



MOD-83-0000481-A

RECORD OF INTERVIEW

URN: Y1D

Enter type:

(SDN / ROT) / Contemporaneous Notes / Index of Interview with VW / Visually Recorded Interview)

Person interviewed: AL-OKAILI, MUNEM OUDAH BALE
Place of Interview: DOUBLETREES HOTEL, ISTANBUL
Date of Interview: 18/01/2014
Time Commenced: 09:15 Time Concluded: 10:03
Duration of Interview: 48 minutes
Audio tape reference nos:
Visual image reference nos:
Interviewer(s): **IHAT 6**
Other Persons Present: **IHAT 7**, **IHAT 4**

Police Exhibit No: Number of Pages: 12

Signature of interviewer producing exhibit:

Person Speaking

Text

IHAT 6

Ok, fortunately it looks like the tapes are recording. Just before I ask you any questions, I'm going to go through a formal process before I get to asking you questions. We're in room number 207 at the Double Trees Hotel in Istanbul, my name is **IHAT 6** and I am an Investigator on the Iraq Historic Allegation Team. My colleague in the other room is **IHAT 7** and he's also an Investigator on the Iraq Historic Allegation Team. I'm going to make sure that he's listening to the recording, **IHAT 7**??

IHAT 7

Yep.

IHAT 6

Yep he's just responded and you also met another colleague, **IHAT 4** and he's an Investigator on the Iraq Historic Allegation Team. As I said to you yesterday the most important person in the room is you and can I ask you to introduce yourself.

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MA My name, my full name is Muneam Oudah BALE.

IHAT 6 And how would you like me to refer to you throughout?

MA You can call me Muneam.

IHAT 6 So I'll call you Muneam.

MA Yes.
Do you want me to start, telling you about this?

IHAT 6 No, no, not quite yet, I just need to explain to you that we will be working in blocks of between 45 minutes to an hour and we will have regular intervals and please tell me if ever you want a break before that period. It's also important that if I ask you a question that you don't understand fully, that you tell me and then I can re-phrase the question in another way.
The date today is Saturday the 18th of January 2014 and the time by my watch is 9.10am. I explained to you yesterday that the purpose of this interview being recorded both audibly and visually is that if this case did go to a court, it would be easier to describe certain events by actions and emotions.

MA Yes

IHAT 6 Does that make sense to you?

MA Yes it is very clear yeah.

IHAT 6 OK, thank you.
Reason we're here is because I understand that an incident has happened when the British Forces were occupying Iraq. We are in no rush, I want you to take your time, my job is to try and get as much information from you as possible and it is to re-live events which occurred in 2003, which is over ten years ago.

MA Yes.

IHAT 6 Do you have any concerns at this point?

MA No (inaudible)

IHAT 6 I want you to think back to the incident, think about what's happened and when you are ready please tell me as much as you can, as much detail as you possibly can.

MA Shall I start?

IHAT 6 Yes please.

MA

I'll start by, going back exactly how the, incident took place and where we were living then.

IHAT 6

Yes please.

MA

My uncle Abdul Mohammed, I'm sure you have seen him, and I used to live in, the Naval base and he has his own sheep. I came home with my cousin, which is Hasan, he is my (inaudible) cousin who has, who died and my uncle said you may take, the sheep, the herd and you go coz there are farms around the base and it's close to the Shatt-Al-Arab which is a river. We started herding the sheep, after a while one tank or one armoured vehicle came, I didn't take any notice of it, I asked Said, I said what are they doing here? He said they come regularly to, clean the vehicle, don't give them any attention. They just drove towards the (inaudible). After one hour approximately, we saw, some personnel, Army personnel and one of them came towards us, but we didn't know what he, what he wants to be honest and we can't see everything because there are some buildings around and then just suddenly felt that he was behind us and he was fully armed and he, about his body that he was wearing the uniform was carrying his arm, he immediately spoke to us he said 'go away', we couldn't basically understand what he was saying, we, did our best to understand what he was saying but we couldn't. Said was younger than me, he said 'let's run away' but I said 'no he's an armed person, he might shoot us', he said, I told him I'm wiser than you, don't attempt to run otherwise he will shoot us, let's see what he wants first and then we will judge that later. He started walking, afterwards, Said I felt that he was trying to run away and he, the soldier was walking and hit Said on his leg and I emphasised that if he runs away he will shoot and we nearly approached his other colleagues, the soldiers, colleagues and, their armoured vehicle was stopped near the river bank and they were washing it, some of them were not wearing, their military uniform and when we were there, his colleagues, the soldiers colleagues were, they just say 'sit down, sit down', again they started to, try and speak with us but they couldn't. There is a fisherman he was, fishing, they said he knows how to speak English and let's call him and there were many people, there are a lot of people there, fishermen in this particular area. They called this particular fisherman in order to help them, he spoke in English with them and he left, we didn't know what he told them. We, remain sitting there, after approximately ten minutes or so one of them said 'stand up', there was a, something like a platform, into the water, 5 metres into the water, it has some kind of poles holding it and the ships or boats coming towards it and it is a bit further down in the river and he asked us to stand or stay on the edge of this platform. I stood on one edge and Said was standing to the opposite of me, they, in this case came, were behind us, we were at the front, the platform width is approximately 3 metres and before, behind us were four soldiers so we had no escape and one of them, the same soldier who brought us was already carrying his own weapon and he was, he looked very very angry and he was speaking, apparently he was just saying something like, throw yourself into the water but we don't know how to swim, for god sake why do you do this to us? Please and he just didn't listen to us, he just wanted, to pass this idea to him, in order to stop doing this but we couldn't, he just couldn't understand what we were saying at all and got more angry and afterwards he just came toward us and pushed us into the water. Said was in the water and I was afterwards and I just couldn't feel anything afterwards, ten minutes later, I sank when he first push me, after ten minutes I managed to reach the surface of the water, I wanted to swim in order to reach the bank and it was even difficult to get out of the water because there is some sort of metal on the edge of the bank, yeah in order to hold the banks, side from falling into the water, I tried to catch something but I just couldn't, it slips out of my hand, I started worrying, I thought I'm going to sink in the water, I just can't, get out and I started shouting 'help help I'm going to die, I'm going to die' and the water was really dirty because boats and ships using it, it was really dirty. The operator of the water, his son, is accompanying us, this is his son and his father was the operator of the water, station and he died, he passed away, and he brought a rope and threw it to me and he started pulling me out until I reached the edge of the bank. After a few minutes or so, I just couldn't realise where I was because of the smell, the gas smell and the dirt, the water was really dirty, I lost my conscious. Next day when I

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was I realised what had happened. I just couldn't remember anything about the incident and about Said's death as well, I just thought he managed to get out of the water and he survived. The next day they sent somebody to me and they said you were present at the incident and apparently Said had died. They said you have to attend at the Police because of this incident and at that time the Royal Police, British Police were present in the area, apparently they took Said's body to, to the hospital and they later sent somebody for him. While at the Police station obviously they took my statement and they said you have to go to the British Consulate which is not far from where we live. We were in there then they started investigating the incident, how it happened etc and a British team they were investigators, they came with us they said we'll take you to the incident and you'll tell us what happened and they used [REDACTED] Interpreter, they took us in the armoured vehicle and they asked, started telling me 'come on tell us where you were standing and where was Said standing, where was the tank of the armoured vehicle was, how did it start from the beginning, where did they brought you from', yes. They took every detail of the incident from the beginning. Then they started the investigation and went back to their base, the Royal British Police, they said we'll give you the body of Said and you will obviously take care of it. Afterwards they did a call, (inaudible) they said we took your statement and that's it, when we call the deceased father, we'll call you as well and you'll be ready for this. When we call you, you have to be ready and come and after they gave us the body back, we didn't have any contact with them for a while before that we have our own bereavement and then there are some procedures to do and they stopped contacting us for approximately ten days. After this they sent somebody, they just sent for me actually to the airport, they didn't call my uncle but they called Abu ALI, the person who died and they are witnesses they were, witnesses actually in the area when the incident took place.

IHAT 6

OK.

MA

And they started the investigation and they said was, this is not enough, have to go to the, where the incident took place and ask other people who might have seen the incident and there were between 6 or 7 witnesses and they started the investigation with us. They took our statements and they ask us about the incident and how it happened. After a while they sent for me alone, they said you have to attend at Basrah Airport in order to take your statement about the incident. It wasn't only me to be honest, there is Abu ALI, the person who died. This is after a while and the team who was carrying this investigation consist of 15 members or so. They weren't wearing Military uniform, they all wear civilian clothes, kind of, suits with ties and they said we are an investigation company and there will a trial later on, then there was an officer, I'm not quite sure about his rank whether he was Brigadier or so, he introduced us to the team and all of them have their own laptops or computers and our Lawyer used to be Lebanese and he was the main contact between us and them.

IHAT 6

Yes.

MA

After the interview had finished I asked the interpreter, I said 'what is going on? Can you explain that to me?', the Lawyer said you will not win this case because the British Soldier was saying that you jumped into the water and the trial or this position will end and you will lose, you will lose the case because there are no, the soldier didn't admit any good, you didn't, you didn't face us with him in order to see who is telling the truth and he said the trial or the case has ended and you have no rights. And afterwards we were worried to follow the case and we just sat in our houses and stopped talking about it. Some people I'm not quite sure whether they are from the same team or not, they used to come to my uncle's house and they, my uncle was saying they were trying to close the case and don't raise it further and make the Government involved. They came once or twice to this area and the Naval headquarter. They said if you can close the case followed by compensation or some sort of and my uncle said no, there is a complaint about it and the procedures have to be followed and there were events at that time at the airport area and

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we weren't able to go there and obviously you can't go there because Almmardie, Army or Militia they started suspecting you and you think you might be collaborator, we just basically couldn't go there, even if we had the mans but we were afraid and there was no communication whatsoever for a long period of time. Approximately 7 years passed without any result, suddenly a young Lawyer appeared on the Theatre and he said 'I can defend your case', his name [REDACTED] and he gave us some telephone contacts numbers and he said eventually hopefully we will reach a result.

IHAT 6

You can speak, we have a break in about 20 minutes, half an hour. OK?

MA

After a while, as I mentioned, this person appeared and he said you can bring any documents or papers confirming that they have sent you, they called you in the past, any paper you have whether they were attend in English or any other language and I said I have a letter from the Royal British Police and I took all my papers and went to see and he started checking them and reading them and he said I'll arrange an appointment with them and hopefully I'll contact you later. So I kept contacting him for approximately 4 to 5 months afterwards and he said 'until I hear something I'll make sure to let you know'. After a while, [REDACTED] contacted me and he said 'now we have got the permission for you to go' and I said 'what about the, my uncle, the deceased father?', he said 'no, at this point they want you only, you are a witness' and [REDACTED] took me to Beirut and they did something similar to what you expect of us and I later on met the Solicitor and Lawyer and she also asked me about the incident and how it happened and they took my statement and they, I handed over all my documents to them and afterwards they said you may leave and go back to your Country and we'll contact you and we'll tell you about the result and whether there is a trial or not and we'll let you know. They kept phoning us from time to time and repeating the same story, the same, the same, what we say the court, they keep repeating this on us. Again, once again they ask us about the incident and how it happened and what (inaudible). This continued for a long period of time, speaking over the mobile, sometimes I see 4 or 5 phone calls from them and even my telephone battery runs out, they say recharge it and continue, that was on their account so we weren't bothered a lot with charges and [REDACTED] after a while he said the permission has finally arrived and he said they will call you and offer you a certain amount of money and if you agree to it, that's it, the case will end and said after it ends you are not allowed to go the street and speak to other people about, internally or externally, wherever you go, as if you haven't raised any complaint in the beginning after the case has ended, that's it, you don't have to contact or speak to any organisation or (inaudible), charity etc. I said we have to agree and we're not going say anything, whatever they will compensate us, we will accept it.

IHAT 6

Yes.

MA

After a while they referred us, myself and my uncle, sorry they transferred the money to us, they gave him his money to his current account and they did the same to me as well, that was basically it since we received the money, afterwards there were no other further communications, I would say 3 years or 4 years ago, yes. Would you like to ask me anything and I can answer you? I'm quite happy. This is our story rather short, the whole incident is rather...

IHAT 6

It's my job to get more information from you.

MA

I agree.

IHAT 6

I'm going to try and go over and tell you what I think you've said to me.

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MA Yeah.

IHAT 6

To make sure I have a grasp of what you've said to me and what you've said to me is that when you were living near a Naval Base...

MA Yes.

IHAT 6

...with your uncle Abu Mohammed...

MA Yes

IHAT 6

...and his son Hasan Said...

MA (inaudible)

IHAT 6

...and you were a Shepherd working the nearby mountains...

MA My uncle is actually the person who is living in the base of the Naval Base and I used to go and visit them.

IHAT 6

OK, and what you said is on this particular day you saw an Army vehicle near the area of the Shatt-AI-Arab river...

MA Yeah, the Naval Base is located there, obviously the base used to be occupied by the Army but when the (inaudible), it isn't obviously, it is not intended to be for people to live in it, it used to be occupied by the Military but because of the war, it was empty, that's why people came and lived in this, because they had already left, people moved to stay in the Barracks.

IHAT 6

I understand.

MA Because they were nice buildings and they were ready to, for people to live in them.

IHAT 6

And you said on this particular day you saw this Military vehicle near the river and you question what they were doing there...

MA Yes.

IHAT 6

...And then you said one soldier approached you...

MA He wouldn't come directly towards us because there were buildings as I mentioned everywhere so...

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IHAT 6

...and he approached you and you said Hasan was thinking about running away?

Interpreter

Hasan? You mean Said?

IHAT 6

Sorry Said

MA

At the beginning no he didn't and as I, when I ask him he said 'don't give any attention to them, leave them alone'.

IHAT 6

Yes.

MA

But after a while this soldier was coming towards us and we started to say 'what does he want?' and we were just shocked when we saw him immediately he was standing behind us.

IHAT 6

Yes, and then you said 'the soldier ushered you towards the water'?

MA

Yes, to his other colleagues.

IHAT 6

And I think you mentioned another four soldiers were there?

MA

Yes, four approximately, they weren't wearing their full gear if you like but he was wearing his full military uniform.

IHAT 6

I understand.

MA

He was ready with all his gear and he's a rather big guy.

IHAT 6

Yep, and then you said that you couldn't swim?

MA

No, I don't say, I say I can't swim very well.

IHAT 6

And then the soldiers made you walk towards a platform...

MA

Yes.

IHAT 6

...and you said that they didn't understand your language...

MA

No, he wasn't able to understand.

IHAT 6

...but then the both of you were forced into the water?

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MA

Yeah he told us to stand near the edge of the platform and he started getting very angry, we thought that he was going to shoot us, unless you threw yourself in the water, he will shoot you.

IHAT 6

And then you said both you and Said entered the water?

MA

Yes.

IHAT 6

You describe the water as being muddy?

MA

Dirty as I said because there were a lot of boats, ships and it has a lot of gas and dirt.

IHAT 6

And then you said you went under the water?

MA

Yes.

IHAT 6

Then came up?

MA

Yes.

IHAT 6

'I then tried to climb up a bank'

MA

But I couldn't.

IHAT 6

Then you said after some time you were rescued...

MA

Yeah because there was shouting and saying 'I'm going to sink, I'm going to sink' and they obviously threw the rope to me and...

IHAT 6

You then said that the following day you were aware that Said sadly died and then you said the Royal Military Police spoke to you that next day...

MA

Yes

IHAT 6

...And asked you to give an account of what happened...

MA

And they call me again to, they took me to where the incident took place and they ask me to tell them every single detail, from where I was taken until I was pushed towards the water and they were even taking photos.

IHAT 6

I understand, and they told you that sadly Said had died...

MA

Yes

IHAT 6

And then you said you didn't hear anything until 7 years later...

MA

Yes, there were absolutely no communications.

IHAT 6

...and then you spoke to a man named [REDACTED] who informed you that you may have been able to claim money...

MA

Yes

IHAT 6

...of compensation for what had happened to you.

MA

Yes

IHAT 6

OK. Thanks very much for that account, I'm going to explore certain aspects of what you said to me to try and get much more detail...

MA

Yes, alright.

IHAT 6

...of that incident,

MA

OK.

IHAT 6

Later on I will also ask you to draw a sketch plan.

MA

This is what I thought, I thought I would do some sketch regarding the incident because you can't imagine how whole the platform was.

IHAT 6

Would you be happy to do that for me?

MA

Yes, yes I'll do anything, no problem.

IHAT 6

We'll do that later on when I need finer detail from you.

MA

Yes

IHAT 6

I'm going to start off by asking you how life was in general before British Troops came into Basrah, and how life changed, if at all, when Troops were in Basrah.

MA

Shall I start?

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IHAT 6

Yes, yes

MA

Things before wasn't that great and we were affected greatly by previous regime's and we were told or hear that the British Forces would be in Basrah and the areas around and the American Forces will go upwards, towards Baghdad and when they first came they were treating us in a very good manner, whenever you see a British Soldiers on the streets, you won't feel any fear or even when we see the tanks, we had no fear from them whatsoever and we didn't felt they were some sort of occupation. We were just normal people, we don't belong to any certain militias or parties, we didn't see any harm from them at the beginning. That's why we were a bit puzzled and astonished when this incident took place because we know that they don't pose any harm to people. If any person did something wrong, let's say, the British would take him for an hour or so to their base and they just quickly ask him about what he did and they release him afterwards, whatever wrong he might did, they just ask him a few questions and they will release him afterwards, they were treating us, as I said, in a very good way. Anything else you would like to hear?

IHAT 6

No, that's fine thanks. Can you just tell me or just describe your relationship with Abu Mohammed and Said?

MA

I had difficult life, I've had particular time and I used to go to him, to my uncle's and to see Said as well and they helped me by offering me food and milk etc. Because during the occupation there weren't any jobs and all the Government Offices were closed, there were no work, so we rely entirely on the sheep and the herd and their products basically and I used to go and see them regularly and he likes me, my uncle he relies on me and we are like friends if you like.

IHAT 6

How is Abu Mohammed related to you?

MA

He is the cousin of my father, immediate cousin of my father.

IHAT 6

Do you remember the date of the event?

MA

25th of March, approximately between 10 to 11 am, roughly, we didn't have, we have obviously see the call for the prayer as it's called and we know that we can judge what time was it.

IHAT 6

And what year was this?

MA

2003, yes 25th of March. Now he's saying no sorry, it's May.

IHAT 6

May?

MA

May. This is the exact date 25th of May 2003.

IHAT 6

Thank you. Muneam can you just describe the relationship you had with Said?

MA

Most of the time I spoke with him, he was my cousin and he was my friend and whenever he, let's say, find a job he would immediately contact me and he'd say, he was very close relative

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and a friend, whenever I need something I would go to him. If he, as I said, find something suitable for me, work etc., he would immediately contact me and he say you may come and help. Abu Mohammed, his father, has many other sons but my relationship was really good with Said in particular.

IHAT 6

At this time who else lived within the Naval Base with Abu Mohammed and Said?

MA

His obviously, Abu Mohammed's wife and his other sons, and children, they were all living there.

IHAT 6

And could you tell me everybody's names who lived there?

MA

His sons [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and his wife, Mohammed's mother and young, his young daughters, he has three young daughters.

IHAT 6

OK. I'm looking at my watch and we've about 45 minutes into the interview, would you like to have a break at this time?

MA

I don't mind, it's entirely up to you.

IHAT 6

OK, we'll have a break now, the time is 1003, and then we'll go downstairs, stretch our legs, have a coffee and come straight back. Is that OK with you?

MA

Yeah yeah that's fine.

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Interviewer(s): **IHAT 6**
Other Persons Present: **IHAT 4**

Police Exhibit No:	Number of Pages:
Signature of interviewer producing exhibit:	

Person Speaking Text

IHAT 6 Good days, we're recording again, welcome back.

MA Thank you.

IHAT 6 We are still in room 207 at the Double Trees Hilton Hotel in Istanbul, my name is **IHAT 6**, I'm an Investigator with the Iraq Historic Allegation Team and also present is **IHAT 6** interpreter and also can you introduce yourself again.

MA Muncam Audah Bale

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IHAT 6

And also in the other room are my colleagues, [REDACTED] IHAT 7 [REDACTED] IHAT 7 can you hear me? [REDACTED] IHAT 7? OK, he can hear me and also I'm getting a bit deaf and also [REDACTED] IHAT 4 who's an Investigator with the Iraq Historic Allegation Team. Muneam we spoke at length or you spoke at length about events which happened on May 2003, before I go any further the time as well, the time is now 1055 am and the date is Saturday the 18th of January 2014. As I said I'm not going to talk about events which occurred on May 2003 but what I want is to discuss your personal circumstances and I want to talk about your life as a young child up until May 2003, I want to talk about, you to talk about your family composition and all the addresses you lived up until that point. Muneam are you happy to talk about that?

MA

Yes yes that's fine.

IHAT 6

In your own time.

MA

Am I appearing on the video we're seeing? No I believe not, I don't think it is working is it?

IHAT 6

OK, so the monitor's not on, anyway [REDACTED] IHAT 7's next door and I'm sure he can see us on his monitor.

MA

I just wanted to (inaudible)

IHAT 6

No it's a good point because I didn't notice. Let's talk about you.

MA

We used to live in Basrah for a long time ago, I used to live with my father in Basrah, later on when I got married I left my parents and lived separately, I started to rely on myself and working as self-employed, I was a worker, simply a worker, I didn't know any other profession and I also studied at school but I left at year 6 primary school. I started working in order to support my family, after a while I joined the Army to do my Military Service and I, as I said, I joined the Army and I stayed in the Army approximately for 5 years and a half. I served in different units in Iraq, in different places and I even participated in the Kuwait invasion and after the war ended and I was released from the Military, I went back to my previous work as a worker, I used to do simple things and when the regime was toppled there weren't any jobs, so we basically relied on our live stock to maintain our life because there weren't any jobs available and we suffered for a while until things started to get better and now I am living, thank god, in much better life, the wages are better now and I managed to get myself accommodation, thank god our live has improved, it's better now. Anything else that you want to hear?

IHAT 6

Thanks for that, just to go over what you've said to me, from a young age you lived with your father...

MA

Yes

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IHAT 6

...In Basrah and then when you were old enough, you went to live separately...

MA

I got married and (inaudible)

IHAT 6

...and then you said you've always been a worker...

MA

Yeah

IHAT 6

...you left school year 6 which...

MA

Yes

IHAT 6

...then you joined the Army...

MA

Yes

IHAT 6

...on compulsory service...

MA

Yes

IHAT 6

...for around five and half years.

MA

Yes

IHAT 6

And worked at different units and you'd said you'd participated in the Kuwait invasion...

MA

Yes

IHAT 6

And then you said when the regime was toppled, there were no jobs and you worked with livestock...

MA

Yes

IHAT 6

...and you said fortunately things are better for you now.

MA

Yes

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IHAT 6

I'm going to talk in a bit more detail, ask you to talk in a bit more detail about your life after 2003 later on in the process. You started to talk about your young life but I'd like to know about your family composition, by that I mean your father's name, mothers name, any brothers or sisters.

MA

No no that's fine.

IHAT 6

Are you happy to talk about that?

MA

Yeah that's fine. My father's name, my father's full name is Oudah Bale (inaudible) and he was born in [REDACTED] and he lives in Basrah. My mother's full name is [REDACTED], she is younger than my father, I can't remember her date of birth.

IHAT 6

OK

MA

Just to let you know that unfortunately my father is deceased.

IHAT 6

I'm really sorry to hear that.

MA

He passed away in 2010. I have brothers, the eldest called [REDACTED], obviously, he is the eldest and I am the second after and he was born in [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was born in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and other brother [REDACTED] was born in [REDACTED]. We are, I have four brothers obviously, sisters [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]'s born in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I think she was born in [REDACTED], I thought, because she's younger than [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I think approximately she was born in [REDACTED] and (inaudible), I can't remember her date of birth obviously and [REDACTED], she was born in [REDACTED]. That's it. We are nine in total obviously yeah. One of my brothers who I have not mentioned died in an incident, is it, do you need me to mention him as well, his name?

IHAT 6

If he was your brother, yes please do.

MA

His name is Tom and he was born in 1972 and he was a University Graduate but unfortunately he had a car accident and he died.

IHAT 6

I've very sorry to hear that. I should asked you earlier but what's your date of birth?

MA

I was born in [REDACTED]

IHAT 6

And when did you leave the family home?

MA

I think it was early 90's, 92, 93 cos we were serving in the Army at that time and I just couldn't

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leave my family alone, so, they used to live my parents but after I was released from the Army, I had to live my own life and have separate living.

IHAT 6

I understand, can I talk about, can you talk about your life from 92 and by that I mean your wife and your children.

MA

My wife actually passed unfortunately, she passed away in 2012, I had three children from her, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] all males and one daughter..

Interpreter

'I've forgot her name' he's saying

MA

Because I called her a nickname, [REDACTED] this is from my first wife, once she died in 2012 as I mentioned, I got married again, I got married this time a year ago, after the condolences, procedures, do you want my wife's name?

IHAT 6

Yes please.

MA

[REDACTED], she was born in [REDACTED] and the second wife, the one I am currently...

IHAT 6

Yes

MA

...with called [REDACTED] and she was born in [REDACTED]

IHAT 6

May I offer my condolences for the loss of your wife.

MA

Thank you very much.

IHAT 6

I want to talk about Said, again describe his family, where he lived during his childhood, sorry and how your life, your relationship developed.

MA

He used to live close to where we lived and we used to see each other, for a very long period of time they used to live, as I said, near where we lived, in the same area, my father used to go and visit them and they do the same, so sometimes I can see him 6 or 7 times a day and during the events they weren't able to freely herd their livestock inside the city that's why we moved to the, where the Navy Base was because there were farms there and they were close to the river etc. I used to go and visit him and because he was educated, he started at school, I'm not quite sure whether he has finished his school or not but he was a well educated person. After the incident I stopped going to visit the family because as soon as they see me they remember the incident and...

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IHAT 6

I understand.

MA

...they start crying. I stopped going for a very long period of time, whenever I go, as I said, when they see me they just start crying. I just wanted to stop reminding them of Said that's why I stopped visiting. Yeah I stopped visiting them for a very long time, I, if I see them I just wave or say hello from distance but I don't go there.

IHAT 6

I understand. What kind, describe what kind of a person he was.

MA

He was a very nice person and he was, he was committed to his school and he was, as I said, educated and very stable, that's why his father used to rely on him on almost every, he was very obedient and he wasn't his eldest son, he was in the middle but his father used to rely on him among others, he relied on him on looking after the livestock etc. He was distinguished if you like, to his father because he likes his manners and his approach.

IHAT 6

I've not a great mathematician but in May 2003, you'd have been 32?

MA

Yes, almost

IHAT 6

How old is Said?

MA

Said was younger I would say, he was, I would estimate between 25 to 30 maybe, yeah he was young, I'm older than him. The incident itself I said 'why don't you speak to you them, I believe you are educated and you can speak the language?' and he said 'no, I'm not very good at English, I can't interpret what we were trying to tell them'.

IHAT 6

What kind of dialect did you speak?

MA

What do you mean? We live in a village so we speak in our own dialect yeah.

IHAT 6

What do you call that dialect?

MA

We are called Arab's as opposed to people who lives in the city if you like, so villagers, obviously people who live in the countryside are different, they speak in a different dialect from people living in the city.

IHAT 6

I understand. Going back to 2003, I know you mentioned because of the hardship, you were leaving in the Naval Base...

MA

Yes

IHAT 6

...where did you live immediately before you went to the Naval Base?

MA

We used to live in Al-Hussein quarter or district, Hap-Hussein Al-Hussein they called it, in Basrah and we are still living afterwards we went back to living in the same area.

IHAT 6

Could you describe the type of house you lived in at that time?

MA

It was a small house, consist of bedrooms, kitchen, is one floor building, normal small house like any other small houses in Basrah and it is 150 sq metres in terms of size.

IHAT 6

In terms of the distance away from the Naval Base...

MA

By car or do you just want the distance?

IHAT 6

By car.

MA

I would say 20 minutes by car.

IHAT 6

20 minutes?

MA

Yeah, it is very close to Al Haneer, the area from the Naval Base, that's the maximum, 20 minutes is the maximum.

IHAT 6

Muneam can you tell me what it was like roundabout May 2003? And can you just give me an example of what life was like on a day to day basis at that time?

MA

Before the incident?

IHAT 6

Roundabout the same time of the incident.

MA

It was bad as I mentioned, there was no jobs, no, and the American's were there everywhere and there was no Government, all Government Offices were closed, they were no work, no encouragement, the Army were everywhere and when there was a proper Army, Iraqi Army, people used to make living but afterwards they just, when they were released they just couldn't find any jobs.

IHAT 6

Muneam I know you mentioned the fact that you had the livestock...

MA Yes

IHAT 6

...can you talk to me about the livestock, how many sheep you own, where they were kept?

MA

Only sheep we have, honestly I can't give you a figure because we used to sell and buy and I can't tell you exact figure, we sell on daily basis and buy on the same day so I can't just give you a figure.

IHAT 6

And at that time in May 2003, where did you used to keep the sheep?

MA

As I mentioned the Navy Base was deserted so there were a lot of buildings and it was open to us and then we kept our livestock there. It's a huge base and its agricultural area around and the water is near so we kept them there.

IHAT 6

When you said 'we kept them there', whose sheep were they?

MA

They belong to Abu Mohammed, my father has his own livestock as well but it is his and he look after them and he didn't move to the Navy Base so I was looking on my uncle's (inaudible), my father has his own livestock but they don't mix together, he has his own livestock and my uncle has his own livestock as well.

IHAT 6

Yeah I understand thank you. I want to talk about the Army and whether you or Said had any previous dealings with the British Army before the incident in May 2003.

MA

No we don't have any dealings with them whatsoever, we, to the contrary, we greeted them as a nation because they help us get rid of the previous regime and they used to treat us very well. It was very common to see a British tank driving along the streets like any other cars or traffic. We weren't afraid of them at all, at all.

IHAT 6

OK, just going back to Said again, could you help me out and just be a bit more specific about his family composition as well as sisters.

MA

I think I mentioned them, [REDACTED], I thought you are referring to my family, his brothers is [REDACTED], OK, (inaudible) he was born in [REDACTED], he's a little bit younger than him, I'm not quite sure when he was born and [REDACTED], again I don't know his date of birth and [REDACTED] and Said, Said comes second after [REDACTED], [REDACTED] is the eldest and Said comes second after. I can't even remember Said's birth, date of birth as well.

IHAT 6

OK, any sisters?

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MA He has two sisters, we, especially people who live in the villages and the Arab's, we don't call our daughters or sons real names, the names they were born with, if you like, and the date of their certificates...

IHAT 6 Yes

MA ...we have nicknames so forgive me, sometimes I just forget their real names, as far as I remember one of them called [REDACTED].

IHAT 6 Yep

MA ...and the second one called [REDACTED].

IHAT 6 Muneam, you're a fine looking man, I want you to describe what you look like in May 2003.

MA I used to be much nicer, long hair, they used to call me like an Indian person, they just thought I'm an Indian because of my look and hair and my moustache, it used to be much thicker than now, so they took photo's then to me and compared to what I look now I'm sure you'd say no, this is not you. You know I am getting older and I started to lose my hair etc.

IHAT 6 You said you had long hair, can you describe how long your hair was at that time?

MA Approximately it was reaching my shoulders and I used to, it was going to the back.

IHAT 6 Yes I understand.

MA and thick.

IHAT 6 And I can see you're very slim.

MA I was almost the same yeah, I served in the Army and then I was realised and I kept my same, more or less the same weight 57 to 58 kilogram's.

IHAT 6 Can you also describe Said appearance at that time?

MA He was nice good looking guy and he tends to, his skin tends to look like reddish, there was a scar, small scar on his upper lip and he was a good looking guy and slim, medium build, doesn't have any belly.

IHAT 6

And how tall was he?

MA

He was shorter than me I would say, his brothers were tall but he wasn't.

IHAT 6

Sorry.

MA

No, nothing, yeah.

IHAT 6

Could you also describe your living accommodation in the Naval Base?

MA

Basically it belongs to the Military, I would say a building like, it is a building I would say which has partitions into rooms, it's a rather lone building and each one has two rooms or partitions, every family occupy two rooms and it was, and there is a space in the front of the building, it's free for you to herd your livestock there, an open area and we used to put some sort of barb wires in order not, in order to keep the livestock within, so they don't go outside at night.

IHAT 6

You also mentioned other family members; did you share that building with those family members?

MA

No, as I said I left my family back in Hi Huneer earlier but I used to go and visit my uncle and his family so, so during the incident I was approximately staying there 3 days before and as you may probably know there weren't any mobile phones and...

IHAT 6

Yes

MA

...other communications to let my family know. So whenever for instance my father send me there to visit, I'll stay for days there because it was a nice area and close to the river and there is obviously food and other things.

IHAT 6

And did that Naval Base have facilities such as running water, electricity?

MA

There was no electricity, when the Army left or deserted the base, we used to bring water from the river which is close. And there is a water station nearby, people living there used to go and get water from there as it's clean water.

IHAT 6

OK, I'm going to bring this interview to a close, thanks very much for the information you've given.

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MA

Thank you very much.

IHAT 6

And we'll be breaking for lunch, the time now is 1140 am, thank you.

MA

Thank you very much.

END OF DISC

RECORD OF INTERVIEW

URN: Y1F

Enter type: ROTI

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

Person Interviewed: AL-OKAILI, MUNEM OUDAH BALE
Place of Interview: DOUBLETREES HOTEL, ISTANBUL
Date of Interview: 18/01/2014
Time Commenced: 14:05 Time Concluded: 14:36
Duration of Interview: 31 minutes
Audio tape reference nos:
Visual image reference nos:
Interviewer(s): **IHAT 6**
Other Persons Present: **IHAT 4**

Police Exhibit No:	Number of Pages:
Signature of interviewer producing exhibit:	

Person Speaking	Text
IHAT 6	Right, welcome back to room 207 at Double Trees Hotel in Istanbul.
MA	Thank you very much.
IHAT 6	My name's IHAT 6 , I'm a Police Officer, sorry I'm an Investigator on the Iraq Historic Allegation Team, you've got Interpreter .
MA	He said (inaudible)
IHAT 6	Excellent, for the benefit of the recoding could you just introduce yourself again?

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MA My name is Muneam Oudah.

IHAT 6

Thank you. The time now is, by my watch is 2.05 pm on Saturday the 18th January 2004, my colleague [REDACTED] IHAT 7 is in the other room, accompanied by [REDACTED] IHAT 4, [REDACTED] IHAT 7 can you hear me?

IHAT 7

Yes I can.

IHAT 6

OK. I've got a few questions to ask you in relation to the session we had this morning. In respect of the incident at the quayside in May 2003, I will ask you questions about that incident tomorrow morning, OK?

MA

OK, yes, yes.

IHAT 6

I need to ask you if you were aware of where the nearest British Military base was to the Naval compound in Basrah?

MA

The British, the Consulate, at first he said, later on he corrected it, he said the Military, the British Military Police wasn't far from the Navy base, it is approximately half an hour, take approximately half an hour by car to arrive there.

IHAT 6

OK.

MA

They used to occupy the residential palace, it used to...

IHAT 6

I understand.

MA

Yeah, they were there.

IHAT 6

Were you aware of any regular British Military patrols round the immediate vicinity of the dock area?

MA

No, I didn't have any knowledge.

IHAT 6

OK. What was your knowledge of how British Troops dealt with people who committed criminal offences or looted?

MA

It depends, some people, they were treating such people who refer to in a very bad way, some no they just deal with them and then release them afterwards, if they suspect someone who has committed such things, they would normally put a black plastic bag on his head and they would take him away. After they carry some investigation with him more, they would release him afterwards and we heard a lot of stories, some people were treated badly, thrown in the water etc. It depends.

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IHAT 6

And did you see any of this taking place yourself?

MA

I've seen both cases, the good treatment and the bad treatment, for instance but most of them were good treatment. I saw once people who were carrying for instance, rice in bags...

IHAT 6

Yes

MA

...and they stopped these traders and they deal with those people very badly, I saw that in my own eyes. I saw for instance, in my eyes, they use their own cutters to cut the, this small tube, in the tyres and they flatten them immediately after they cut it, the air would come out of them, the whole trailer would. As they suspect that these people are doing something wrong, they would cause these things to their trailers and they wouldn't be able to move.

IHAT 6

OK.

MA

Yeah. And we saw a lot of good things as well, they help people crossing the road for instance and if they see for instance, people dealing with even animals roughly they stop them and tell them why are you doing these things. They have both dealings if you like, good and bad.

IHAT 6

I understand. Apart from when you said British Troops deliberately punctured the tyres of Iraqi citizens' vehicles, did you witness anything else with your own eyes?

MA

No, apart from this I haven't seen anything.

IHAT 6

OK. Muneam, I know earlier on I asked you whether there was any electricity power up the Naval Base and you said there was no electricity...

MA

Yeah, there was no electricity.

IHAT 6

What about in the general Basrah area? Was there any electricity?

MA

Yes, yes there was, yeah there was. But because this is, as I said, deserted Military base...

IHAT 6

Yes.

MA

...there was no, all things, the properties left there were taken or looted by people there.

IHAT 6

On the 25th of May where this really sad incident happened with your cousin, was your other home in Basrah served by electricity?

MA

Yes, there was electricity, yeah.

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IHAT 6

OK. I need to ask you a few questions about the Naval Base, when did you first go to that Naval Base?

MA

Do you mean before the incident?

IHAT 6

Yes, before the incident.

MA

I used to go a lot there, I always go there, from time to time I go to see my uncle's family, sometimes I spend the night there, I stay there, without any problem.

IHAT 6

When did you first, when was the first time your uncle to your knowledge, your uncle go to the Naval Base?

MA

I think a few months before the incident, before the incident. Because the change of regime obviously, the Military was there...

IHAT 6

Yes

MA

...and no-one is able to go and stay there but after the toppling of the regime, obviously people moved there.

IHAT 6

Yes I understand. To your knowledge when was the first time Saeed went to that Naval Base, sorry Said?

MA

He used to go a lot there to the Naval base because as you may probably know they have their own house back in Basrah so he spent most of the time in his home but sometimes he used to go the area, he used to go and come back.

IHAT 6

Where did Abu Mohammed live?

MA

They used to have a house in Hi Apasin which is within Hi Huneer area but because of their livestock, they decided to move to the Naval base because there is farms there and it's close to the water sources and that's why they decided to move there and they don't have to pay any rent or so, obviously the rates belong to the Government.

IHAT 6

Yeah of course. And to give him an example in any one week before the incident, how many times would they stay in their own house in Basrah compared to a number of nights he would spend in the Naval base?

MA

I'm referring to Said here, Said sometimes he may stay a month in the Naval base and goes back to his home to stay for 2 or 3 days in order to see his colleagues, his friends.

IHAT 6

And what about Abu Mohammed?

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MA Almost the same, unless there is certain occasion like marriage, death, this kind of occasions he would go back.

IHAT 6 I'm just going to pop in and speak to my colleagues to see if there are any other questions...

MA Yeah.

IHAT 6 ...that need to be asked in relation to this discussion.

MA OK.

IHAT 6 That's fine. Muneam, I've just got another few questions to ask.

MA Yeah that's fine, go ahead please.

IHAT 6 In terms of your knowledge of the British Army, had you previously seen any Military patrols near the Dockside area?

MA No because they didn't have any base or headquarter there to be honest but sometimes they used to come and wash their Military vehicle there and there used to be, as I said, British Forces in the area but they don't come to the Naval base, they have their own headquarters or bases. They don't come through the Naval base or search the area there.

IHAT 6 And, this is maybe a difficult question to answer exactly but how many times previously had you seen Military vehicles being washed on that part?

MA I even ask Said about it before and he said yes there is a certain place that the Military use it for washing their vehicles because there are, a pump they can use and then, it's like a maintenance area, they just bring their vehicles there, wash them, they maintain them and go. And kind of Military speciality if you like, come to the area, personnel wore in different kind of uniforms.

IHAT 6 And was that a regular occurrence?

MA Not always, I would say every 3 or 4 days, something like this, they used to come, wash their tanks or armoured vehicles and leave and even on the day of this, that when I saw the armoured vehicle I was not surprised because it was like normal, daily normal thing, they just wash their vehicles and then leave.

IHAT 6 And what distance was it between the Naval base you were staying and the platform where the Army were washing their vehicles?

MA I would say the same distance as from here to this car park where the, this car park in front of you.

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IHAT 6

I would estimate that as...

MA

Yeah, at the same distance as where these cars are parked now.

IHAT 6

OK, I would say that's around about 200 metres away?

MA

Yeah more or less, yes.

IHAT 6

OK. I know I questioned about your teeing with the herd, with the animals, how often did you used to tend to the animals?

MA

We used to take them in the early hours of the morning, I would say the dawn and we'll finish around between 10 and 11 am and that's it, we don't go, Said and I won't go again let's say in the late afternoon, that's it, we just herd them during the morning.

IHAT 6

And how would you feed and water them?

MA

Grass, bread, this kind of, Military bread because they left it, it was, there was plenty of it there.

IHAT 6

And where did you get the water?

MA

Because the river is close, he used to take them to the river, they take from them and he'll turn them back, it wasn't that far.

IHAT 6

And were all the sheep kept in one place?

MA

Yeah it was in front of the house, as I said, there was a barbed wire all around and they would stay, keep, spend the night there.

IHAT 6

And how long would it take you to walk the sheep down to the river's edge?

MA

10 minutes to 15 minutes. We don't go far because the whole base is surrounding by fence, it has main gate and then you can go in and that's it.

IHAT 6

And were they under any shelter?

MA

When it rains, occasionally, they take them inside, you know but normally they are kept outside.

IHAT 6

Thanks very much for that further information, I'm just, we've got to come to an end very shortly but tonight I want you to think over events, the tragic events on the 25th of May. I'm going to ask you in detail your contact with the soldiers on that day, I'm going to ask you to concentrate on the one soldier who initially approached you. I'm going to ask you for, to

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describe as far as possible the other four soldiers, descriptions of Military vehicles and uniform...

MA

OK, the armoured vehicle as far as I remember wasn't, it didn't have wheels.

IHAT 6

...and I'm going to ask you any descriptions of any other people, descriptions and any names if they are known to you...

MA

I think they were from the Royal Engineers or as far as I know.

IHAT 6

OK.

MA

And they kept apologising saying 'we didn't know that this, would lead to this kind of incident, we thought that everyone from Basrah would be able to swim'.

IHAT 6

OK, we'll discuss that tomorrow and I am also going to ask your knowledge of the river and right at the very end, maybe not tomorrow, the day after, how about, how the events that occurred on the 25th of May have affected you for the rest of your life. Muneam, at this point do you have any questions?

MA

No thank you, no.

IHAT 6

Thank you very much. I'm going to terminate the interview today, the time is 2.36 pm.

END OF DISC