



MOD-83-0000474-A

Witness: Major [REDACTED] SO74

No. of witness statement: First

Date: 20 February 2020

**In the matter of an investigation into the death of Saeed Radhi
Shabram Wawi Al-Bazooni**

WITNESS STATEMENT OF [REDACTED] SO74

I, [REDACTED] SO74, will say as follows:

1. I am making this statement for the purposes of the investigation into the death of Saeed radhi Shabram Wawi Al-Bazooni (the "Investigation").

Background

2. At the time of the incident I was deployed as part of 26 Armoured Engineer Squadron based at the former Iraqi Naval Academy in Basra. At this time I was a Staff Sergeant in the Armoured Troop.

IHAT statements

3. On 20 January 2015 I was asked to give a statement about the incident to the Iraq Historic Allegations Team ("IHAT"). I have been provided with a copy of my statement ("first IHAT statement").
4. On 12 November 2015 I gave a further statement to IHAT and have also been provided with a copy of that statement ("second IHAT statement").
5. These statements were given around 12 years after the event and my recollections were obviously less than perfect. A further 5 years have now passed and so I can remember even less than I could then. I therefore cannot confidently confirm the content of the IHAT statements, although I use this statement to correct, or add to, the IHAT statements so far as I am able to.
6. Generally, I would make the following comments on the reliability of the IHAT statements:
 - a. The IHAT statements capture my answers to questions, but not the questions themselves, which were often closed or leading. The comments captured in the statements therefore seem disjointed and out of context. They also fail to capture

the nuance of what I was saying in some places. I try to correct some of these issues in this statement.

- b. I had a lot more experience and knowledge in 2015 than I did at the time of the incident, and I have even more now. Whilst I have done my best to remember the events, I sometimes wonder whether something I recall is accurate or whether I am filling in the blanks.

Abdul-Nabi Hameed Abdullah

7. In my IHAT statements I make references to Mr Abdullah and, in particular, whether I visited the scene of the incident on 23 May 2003: the date of the incident. I have been supplied with a copy of a record of an interview with Mr Abdullah on 29 May 2003 in which he says a "[REDACTED] SO74" or "[REDACTED] SO74" visited the scene an hour after a body had been retrieved from the water.
8. I say in my first IHAT statement that, "I can't recall going to that scene that day." This does not put the point firmly enough: I certainly did not go to the scene of the incident that day. The 24 May is my birthday and I remember that the day before was downtime. I was in the compound, lying in the sun or writing letters, when "[REDACTED] SO70" and Staff Sergeant "[REDACTED] SO77" returned and I think I remember them being in dirty and wet clothes. I acknowledge that I could not remember whether both were in my second IHAT statement. When I learnt of the incident I and others wanted to go help but we were told not to; the base was on lock down and no one could leave. I adopt what I said in second IHAT statement in this regard.
9. I knew Mr Abdullah but did not know his name at the time of the incident. I thought he was performing an important role safeguarding the water pumping station. I would occasionally supply equipment to build rapport and support his efforts.
10. As I say in my second IHAT statement, my visits to the dockside were routine. We wanted to establish a presence - and show vehicles on the ground - so would often pass when we were out of the base. Whilst on our way we would pass Mr Abdullah's location and stop to say hello. I would say these visits occurred frequently: maybe 2 or 3 times a week.
11. My first and second IHAT statements I say he spoke "reasonably good English". This is relative to other locals and actually Mr Abdullah and I mainly communicated by sign language, pointing and the occasional word. I would have given him my name.
12. I see that, during his interview on 29 May 2003, Mr Abdullah refers to "[REDACTED] SO74" bringing a "starter switch" to him and, during his interview on 14 June 2003, he says he gave a "[REDACTED] SO74" a "generator starter". Occasionally, if he required a piece of equipment, I would try to source it for him. I saw it as part of our implied task to maintain good relations with the locals. I cannot remember anything about a generator starter or a starter switch. It's possible he could be referring to a starter for the pump to wash our vehicles but I cannot be sure and do not remember any specific event such as this around the time of the incident.

13. I see that Mr Abdullah also suggests I usually visited him alone. In my first IHAT statement I say "I almost exclusively met him on my own". To put this into context, I would never have travelled to the dockside by myself due to the risks of insurgents. Although I may have liaised with Mr Abdullah by myself - approaching him with a large group of men would not have helped rapport - I would have always had top-cover and would never have been out of site of the group.

Instructions and training on dealing with looting

14. I do not recall any specific guidance or orders on how to deal with looters before or during my deployment at the former Iraqi Naval Academy. However I remember I viewed my role to be to discourage looters. That was all we could do: we did not have the facilities to detain everyone that was doing something we perceived to be wrong.
15. I remember that we received training prior to deployment on the rules of engagement, law of armed conflict and the Geneva Convention. Although this was not directly relevant to looting, I felt the principles underpinning this training provided us with a reasonable idea of where the boundaries of conduct were. For example, we would have known that prisoners of war had to be treated in a particular way. I do not believe that, in discouraging looters, a soldier would have disregarded those basic principles.
16. Beyond this, there were probably a variety of approaches to dealing with looters that we used: firmly questioning whether they were stealing; pointing fingers at the items to ask what they were doing; or telling them to unload the items. If a situation required it, we would escalate our behaviour in response to the threat. My impression was that people would use their judgment.
17. I recall the culture of the soldiers being positive. We shared a lot, talked and socialised together and had a healthy rivalry. We were loyal but I do not believe we would have hesitated to berate someone if they did something that undermined our values.

Statement of Truth

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true

Signed:

S074

Dated:

20 Feb 20