



MOD-83-0000478-A

STATEMENT PRINT

Surname: [REDACTED] SO80
Forenames: [REDACTED] SO80
Age: 40 Date of Birth: [REDACTED]
Address:
Postcode:
Occupation:
Telephone No:

Statement Date: 05/08/2015

Appearance Code: Build:
Height (From): 181 Height (To):

| Hair Details: | <u>Position</u> | <u>Style</u> | <u>Colour</u> |
|---------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| | HEAD | SHORT | BROWN |
| | FACIAL | CLEAN SHAVEN | |

Left Eye Colour: BROWN Right Eye Colour: BROWN

Complexion1: FAIR Complexion2:

Glasses Worn: Glasses Use::

| Accent Details: | <u>General</u> | <u>Specific</u> | <u>Qualifier</u> |
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My name is [REDACTED] SO80 and I retired from the Army in November 2014, attaining the rank of Staff Sergeant.

I joined the Army with the Junior Leaders on the 21/06/1991 as a Royal Engineer.

I joined the Regular Army in August 1992 and I was posted to 32 Royal Engineer Regiment based in Munsterlager, Germany as a Sapper (Spr).

My trade was Carpenter/Joiner attached to 26 Armoured Engineer Squadron (Armd Sqn).

In 2000 I was posted to 21 RE Regt based in Osnabruck, Germany. About the same time I was promoted to LCpl.

Sometime during 2000/01 I was trained as a Signaller and I moved into this area of specialism with the Royal Engineers.

About the end of 2002, start of 2003 I rejoined 32 RE Regt, again attached to 26 Armd Sqn. Shortly after this I was told that I was going to the Middle East with 32 RE Regt for possible conflict with Iraq.

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I have been seen by IHAT 10 and IHAT 11 from the Iraq Historic Allegations Team (IHAT) and following they interviewed with me this is my recollection of events whilst engaged on Operation Telic 1.

I cannot specifically remember the training we got in Germany, prior to deployment. However, I can remember there were some exercises, as well as training weapons, signals, etc. We would also have been given training on the Laws of Armed Conflict, Geneva Convention and the Rules of Engagement. We were given this training every year as part of our mandatory training programme. I cannot remember the exact date, but we were deployed to Kuwait sometime at the start of 2003. There we had some acclimatisation training and prepping of our vehicles. I was part of HQ Trp in 26 Armd Engr Sqn.

Having been asked I was unable to remember the name of my Officer Commanding (OC) however having been prompted by IHAT 10, I can confirm that the OC was Maj SO79. The 2I/C was Capt "SO76". Having again been prompted I can now remember that the name of the OP's Officer was Capt and the Sqn Sergeant Major (SSM) was My immediate supervisor was Staff Sergeant

On the advance into Iraq, I was the Signals Cmdr for Capt SO76. Our vehicle was Command Vehicle 1 (CV1). Overall, Capt SO76 was a good officer, "switched on" and knew his stuff. However, they were times that we did not get on well together. We had a difference of opinion on how to carry out signal duties. My overall knowledge of signals was better than his, both technically and operational. I felt that he could not accept that. However, we always had a professional working relationship when it mattered. He was always an officer who remained calm in stressful situations and he was able to make good decisions to deal with them.

As far as I can remember I believe the driver of our vehicle was called. He was a Spr but I cannot remember his full name.

Our vehicle was a 432 or a 436.

I am unsure of the date the war with Iraq started I think it was somewhere between the 21st and 23rd of March, 2003. We were at a staging post on the border between Kuwait and Iraq. I do not recall what other Units, Regts were there. All I remember is a lot of stacked vehicles in convoy formation, including US forces.

My main focus of concentration at that time was our Squadron's "Order of March". First was the Recce Sgt, next was our vehicle. I remember passing on co-ordinates via the radio for a US artillery barrage whose callsign (C/S) was

We crossed the border into Iraq and I spent all of my time in the back of the vehicle. The heat was stifling and the batteries in the back were overheating and giving off gas. It was not pleasant. I opened the back door on a few occasions and all I could see was sand.

We did not encounter any "contact" situations on our way to Basra. As we approached Basra, using the "yellow" route, we were held at a bridge for a period of 24 hrs.

We then moved into Basra and as far as I can remember we went straight to the location which we were to use throughout our deployment. This was a former school which was near to an Iraqi Naval Base. I cannot recall exactly what type of school it was. When we first arrived there I stayed in the vehicle maintaining communications until the base was secured by Black Watch and Engr Recce troops.

We then set about establishing an Op's Room, this was done by a lot of signals from the Sqn and NCO's. Our vehicle (CV1) was parked close to the Ops Room and cable run from the radios into the room. We had a generator, to run the Comms equipment, with CV1 as a backup in case of failure. The offices for the OC and 2I/C were attached to the Ops Room and within vocal range.

I have drawn a sketch map showing the Op's Room with the OC's and 2I/C's offices, I have marked it with an exhibit No^{SO80}1 which I have signed and dated. Which I have handed to IHAT 10. The Op's Officer, was based at Basra Palace and carried out the role at 26 Sqn, specific point of contact (SPOC).

The shift system at the Op's Room was usually a week of days followed by a week of nights. The day shift ran from 06:00 hrs until 18:00 hrs. There were six of us to staff the Op's Room, two Corporals including myself and four Spr's. To facilitate the changeover in shifts, some personnel had to work in excess of 12 hrs. The only other persons I can remember working in the Op's Room were and I cannot remember the names of the other soldiers.

The usual setup of the personnel in the Op's Room was one Cpl/LCpl and two Spr's. This ensured a spread of knowledge, experience and someone with the ability to make certain decisions.

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The equipment in the Op's Room comprised of 2 x VHF radio systems, (one for Sqn and the other Battlegroup net), 1 x HF radio, this was used on the Regt net and a ptarmigan radio/telephone system which was rarely used due to its unreliability at times. The C/S of the Op's Room was Zero, (0) the OC was Zero Alpha (0A), the 2I/C was "Sunray" or Zero Bravo (0B) and mine or my counterpart was "Sunray Minor". The Op's Room had an Out of Bounds (OOB) board. This was used to highlight the areas where due to a number of reasons such as specialist military and/or insurgent activity was taking place. No unauthorised military traffic was allowed to use these parts or pass through those areas.

At booking in/out sheet was maintained in the Op's Room. All 26 Armd Sqn personnel had to complete the sheet before leaving the base. The details on that log gave the time out/in, vehicle crew and C/S, destination and anticipated time of return. As far as I can remember this was on some lined sheets of paper and not an official document. To the best of my knowledge those documents did not have to be returned and were destroyed in the "burnpit" at the end of the tour.

To the best of my recollection my duties would usually consist my sending receiving radio messages, passing on information to the various C/S's, radio maintenance and encryption.

Situation reports (SITREPS) and personnel reports (PEREPS) were sent to HQ twice a day and were usually sent prior to 06:00 hrs and 23:59 hrs. These reports were usually compiled by Capt

SO76 and were sent by me or another Operator. However, on occasions important messages were given by Capt SO76 whilst the Operator recorded it on the Radio Log sheet.

Radio Logs were kept as a record of incidents or occurrences. Each log entry would be signed by the Operator making it. All logs when completed were kept to be returned to Hohne at the end of our tour. These logs were to be maintained for a minimum period of 10 yrs. At the start of each shift I would sign on the log. I did not usually sign off as the entry of the person signing on showed that you had terminated duty.

At the end of my shift the oncoming Comms Cmdr and I would liaise with Capt SO76, if he was available I would give Capt SO76 and the Comms Cmdr a de-brief of the days events.

If an incident which I was dealing with took place close to shift changeover and was quite serious, or had the potential to be, I would stay on duty and deal with it until the incident had been resolved.

When incidents occurred which required decisions to be made above my pay scale, I would usually call Capt SO76 to make that decision. On those occasions he would usually take over the radio and speak directly to the C/S involved, whilst the Operator recorded on the Radio Log what was taking place. This shortened the communication process of relaying the decision/instruction.

From experience in listening to the radio you would get a fair idea of the urgency of a situation by the vocal tone by the person making the transmission.

There are two specific incidents which stick in my mind.

The 1st incident was when an Iraqi male went into the Shatt Al Arab river and drowned. This took place during the day, but I cannot be more specific about the time or date. I remember receiving a Radio Transmission (RT) from a C/S stating that they had detained three Iraqi males for stealing cables. The C/S was seeking direction on what course of action they were to take. To the best of my memory I called Capt SO76, giving him a brief on what had taken place. He then told me to inform the C/S to arrest the Iraqi males. However, it may have been he told the C/S directly over the air and I recorded the details. I cannot exactly remember what happened after this. I can however remember that one of the Iraqi males ran off and jumped into the river and drowned.

As this incident was unfolding it was being relayed to Regt HQ who were in turn were seeking almost continual updates. Capt SO76 had taken control of the incident, I have a recollection that although calm, he was a bit stressed during it.

This is my recollection of this event to the best of my memory.

I have been asked direct questions by IHAT 10 and IHAT 11. I have no recollection of a report on the radio of a ship on fire. No recall on soldiers jumping into the river to save the Iraqi male. Nor, do I remember any other C/S's being sent to the scene, due to an escalating public order situation.

However, this does not mean these events did not take place. Again, I have no recall of any of the soldiers involved coming into the Sqn HQ building where a heated discussion took place.

I am positive that the OC would have been informed immediately, if he was in the base when this incident took place. If he was off base, he was always contactable either by radio or ptarmigan. Had the OC not been informed then myself and Capt SO76 would have been in serious bother.

Therefore, I would have ensured this did not happen. The OC would have been informed as soon as possible.

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Capt **SO76** would have compiled and sent a SITREP of this incident to Regt HQ within a few hours of it occurring.

I have no recollection of a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) being sent to the scene of the incident at anytime. Had a QRF been required this would have been requested on the Brigade net. As far as I can remember 26 Armd Engr Sqn did not have a QRF on the base.

I am unaware of any Iraqi citizens coming to our base on the day of the incident. Neither can I recall hearing of, or being made aware that any threats towards shooting British soldiers by the family of the drowned Iraqi male. Had such threats been made it would have resulted in the following action;

- 1) The area placed Out of Bounds (OOB)
- 2) Threat level for the area increased.
- 3) Information passed to Brigade and Regt HQ for their action
- 4) OC informed as soon as possible

I would be very surprised if Capt **SO76** had not informed the OC of these threats. Had I been made aware an entry would have been made on the Radio Log sheet recording the threats and action taken.

The only person I can remember being involved in this incident was a young Troop Commander by the name of **SO70**. My recall of this Officer was that he was a bit of a "Johnny Rambo" type character. He had some unofficial attachments to his rifle, such as a torch. I remember his rifle wouldn't fit into the rifle rack due to these. He was always telling "war stories" after a while when he started to tell these. I thought, whatever. I am unable to recall any of the stories he told me.

I am unable to remember the names of the other soldiers involved. However, having been mentioned to me now the names **SO75**, **SO71** and **SO72** mean nothing to me. I do recall SSgt **SO77** who was an excellent soldier, however I am unable to state what part, if any, he played in this incident.

In relation to this incident there were some stories on the Sqn "rumour control". One was the Iraqi male who died had been "plasticuffed" to the rear, prior to entering the water. The other was they had been out repairing a bridge when the incident took place. I do not recall who told me or where these stories originated from, or whether I heard them in theatre or back in Germany upon our return.

I am unable to remember the date we left Iraq. Prior to moving out all the completed Radio Log sheets and many other important documentation would be placed in the CV1 box. This box was approximately the size of a small suitcase. Capt **SO76** would also have placed documents he wanted to retain in the box. It was kept in the vehicle and remained there until it was returned to us back in Germany.

Within two months of returning to Germany I was promoted to the rank of Corporal and transferred to 39 Engr Squadron, in Hohne, Germany.

Therefore, the incident I am going to relate now must have taken place prior to me being transferred. To the best of my memory I was with Capt **SO76** in the Sqn HQ building. When I saw a photocopy of the 26 Radio Log entry relating to the drowning incident, my signature was beside the entry. I know it was a photocopy as the bottom left corner was black where the paper had been folded over when it was copied. I know it sounds strange but I cannot remember the circumstances surrounding me seeing this log. I recall Capt **SO76** making a comment that the log maybe required sometime in the future. It is possible that Capt **SO76** had asked me to photocopy the log sheet. I cannot explain how this log sheet came to be in Capt **SO76**'s possession.

The normal procedure when the CV1 box was returned to Hohne. It would be handed to the Quartermaster Signals Master Instructor (QMSI) or Regimental Signals Instructor (RSI) for them to record and store. At some stage Capt **SO76**'s documents would have been returned to him for his necessary action. This may have been prior to our other being sent to the QSMI or RSI. With Capt **SO76** being in possession of the Radio Log sheet, suggests to me that he got hold of them prior to them being sent to the QSMI or RSI. Or, he specifically requested the Radio Log sheets himself.

There is something that has stuck in my memory for the past 12 yrs and has caused me some concern. My memory is of myself and Lt **SO70** standing in the stairwell of the Sqn HQ building, when he said to me "If anything comes out of this will you back me up" or words similar. I cannot recall if I replied or not. What struck me about this comment was I found it very strange and suggested to me that he may have done something wrong. I have never told anyone about this being said to me, other than my wife and that was only recently. It has to be borne in mind that at that time I was a young LCpl and I felt that to mention this comment to anyone would bring me under undue attention and

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could harm my career in the Army. I only feel it is fair to say that in the Army at this time, you did as you were told. No questions asked. No objections made. Things are a lot different now. I cannot remember with any degree of certainty if Lt [SO70] was in the room when I was with Capt [SO76] when he showed me the log. However, if he was there it would explain why he made those comments to me. As I have mentioned I found the comment Lt [SO70] made strange. Bearing this in mind I can only assume that there was something in the Radio Log sheet which did not reflect well on him.

I have been asked directly if at any time whilst in theatre or upon my return in Germany was I ever told or requested to destroy or alter any of the Radio Log sheets relating to this incident. I cannot remember such an event taking place. Having said that, if such a request had been made I would have asked why. Had such an order been given then I would have done as instructed. Now, with a greater degree of life experience I would refuse such an order or request and report it as well. However, as stated I have no recall of this taking place, but that does not mean it did not happen.

Throughout my tour on Telic 1, I believe I left the base only on two or three occasions. On each occasion this was to Basra Palace to obtain radio encryption. I never went to the Naval Base, therefore I was, at the time unable to picture the scene where the drowning took place.

Having been asked, the radios the troops used on the ground with 26 Sqn were all vehicle mounted. One of the radios in the vehicle could be detached from and carried on a back pack. To do this would take approximately 30 mins or so. No Personal Remote Radios (PRR) were on issue to 26 Sqn at the time. I believe we got them after our return from Iraq. Each vehicle would have at least two radio sets to listen in and transmit on the Brigade net and also on the Sqn net.

The second incident I referred to earlier, is where a number of Iraqi's who had been trying to get into ISO containers, which contained ordnance and weapons, close to our base, had been shot and injured by Infantry Snipers. Capt [SO76] told me the Snipers were on our base. I did not know they were there until this incident took place. The injured Iraqi's were brought into the Camp for medical treatment and later taken away by Ambulance. I do not know the final outcome of this incident.

In relation to the drowning incident I had always been of the opinion that the body of the drowned Iraqi Male had never been recovered.

Signed: [SO80]

Signature Witnessed By: [IHAT 10]