



MOD-83-0000065-A

Iraq Judicial Inquiry

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF  
S001

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I, S001 c/o WH Law LLP, Finch House, 28-30 Wolverhampton Street, Dudley, West Midlands, DY1 1DB, will say as follows:

1. I joined the Army in August 1996. I completed Phase 1 Recruit Training at ATR Lichfield. In June 1997 I was awarded British Military Parachute Wings having completed the appropriate training, to include parachute descents, and qualified as a military parachutist. I was assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion Parachute Regiment.

In late 2000 I was awarded a certificate of achievement for my support and participation in Airborne Exercise between 17 November 2000 and 11 December 2000.

In 2000 I was promoted to Lance Corporal.

In 2001 I qualified into the Royal Signals. I was in effect dual qualified from this point onwards.

In June 2001 I completed the Skills at Arms phase of the Section Commanders Battle Course, and the Section Commanders Battle Course, Tactics phase. In June 2001 I was promoted to Corporal.

During my time within the Forces I spent time in the UK, Northern Ireland, Canada, Yugoslavia, Belize, USA, Kuwait and Iraq. I completed five tours of Northern Ireland in total.

My mid-year review in 2003 by Major Worthington stated the following; 'Cpl has had an excellent 6 months, serving throughout Op TELIC as a Section Commander. Whether instructing his section during the pre-deployment training phase in SENTA or leading his section on operations in Iraq S001 has proven himself to be a dependable and mature Junior Non Commissioned Officer. He made the transition from a war fighting to a peace support focus effortlessly and ensured his section remained focused and motivated throughout a hectic and volatile period that saw C Coy (my unit) committed to operations in Basrah, the Rumayllah Oilfields and the Maysan province. S001 is an approachable, mature and well rounded individual who readily earns and commands the trust of peers and superiors alike'.

In April 2005 the following was written about me by Major Wilson S001 is a mature, thoughtful section commander whose calm demeanour has been a great source of reassurance to his Junior Soldiers 'JS'. He is fair and consistent in his dealings with them yet uncompromising when the standards required are not met, whether in behaviour or performance. He praises, encourages or grips depending upon the needs of the individual and as the situation requires. He is a genial character with a good sense of humour, is well respected by his peers and is also a committed family man who balances work and family life admirably. S001 has been a strong section commander who has shown a genuine commitment to ensuring that his JS get the best possible start to their careers. He is a technically sound instructor but his job demands so much more and he had fulfilled all that has been asked of him. In turning JS's from civilian youths to soldiers his JS's have been left with no doubts over what it means to apply the core values and standards which are key to everything we do here. His administration is sound and his work is detailed and accurate ensuring he has the pertinent facts available. He anticipates well and navigates the plethora of niggles of the training environment and programme without fuss'.

I left the Army voluntarily in approximately December 2005.

2. With reference to scenario training and class based exercises; due to the passage of time I do not recall any specific class based exercises. I may have had theory sessions when I was training to be a signaller but I do not recall any specifically. Scenario training was generally in the form of physical activities and assessments; I recall many of these taking place in Wales, and being based upon your physical fitness and use the terrain. Many of these sessions included live firing exercises and honing the skills required to be a soldier and or commander.

Whilst in Northern Ireland I was involved in peace keeping. I don't recall having any specific training in peace keeping. The Northern Ireland deployments were always structured and well resourced. We were placed with the local Police to assist in the stop and search of vehicles. Every vehicle on point was stopped and searched and we were tasked with looking for explosives. I had never been deployed into a War scenario before Iraq.

3. In 2002, I, along with 19 colleagues, was based in Wales for approximately six months undergoing fitness training. This was in preparation for Special Air Services 'SAS' selection which was planned to take place in January 2003. In December 2002, all 20 of us were pulled from training and SAS selection to go to Iraq. I don't recall when or how we were told that we were being deployed to Iraq. We were deployed to Iraq in February 2003.

We were initially based in Kuwait. My Personal Development Record states that we were in Kuwait from 16 February 2003 until 22 March 2003. In Kuwait I recall filling sandbags and there being a period of uncertainty, whereby it wasn't clear whether we would definitely be going into Iraq or not. We did complete some training in Kuwait but I recall it being focused mainly upon chemical Warfare, I recall doing a lot

of fitness work whilst wearing a respirator. During our time in Kuwait I do not recall any briefings upon Iraq, the target areas and or aims of our deployment.

We travelled from Kuwait by convoy, of at least 2000 members, across the border and into Iraq. I recall there being a gap in the border that allowed us entry.

For approximately the first half of my deployment in Iraq, the position was that we were at War. I recall the last half being after the War had finished and the role changed to policing and peace keeping. War, although trained for, was something I hadn't experienced on the ground before. The position during the War period was that the threat to us was real. Gun fire was exchanged on multiple occasions on a daily basis. The enemy did not wear uniform so it was difficult to differentiate between the enemy and civilians.

The Operations in Iraq initially consisted mainly of us following the air assaults and the United States Forces and picking up any pockets of the enemy which remained. We travelled in convoys. We were fired upon on numerous occasions. If we could identify where the shots were coming from we would fire back.

I do not recall exactly when the position changed from War to peace keeping. I would estimate that it was approximately half way through my time in Iraq but due to the passage of time I can't be sure about this. I recall Saddam Hussein being missing or having left but I don't remember it being a case of one day it was war and the next it was peace time. I don't remember it being definite like that at all. I recall the political landscape changing but I do not recall our instructions changing. I do not recall being briefed on the change from war to peacetime.

I recall yellow cards being given that detailed the rules of engagement, however, due to the passage of time, I do not recall when I was issued with such a card or what it

specifically detailed. I cannot recall if this was issued before or in Northern Ireland or in or before Iraq.

I recall us being expected to have a visible presence in Iraq to help stabilise the Country. We were expected to immerse ourselves with the local population. However, it did remain hostile. Many people did not want us there. I recall hearing small arms fire in our direction on a daily basis throughout the whole of my time there. I would say we were in a constant state of high alert. It remained a dangerous place and we always had to be ready for an enemy attack.

Our daily tasks consisted of patrols, guards and rest, in repeat cycles, every six hours.

With regards to patrols, my understanding at the time was that we should have been going out in units of twelve. I do not recall this ever happening. We were usually in teams of seven or eight. I did not have any control over who would be on patrol with me; it was a case of whoever was free and rested would go out. It was common for men to go out who hadn't rested. We did not travel with translators and I did not speak the local language. Communication was an issue in Iraq and most of the time we had to resort to hand gestures. Whilst some civilians did speak English, not all did, and I recall that it was sometimes a struggle to communicate with people there.

With reference to briefings and or instructions before patrols, due to the passage of time I do not recall any specifically. Generally instructions tended to be brief, for example, we would be asked to patrol a certain route. We were not told how to do this, as it was assumed that we were all qualified and capable of carrying out such a task.

As a Corporal I would have led the unit whilst out on patrol. My Second in Command 'two IC' in Iraq was initially Private Sexton. This changed to S004 [REDACTED] when Private

Sexton left. I did not choose who would be the 2 IC. It was a role dictated by experience and that would have been confirmed by our Sergeant or Platoon Commander.

I do not recall being trained on how to stop and search vehicles in Iraq. I assume that they relied on the experience we had gained whilst working in Northern Ireland, however, the two places were very different. In Northern Ireland every car was searched thoroughly and you had experienced police assistance.

We had no specific instructions on what to search or on how to conduct the searches. We had no instruction to seize weapons if they were found.

The civilian reaction to our searches was mixed. The children were intrigued whilst the elder generation did not want us there.

During our patrols our communication equipment was outdated, unreliable and more often than not did not work. On many occasions we would be in the middle of nowhere with no form of mobile communication. This made me feel very vulnerable for myself and my unit. It would have been known to the Commander and Sergeant at the time that the equipment was unreliable.

I recall that there was a distinct lack of strategy in Iraq during the peace time. This lack of strategy during this time meant that we didn't really know what our role was or what the overall plan was. I recall it feeling like we were all just getting out on the ground without actually knowing the full extent of our role.

4. I do not recall any incident in which any civilians were restrained by me or my former colleagues. I do not recall any incident in which any civilians were struck by helmets, rifles and or by me or my former colleagues. I do not recall witnessing any incidents in which any of my colleagues were engaged in an altercation with an Iraqi person.

5. Save as to what I have detailed in paragraph four above I do not wish to add anything further in relation to the statements of my former colleagues.

I confirm that the contents of this statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed ..... S001 [REDACTED] .....

Dated...27/09/14.....