

MOD-83-0000066-A

STATEMENT OF S003

Iraq Historical Enquiry

Statement to Sir George Newman's Enquiry

I, S003, am currently employed in the UK but was born in [REDACTED]. I came to the UK in 2001 in order to play semi-professional cricket. I then decided to join the British Army which I felt would allow me to play Army sport and would be an interesting life. I enlisted 2002 and did Phase 1 at Catterick and Phase 2 at Catterick ITC. I was then pointed by the training staff towards the Infantry and particularly to the Parachute Regiment. This was due to my fitness levels. I had not particularly considered going into the Infantry prior to this. I got on well in basic training and I felt trained to a basic level when I left the training establishment. I joined the Parachute Regiment in January 2003. I joined 3 Para in Colchester. I immediately deployed to Iraq on Op Telic 1 in February 2003. In the time between joining the Regiment in January and deploying in February, I did some basic weapons training and received some basic briefings on Iraq. I was briefed on things like the climate, temperatures, health issues, languages, the war structure, the history of the region etc. to give me some basic background about the area and the situation in relation to the war. There was no more detailed training at all about what we might expect or on how to act in any particular situation. I do not know what pre-deployment training, if any, the other members of my platoon had received as they were more experienced than me and I had only just arrived.

We deployed in February to Kuwait. At that time, I was very inexperienced and was one of several people who came virtually straight from Phase 2 to the deployment. I was the only one in my platoon who was in that situation. I had been assigned to 7 Platoon which was part of the Rifle Company. The other members of that platoon were the OC who was [REDACTED] S010 and the Platoon Sgt whose name I cannot recall. He was then later replaced in theatre to Sgt O'Brien. The platoon Cpl was S001 who seemed to me to be very experienced. The other members of the platoon were all Privates:-

S004, S006, S002, S005 and S007. I will comment on each of these in turn.

S001

He seemed very experienced and very capable. He had clearly been in the Army for some time and had served in Northern Ireland. Although he could exercise his authority as a Cpl he was easy to work with. He did see things in very black and white terms but at least you knew where you stood with him.

S004

I believe he was the Senior Private and therefore, at the time that we were in Iraq, was an acting L/Cpl. We did not actually have a substantive L/Cpl. He was a good soldier and also had some personal authority. He and S001 seemed to work well together.

S003

S006

He and I became good friends. He was a good soldier and he helped me a lot and advised me what to do in specific situations where I had no training.

S002

I did not know him well. He was brought in from another troop to drive the WMK. He seemed to be a likeable chap and was popular.

S005

He may have been the machine-gunner, I am not sure. He seemed very professional and he had a good sense of humour.

S007

He came across from the Parachute Regiment assault engineers. I did not know him well initially. He joined us either in Kuwait or Iraq. I cannot recall. I do not know if he replaced someone else.

We went to Kuwait for three weeks or so prior to going into Iraq when the war started. We did some weapons training in Kuwait, both in terms of refresher training and also using the Minimee machine-gun which was not available outside theatre. We also did some joint helicopter training with the US forces and otherwise just generally acclimatised to the heat and the conditions. So far as I recall we did no VCP training at that time.

Some of the other members of the platoon, I cannot remember which ones, had served in Northern Ireland together. They were very experienced in setting up and operating VCP. In Northern Ireland they had done it regularly although whether it was done in the same way in Iraq as it had been in Northern Ireland, I do not know. I had never received VCP training in the Army. Anything I learnt was by doing it in practice in theatre on the advice of others. When a VCP was set up I would be given a role which might be something as simple as being a look-out and I would then carry it out. Generally, my role was as look-out or all round defence because I was one of the least experienced. I did do a little searching on the odd occasion but that was a rare event.

I had some very basic training on detaining suspects in Phase 2 of basic training but it was nothing very detailed. I had no prisoner handling or detention training at all in theatre. We were not issued with any handcuffs and I did not carry any ties of that sort in order to restrain people. We had no facilities for detaining people or taking prisoners and we were not briefed on what we should do if we were in that situation. Unlike in later Op Telics there were no detention centres and we were not looking to arrest insurgents and keep them for interrogation or anything of that sort.

In Kuwait, we were briefed that we were going into Southern Iraq to protect the oilfields and to stop them being destroyed by the Iraqis or by insurgents. We were also going to secure the area after the American spearhead troops had gone through and then deal with any left-over resistance or militias. We also had the task of securing left over munitions in order to stop them falling into the wrong hands.

S003

We were briefed that there could be hostile elements amongst the civilian population and that there were active militias in the area which we might have to deal with after the Iraqi Army was defeated. We were also briefed that there might be looters or bandits and we would have to deal with them as well. The briefings were general and there was no specific detail given or any particular tasking assigned to us to deal with these issues, we were simply made aware of them.

The Rules of Engagement at that stage were on a card. I cannot recall the colour of the card. Effectively, this was a war and we were entitled to use lethal force. We did not know whether we would have to fight the Iraqi Army or not but we were prepared for that. My understanding was that I could use lethal force if my life or the life of another was in danger. I was equipped with an SA80 rifle and a war load of ammunition together with some grenades. I also carried spare ammo and some grenades for the USGL. In the event, as far as I recall, I never had to fire my weapon in anger. Everything was new to me, the people, the situation, the country etc. It was all a learning experience and I relied heavily on other people to tell me what to do. However, I felt that with the training I had received and the experienced people around me, I was capable of carrying out my role successfully.

When the war started I travelled in the back of a four ton truck for several days over sand in order to get to the Iraqi border. Once we crossed the border into Iraq, we then made our way in stages to a couple of locations that I cannot recall. When we stopped and camped we would carry out patrols in order to reconnoitre the local area and ensure that there were no threats nearby. It was clear that there had been fighting and there was quite a lot of battle debris about but we actually did not see any fighting at that stage. At one point we ended up getting to Rumaylah and later moving up north into Maysan Province towards the Iranian border. At some point around the Rumaylah area there was a fire-fight at night near an oilfield. There was a lot of firing and some prisoners were taken. I was not directly involved in this although I was present at the location.

We ended up in a police station somewhere near Highway 6. I did not know the actual location. This is obviously in the vicinity of the village in which the incident happened. This building became our platoon Headquarters. At some point, we did go into Basra and took part in a fully armed march into the centre of the city to test local reaction. There was no hostile reaction at all and in fact we were welcomed by the population. After that, Basra came under UK control but then we moved back out into the country to the police station. I cannot recall exactly when all of this happened.

At some stage we were also moved to a different location further north just after the war phase, again I am not sure where or when this was.

For the majority of the deployment we were based at the police station near Al-Amarah. At this police station we did patrols in the local area and carried out VCP on the roads. There was a big road called Highway 6 going all the way down the country from north to south ending up near the Iranian border. It was an important highway and part of our job was to try and exercise some control on it in this area. There was also another road that crossed it and created a crossroads near to the village of Jalb. This area was where the Marsh Arabs used to live until Saddam Hussain built some huge canals as defences near the Iranian border and drained the marshes. He also then murdered most of the Marsh Arabs and the area was very desolate. We did not know whether or not the population would be welcoming but even if

the locals were happy to see us, there were clearly elements of Iraqi people who were not. The village of Jalb had apparently been a military outpost with weapon storage in it although I was not aware of this at the time. We had been briefed that there were lots of weapons coming across the border from Iran and then going up Highway 6 to the North. Our job was to try and locate some of these and stop them.

At this stage, we were wearing helmets but I cannot recall whether this was because it was still the war phase or due to the hostile nature of the area. I can recall that in the tasking we did up north we were in berets so that may have been later than the deployment to the police station in Jalb but I am not really sure.

I have no clear recollection of the ending of the war phase and the move into peace-keeping. I can recall us handing in ammunition at some point which would tend to indicate that that was the end of the war phase but this is all somewhat vague. I certainly cannot recall anyone in the chain of command telling us that there was a change in the Rules of Engagement or procedures. This was a long time ago and I do not recall any specific point where we changed from fighting to peace-keeping. I can recall that we did go back to wearing berets at some point but I do not recall who told us to or why. At the time of the incident that is the subject of this enquiry we were still wearing helmets.

Although at some point we clearly moved from a war phase to a law and order role and we were trying to control what was travelling on Highway 6, I am not conscious that this affected the way we operated. There was still a high level of threat and we were conscious of it being potentially a hostile situation.

We were equipped with two vehicles. One was a Pinzgauer which was longer than a Land Rover but slower and carried eight people in the back and was the vehicle that I was travelling in on the day of the incident. We also had an Army Land Rover known as a WMK) which was short wheel-based one with a stand in the roof for the vehicle mounted machine gun. I never manned that machine gun at any time. The drivers were changed on different days depending on who was on patrol that day. I never drove either of the vehicles. We would patrol both on the highways and in the villages. We were looking for suspicious activity and also trying to carry out a "hearts and minds" role to establish a rapport with the local populace. The local's reaction to us varied as they were neither all friendly nor all hostile. Of course, this meant that we would never know how they would react when we entered a village or stopped a vehicle. We had to be on our guard at all times.

We did on occasions chase vehicles and stop them or stop and search pedestrians. We had had no training that I can recall in how to identify potential insurgents. This was an unknown area and we were not familiar with the locals. The carrying of weapons was very common in the area and did not necessarily denote an insurgent. It was therefore very difficult to spot anyone who might be a threat, particularly as many of them had weapons. We mainly relied on stopping males as they would potentially be more of a threat. Also, if vehicles acted suspiciously then we would pursue and stop them.

I am aware that on some patrols weapons were found but I was never present when any patrol did this. We did not patrol every day. There was a three shift rota of patrolling, camp security and then rest, which we went through. Therefore, there would be many occasions when patrols went out and I would not be present. I do not recall every arresting or seeing anyone arrested for possessing the weapons. As I said before, I do not think we did arrest

people because we did not have the facility to do so. The understanding was that if people were found with weapons we would simply confiscate the weapons and let them go.

Every day was much the same in this area and I cannot recall anything which occurred in the lead up to the incident which was unusual.

The Incident on 11th May 2003

This was a perfectly normal day. I cannot recall what we had done the day before. I cannot recall if patrols had gone out on the previous day or if I was on them. Each day was very much like the last with the routine of patrols, guard and rest. I can recall S001 telling us before we went out that we were to set up a VCP on Highway 6. The purpose was to search and locate weapons coming across the border. This was the first time I had done a static VCP and I also believe it was the first time in Iraq that the Section had done one.

There would have been a briefing before we went out but I cannot recall whether it was from the OC or S001 and I cannot recall what was said. My role, as I remember it, was security/force protection rather than searching cars or people. As I said, I was the most junior member of the team and generally the searching was carried out by more experienced individuals, particularly those who had been in Northern Ireland.

We had the usual two vehicles with us. S002 was driving the WMK and I think S007 was in the Pinzgauer. I travelled in the Pinzgauer which was a slower vehicle. I cannot recall who else was in that vehicle with me. I cannot now even recall who the machine gunner on the WMK was on that day. I also do not remember where S001 was. I travelled in the same vehicle all day and I never went in the WMK at all. We left camp in daylight but I cannot recall the time. I do not know what we did, if anything, before setting up the VCP or whether we went straight to that location at the beginning. I can only say that it was somewhere on Highway 6 but I do not know where. The locations were not part of my responsibility and I did not have a map.

At the location we did not block the road, we simply sat at the side of the road observing vehicles something in the manner of a highway patrol. I cannot recall what time of day the chase occurred. We had stopped some other vehicles before this incident occurred and those drivers co-operated with us. Nothing was found in any of those searches. I was not involved in the searching. My role was to give cover and observe my arcs in case of a threat coming in from outside. I was not so interested in the stop and search procedures as that was not my responsibility. I could not properly keep a look-out and be looking at what the searchers were doing at the same time. I had a job to do and that involved looking outwards. At this stage we were still wearing helmets and body armour and we were aware there was a potential threat, so we could not relax our vigilance.

At some point, I was on the ground looking down the road and I saw a vehicle stop and turn around. It is difficult to say how far away this vehicle was as the landscape is flat and featureless. I would guess that it was a few hundred yards away but I am not sure. They presumably behaved in this way because they had spotted us at the side of the road. I considered this to be suspicious and I called out to S001 who then looked and saw the vehicle. S001 immediately told us to mount up and chase the vehicle. I got into the back of the Pinz. I cannot recall who was with me. I also cannot recall who was driving. We set off down the highway. The Pinz is slower than the WMK and we were left behind. As I

was in the back I could not see forward. I had a restricted view sideways and I could see behind. I did not know what was happening ahead. We went off quite fast for about five or so minutes. I cannot recall what was being said between any of us. We then stopped and dismounted although I did not know, at that stage, what was happening.

When I got out of the vehicle I found that we were in a village but I did not know where. I saw some houses and two suspects lying on the ground in Arab dress near to a white Toyota pickup. There were also locals around although whether they came from the vehicle or from the houses I did not know. There were no soldiers around the vehicle at that stage. There were two young men in white dish-dash lying on the ground. They were lying still at that stage. S001 wanted to search the vehicle so he asked me and someone else who I was with to check the two suspects over for weapons. I cannot recall who the other person was who was with me. I do not know what the other soldiers from the WMK were doing at this stage. The gunner would have been up on top and you can only get four or five in the vehicle so there were probably no spare bodies to search the suspects for weapons.

As ordered, I went over to the suspect. I went to search one of them. I have no idea which of the two Iraqis this was. I searched him by patting him down as best I could using my left hand. My weapon was in a sling across my body and I was holding it in my right hand so it did not swing around and also it was ready in case I needed it. Therefore, I only had contact with the suspect with one hand. I do not know what was happening with the second Iraqi. I was not looking. I was concentrating on the one that I was trying to search.

As I started patting him down he was squirming and started to get up. I forced him back down by putting my left hand on his back/shoulder area and pushed him down by leaning forward. I did not use any force as such, just my body weight. I did not strike him at any time. He then went back down to the ground and one of the other soldiers, I cannot now recall who, saw this and came over. He said he would take over and I was told to get back to my arcs and ensure that the area was safe. I therefore did this.

I had physical contact with a suspect for a few seconds at most and I used minimal force to hold him down. I never used any violence against him.

I then went back to what was effectively the perimeter and kept a look out. I was about ten metres or so away from the vehicle. The incident that was occurring was therefore behind me now and I was looking outwards. The situation was becoming potentially difficult as more locals came over to the scene. I was ensuring that I was observing outwards in case we were attacked. I did not see any physical contact between the locals and the soldiers. A large black dog arrived which was looking dangerous. It was snarling and barking and it was shot. We then left the scene after a fairly short period and when we did the two men were still lying on the ground.

We drove off down the road and again I was in the rear vehicle which was slower. The vehicles stopped further down the road near a group of pedestrians. We all dismounted and once again I was tasked to check my arcs and give perimeter cover. Some of the other soldiers searched each civilian. It all happened very quickly and then we remounted and moved on.

After this, I cannot recall whether we returned to camp or whether we carried on patrolling. I can recall that at some point during the day S001 was in communication with base by radio but I cannot recall when this was or what orders he was given.

We certainly got back to the police station in daylight. I cannot recall what conversation, if any, there was on the journey back. There has been a lot of discussion and rumour spreading since and it is difficult now to remember what I knew at the time and what I have been told since.

When we got back to camp S010 did speak to S001. I do not recall him speaking to us directly or debriefing us in any way.

It was only some days later that we began to hear rumours that someone had been killed. I had not been aware of this before.

Comments on S010 Statement

I do not specifically recall a briefing about VCP's or Al Uzayr from S010 before we deployed to the police station. It may well have happened but I do not recall it.

It is correct that they did have radio communications with Platoon Headquarters at all times. That was the responsibility of S001 but was nothing to do with me.

I was not aware that S010 had done a VCP on the ground or that he had found weapons. There were weapons found on some of the patrols but I was not aware that S010 was there.

I do not agree that S010 knew me personally "really well". He probably did know some of the others quite well but I was the junior member of the team and was only just out of basic training. He certainly did not ask me personally if anything had happened on our return.

I also do not agree that he asked me "individually" what had happened or that I denied anything had happened. He never asked me anything at that time. He also says he believes Sgt O'Brien spoke to us, but Sgt O'Brien certainly never spoke to me about it.

I was not aware of rumours circulating in the village about people being killed.

I was not spoken to by S010 afterwards, in fact it was not discussed at all at that time.

Comments on Sgt O'Brien's Statement

He mentions the use of the Clansman radios and the PRR. I did have a PRR set for part of the time I was on this deployment but it was taken off me at some point and given to someone else. I cannot recall why this was. I also do not know when it was, but I think it may well have been before the incident. The reason I say that is that my recollections of the day in question does not include any "chatter" from other members of the unit when we were at the VCP.

I am surprised that it says that the VCP's were done each day. I can only recall being involved in one road-based VCP in my time in Iraq.

He confirms what I have said which is that he had not spoken to us individually about the incident.

Statements of the Iraqi Witnesses

Ali Mohammed Abdullah

I have no comment to make on this statement

Anthar Fenjan Sadaam

I cannot comment on the chase or the number of vehicles as I was in the rear of the Pinz and could not see forward. The WMK was faster than us. I do recall hearing a gunshot at one point when the dog was shot.

Audi Saeed Youssef

I have no comment to make on this statement.

Bonnain Sary Moutlak

I do not recall any females being pushed over. There were a lot of people present and crowding around. I was outside of this group covering my arcs and occasionally looking in.

Dalal Fenjan Sadaam

I have no comment to make on this statement.

Hashim Auda Shewail Hebaitar

I have no comment to make on this statement.

Jusm Bader

I have no comment to make on this statement.

Kadhém Khalaf Toama

The two drivers would have stayed with the two vehicles. I did not get involved in beating anyone. I was looking outwards for potential threats.

In the second incident I was again in the slower vehicle and I remained with it covering my arcs while the pedestrians were searched. I did not see them beaten.

Karim Manea Hassan

I have no comment to make on this statement.

Samira Reshek

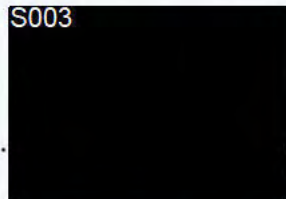
My only comment is that we were not wearing green uniforms.

Shihab Abdel Reda Dawood

I have no comment to make on this statement.

Soughier Khalaf Toama

I have no comment to make on this statement.

S003


SIGNED.....

 S003

DATED.....

23/09/2014

