left-hand side in order to clear the room, then I advanced to clear the next room.

19. It was as I entered the first room in the house that I heard the 5 rounds of automatic fire. I could not tell where the rounds were coming from and I wasn't sure what weapon was being used. I did not see anyone else in the house at that stage. However, as far I was concerned, at that point we were 'in contact'.
20. As I moved into the next room, I saw two Iraqi men at the top of some stairs. One or both of them were carrying long-barrelled weapons. I can't remember if it was both men.
21. Because of the intelligence we had received from the walk-in, I believed that these men had fired the rounds as a warning, and accordingly I believed that my life and the lives of my men were in danger. I therefore fired a single shot at the male who was first on the stairs. I then immediately trained my weapon on the second male, who put his weapon down. I didn't myself pick his weapon up, because I was then dealing with the casualty and directing other people to clear the other rooms in the house.
22. I don't remember whether the first man had been running down the stairs when I shot him. I think he walked slowly down the stairs after he was shot and collapsed at the bottom.
23. I remember calling for a medic, and the medic, SO14 [REDACTED], gave the wounded man first aid at the bottom of the stairs. I also remember that there was an Iraqi woman, who I assumed was the wounded man's wife, who was crying. I think she might have come from upstairs, but I'm not sure. All I remember was the woman shouting, 'Why? Why? Why?'
24. I think SO13 [REDACTED] was outside the house when I shot the man, but then he came in. It was mayhem after the man was shot, particularly with the woman screaming. I don't remember whether there were any other Iraqis in the house at the time. I don't know if I tried to speak to anyone in the house about why we were there, and I can't remember

whether an interpreter was present. My memory is hazy because this all happened 12 years ago.

25. I think the wounded man was then taken away in an ambulance.
26. I know we then left the house, got into a Snatch and went to another house with some other Iraqi men. I can't remember the ins and outs of this visit and I cannot remember why we went to this other building. I just remember going somewhere else afterwards before we went back to Camp Cherokee.
27. Returning to the moment when I shot the man, I should say that at that point I had it in my mind that we had been told that there were up to 15 men with heavy weapons in this house. If there had been that many armed men, it would have been a hard fight for us. It was necessary for us as a platoon to keep up our speed, aggression and momentum as we entered the house. I believed I was shooting one of the enemy forces and I expected to see other men coming down the stairs with weapons. I was quite surprised once it became obvious that there were just two men and a woman there.
28. I only fired the one shot, and I fired because I believed that my life and the lives of my men were in danger. As soon as I trained my weapon onto the second man, he dropped his weapon and I de-escalated the situation.
29. The Inspector has asked me whether I had a silencer on my weapon. I did not. I had an SA-80 rifle and you cannot get a silencer fitted to one of those.
30. I would like to say that the experience of shooting Mr Salim is one of the traumas that I am currently working through with a psychologist. I have been visiting Combat Stress due to my severe PTSD.

Statement of Truth

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed . SO11

Dated 06 08 15