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RECORD OF INTERVIEW

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(SDN / ROTI / Contemporaneous Notes / Index of Interview with VIW / Visually Recorded Interview)

Person Interviewed: [REDACTED] SO75
Place of Interview: [REDACTED]
Date of Interview: 04/03/2015
Time Commenced: 10:25 Time Concluded: 12:29
Duration of Interview: 2 hours 4 minutes
Audio tape reference nos:
Visual image reference nos:
Interviewer(s): [REDACTED] IHAT 4 [REDACTED] IHAT 1
Other Persons Present:

Police Exhibit No:	Number of Pages:
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Person Speaking

Text

IHAT 4 Right then SO75 we seem to be up and running, recording, as you can see the date and time is on the screen there, it's 1025 on the 5th of March, the year 2015 and obviously we're at the [REDACTED] Police Office in [REDACTED] and basically, can you just confirm that you've attended this interview of your own free will and you're a voluntary attendee at a witness in relation to this interview?

SO75 Yep.

IHAT 4 Yep. I know we've identified ourselves actually on the hard drive of the machine but can you just identify yourself and give me your date of birth please?

SO75 [REDACTED] SO75, date of birth [REDACTED]

IHAT 4 Thank you and I'm obviously [REDACTED] IHAT 4 from the Iraq Historic Allegations Team from the UK stationed at Trenchard Lines in Upavon and also present...

IHAT 1 [REDACTED] IHAT 1 I'm the SIO for Pod 1 at IHAT, also based at Trenchard Lines, Upavon, Wiltshire in the United Kingdom.

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IHAT 4

First of all thanks for coming today SO75 and I know it might be a bit stressful for you but we do need to speak to you in relation to an investigation that's been on going now for the best part of 18 months. What I'd like to do is first of all can you remember what your service number was? Most people can (INAUDIBLE).

SO75

[REDACTED]

IHAT 4

Yep.

SO75

[REDACTED]

IHAT 4

Sorry [REDACTED]

SO75

[REDACTED]

IHAT 4

[REDACTED] can you remember when you joined up?

SO75

I think it was March time, around there, it was just after my 18th birthday I believe.

IHAT 4

Ah ha.

SO75

Somewhere around there.

IHAT 4

Yep and then what trade did you join up as?

SO75

Royal Engineer.

IHAT 4

Royal Engineer and how long did you serve before being demobbed?

SO75

Ah I left in 2004 so six...just over six years.

IHAT 4

OK and did you leave of your own freewill or what was the circumstances in relation to...?

SO75

I signed off yeah.

IHAT 4

You signed off? OK. Um the incident we want to talk about SO75 today is, is an incident that occurred during Op Telic 1, do you know what I mean by Op Telic 1?

SO75

Yep.

IHAT 4

Basically what I'd like you to do is tell me as far as you remember about where you were when you had the notice to go on Op Telic 1 with the Squadron and basically the build up to it, all the training you had OK and then when you went to Iraq, however you got there and then your time in Iraq until the time you went back, so basically, just free recall for you to tell us what you remember about the process about going to Iraq and all the training etc. you had and what happened once you were in Iraq.

SO75

OK. Um when I got there, well I don't know where I was when we got told when we got told we were going...

IHAT 4

Take it, I know it's a long time ago but if you can't remember just say so, it's just to get you to talk about the experience.

SO75

OK so I don't, I don't remember where I was when I got told...

IHAT 4

OK.

SO75

...that's just no, um there was injections and things like that, I remember that.

IHAT 4

Ah ha.

SO75

Getting Anthrax injections and stuff like that, I remember going through that process of having a couple of injections and things like that towards the build up. Training wise I think we had some weapons training.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

There would have been like APWT I presume and there would, I think they had training on like the GPMG and things like that.

IHAT 4

Yeah.

SO75

Briefly, maybe a day.

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IHAT 4
SO75

Hm mm.

I don't really remember getting any other training specific to...ah we would have had like sessions in the like classroom.

IHAT 4
SO75

Hm mm.

About vehicles, you know like heat signatures and things like that...

IHAT 4
SO75

Yep.

...for vehicles. I'm sure there were others, just can't remember. Um and then we flew out from Handover I think, I remember putting the vehicles on the train actually, we put the vehicles on the train...

IHAT 4
SO75

Hm mm.

...to go out, however they were going out, I remember doing all of that, ah and I remember when we got to Iraq we was just in the airport in like a tented, tented camp if you like and then...ah just trying to think of the chain of events...I don't know how long we were in the camp for and I remember being in the vehicles, still living in the vehicles for quite some time and then our main role, the first role as Royal Engineers was to get the American Marines across the border...

IHAT 4
SO75

Hm mm.

...so as Armoured Engineers we had the bridge layers and things like that...

IHAT 4
SO75

Yep.

...so we had to um, I remember, we had to do the break through the border which is like breaking through the, like the buns, tank buns, tank pictures and then fence from...must have been in Kuwait actually, through to Iraq, does that sound right? I think that's right, um so we had to get through there and I remember we got the American Marines in and then we must have pushed up through into Basra, coz we were, that's right we were with the American Marines for about 2, 3 weeks...

IHAT 4
SO75

Hm mm.

...just in the middle of nowhere...

IHAT 4
SO75

Yep.

...for quite some time, so yeah we done that and then after that generally the rest of the time it's just support for like clearing rubble, clearing things away and sort of just supporting with the...with the Arc, with their CET's...

IHAT 4
SO75

Hm mm.

They're Combat Engineer Tractors.

IHAT 4
SO75

Yes.

That was generally our role, I think, from then, from then on in. Oh we built got a tented camp as well, built of, (INAUDIBLE) a 200 man camp I think at one point, that took a while, I don't really remember much more, more than that.

IHAT 4
SO75

Is that all you remember from Op Telic 1?

I remember a lot of driving.

IHAT 4
SO75

Yeah.

There was a lot of driving involved.

IHAT 4
SO75

Hm mm.

And we...and then at one point we drove, it must have been six hours during the night in the middle of a sandstorm to do a weapons test on the GPMG.

IHAT 4
SO75

Hm mm.

I remember sitting watching the Artillery, at one point, firing over, over Basrah, there was little

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bits and bobs like that but generally it was, it was just support you know?

IHAT 4

Hm mm. So you mention a crossing, did you go to Kuwait first? because you were on about flying, were you flown to Kuwait?

SO75

Well yeah we wouldn't be flown into Iraq, it was...

IHAT 4

Yep.

SO75

...it must have been Kuwait yeah. It was yeah because we got, that's where we had to get the American Marines across the border, if I'm right it was maybe the East, North East, there was a port there as well...

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

...somewhere around there.

IHAT 4

Yeah.

SO75

So...

IHAT 4

So how long did you spend in Kuwait before you crossed the border with the Americans?

SO75

I only remember being with the Americans for a couple of weeks.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

Um I'm not sure in total, tot up in total how long we were in Kuwait for though, must have been obviously a bit longer than that, maybe a month I don't know.

IHAT 4

Right and you say you were supporting the American Marines?

SO75

We had to get them across a border, after that we didn't see them.

IHAT 4

Right, so after they went forward then, what was the process for your entry into Iraq as a Squadron?

SO75

Uh we basically stayed back, I think we were just camp...we were just in leaders most of the time, just in the middle of nowhere, just...and then obviously we followed up after that when it was safe, safer.

IHAT 4

So who were you with when you crossed the border?

SO75

Who? What person was I with?

IHAT 4

Yeah.

SO75

What people (INAUDIBLE)?

IHAT 4

Or what vehicles you were in, can you tell me a bit about that?

SO75

I was in...just in the Spartan...

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

...with Lieutenant **SO70**

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

No I wasn't, no sorry he came over later.

IHAT 4

Yep.

SO75

I was with, oh shit what's his name? Sergeant, I don't remember his name.

IHAT 4

What troop is he from?

SO75

Armoured Troop I think, I can't remember his name.

IHAT 4

No?

SO75

No, I remember he caught his ring on the back of the vehicle, de-gloved his finger.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

I can't remember his name.

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IHAT 4

Right (laughs).

SO75

(Laughs). OK sorry it's gone.

IHAT 4

Anybody else in the vehicle apart from the Sergeant?

SO75

No, only room for two I think.

IHAT 4

OK.

SO75

Just the two of us.

IHAT 4

And what armour did you have on your vehicle?

SO75

We obviously had our personal rifles force...

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

...and the GPMG.

IHAT 4

Yep.

SO75

We may have had a...we may have had a rocket, I can't remember what they're called...

IHAT 4

No.

SO75

...the rocket launcher thing.

IHAT 4

Yeah.

SO75

We may have had one of those, I remember, I remember having one at one point...

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

...but whether or not we had it then, you know.

IHAT 4

So you then crossed over...

SO75

Yep.

IHAT 4

...and how long did you stay before you reached Basra?

SO75

Well like I say we were in league's or not, a leaguer getting mortared one night, um while I was in (INAUDIBLE), um but the time frame I don't...I don't remember the time frame at all, um well we spent six months out there in total, we spent a month maybe beforehand, maybe a week maybe, a couple of days I don't know, something around there.

IHAT 4

You mention there's a load of mortar fire, was there any other incidents en route from the crossing to Iraq? You may have ended up...

SO75

I think then probably small arms fire went during the crossing, maybe but we was right back, we weren't the first ones in there, we were um and there was the mortar, I remember the mortar attack when we was in leaguer and then later on down the line when we was in Basra, I think there were rocket attacks against the 2I/C maybe or IC or something like that...

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

...(INAUDIBLE).

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

But apart from that I don't think there was many, there wasn't any incidents on us at all.

IHAT 4

OK, so what else happened then on the build up from you crossing the border, going through to Basra and then ending up where you were billeted?

SO75

What after we got to Basra or...?

IHAT 4

You seem to be a bit sketchy on the whole process, I'm trying to take your mind back there just to see what you remember in relation to the whole operation, obviously you remember the crossing, you remember being mortared...

SO75

Yeah I remember the significant events but...

IHAT 4

Yeah.

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SO75

...like I say this was like 10, 15 years ago, it's hard to...

IHAT 4

I know.

SO75

...remember small detail.

IHAT 4

I know but on the other hand it's also a war footing situation isn't it?

SO75

A what sorry?

IHAT 4

A war footing situation, that's what you were in wasn't it?

SO75

Yep.

IHAT 4

So that's what...I'm trying to get a picture...

SO75

Yeah.

IHAT 4

...in my own head about what you did, who you were with and where you were and what happened along the way.

SO75

OK.

IHAT 4

And that's what I'm trying to do, just to paint a picture from your memory, that's what I'm trying to do.

SO75

I remember the war only lasted actually it was only like 30 days or something like that, it was only...and after that it was a case of a peace keeping, a peace keeping role.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

And I remember being in the middle of nowhere in...in just living off the wagons...

IHAT 4

Yep.

SO75

...for patches of time, do you know what I mean?

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

But where they lie in the timescale is, y'know, I couldn't put...place them. I mean most of my time out in Iraq was driving the vehicle, y'know, just getting told where to drive, go here, go there, y'know but I was still with the Sergeant, I still can't remember his name, I was still with him when we was in that leaguer when the mortar...I think that was still with him, must have been and I remember being in the desert with the desicam, or did we even have desicam then? Coz there was a point we were still in green kit...

IHAT 4

Yeah.

SO75

...for a long time, we had no cam but I remember the nets being up so we must have been in the desert for quite a while and I remember being...that must have been when we was with Americans because we were living off their rations, so um we must have been there for maybe a bit longer than two weeks I don't know. Um, it can't have been that a longer time though from when we went across the border to the time we were in Basra surely.

IHAT 4

Yeah.

SO75

You know what I mean? It can't have been that long, so it must have been only a few days here and there and whatever but the majority of the time between actually getting there to actually being in Basra must have been with the American Marines in a...in a...in the desert coz I remember they brought Pizza Hut and MacDonalds with them (INAUDIBLE).

IHAT 4

That's right yeah.

SO75

They just rolled up with it.

IHAT 4

Home from home, yeah.

IHAT 1

What Troop were you in?

IHAT 4

Support Troop.

IHAT 1

You were in Support Troop?

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SO75

Yeah.

IHAT 4

OK then, so from Basra then, where did you actually end up?

SO75

What when we went to Basra?

IHAT 4

Yeah.

SO75

We ended up in a...I think it was an old Naval school or something like that.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

The actual, the compound.

IHAT 4

Yep.

SO75

Um that's where we stayed for the whole time basically.

IHAT 4

And what was your role within the compound then? What did you do?

SO75

Well a lot of it was just making sure...looking after the wagon basically and stuff like that.

IHAT 4

Ah ha.

SO75

Coz that wagon I had was absolutely garbage.

IHAT 4

Yeah.

SO75

They didn't have any spares, they didn't take anything with them.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

Um the REME didn't have any equipment to fix it, I mean when we went on that drive for god knows how many hours through the night, my wagon must have broke down at least 20 times and I was out, decks up, get inside, my head under the...pull the fuel filter out, it only had one fuel filter, pull the fuel filter out, bang it off the wagon, screw it back on, prime the engine, get it going again, drive another 30 minutes, it would bloke up with sand, pull it off again and it was like that all through the night.

IHAT 4

So what equipment did you have on the vehicle to help you do that then?

SO75

Um, well I had the, the standard equipment that comes with the vehicle, the CES if you like, there's was like ropes and track equipment to change track links, y'know wheel jacks, normal sort of spanners and things like that, like a little lamp but it was all sort of sub-standard kit if you like, it was not...it wasn't...we didn't have new kit, the wagon was a piece of crap and the kit that came with it was rubbish as well, do you know what I mean? So you were working with sub-standard stuff, um god knows how old that wagon was before we went out...before we even went out there, know what I mean? Um so it was just basic tools really, that's all you had, um...

IHAT 4

Where was that kit kept?

SO75

In bins on the side, know what I mean like long bins strapped to the side, I remember after, I think I put a bin on there myself, before we went out.

IHAT 4

How secure were the bins?

SO75

They were just bolts and windlashes.

IHAT 4

So pretty secure?

SO75

Um yeah I'd say they were on alright yeah.

IHAT 4

Right. This compound.

SO75

Yep.

IHAT 4

Can you describe the compound?

SO75

Um there was a main gate, there was a building, I think there was a main building on the right as you went in, um...

IHAT 4

Is it easier if you draw it?

SO75

Uh yep I'll try and draw it yeah.

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IHAT 4
SO75
IHAT 4

There's a piece of paper there, a ruler if you want, a flexi-ruler.
(Laughs), it's nice that.

SO75
IHAT 4
SO75

Yeah, that pencil you can use, you might want to use a pen though. Yeah if you could draw to the rest of your recollection, it might help when we talk about things.

I'm pretty sure someone else was in here as well.

Yeah.

I don't know who they were, I can't remember who they were but there was somebody else in here as well.

IHAT 4
SO75
IHAT 4
SO75

OK.

Um so, basically sort of square, rectangular compound, can you guess what it is yet?

Yep.

So there was a main gate sort of here and then you had I think a building here, I think a building here and you had um...accommodation block...

IHAT 4
SO75

Ah ha.

..on the left hand side, ah I think there was...actually there was a bit of car park...there was a car park here as well, like a gravel area and there was another big gravel area here or car park area.

IHAT 4
SO75

Hm mm. There, if you can just write on there what they are so we can understand it please.

This was the Command offices if you like whatever and then at the back here was a cookhouse, mess, whatever you want to call it.

IHAT 4
SO75

Hm mm.

There was something else over here as well but that weren't anything to do with us so we never really went over that side. This was our...basically our area, our mess hall, our combination, the command centre and the gate was over here somewhere.

IHAT 4
SO75

OK, anything else?

That...maybe that accommodation was split, I think there was like a senior ranks mess or something that we made...that they made into over here, probably draw that around it, I don't know the exact...

IHAT 4
SO75

Hm mm.

(INAUDIBLE) NCO's, maybe officers as well. That's it.

IHAT 4
SO75

Main gate, was it main gate? Put main gate there.

IHAT 4
SO75

Main gate.

IHAT 4
SO75

Please.

I can only remember there being one gate, so...

IHAT 4
SO75

Yeah. So if there's only one it will be the main one.

Yeah, should be.

IHAT 4
SO75

These here are the walls?

Yep pretty sure yeah, there was definitely something else here, like I couldn't draw, I couldn't tell you...

IHAT 4
SO75

No.

...which configuration the buildings were or anything like that, this was the main road that went down, this is the perimeter walls.

Hm mm. How high were those?

6, 8 foot, something like that, something like that, six to eight foot.

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IHAT 4

OK. Were they reinforced in any way?

SO75

No idea, they were just walls.

IHAT 4

Were there any sangars?

SO75

Any what sorry?

IHAT 4

Sangars.

SO75

Not that I remember, like I can say there was something here and I'm pretty sure someone used to man a point here or something like that and there may have been sandbags on a building or there may have been something like that but as...I don't know, I can't remember.

IHAT 4

For the record I'm going to make that your exhibit.

IHAT 1

What's the sort of...what sort of distances were these?

IHAT 4

SO75/IHAT87, you'll get to sign those at the end then we can do it altogether, don't worry about that now.

SO75

So the distance from the main gate to the back was probably, it's got to be about a football...football pitch, about 100 metres maybe.

IHAT 1

Really? So it's quite...quite big, so would that...so from side to side would it be bigger then would it?

SO75

Yeah, it must have been.

IHAT 1

It's a fair old..

SO75

It was like a school, like a little college...

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

...a little school, I believe, maybe a Naval school or something like that.

IHAT 1

Yeah. So you've got here the first building on the left, you've got that as...

SO75

Accommodation.

IHAT 1

Accommodation, tell me how that was configured inside.

SO75

Um, there was tables in there to start with when we first got there.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

And they just got all moved out.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

And then just cot beds on the ground or whatever.

IHAT 1

Yeah, was it a single storey building or...?

SO75

Yeah.

IHAT 1

Single storey.

SO75

Yeah.

IHAT 1

How many rooms were in it?

SO75

There was quite a few, um maybe 5 or 6.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

And a corridor going right down the middle.

IHAT 1

Yeah, so you got...so you go in, there's a corridor down the middle and there's rooms, what off of each side of the corridor?

SO75

Yeah.

IHAT 1

And how many people would have been in each room?

SO75

Some rooms were bigger than others.

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IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1

Yeah.
The room that we were in our old whole squad...our whole troop was in there.
So the whole of Support Troop were in one room?
Yeah.
Quite a big room then.
I think so anyway.
Yeah, so how many in a Troop then?
12 maybe.
12, so that's just the other ranks apart from the...what's that...does that include junior NCO's and Sappers would it?

SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1

Junior NCO's yeah and Sappers yeah.
Right OK, so there's 12 of you in there, in one room.
Possibly yeah.
Who were in the other rooms then?
The other Troops, the other troops yeah.
OK and then above that you've...

SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1

There were some more in other rooms from our troop as well but I can't recall.
OK and did you go into the NCO's and Officers block?

SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1

No.
So you wouldn't know...
I don't know what it looked like in there no.
OK.

SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1

Never.
Was that a single storey building as well?
I think so, yeah.
Yeah.
Yeah.
What about the mess, what was that like?
It was just a massive hall, huge, it must have been 10 metres high.

IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1

Yeah.
Maybe 7, 8 metres high.
Yeah and who was in there then?
Who was in there?
Yeah.
The...the cooks.
Yeah.
They weren't in there originally, I think when we first got there we were still on rations but after a while they moved in in there.
Mm.
And at one point I got asked to size it up to put air conditioning in there.
Yeah.

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SO75 But I didn't have the equipment or anything like that so they got some civvies in to do it.
IHAT 1 Right OK. When you say civvies...
SO75 Some locals, I presume they bought them.
IHAT 1 Yeah.
SO75 Like you would here.
IHAT 1 OK.
SO75 Rung someone up and...
IHAT 1 Yeah.
SO75 Ask them to put them in.
IHAT 1 OK.
SO75 I don't know too much about it, that was it, one minute I was asked to do it, the next minute someone else was there doing it.
IHAT 1 So what would you say the main purpose of that building was then?
SO75 Us to eat the food.
IHAT 1 That was it? Nothing else.
SO75 No.
IHAT 1 OK. So...and then to the right hand side, is that...is that...
SO75 Where the command...
IHAT 1 Command...
SO75 Command building...
IHAT 1 OK.
SO75 ...or SHQ or whatever you want...
IHAT 1 SHQ...
SO75 Yeah.
IHAT 1 OK. so describe the layout of that building to me.
SO75 Uh, that was pretty similar to this really.
IHAT 1 Yep.
SO75 It had like a corridor and some rooms off of it, where you'd have the Chief being there.
IHAT 1 Chief?
SO75 Chief, Chief Clerk.
IHAT 1 Oh sorry, Chief Clerk yeah (laughs).
SO75 Not Chief Indian (laughs)
IHAT 1 Yeah (laughs), Chief yeah go on, Chief Clerk yeah.
SO75 Um IC, 2 I/C.
IHAT 1 Yeah.
SO75 Clerks.
IHAT 1 Yeah.
SO75 Just the same as what you'd find in a normal...a normal SHQ, um our SSM, Sergeant Major.
IHAT 1 Yeah.
SO75 He'd be in there as well, that's it.
IHAT 1 Yeah and how often did you go into that building?

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SO75

Well you could go in there to get paid coz you...

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

...had no access to money.

IHAT 1

Right.

SO75

So if you wanted money you could see the Chief and he'd give you some American Dollars.

IHAT 1

Yep, yep.

SO75

You can use those American Dollars to buy crap from the...like sweets and whatever, you know what I mean?

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

That was the only thing you could spend it on anyway so there's no point, you know, there's...you don't need for anything else.

IHAT 1

No. So where did you buy the sweets from?

SO75

Oh they bring it in from somewhere, the Chief...the Chief Clerk.

IHAT 1

OK. What else was in here then?

SO75

Nothing, I don't know, nothing else that I can...

IHAT 1

No?

SO75

...think of.

IHAT 1

So where would your ops room would've been then?

SO75

Oh with...the radio was...

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

...in it as well yeah sorry yep yep.

IHAT 1

OK, so that was in the command centre as well?

SO75

I should call it call SHQ really.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

It's probably the wrong thing...terminology.

IHAT 1

And you've...you've shown the main gate as being on this front wall here.

SO75

Mmm.

IHAT 1

What sort of gate's that?

SO75

Oh geez now you're asking, a big one, it's quite tall.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

Ah wide.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

Two gates.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

I believe.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

I don't...I can't remember what they're made of, whether they're wood or metal.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

Probably metal.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

I believe they...I can't remember if they...they must have opened inwards, that's it.

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IHAT 1

OK and just for my own...so you've got the main gate there, you've got no...there's no guard room or anything like that?

SO75

Ah well there must have been some sort of guard, maybe this was...this was done by these guys there I think, I don't know if there was a hut there or if there was a little turret or there must have been something, I don't remember being anything...actually being on the wall physically to stand on.

IHAT 1

No.

SO75

So there must have been...I don't know, there must have been something there.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

Because there was guards on the gate.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

But whether there's a hut or something.

IHAT 1

Right, OK.

SO75

Or maybe they were stood on the gate and they come from here.

IHAT 1

So you've got a compound there, it sounds to be quite substantial in size, it's got a perimeter wall which was all the way round?

SO75

It was all the way round this side.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

Whether or not there are any gaps or anything over the back end this end, wouldn't probably be able to tell you.

IHAT 1

OK and IHAT 4 asked you about sangars, how would you or how did you protect the camp then? Provide security for it.

SO75

Well they had guns.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

Which would have been...this must have been infantry or something, these guys here...

IHAT 1

Yes.

SO75

I don't know.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

But I presume that must be down to them.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

To protect.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

Coz we never done any...

IHAT 1

No.

SO75

...staggering on or anything like that so...but I can't tell you if there was sangars, I can't remember...

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

...being there.

IHAT 1

I'm just trying to get a perspective of it coz I would...

SO75

There wasn't...

IHAT 1

...the size of it, I'm just thinking of the situation you were in...

SO75

Yeah.

IHAT 1

..y'know, straight after a, y'know...

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SO75

Yeah, I know what you mean.

...a conflict is, y'know, potentially you could have had insurgents come over at any point...

Absolutely

...so it just seem...would seem to make sense that you would have some sort of security.

Walls weren't protected, not...these walls weren't protected.

No?

...at all.

OK.

There was no...there was just wall.

Yeah.

Wall, wall, wall, the only protection I can recall was...was guards...

OK.

...at the main gate and like you say, they could have chucked anything over and but I don't recall there being, y'know, it built into a fortress or anything like that because it wasn't, it certainly wasn't.

What was the infrastructure in the camp like?

Uh how do you mean?

Amenities, utilities, that kind of thing.

Uh there was...I think actually there was a shower/toilet block around here somewhere, now I come to mention it, I couldn't tell you exactly where it was placed, maybe around here somewhere, uh toilets/showers, I remember there being a block there. I know this was a car park coz that's where I used to have to change the tracks.

Yeah.

And I know this was road coz that's...that was the only way in and out and I know it was dead opposite the SHQ.

Yeah.

Um like I say from behind there, I couldn't tell you anything that was over that side.

OK.

Um we did have a toilet block in the end, um.

So you had sanitation? Electric? When you moved in did you? Those kind of things, plumbing?

I'm trying to think if we had electric, we must have done, we must have done, yep I'm pretty sure we did.

Hm mm.

I'm pretty sure electricity was there.

Yeah.

Um, yeah it would've been, yeah coz they'd run the air con and stuff off of it, yeah, so we would have had electricity, um and I remember the toilets were working.

Yeah.

So yeah.

OK, so what you've described then is you moved into this old Naval base, it's got a 6 to 8 foot perimeter wall all the way round, a gate, one which is, as far as you can recall, is the only way in and out and you described some various buildings that around there and in the middle there is a car park or there was an area where you parked all your vehicles.

IHAT 1
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SO75

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SO75

It's just a hard standing yeah. Well no our vehicles on the gravel over here.

IHAT 1

Right.

SO75

That was sort of just a hand standing for doing any sort of...

IHAT 1

Right.

SO75

...repairs and things like that.

IHAT 1

OK and were all the Squadron vehicles in there? Within...confined within the camp?

SO75

I can't remember the bridge layers and the...they must have been in there, there was nowhere else where they were.

IHAT 1

Mmm.

SO75

I don't remember seeing them vivid, I can't remember them being there but they must have been there, I know all our vehicles (INAUDIBLE)...

IHAT 1

Yep.

SO75

...our Support Group vehicles were at the end here.

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

Um, they must have been in there, I can't imagine them...where they...where else they would have been.

IHAT 1

Yep and then just over on what would be affectively to the...behind the SHQ, there were some other military people here I presume, are they military people, British Military?

SO75

Yep, yep.

IHAT 1

British Military?

SO75

I presume so.

IHAT 1

OK but you're not sure who they were?

SO75

No, I couldn't tell you who they were no.

IHAT 1

No, were they not Engineers then?

SO75

No.

IHAT 1

OK.

SO75

I don't think they were, no they weren't.

IHAT 1

OK, so who else was embedded within the camp then? Apart from the Engineers?

SO75

Well that's what I mean, I can't say, I don't remember who they were.

IHAT 1

No.

SO75

They must have been infantry or some sort of...

IHAT 1

OK.

SO75

I'm pretty sure.

IHAT 1

OK and you...and as far as you recall it would probably be them who provided security for the camp?

SO75

Yeah, I know we never done any sort of, y' know...staggered on the gates or anything, maybe occasionally but I'm pretty sure there was others that were looking after that.

IHAT 1

OK, alright, thanks IHAT 4

SO75

I might be wrong but that's the way I remember it.

IHAT 4

OK so there's nothing else you remember about the compound then?

SO75

No.

IHAT 4

You spoke about the accommodation block, how many Troops were in 26 Squadron?

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SO75
IHAT 4
SO75
IHAT 4
SO75
IHAT 4
SO75
IHAT 4
SO75

Support Troop.

Hm mm.

Armoured Field Troop, MT.

Yeah.

Signals, I think that's it, 5.

And did you say you were in that block there SO75 yeah?

Yep.

Who was in the room with you? Can you give us some names please?

Ah [REDACTED] he would have been just as a Sapper then I suppose, Corporal [REDACTED] there were a couple of guys from the TA that were there as well, 2 maybe 3, I have no idea what their names were, um...I think [REDACTED] SO72 [REDACTED], he went...been there, [REDACTED] I think he was in there, I can't remember, I can't remember exactly who was in there, um...I'm trying to think now whether we're all in one room or if we were split but I can remember the names of the people who were there but whether or not they were in that room specifically. There may have been [REDACTED], he may have been in there, um [REDACTED], how many's that?

IHAT 1

[REDACTED], [REDACTED], SO72, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], so that's 6 plus you is 7.

IHAT 4
SO75

How many in the Troop?

There must have been between 12 and 15 people maybe in the troop, something like that, I'm just trying to think of names.

IHAT 4
SO75

Mmm.

And whether or not they were actually there, whether or not they were on the tour, whether they were in the room, whether they were...there's a couple...there's a couple of people's name I could remember that I can't recall, even if they were there or not, um...um... [REDACTED] um, [REDACTED] he was there for a while, I know he actually left I think coz he hurt his back, whether or not he was in the room I don't remember.

IHAT 4
SO75

Hm mm.

And then you've got [REDACTED] but I can't remember him being there, he was in the Troop but I can't remember if he was there or not.

IHAT 4
SO75

OK. Let's just concentrate on the troop for a moment then.

OK.

IHAT 4
SO75

You've given some names there what you can remember.

Yep.

IHAT 4
SO75

So tell me about what vehicles you had in your Troop.

OK

IHAT 4
SO75

The chain of command within the Troop.

OK.

IHAT 4
SO75

And then describe them, lets deal with the Troop first please.

What, what, the people in the Troop?

IHAT 4

Yeah people in the Troop and the chain of command in the Troop and what vehicles you had and who was in what vehicle.

IHAT 1
SO75

Tell us about the vehicles first, what vehicles were there?

OK so one Spartan which was my vehicle, a 432, 2 CET's,

RESTRICTED
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IHAT 1
SO75

2 C...?

...ET, Combat Engineer Tractors. I'm trying to think what VMH, they took a medium, I think a medium wheeled tractor out, I'm not sure whether they took the light wheel, light wheel with us as well. It was definitely the medium wheel tractor, 2 combat engineer tractors, the Sparton, the 432, that's a definite, in my Troop, yeah.

IHAT 4
SO75

Hm mm.

Those were definites yeah.

IHAT 4
SO75

Can you remember who was in each vehicle?

So it was me and Sergeant..., whatever his name was but he wasn't actually from our Troop, he was from a different Troop, that's probably why I don't remember his name, it might come to me in a bit and then you had Staff SO77 and [REDACTED] in the 432. You had [REDACTED], he was there as well, I'm not sure if he was in the room.

IHAT 1
SO75

What vehicle was [REDACTED] in?

I'm pretty sure he was in one of the CET's. I can't remember who he was with though, maybe...ah, um, ah what's his name? One of the Corporal's as well, he was in the other CET, what was his name? [REDACTED] in a CET with the Corp...the other Corporal, I'm just trying to think of his name, uh I can't think of all these names (laughs). I can't remember his name either um but [REDACTED] and the Corporal was in one CET and then [REDACTED] and A.N Other was in the other CET, maybe [REDACTED] I think, was in the other CET and then [REDACTED] was in the...I think [REDACTED] was in the light...in the medium wheelie or [REDACTED] [REDACTED] might have been in there as well coz you had plant operators and if there was more than...more plant operators than there were vehicles, so I know [REDACTED] was a plant operator, [REDACTED] that is.

IHAT 1
SO75

Hmm.

[REDACTED] he was a plant op.

IHAT 1
SO75

So what vehicle did they have?

I'm not sure, if you took another...another, might have taken the little light wheelie with us as well, like a little tractor and they might have been in one of those but I'm not 100% sure, I remember the medium wheelie being about definitely 100% but I can't remember if we took the light wheeled tractor as well but like I say, there was more plant ops than there were vehicles so there might have been a lot of swapping and changing. I remember on the 300 man camp I'm pretty sure we had a Grader as well.

IHAT 1
SO75

A what sorry?

A Grader, I'm pretty sure we would've had one of those but again I'm not 100% sure. Well that's pretty much all the vehicles covered innit? I'm just trying to think of their names. I can't remember the Corporal's name either sorry.

IHAT 1
IHAT 4

OK.

What about the chain of command within the...

SO75

So chain of command you had um...Ah Corporal [REDACTED] as well, he was with us, he wasn't in a vehicle though, he might have been in Field Troop actually and he came over to us afterwards, I think he might have come over to us afterwards. Anyway the chain of command was obviously the N...Junior NCO's, so that was [REDACTED] that was [REDACTED], oh [REDACTED] SO71 [REDACTED] was there as well, they must have just been part...obviously they would have been in the back of the 432, as a Field Support role, y'know.

IHAT 1
SO75

Sorry so Junior NCO's were [REDACTED] SO71 [REDACTED] and...?

IHAT 4
SO75

[REDACTED] SO71 [REDACTED] and...

[REDACTED]
I'm pretty sure [REDACTED] was as well by then, uh and then Corporal...I can't remember his

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name, there's Corporal [REDACTED]...uh [REDACTED], there's one and there was another one as well, [REDACTED] (clicks fingers), [REDACTED] something, [REDACTED], you know it don't you? (laughs), [REDACTED]...one out of two's not bad, Corporal [REDACTED]... [REDACTED], [REDACTED], yes, [REDACTED], how do you forget a name like that?

IHAT 4

SO75

IHAT 4

SO75

IHAT 4

SO75

IHAT 4

SO75

OK, there you go.

Working the grey matter today.

It's there inmit?

Yeah.

Anybody else?

Um, so those were the Corporal's obviously.

Yep.

And then Staff Sergeant [SO77] and then um Staff Sergeant [SO77] and then Troop...Troopy didn't come with us coz otherwise he would have been...he or she slash she would've been with me, um...coz we were at...we were without a Troop Commander for the first part until Lieutenant [SO70] came in...

Hmm.

...when we were out in Theatre, so we didn't have...we didn't actually have a Troop Commander at the start.

OK, so if we talk about the time when you're in the Naval Academy...

Yep.

...base, when you've...when you moved in there as such...

Yep.

...who was your Troop Commander then?

That was...by the time we got to the Naval Base, Lieutenant [SO70] was with us, he was already...

And prior to that?

He came out when we was at...still in the desert, just in the middle of nowhere.

Right, OK, so by the time you got to the Naval Base, you had a Troop Commander?

Yep.

OK, which was? Who was it?

Lieutenant [SO70]

Do you know his first name?

Um [SO70]

When did he join you?

Um, well it was after the Americ...we were with the Americans coz Sergeant was still with us then, um so it would have been as we got across the border and then we was in between the border and going into the..to the compound, between those two points, I remember him, that's when they swapped over.

Yeah, OK.

Um [SO78] aswell... [SO78] that's another one of the Sapper's that was there.

Sapper [SO78] ?

[SO78] he was part of our Troop as well.

Do you know his first name?

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

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SO75

IHAT 1

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IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO78

SO78?

SO78, and that was the chain.

OK, so chain of command you had...coz at the time you were a Sapper then yeah?

Yep.

So you were bottom of the food pile?

I was (laughs).

So you've named 4 Junior NCO's, SO71, Corporal [REDACTED] and Corporal [REDACTED].

Yeah.

One Staff Sergeant...

Yep.

SO77 and then Troop Commander Lieutenant SO78.

Yeah.

What about Troop Sergeants?

Well the Troop Sergeant obviously was the guy that was with me for a while.

Yeah.

He was from...

Yeah.

Armoured Troop.

Yeah.

There may have been another guy as well, I'm pretty sure there was but for the life of me I have no idea who he was.

OK. and just for your particular chain of command then, who did you answer to?

It would have been the Corporal's.

What all of them or...did you have like a Section Corporal or...?

Well no not really, I mean...are we talking about in the Troop or in Iraq?

Well we're talking about whilst we...whilst you were in Iraq and then post Iraq but still in, in Theatre.

Well it was kind of a...if we was in as a Troop...as a Troop altogether...

Yeah.

...obviously the chain of command stands as it does there, y'know...

Yeah.

...with the Lance Corporal's and then the Corporals.

Yeah.

But a lot of the time we just...in Iraq coz we was a scout (??) essentially, a Support Troop...

Yeah.

A reconnaissance vehicle, um it would only be me and SO70...

OK.

...so it really depends on which environment you're in at the time.

OK. So just...I know you briefly said here and I kind of got some previous military service so the

SO75

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IHAT 1

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set up I know because your an Engineer it might be a little bit different.

OK.

But um my recollection was I would...I recall a distinct chain of command, I had a Lance Corporal, a Corporal, a Sergeant, a Colour Staff Sergeant...

Staff Sergeant yep.

A Sergeant Major, a Company Sergeant Major, a Troop Commander, a 2 I/C and a Company Commander, would you recognise that chain of command as somebody if, for example, you had a problem or somebody was writing your report or if you're at a problem, who you would go to, what was your actual chain of command?

Well obviously the first person you got to is the Lance Corporals.

Yeah.

Your direct...

Yeah.

...y'know and then the Troop Corporals and then the Sergeant, then the Staff Sergeant and then...and then...

Yeah.

...the Troop Commander.

Right, so you had the same kind of chain of command throughout your...

Yep.

...OK.

Obviously if there was...if I had an issue at the time and I was in a vehicle or whatever then there's only one other person that's there that's above...

Yeah.

...y'know, higher rank than me and that's the Troop...that was the Troop Commander.

Yeah.

So, y'know if I had a problem then, then I...

OK.

...wouldn't, y'know I wouldn't wait until I got back to say something, I'd just voice my opinion there.

Yeah, OK and you felt comfortable doing that?

Um well yeah, I mean there wasn't any particular point where I felt I needed to raise an issue or anything...

No.

...to either the Sergeant that was with me or a Troop Commander, I just drove the vehicle y'know.

Yeah, OK.

What was the rapport like within the Troop?

It was pretty good, um everyone has their little arguments and stuff every now and again but generally it was...everyone got on with each quite well.

Hm mm.

It was...it was a good relationship, everybody had a pretty good relationship with everyone.

Yeah. Just in relation to the chain of command you have eluded to there within the Troop, what about within the Squadron?

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

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IHAT 1

IHAT 4

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SO75

IHAT 4

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SO75

So above Troop Commander, um was the...obviously you had, I wouldn't say above the Troop Commander but you have the Staff...you have a Sergeant Major, a Squadron Sergeant Major, um then you'd have 2 I/C of the Squadron 2 I/C...

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

...Squadron I/C and also you had Squadron ops as well, that's in the Squad...just in the Squadron obviously.

IHAT 4

Who were they?

SO75

What are their names? Ah Jeez, um the Sergeant Major's name [REDACTED] I remember his first name, jeez I can't remember, problem is you have hardly anything to do with these people, y'know, 90% of the time so...I don't know.

IHAT 4

Can you remember who the Quarter Master was?

SO75

Um I've got all the faces in my head, I can see all the faces.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

IHAT 1

It's a long time ago anyway.

SO75

Hey?

IHAT 1

It is a long time ago.

SO75

I'm sorry, it sounds vague but I honestly can't remember the names, I've got all their faces in my head, it's just...

IHAT 4

What about the 2 I/C then?

SO75

What about the 2 I/C? His name?

IHAT 4

Mmm.

SO75

I don't know, I can't...I can't remember their names.

IHAT 4

Well the OC?

SO75

Oh man it sounds rubbish, it sounds crap, I'm sorry, I'm really sorry.

IHAT 4

Don't apologise, if you can't remember, you can't remember, simple as that innit?

SO75

Yeah (laughs), you're looking at me as if...

IHAT 4

No I'm not.

SO75

... I should know these names and I'm really trying but I can't...

IHAT 4

I know.

SO75

...I can't remember their names.

IHAT 4

As [REDACTED] says it's a long time ago, you can't remember, you can't remember, don't worry about it. OK then so when you were in this compound then that you've kindly drawn for us, what was your daily routine please?

SO75

Ah so day to day bits was looking after the wagon mainly, there was long periods of time where nothing would really happen so it was just the case of just looking after the wagon really, when we was in the compound. We would go out to other compounds, there were times when I had to drive...drive the, er, Troop Commander, up...maybe up to the HQ which was the Palace, um and there would be times when I'd just basically ferrying people around the city and stuff like that.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

Um, there was a time when we got called to a bank where some civilians had blown a hole in the side of it and um we basically got called there, we were the first people there and then obviously we had to just make sure, we waited for the medics to turn up and the RMP's and basically drag these guys out, they decided to jump, they decided to blow a hole in the side of the bank vault go in there with respirators on that didn't, didn't filter out wood smoke or anything like that and they just killed themselves, they had to be dragged out, I remember that, that was one of the sort

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of things we had to do just on a sort of day to day basis and the rest of the time it was mainly just...just ferrying people around and if there was calls to anything, I mean I think we went one day to clear out the compound that had been half destroyed and sort of help out, basically tidying up the place and stuff like that and there was a lot of rubble clearance and things like that and using the CET's to clear up walls that had been blown down and just generally things like that, day to day, yeah.

IHAT 4

SO75

IHAT 4

SO75

So how would your day start then? You'd be in the compound...

Yeah.

...would there be a daily briefing for the troop to say "we're doing this today boys" or how would it work?

Uh, so obviously it'd be breakfast in the cookhouse or whatever and then I'm pretty sure I would have done some phys as well at some point during it but I had a abdominal hernia so I was kind of excluded from things like that.

IHAT 4

SO75

Yep.

Um and it would be generally this sort of what was happening, what the latest sort of situation was, um and y'know what we were going to do which most of the time was just sorting the wagon's out and things like that y'know, so.

IHAT 4

Whilst you're talking about the wagon then, would there be a...some kind of record kept of when things were done to the wagon? or, how did that work?

SO75

IHAT 4

SO75

No.

No?

No there was no sort of service record or anything like that, it was just a case of day to day stuff like if you we need to change track links or if we needed to y'know um, check the oils or whatever y'know, things like that. Um yeah, it would just be daily maintenance basically, go out and just make sure you do some sort of maintenance on your vehicles, tighten all the track...track pins up, um because we lost a wheel at one point.

IHAT 4

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

Hm mm.

Um.

Can't be good.

No, we was um, it was a rear track tension with this...just the whole thing came off and it ended up halfway down wheels, um so we lost through it through a whole track and things like that, y'know, just...old, the wagon was old.

IHAT 4

SO75

Mmm.

Um whe...tryres used to go for a pastime, the rubber on the wheels used to just strip off, um so we had to change wheels, the track links would go, um hub oil and things like that, um yeah. So there was always, always more than...I mean I had to hot wire it a few times just to get it going coz the engine would get so hot and there's a little thermostat in the engine.

IHAT 4

SO75

Hm mm.

Or it was in the gearbox or whatever, it was under the front decks and it just physically wouldn't start unless you poured a load of water over it to cool it down, um or um...or literally disconnect the switch, hot wire, sort of link it together to link it out to get it going, there was several occasions that well, I've had to sort of frig it to get it going.

IHAT 4

SO75

IHAT 4

SO75

IHAT 4

Hmm.

So the...I mean the wagon was old, it's...

And as you said it broke down en route as well.

Constantly, yeah.

Whilst...

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IHAT 1

So mate go on.

IHAT 4

...whilst we're talking about the vehicle, what equipment was fitted on your vehicle? You've mentioned that GMPG...

SO75

Yep.

IHAT 4

...you mentioned it carried spare tracks and tools etc. that were on the side.

SO75

Yep.

IHAT 4

What else was on the vehicle?

SO75

There was basket on the back.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

And that had a cam net in it.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

I can't remember if it was a desicam net or if it was green one, I know we were in green kit for a long time but I don't know the point in which we switched over, I don't recall when that was.

IHAT 4

Hmm.

SO75

Um what else was on there? There was, um, infrared reflective signs and things like that because we had to put them on the back and then there was a great big red tarpaulin that we had to put on the top [REDACTED] but whether that stayed on there, I know the ones probably did on the back and the IR paint on the side and stuff like that. Um there was a night vision scope that could be fitted in, at the front for driving, um there was a BV that went in the back door for boiling water and stuff like that, little boiling vessel, that's about it.

IHAT 4

So what would you check when you're out in your vehicle, that was on your vehicle, all the kit on there, what would you check that was on the vehicle prior to leaving the compound?

SO75

Well like I say it was like a day to day to make sure maintenance was done, we'd check the tracks tension.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

Make sure the tracks are tensioned, you'd go normal morning sort of routine checking like...checking that the actual vehicle works and starts and stuff like that, um but y'know there was always...it was always filthy, dirty and stuff like that and y'know need to get...you need to get under it, get under the decks and stuff to clean it, things like that but that's not something we'd just do on a normal maintenance, on a daily sort of thing, y'know.

IHAT 1

So when you went out in the morning then, you were responsible for a Spartan vehicle yeah? So, I mean I call it a first grade service...

SO75

Yeah.

IHAT 1

...is what we used to call it, you check the fluid levels and tyre pressures and that kind of thing, is that the kind of thing you're talking about?

SO75

Yeah that's what I mean by like track tension...

IHAT 1

Yep, yeah.

SO75

...check the track tension.

IHAT 1

Yeah so you make...your kind of first...to make sure it's road worthy basically?

SO75

Yep, yep.

IHAT 1

And [IHAT 4] asked if any record is kept at that...that you've done that.

SO75

I don't recall ever...ever doing a record of it.

IHAT 1

No, OK. How...how would you default a vehicle then if something was wrong?

SO75

Well like I say there was allsorts wrong with that wagon, it was just to keep it going.

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IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

Hmm.

There's no way you could default it and say "this ain't working, I'm not using" because it had to be used y'know.

When you, um, left the site or the compound, so whether it be for any...any of the things that you described, the kind of roles that you performed...

Mmm.

...so for example when you were called to the bank because they'd be a bank job or driving Troop Commander's to the Palace, what was the expectation for you as the person responsible for that vehicle in relation to make sure the equipment was on there, the fluid levels were there and that everything was tickety boo with that vehicle as far as it could, what was the expectation for you?

Well it was my job obviously to keep that vehicle roadworthy.

Yeah.

To keep it...to keep it..

Yeah.

...but I mean...

So roadworthy I understand...

...it's one thing keeping it..

Yeah.

...up to scratch to go on the road but it's another thing...

Yeah.

...if it's breaking down left, right and centre...

Yeah.

...it's out of your control, you know what I mean?

And I understand that because of the situation you were in and the general condition of the vehicle but these things, for example, the fact that there should have been GPMG's, spare tracks, basket with cam net, infrared reflector signs, red tarpaulin, boiling vessel, all those kind of things, what was the expectation that those things were on the vehicle as far as you were concerned, for you?

What you mean what...was someone instructed to ensure I was doing what I was...

Yeah if..

...what I was expected of?

...let me put it a different way, if I was your Troop Commander...

Yeah.

...and you were my driver, would I be able to be guaranteed that those things were on the vehicles? It was your responsibility to make sure they were there.

Well yeah I suppose, it was my responsibility to make sure that I had all the CES.

Yeah.

That was my responsibility.

Yeah.

Yep and if anything was wrong with it...

Yeah.

...to go and get it sorted, not that it would get sorted.

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

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IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75

No.

Um you had to just deal with what you had.

Yeah, OK.

Um but yeah, in response to your question then yeah it was technically my responsibility for all this pieces of equipment...

IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1

Yeah.

...on the wagon...

Yeah.

...and they were kept up to a standard as best they could be, y'know...

Yeah.

...the problem was, there was nothing else, there was no parks, there was no...

SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75

No.

...so, y'know.

OK but who did you report that to?

Well REME, if there's anything wrong with the wagon itself...

IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1

Yeah.

...we'd report that to REME.

Yeah.

Directly.

What about if there was kit missing?

SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1

Um, if there was kit missing then just up the normal chain of command.

Yeah, OK, being?

SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1

Um the Troop Corporals.

Yeah and what would they do about it?

SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1

Not a lot coz there was nothing you could do about it.

No.

Um we didn't actually have any...any other equipment.

IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1

Yeah.

...so y'know I don't think...I can't recall any...at any point me saying I need a new one of these...

No.

...so...

And in what sort of circumstances would kit...

SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75

I mean in a...in a normal circumstance...

Yeah.

...when you're...back in camp or whatever...

Yeah.

...in a normal situation...

Yeah.

...you'd have to put a form in.

Yeah and when you say in a normal camp situation, what are you...?

Just...just back in Germany.

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IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
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SO75
IHAT 1
SO75
IHAT 1

In Germany, OK.

Yeah, you'd have to fill out a form...

Yeah.

...that would have to be approved...

Yeah.

...that'll get sent off to someone...

Yeah.

...and then if you're lucky...

Yeah.

...you might get a replacement but again there was nothing...

OK.

...we couldn't even get bulbs for lights and things like that.

No, OK, so it's quite...quite a dire situation is what you're describing there in relation to getting spare parts?

Well yeah really, I mean I remember having track pads and things like that, y'know, the bare essentials but..

Yeah.

...when we was driving they couldn't even give me an oil filter...

No.

...a fuel filter.

OK.

It's crazy.

Yeah.

But that was the way it was.

So, just again for my...so bearing that in mind then, how...how did you try and prevent that from happening?

We just got to try and keep on top of it.

Yeah.

As much as you can really.

Yeah.

Um, when that week when the track tension come off, they did fix that, they managed to fix that, I think that had to be dragged.

Yeah, OK.

I mean I ended up the last...when I was talking about that drive all that time, I think in the end the REME just turned around and said y'know 'enough's enough we'll pull it', in the last sort of hour they pulled...pulled it back to wherever it was we were, um and eventually I think I actually got a new filter but it took them (INAUDIBLE).

OK.

You said the vehicle was always very very dirty?

Well yeah it done a lot...done a lot...done a lot of work during the day and it was always dirty and the dust more than anything...

Hm mm.

...the dust just gets everywhere, in the air filters and the fuel system like you say.

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

SO75

IHAT 1

IHAT 4

SO75

IHAT 4

SO75

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DOCUMENT RECORD PRINT

IHAT 4

I can imagine. What safety equipment did you have on the vehicle?

SO75

Safety equipment in regards to our safety? Or to the...?

IHAT 4

In general, everything that was on there for safety of that vehicle and other people in it.

SO75

You mean like protection?

IHAT 4

Yeah for example, was there a first aid box on there?

SO75

Um we had our own...

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

...we had our own sort of first aid...

IHAT 4

Yeah.

SO75

...equipment, um we had obviously our own weapons and things like that...

IHAT 4

Yep

SO75

...for safety I suppose, um (INAUDIBLE), we had a hatch that you could shut up, shut.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

I suppose that's a safety...

IHAT 4

Yep.

SO75

Um, locking back door, there wasn't really anything in the ways of...

IHAT 4

Let me help you then, what about internally or externally? Was there anything, if you came under attack and the vehicle, for example, may have caught fire, was there anything on the vehicle to help you put a fire out for example?

SO75

Yeah there would have been a fire extinguisher on board yeah.

IHAT 4

How many?

SO75

One.

IHAT 4

One?

SO75

There's a fire wall at the front of the vehicle.

IHAT 4

Yep, yep.

IHAT 1

What's a fire wall then?

SO75

It's just a...

IHAT 4

Blocks it off yeah.

SO75

...coz you sit, you sit next to the engine when you're driving, so there's a fire wall blocking, protecting you from the engine, so there's a safety if you like.

IHAT 4

Ah ha.

SO75

Um there was definitely one, it's possible there was two, um some of the vehicles had the pull extinguishers,

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

For the engine bays, if the engine bays caught fire.

IHAT 4

Yep.

SO75

In...y'know for safe...when you're talking about safety in the vehicle, I mean that's...that's it really, there's nothing, you got a bit of protection from the engine if that catches fire, um.

IHAT 4

Any outside?

SO75

There's...there's...there's, the arm...I think the armour on it was thick, it had thick armour, um then you got GPMG on the top, you've got the hatches, you've got the back door you can close, you can put the seat down, the driver's seat can go down, so you can shut the hatch and you can still drive, um

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IHAT 4
SO75
IHAT 4
SO75
IHAT 4
SO75
IHAT 4
SO75
IHAT 4
SO75
IHAT 4
SO75

No.

They were just there for show, it didn't have any...I don't even think it worked to be honest.

Hm mm.

Um, lights, that's it.

OK thanks for that. Um what about radios?

Yeah there was a radio.

OK, can you tell me what type of radio it was?

It was a box, a big heavy box.

Hm mm.

I don't know what it's called but it had a like a handheld clip that you could change just permanently live or squeeze to talk basically and there was two like headsets, if you like, one for the trooper and one for the driver. Um, yeah then the standard desert there's an aerial antenna on the top that's hooked up to the back of the radio, um they were another thing that was constantly just poor.

Mmm.

Y'know, so they were changed out quite a lot, those radios were just rubbish.

Right.

I think they changed them after a while, they went...we got back I think they were bringing the new...the new radios up but we were still on the big box...

Hm mm.

...(INAUDIBLE) put in there...

Yep.

...so.

OK, so you would have a headset and troopy would have a headset as well?

Yep.

So OK then, you've had your daily brief or whatever, you then leave the confines of the compound, which you've drawn for us, what would be your radio procedure once you leave the compound?

There'd be a radio check to...to comms, um and it would be a case of um calling in the callsign and...but generally it would be the Troop Commander that was on...on the radio or the Vehicle Commander.

Right.

Um I would have probably very minimally used the radio, um only when a Troop Commander wasn't around, I'd just be...just listen in.

Yeah.

Coz when he wasn't on the vehicle, essentially it's my job to listen into the radio.

Yeah.

For anything that...anything that happens, so obviously we could talk to each other without it being on the radio, do you know what I mean?

Hm mm.

Just like a live connection...

Yep between you and...

...(INAUDIBLE) without being on the radio.

IHAT 4
SO75
IHAT 1
SO75

IHAT 4
SO75
IHAT 4
SO75
IHAT 4
SO75
IHAT 4

SO75

IHAT 4
SO75

IHAT 4
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IHAT 4
SO75

IHAT 4
SO75
IHAT 4
SO75

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IHAT 4

Right.

SO75

Yep.

IHAT 4

And how would that be recorded once you left here?

SO75

How would it be recorded?

IHAT 4

Mmm.

SO75

Um well the radio operator would have a book to write it.

IHAT 4

In this one here yeah?

SO75

In there yeah.

IHAT 4

Right and what Callsign did you have?

SO75

Four Zero Alpha (40A) I believe.

IHAT 4

And that...was that Callsign designated to that Troop for that vehicle throughout the whole...?

SO75

Just that vehicle.

IHAT 4

Yeah, yeah and how's that depicted on the vehicle? That Callsign.

SO75

It's written on it.

IHAT 4

Yeah.

SO75

Yep.

IHAT 4

And whereabouts on the vehicle is it written?

SO75

Um I know it was written on it, it was painted on it, on the side, literally on the side of the long length.

IHAT 4

Yeah.

SO75

Yep.

IHAT 4

Just on the one side?

SO75

Both I think.

IHAT 4

OK.

SO75

I think it was on both.

IHAT 4

OK. So you would leave the compound, you would tell your SHQ building...SHQ communications building there, you drew there.

SO75

Yep.

IHAT 4

...that you were then leaving.

SO75

Yep.

IHAT 4

And you said they would log it.

SO75

Yeah presumably log it, I didn't actually know what happened in there but I'd never really been in there but yeah.

IHAT 4

Yeah and who would say you were leaving, would it be the Troop Commander or would it be yourself?

SO75

Troop Commander.

IHAT 4

Yeah so you'd say they were leaving.

SO75

Yep.

IHAT 4

Would you tell anybody else?

SO75

Obviously Staff Sergeant **SO77** would know what was going on, um sometimes we were with them, sometimes we weren't.

IHAT 4

Yeah. Sorry would Staff Sergeant **SO77** know every time you were going out, what you

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were going out to?

SO75

I presume so, I presume they would have...would talk to each, they're the two top chains of command.

IHAT 4

Hmm so, for example, when you went to the bank he would know you were going to the bank, you explained that incident at the bank, so he would know where you were going on that particular day, would he?

SO75

I assume...I assume he would.

IHAT 4

OK and then when you were out, wherever you're going on patrol, who would you stay in communication contact with?

SO75

Um, with SHQ.

IHAT 4

Anybody else?

SO75

It would depend if there was anyone else with us, if we was out as a Troop then I'm sure we'd communicate between the two.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

Um maybe, uh, um the Battle Group, if we were on our own near the Palace or whatever then we'd obviously communicate to them.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

Um yeah that's it.

IHAT 4

So I'm going to take that, from what you're saying, primarily you only went out on the radio, your main line of communications, most of the time, was the comms unit within the compound?

SO75

Yeah I believe so, yeah.

IHAT 4

Yeah?

SO75

Yeah.

IHAT 4

OK. How many times, I appreciate it's a long time ago, would you go on patrol with just the Troop Commander? With just you and him?

SO75

What how many times in the whole thing?

IHAT 4

Yeah, did you go out as a soul vehicle together?

SO75

Um, I couldn't tell you exactly, maybe, I don't know how many times we went back and forth to the Palace...

IHAT 4

Mmm.

SO75

...and things like that, um maybe half a dozen, six, I don't know.

IHAT 4

And what was your relationship like with Trooper SO70 ?

SO75

It was OK, we got on OK, um like I say I just drove the vehicle most of the time, he uh...he came in later on so I didn't really know him beforehand, um but he was, he was OK, he's never...I got on alright with him.

IHAT 1

Can we have a quick pause? Time's 1156 we'll just quickly pause here, I just want a quick word with...with IHAT 4

IHAT 4

BEEP SOUNDS

SO75

Right we're recording again, we just had a comfort break and you've now got some fresh water, just confirm that please?

IHAT 4

Yep.

Thanks, um and time's now 1215, obviously it's the same date, same people present. Um, I know it's difficult, as we spoke about during your first interview before we had the comfort break and the refreshment break, to try and remember things OK um some names you can remember, some you can't, (INAUDIBLE) you've kindly drawn the compound for us to the best

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of your ability, stuff like that. What we'd like to focus on now, right, remember at the start I asked you for a free recall about your time, your build up and your crossing into Iraq, what we'd like to do now is...is centre on the main reason why you're here and the events on the day of the 23rd of May 2003, OK, so what we'd like you to do please is give us in much detail what you can remember from that day, from the time you got up, until the time you ended up back wherever you did.

SO75

Um OK so obviously it was a normal morning routine, scoff whatever, um scram and the...the purpose, the whole purpose of that day was to take the vehicles to the wash down...

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

...and clean...clean up, do maintenance, wash them down, get them cleaned up, so it was our vehicle and a 432 so, there must have been another 432, I'm sorry I missed that.

IHAT 4

That's alright, that's fine.

SO75

So, coz SO71 and SO72 were in the other 432 so yeah there was two 432's, OK. Um so the two...the 432 and our vehicle went to the wash down which was basically the port and the other vehicle was parked in front of us and then there was a pump of some description at the...in front of that vehicle I believe. Um the idea was they were going to wash their vehicle, I was doing the normal, what I'd do on my vehicle, um, y'know cleaning it out, getting under the engine base, um tidying up and when we got to the docks, I think SO71 and SO72 would've been, y'know, setting up or whatever to...to use the...

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

...and SO70 went off to...to make sure...just recce the area, um when he came back, he came back with two guys and he was talking to a local, um I believe, I only remember there being one, one fella down there at the time, um and SO70 was talking to the local, telling them to tell...telling the guy...telling him that the guys had been stealing cables from the back of a house. Um they were just talking, they were just talking, y'know for some time, there was nothing, it was nothing, wasn't raised voices or anything like that, it was just talking, um so I carried on doing what I was doing, I was half on the wagon listening to the radio, generally tidying up, cleaning the vehicle, checking under the...under the...under the decks um, y'know, there was no reason for me to be stood there watching or anything like that. Now they must have been there for a quite a while, just chatting and talking and then I heard the splashes from the...from the...from the...from the river, um I got down to see what was going on and by that time SO70 was up near the dock and I think SO72 had come over as well and then I briefly got down off the wagon just to see what was going on and one guy was swimming across to the other side and basically the other guy didn't...didn't go across, um and then, but after that I think these women just basically came out all dressed in black from everywhere, I mean there was one guy stood there to start with and the next minute there was, looked like hundreds and hundreds of women.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

And they were trying to grab SO71's rifle off of him and I was on top, back on top of the vehicle again and I was listening to the radio and then SO71 got on the vehicle, I think, he might have asked me to call it in but I think he called it in, in the end, I don't believe I did it, um and then um that's when... SO77, Staff SO77 and turned up in another 432, I think it was it might have been SO78, I can't remember exactly who was in the other vehicle.

IHAT 4

Hm mm.

SO75

And basically we just left, we went back to the...went straight back. I remember it was called in at the time. Oh, sorry I missed a bit, um so when the other guy didn't come back out, basically SO72 decided...I think SO72 either was told or he decided to jump in, try and get and the guy (coughs) excuse me.

IHAT 4

That's alright.

SO75

And he fished around in there for a while trying to get this guy out but he couldn't get him out, I don't know what was down there, whether it was, there was metal under the water or what but

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one of the guys had got...swam across and then promptly got out, ran off and the other guy just didn't, didn't...he just didn't appear from behind the...from behind the wall, that's when all the...and by that time SO72 had got out and that's when all the women turned up in the black and going nuts. Um but from the point of him bringing them out to...the point where all these women came out it was just like that (clicks his fingers), it was like a flash, it was hardly y'know and then it just felt like all hells breaking loose and that's when obviously it was called in and someone came out and then all three vehicles left at the same time.

IHAT 4

SO75

Anything else?

Um obviously I can't remember exactly what happened afterwards but there was obviously a meeting between the Officers and uh SO70 and whatever to talk about what had happened and stuff but yeah. Obviously I wasn't involved in that meeting. So, yeah, that's about all I can...that's about it.

IHAT 4

SO75

You spoke about the incident down there so...when you say you left, so what was the makeup of leaving then? Which vehicle left first etc.?

Uh well their vehicles were in front of ours, so it was a 432, us and then the other vehicle came in from the side, so we must have just left all in order like that I imagine, I can't really tell you exactly but it must have been Lance Corporal SO71's vehicle first, I would imagine and then ours and then the other 432 behind.

IHAT 4

SO75

Did you leave at speed or...?

Not particularly.

IHAT 4

SO75

No?

No. We didn't like speed out of the camp, you can't speed in those things anyway...

IHAT 4

SO75

Yep.

...but, y'know, it was just normal, yeah.

IHAT 1

Can I just summarise what you said, just to make sure I've got it, you said it was...talking about the events of the 23rd of May 2003, um you said it was normal routine, you had some scran/scoff, purpose of the day was to take vehicles to the wash down area to wash your vehicle and a 432.

SO75

IHAT 1

Yep.

Yeah?

SO75

Correct.

IHAT 1

SO75

You said SO72 and SO71 were in the other vehicle.

IHAT 1

Yep.

You went to the wash down area at the port, the other vehicle parked in front and they've washed their vehicle.

SO75

IHAT 1

No, they don't...they don't get...actually get to wash their vehicle, I don't believe.

SO75

Right, OK.

IHAT 1

I don't think the pump was ever started, it wasn't...

SO75

Right, OK.

...we didn't...I don't even think we got far, it was literally just sort of, uh I think people were just pottering, just generally tidying up and cleaning the vehicles and stuff like that, they didn't actually get round to actually washing the vehicles down at all coz my vehicle was...obviously the vehicles were still filthy.

IHAT 1

OK.

IHAT 4

Yeah.

IHAT 1

Um you said you did the normal, getting under the vehicle and cleaning it out etc.

SO75

Not under it no but on top of it, in it, round it, in between obviously listening to the radio,

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listening out for the radio as well.

IHAT 1

Yeah. Um...

SO75

So, yeah...

IHAT 1

You said **SO71** and **SO72** were setting up, **SO70** went off to recce the area and came back with two guys, he was talking to a local, there was only one fellow down there, told the local that the guys had been stealing cable from the back of the house.

SO75

Yeah.

IHAT 1

There weren't any raised voices, they were just talking, you were on the vehicle listening to the radio and tidying up, you said there was no reason for you to be stood there watching, you must have been there for a while when you heard two splashes?

SO75

I heard...I heard splashes.

IHAT 1

Heard splashes, you got down to see what was going on, **SO70** was near the dock and the guy was swimming to the other side and the other guy did not come up. Lots of women came, one of them tried to grab **SO71**'s rifle, you got on top of the vehicle and on the radio (BEEP SOUNDS) to call him. I'm not sure how long we've got.

IHAT 4

(INAUDIBLE) remain 134 minutes and 45 seconds.

IHAT 1

Yeah that's just a warning on there. You got on top of the vehicle to call it in.

SO75

I don't know if I actually called it in.

IHAT 1

But, yeah but you believe that **SO71** called it in.

SO75

Yeah.

IHAT 1

SO77 turned up with **SO78**? Is that what you're saying?

SO75

I'm not sure if it was [REDACTED]

IHAT 1

Yeah.

SO75

...or **SO78**..

IHAT 1

Right.

SO75

...that was driving the vehicle.

IHAT 1

OK so [REDACTED] or **SO78** then you left and went straight back, when the other guy didn't come up, **SO72** jumped in to get the other guy, one guy swam across and ran off, the other guy didn't come up, called it in, all 3 vehicles left at the same time, can't remember exactly what happened after but there was a meeting between the Officers and **SO70** about what had happened.

SO75

I believe so.

IHAT 1

Yeah, OK, so you believe. OK what we'll do is, because we're coming to the end now is, we'll finish for lunch and then we'll obviously resume after lunch and go into that, OK?

IHAT 4

OK, the time is 1229.

END OF CD

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