



MOD-83-0000361-A

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**MOD Form 266A/B**  
(Introduced 12/03)  
Case No: 64872/04

**SERVICE POLICE  
WITNESS STATEMENT**  
(CJ Act 1967, S.9; MC Act 1980, ss5A (3a) and MC Rules 1981, r70)

Statement of: Nicholas George STEELE	
Rank/Status: Civilian (UK)	
Age if under 18: Over 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18')	Occupation: BFBS Presenter
This statement (consisting of nine pages each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.	
Signature: NG STEELE	Dated 18 <sup>th</sup> December 2004

I am Nicholas George Steele. I am employed as a BFBS Presenter at Shaibah Logs Base, BFPO 645. I am on a mobile contract and am not based at any UK BFBS HQ.

I have been at SLB since 16 Nov 04. I am due to move from SLB between 8-14 Jan 05 when I go on leave until 19 Feb 05 when I will be posted to work at the BFBS station at Banja Luka Metal Factory (BLMF) in Bosnia.

On 17 Dec 04, at about 1400 hours, whilst at SLB Iraq, I travelled to Az Zubayr Port (AZP) in order to do an interview with the Commandos Of 40 Commando Royal Marines at AZP, reference a sponsored 'Row Home for Christmas' Radio for transmission at a later date.

When I travelled to AZP, I was escorted by members of 40 Cdo and I travelled in a white pickup truck driven by a Turner's engineer. I cannot remember his name, however his hair was in a ponytail and he was Scottish from Ayrshire.

The convoy to AZP consisted of a lead vehicle, which was what I can only describe as a Commando truck which was a four wheeled box-shaped truck. A four ton truck behind that followed by ourselves with a Land Rover soft topped vehicle at the rear.

The journey to AZP was relatively uneventful except for a white coloured car with a square front and large oblong shaped headlights and black grill that had attempted to pass us on a narrow road.

At the time the rear Land Rover had gone forward to block a junction and our pickup was at the rear of the convoy. We had just turned left at a junction and there was a large gas/oil plant on the right hand side that had large globe shaped storage tanks intermingled with cylindrical shaped tanks.

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The driver of our pickup was talking as if he was talking to the driver of the white car, telling him that he had no chance of getting past and telling him to get lost. We lost the car after a while, after we had turned at the junction once the rear Land Rover re-joined us. I could not make out the details of any occupants as I looked at the vehicle through our wing mirrors and can only remember the headlights of the car.

We arrived at AZP and I did my interviews and got all the information needed for my radio show.

At about 1715 hours or just after we set off to return to SLB, the sun was just going down and it was approaching dusk. Immediately prior to setting off, a marine called SO29 had given a brief to everybody whilst outside the 40 Cdo Ops Room warning them to be on the look out for IED's, specifically mines with pins sticking out of the top as apparently information had been received that IED's had been found that morning.

I remember SO29 telling the crew of the Land Rover to swerve if he did as he would be possibly trying to avoid IED's in the road. Just before we set off the crews checked the batteries of the ECM equipment in the vehicles.

On our trip back to SLB, the convoy consisted of only two vehicles, the lead vehicle being the green coloured Commando truck. SO29 sat in the front passenger seat (which was on the left side). The driver had short blond spiky hair, however, covered it by wearing his green coloured beret.

I sat on a bench seat on the right side of the vehicle behind the driver facing the left side of the vehicle. To my left which was at the rear of the truck there were two marines doing 'top cover'. They were both facing forward. I presume this as although I could not see their upper bodies or heads, their legs faced forward.

The sides of the vehicle were covered in a thick canvas material with plastic windows, which ran the entire length of the sides of the vehicle. There was a canvas cover above my head which ran to near the rear of the truck, which was then open top to allow the two top cover marines to stand up.

The rear of our truck was open backed and I could see out, the only obstruction being the lower torso and legs of the two marines. I could see that there were four marines in the rear Land Rover, two in the front seats and two on 'top cover'. I could not see which was the 'top cover' marines stood in the Land Rover as by the time we left and got on the road it was dark and I could only see the headlights of the Land Rover, which remained quite close throughout the journey, I would estimate about 5 metres behind us.

I spent a lot of my time looking out through the front windscreen of our vehicle as an extra set of eyes and I looked for possible suspicious items on the road ahead.

We had been travelling for about 25 – 30 minutes when I became aware of a car attempting to overtake our two vehicles. I had immediately to this been looking forward out of the windscreen, when I heard a very high revving engine sound and turned to my left to see a set of dirty yellow

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coloured headlamps at the rear of our vehicle being alongside or having just passed the rear Land Rover.

Immediately prior to seeing the headlamps I had heard a screeching noise similar to a car's tyres wheels spinning behind the rear Land Rover.

As the vehicle (I do not know any details of the vehicle as all I could see were the headlamps of the car) pulled between our two vehicles, but on the opposite side of the road I heard a male voice shouting to the rear of our vehicle. The voice was not in English and I could not hear what was being said, but it came across as if 'forced' the person trying to express themselves quickly and loudly.

I then heard a burst of automatic gunfire consisting of about six or seven, very quickly fired rounds which had a pop sound to them. The noise came from the direction of the rear of our vehicle, but I do not know where from. It did not come from the top cover of my vehicle as the noise come from their direction.

Almost straight away the two top cover of my vehicle turned to their left and began shooting but I could not see what at, as by now I had thrown a couple of day sacks in the cab of our vehicle so they would be between the car and I and had laid down on the floor of our vehicle with my back against the bench seat on my left side with my head facing the rear of our vehicle. I lay on the floor holding a day sack in front of my body to try and protect myself more ( I was wearing a kevlar helmet and body armour at the time).

I am not sure how many rounds were fired by the two top cover in our vehicle but the noise made by the guns fired by the marines was a lower pitched noise to those fired initially.

There was a further burst of the higher pitched 'popping' sound gunfire which I presumed by now to be coming from the vehicle with the yellow headlamps as we had continued to travel and the gunfire remained as loud as the initial burst.

I could also hear the lower pitched gunfire of weapons being fired from the rear Land Rover, however I could not see where they were firing as I was behind the day sack and it was dark outside.

I then heard SO29 shout 'contact left, punch through.' There were further shouts of 'move, move, go, go'. I then heard SO29 shout 'vehicle has stopped, vehicle has stopped, I repeat vehicle has stopped'. I had heard this and looked to see where the feet of the marines were in my vehicle with a view to whether I was going to have to get out of our vehicle as I did not know whether SO29 meant one of our vehicles had stopped or the yellow headlamped car had stopped. I then heard 3 or 4 more rounds of the lower pitched gun being fired on single shot mode.

I am unsure if the rounds were fired by the top covers in my vehicle or the top cover of the rear Land Rover. I then felt a tap on my shoulder which was one of the two top cover marines who

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asked me if I was all right. <sup>SO29</sup> then turned to me and asked if I was all right. I gave him a thumbs up. He asked me to go into a day sack and get a map out so he could make a call on his mobile to report the incident.

We then continued our journey back to SLB. Upon arrival at SLB, about ten minutes later, the two top cover marines sat next to me once they had unloaded their weapons. I asked them 'what the fuck happened?' One of the two said that a white Nissan had come to the side of the truck and 'opened up', which I took to mean having opened fired against us.

I heard the marines talking whilst at the loading bay and could hear one of them saying 'did you see the tracer rounds bouncing off the bonnet of the car?' but I am unsure which one. They were asking each other how many rounds had been fired. I heard one person mention that the 'windscreen had gone', which I took to mean having 'shot through with gunfire'.

Signed: NG STEELE

Signed: NJ SMITH  
Sgt  
RAF P&SS

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