

MOD-83-0000063-A

IN THE MATTER OF AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEATH OF  
MR NADHEEM ABDULLAH

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF S002

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1. I joined the army at the age of 17. I had been in the army cadets from the age of 15. After I turned 17, I went to the Army Careers office to take the entrance test. I had always wanted to join the Parachute Regiment and after taking the preliminary tests, including an IQ test, I was allowed to attend a pre-entrance assessment which consisted of a full medical and some basic fitness tests.
2. Soon after my 18th birthday, I went to basic training at Litchfield Army Training Facility and subsequently at Catterick. Following completion of basic training, I went into P Company. The purpose of this was to determine whether I was able to join the Paras. This involved particularly gruelling fitness tests. I completed P Company successfully and obtained my maroon beret. After that, I went to RAF Brize Norton for jump training. That took about a month of ground work before I was allowed to jump from an aircraft. My basic training took 9 months. After that, I went on leave for a short period following which I was assigned to 3rd Battalion.
3. I joined 3rd Battalion in November or December 1999. Somewhat unusually, I was drafted directly into Support Company rather than one of the Rifle Companies. This was because Support Company was short on numbers at the time.
4. I was initially based in Dover and preparing to move to Colchester Barracks, 3rd Battalion having recently returned from Kosovo. Once at Colchester Barracks, I passed the machine gun test (the carder) which meant that I was allowed to remain in Support Company as a machine gunner. We also received Northern Ireland training (henceforth NI training). This consisted of riot control; stop and search; vehicle and house searches and dealing with the general public.
5. In riot control training, we learned formations to deal with many different public order scenarios, depending on the size and aggression of crowds. In particular, in our formations, we were taught never to be the aggressor. If the crowd adopted a violent stance, we would respond to that with a change in formation but if the crowd became less violent, we would revert back to a less

confrontational stance. We learnt to use batons in a controlled manner and were told never to strike the head. We also learnt to fire baton rounds and to employ strict rules of engagement for their use.

6. In stop and search training we learnt how to communicate effectively and appropriately with members of the general public and learned the limited circumstances in which reasonable force could be employed in order to conduct a search. I learnt how to conduct a body search and how to search buildings and grounds in order to locate weapons or explosives. We were taught how to stay within the law i.e. only to stop and search when had the right to do so and only to use force when justified. In particular, I recall that we were taught that members of the public knew their rights and would complain or sue if we behaved unlawfully.
7. As part of NI training, we learnt tactics for conducting Vehicle Checkpoints (henceforth "VCPs"). In a VCP, two vehicles would be parked in adjacent but staggered positions. As well as the men manning the vehicles, there would be two cut off men, who were usually hidden (for example in undergrowth). Their jobs would be to inform the commander if there was anything problematic coming towards them or to try and apprehend anyone who failed to stop at the VCP. We were taught that the purpose of the checkpoints was show presence in an area and to demonstrate control. A VCP could either be set up as a matter of routine or where there was a specific suspicion that a vehicle might be carrying prohibited items.
8. NI training was both theoretical and practical. We were assessed on our real-time reaction to incidents in a mock-up village, for example shooting from a window or an IED bomb going off. There was also a simulation screen similarly designed to test your reactions to various scenarios, some of which involved the use of a rifle. Public order training included highly realistic simulations, in the course of which members of other companies within our battalion played the role of rioters.
9. Following training, I started a six month tour in Northern Ireland in Support Company. Whilst in Northern Ireland, I was assigned on rotation between patrols, guards and Quick Reaction Force. From time to time I was sent to an RUC police station from which we conducted patrols and observation and surveillance duties. After the deployment finished, I returned to Colchester. Subsequently, I was sent on two more three month tours of Northern Ireland, during which I was engaged in similar duties. I think that I conducted VCPs on every tour of Northern Ireland. During these, I would have conducted searches. I am also fairly sure that I dealt with incidents of public disorder. I certainly remember being in Northern Ireland during marching season, during which I would have dealt with public order situations.

10. I felt that the NI training I received was very effective and enabled me to deal with the challenges of my deployments to Northern Ireland. I never felt out of my depth. As far as I can remember, I was always clear about the job I had to do and confident that I could do it.
11. In the winter of 2012, I was sent to South Africa for a month's jump training. I was deployed to Iraq on 15 February 2003 as part of Operation Telic 1, only a month or so after our return from South Africa. We had done a lot of pre-training for combat before the deployment. In my case, this included training on the Wimmick as a driver and machine gunner. I can't recall whether combat training only started after we got back from South Africa, or whether it had started before hand.
12. I don't recall any specific peacekeeping training prior to the deployment on Operation Telic. I can recall some basic language training, and receiving some brief advice. I recall the phrase "hearts and minds" being used and being told not to communicate or look to the woman to answer questions unless absolutely necessary but to communicate with the men. I don't remember whether we were told this in UK or when in Kuwait or in Iraq after invasion. I also remember being given cards which set out the rules of engagement. I think that there was a card for war and a card for peacekeeping. I can't recall the contents now but I would have been aware of them at the time. Undoubtedly, the vast majority of the training that we received was for combat rather than peacekeeping.
13. I was initially deployed to Kuwait in order to acclimatise and prepare weapons and vehicles. This deployment lasted about a month. I knew that we would be going into South Iraq, that US forces would be conducting most of the fighting and that we would be sweeping up the areas that they would not cover in their advance to Baghdad.
14. After the invasion, I recall driving from place to place at night and stopping in the day. I knew that we were doing this for tactical reasons but I don't think I knew the bigger picture, for example, whether we were following the Americans or trying find pockets of insurgents. We may have been told this at the time but if so, I cannot recall it.
15. In the event, our involvement in the fighting was limited. There are only a few incidents that I can specifically recall, and even then my memory of them is vague. I remember that on one occasion we were tasked to go to an area where there were insurgents who had failed to leave after leaflets had been dropped telling all fighters to evacuate the area. We could hear some fighting going on but I believe that by the time we got there, it was over. On another occasion, I recall

that we saw an Iraqi tank from a distance and opened fire on it. However, I do not think there was any need for me to use my weapon because some anti-tank missiles were fired by other members of the Company and these dealt with any threat that there might have been. I remember a further occasion when three explosives landed quite near to us. We sent some mortars back and also sent a few helicopters to find out where the artillery was coming from. I can't recall how this incident concluded. At other times I remember manning an observation post near a village and recall guarding a prison camp where some Iraqi officers had been detained.

16. Following the end of the war stage of Operation Telic, we went to a camp which was located somewhere in Southern Iraq. I don't recall exactly where it was (this was before we went to Al Usay'r). I was stationed at the camp for around two weeks. In that camp, the Rifle Companies had requested Wimmicks, which could only be driven by qualified drivers. I believe that Support Company was the only Company which actually had any Wimmicks. Certainly, the Rifle Companies had nobody qualified to drive the Wimmick off-road. For this reason, they had to attach a qualified driver from Support Company to the Rifle Companies whenever they went out on patrol. No one wanted to move away from their platoon, but I drew the short straw and was chosen to be attached to C Company as a driver. Whilst attached to C Company, we were assigned to guard munitions dumps and barracks because following the end of the conflict locals were stealing weapons and ammunition. After that, C Company was tasked to an abandoned school in Al Usay'r and we were told to conduct patrols from there. I would say that this was about a month before the incident in question.
17. Once we arrived at the school, C Company was rotated between three sections: patrol section, guard section and Quick Reaction Force. There would usually have been a rest section as well, but we did not have the resources for this. This meant that patrolling was particularly gruelling for us, especially given the extreme heat. I would rotate between each section. When a section went out, they would always take a Wimmick and a Pinzgauer. The purpose of these patrols was to establish ourselves as the local police force. It was chaotic in the area following the end of the conflict phase of the war. Shootings and kidnappings were commonplace. There was no effective police force following the fall of the regime, so in that area, the British Army was the only organisation capable of maintaining law and order.
18. As well as the patrols, we might go out to deal with specific incidents, for example if we saw or heard gunfire we would go and see what the problem was. Normally, we would have to do this without the help of interpreters (see below). Quite often we would discover weapons including mortars, mines and rifles on our patrols. These might be hidden in houses or bunkers but often we would stop

and search people and find that they were carrying weapons. Sometimes these would be carried by women. On one occasion, I found a woman carrying a belt fed machine gun under her burka.

19. When C Company went out on mobile patrols, they would always take the Wimmick and Pinzgauer and I would always be driving the Wimmick. There would normally be a section commander with me and someone on top cover with the "minime" (a personal machine gun not fixed to the vehicle). In war time, there would normally be two mounted machine guns in the Wimmick, but these had been removed for the purposes of peace keeping. Neither the Wimmick nor the Pinzgauer had any armour. The Wimmick had no skin, merely roll bars. The Pinzgauer had a canvas skin and an aluminium body. Because of this, we were all very conscious of our vulnerability if fired upon. This was a constant worry, because we knew that local people had weapons including heavy machine guns.
20. During this period, we were going out on patrol up to three times a day but probably averaging two patrols per day. The Commander would tell me where to drive and I would just drive wherever I was told to.
21. I do not believe that I received any training for peacekeeping in Iraq beyond that which I have described in paragraph (12) above. I certainly don't remember any training in respect of VCPs beyond that which I had previously received for Northern Ireland deployments. I don't specifically remember anyone telling me that I should put my NI training into effect. I expect that they just assumed we would know to do so. I do know that when I was on peacekeeping duties I very much had in mind my NI training and I imagine that everyone else was doing the same. However, I found that there were difficulties in applying Northern Ireland peacekeeping methods in South Iraq. Perhaps the biggest was communication: none of us spoke Arabic and hardly any of the Iraqis spoke English. In fact I can recall only one person, a local teacher, who spoke adequate English. I had come across him whilst guarding the munitions dump prior to the deployment to Al-Usay'r. I took the opportunity to ask the teacher to write some phrases for me in Arabic. I decided to do this because we had experienced real difficulties explaining to people why they could not travel across the area that we were guarding at the time. When I asked the teacher for help with this, I was acting on my own initiative, not that of a commanding officer. It would have made a big difference if we had had more interpreters available to us, as they were few and far between. I cannot remember ever going out on patrol with an interpreter. It may have happened, but if it did, it would have been a rare occurrence.

22. There were also difficulties in conducting VCPs. Given the terrain, there was a lack of cover for the "cut off" i.e. the soldiers whose job it was to stand at either end of the VCP to try and prevent anyone from driving through it and to give advance notice of any threat. In Northern Ireland, the cut-offs would have been hidden. This made us feel more vulnerable and made VCPs less effective in Iraq than they would have been in Northern Ireland. Also, on open ground it was much easier for vehicles to spot the VCP at a distance and then turn round. This used to happen a lot. When it did, we would try and chase them. There were many occasions when we had to do this. We did sometimes find weapons hidden in vehicles that had failed to stop. Sometimes, whilst chasing vehicles, we saw weapons being thrown from windows. Because of this, we would always treat as suspicious any vehicle that tried to avoid passing through a VCP.
23. When setting up a VCP in Iraq we would follow the same procedure as in Northern Ireland – i.e. two vehicles adjacent and a cut off at either end. They tended not to be so far away as they were used mainly for cover. Some VCPs were designed to stop all vehicles coming through, whilst in others we would stop some at random. On conducting searches, we would politely gesture for the occupants of a vehicle to decamp. We would always try to be friendly, non-threatening and to put people at their ease. The last thing we wanted was for any situation to turn violent. After the occupants decamped, we would conduct a general search of the car, including the back seats, front seats and boot. Some searches were more thorough than others. In NI training, we were taught to spend up to an hour searching a suspect and vehicle. I am not sure that any search that I conducted in Northern Ireland actually took that long but I do know that in Iraq there was never time to spend anywhere near that much time on a search. Of course, the situation would be different if munitions were found but in that case we would seize the vehicle in any event.
24. On conducting our searches, the occupants of the vehicle would be asked to get out and then to stand up and put their arms out. We would then conduct a pat down search. Usually, it was only if we found weapons that they would be taken to their knees (obviously because in this position it would be more difficult for them to run away). However, I believe our training was that if someone who had been stopped at a VCP refused to get out of his vehicle or otherwise failed to cooperate with the search, he would be taken to his knees immediately because he would be assessed as posing a higher risk to us. As part of NI training I would have been taught to take a suspect to his knees but I cannot now remember the techniques that I learnt. I believe I would also have been taught that if someone refused to get out of a vehicle, then they should be taken out. My recollection is that if someone was to be taken out of a vehicle, it was deemed better to put them immediately to their knees for the search because they posed a higher risk to us. There may have been circumstances when a suspect would have been

asked to lie on the floor for the purposes of a search, but I cannot be certain about this.

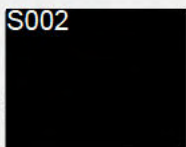
25. If we found weapons, we would detain the suspect and their vehicle. They were plasticcuffed and driven back to our base in Al Usay'r for collection by the Royal Military Police.
26. My job at a VCP was primarily to maintain responsibility over the vehicle. Generally, you would not want a military vehicle to remain unattended and the Wimmick was my responsibility, not that of C Company. That said, I would sometimes have to get out of the Wimmick to help with a stop and search. Sometimes, the top cover would remain in the vehicle when I did this. I am sure that whatever I did at a VCP would normally depend on the orders of my commanding officer. However, there would have been situations when I got out on my own initiative. For example, if there was no risk that anyone might seize the vehicle, I might assist my colleagues but if there was a crowd around, I might decide that it was more important that I remain with the Wimmick.
27. I understand that the incident in question took place in May 2003. As I have already said, at that time, we were conducting two or three patrols per day and numerous VCPs. I was interviewed by the RMP about this incident on 1 December 2003. During that interview, I did my best to recall the incident despite the fact that it had occurred over six months earlier. My period of service had come to an end, I think in September of that year and I had been working for my father in the family bakery since leaving the army. I had already begun to put my army career behind me in order to focus on my new job and had not given much, if any, thought to my time in Iraq. Furthermore, I had experienced numerous VCPs during which vehicles were stopped and the occupants searched and there had been many occasions when we had chased vehicles that had failed to stop at VCP. For all these reasons, it was very difficult to remember the details of what had happened on that day and to distinguish this incident from other stop and searches that I had been involved in. However, I know that during the interview on 1 December, I would have tried to answer the questions accurately and honestly. I was confident that I had always acted professionally whilst performing my duties in Iraq and that I had never injured any Iraqi civilian. I have read a summary of the account that I gave in that interview. Due to the passage of time, I no longer have a reliable recollection of the events in question. However, I can say that the account I gave on 1 December 2003 would have been as accurate a recollection of events as I was able to give at the time, given the difficulties that I have mentioned above.



The contents of this statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

S002

Signed:



Dated:

11/09/14