



MOD-83-0000260-A

Witness Name: SO12

Statement No.: 1

Exhibits: SO12/1

Dated:

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

WITNESS STATEMENT OF

SO12

I, SO12, 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. By way of background, at the time of the incident, I held the rank of Colour Sergeant acting as Warrant Officer ('WO') in the Coldstream Guards attached to 1 KINGS. At the time of the incident I had attached to the KINGS Regiment for two years. I had not been in Basra for very long, as I had previously been serving in Al Majar province with C Coy assisting the Northern battle group. I had numerous duties, one of which was to act as intelligence officer (although I was not trained as such), as C COY did not have a central intelligence cell.

3. Because we didn't have a central intelligence cell within C COY, we would get picked to do various jobs around our Area of Responsibility ('AOR'). My role was to collate whatever I could of the intelligence which was coming in, and, for example, to try to get background information on target areas or areas of interest to us. Every time that we were given a job, we would collect as much information as we could and put it into a pack. There were a lot of notes, war diaries, and relevant documents produced as and when they were required, however I no longer have any of these records myself.
4. Turning to the evening of 5 November 2003, I recall the incident well. Sometime before 10pm, a 'walk-in' came into the main guard room, and asked to speak to someone who could help the civilian population. The walk-in was a local taxi driver. He had parked his taxi, which had [REDACTED], outside. I was the duty WO in the Ops Room and I was called in to speak to the walk-in. I took an interpreter with me, but I cannot now recall the interpreter's name.
5. The walk-in told the interpreter that a party of around 10 to 15 men had broken into a house in a certain location and taken the occupants hostage. He stated that they were planning an operation against British forces. We didn't know whose AOR the house was in: the AOR of C Coy ended at the roundabout just outside our main gates, and to the left of that was the AOR of the QLR battle group from Basra palace and the old state building. At the time, C Coy didn't have an AOR as we were tasked as Operations Company.
6. After the walk-in had given this information, I asked him to wait and went to speak with Maj Routledge, who was the Officer Commanding ('OC') C Coy. Maj Routledge conducted an interview with the walk-in through the interpreter. I was in the room. The walk-in stated again that there were 10 to 15 armed men taking over a house nearby, who were planning on creating an incident for the British forces.

7. Major Routledge spoke to the OC QLR, who informed him that they already had an operation on that night elsewhere, so they asked C Coy to investigate the intelligence from the walk-in. Because we did not know the target location, Maj Routledge decided that we needed to do a 'RECCE'. We didn't have a civilian vehicle on Camp Cherokee, and with the possibility that there were 10 heavily armed men in the house we didn't want to telegraph our presence by using army vehicles. The walk-in agreed to show us the house in his taxi. Myself, Maj Routledge and one other person got into the taxi, as well as the walk-in (who was driving), and the interpreter (who was in the front right-seat). There were three of us soldiers in the back, but I cannot now remember who the third person was. The Inspector has asked me whether I was wearing a dishdasha on the RECCE. I know that I was not wearing a dishdasha, because we were in combats and full body armour.
8. On the RECCE, the walk-in drove us past the house, which was about 500 to 600m from the roundabout. It was a fairly big house, with a flat roof, big gates, and a large wall. The RECCE was really just a drive-by to get as much of a picture as we could of our route in and out, as well as the real estate around the house. We did not stop at the house. We then drove back to the camp, and Maj Routledge called the Battalion to ask what they wanted us to do. A decision was then made (I do not know who by) that we should go back to the house and find out who was in there.
9. Maj Routledge gave orders that we were to go to the target location in two Cut Down Land Rovers, four Snatch Land Rovers, and two Warriors. All of the Snatches were on the road itself, and the Warriors were positioned at each edge, covering the arcs. The cut down Land Rovers were there to get people away if we needed to. I now produce as Exhibit S012/1 a sketch map showing the target location and the position of each of the vehicles. I was in the last Snatch vehicle, positioned in the back. I do not now recall who was driving the Snatch that I was in.
10. As we drove near to the target location, the area was very quiet. This was an indication to us that something was happening, as normally there would be people walking around as well as traffic. The first Snatch drove past the gates to the courtyard. The second Snatch drove up to the gate, with its headlights illuminating the gate. The third Snatch stopped behind the first two, and our vehicle covered the back-end.

11. Sgt SO11, who was Cmdr of the second Snatch, shouted "British Army", and to open the door. Immediately, two automatic weapons were fired from the roof over our heads. I could not see who was firing, but I could see muzzle flashes and I heard automatic fire. I am absolutely certain that shots were being fired. I have been asked by the Inspector whether the gates of the house had been opened before the shots were fired. I do not think that the gates had been opened yet, but it could have been that as the gates were opened the rounds were fired.
12. The next thing I saw was dismounts coming out of the Snatch and moving into the courtyard, towards the front door. There were four soldiers by the door. I cannot remember who the four were, apart from Sgt SO11, who I remember was the second soldier through the door.
13. The soldiers entered the house by a kick to the door. The next thing I heard was a shout of "British Army", and then a round was fired. Maj Routledge was standing beside me. We looked at each other, wondering what was going on. I remember that there were other dismounts standing by the gates, ready to go in to assist if they were needed. Maj Routledge did not go in at this stage. I recall that 2Lt SO13 was going through the gates with his troops in order to assist. There was also a Cpl, it might have been Cpl Ryan Jones but I cannot recall for certain. I do remember that when I went into the house, around 30 minutes after the casualty was evacuated, the Cpl was holding the hand of a female inside the house.
14. I did not go into the house immediately. I remember that there were no more shots before I went in, but there was a lot of screaming and shouting inside the house. I remember that two males were led out of the house in plasticuffs and were put under guard next to the main gate. There was the owner of the house and a female, and I think one other person. I did not speak to them.

15. I remember that Sgt SO11 came out of the house and he was extremely upset. I took him into the backyard and offered him a cigarette to try to calm him down. He then told me what he had seen as he entered the house. He told me that as they had gone through the door, two men came running down the stairs carrying automatic, long-barrelled weapons. The first person started to swing his weapon towards the door, at which point Sgt SO11 opened fire. As I have said, I did not see this myself but that is what Sgt SO11 told me outside the house.
16. After the incident, I went back to Camp Cherokee. The walk-in had disappeared. The Inspector has asked me whether it occurred to me to retain the walk-in in order to debrief him after the operation. All I can say is that it wasn't my decision whether or not to retain the walk-in: it would possibly have been the OC's decision. It was something which was in the back of my mind, however I was then tasked to do other things. When the interpreter came back to Camp Cherokee the next morning we asked him if he had known the walk-in previously, and he said that yes he had. We did ask the interpreter where the walk-in lived but he would not tell us.
17. I did take a note of what the walk-in told me. I do not now have that notebook as it was handed over at the time for the intelligence folder.
18. My involvement in this incident ended after we returned to Camp Cherokee. I was not part of any group which went to visit any other families, and I was not aware that that had occurred.

Statement of Truth

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true

Sign

Dated

08/08/2015