

Monday, 14 December 2020

(9.30 am)

MR DE LA POER: Sir, good morning. Perhaps I may begin by just explaining the shape of today. Our first two witnesses, one of whom is sitting in the witness box right now, are subject to a restriction order you have made, sir. The terms of that restriction order prohibit the identification of the person that we have ciphred as Trial Witness 2.

The gentleman who is sitting in the dock, who we will identify formally --

SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Did you say the dock?

MR DE LA POER: I did say that and I was quite wrong to have said that: in the witness box; that was a very unfortunate lapse.

SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's going well so far this week!

MR DE LA POER: Thank you, sir, yes.

The gentleman sitting in the witness box has been ciphred as Relative B. As a result of your restriction order, these two witnesses' evidence is not being broadcast on YouTube; it is however being broadcast to the court annexes.

After this hearing, a transcript will be prepared redacting any material that might tend to identify either Trial Witness 2 or Relative B, although as we are

1 now sitting in private session, we will be able to
2 identify both of those people by name as we start, and
3 perhaps Relative B , as he is, may now be sworn.

4 RELATIVE B (sworn)

5 Questions from MR DE LA POER

6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I was just concerned about the
7 formalities of the way that was done, but that's fine.
8 You're obviously bound by the oath that you have given.
9 Thank you.

10 A. Thank you.

11 MR DE LA POER: Could you please give your full name?

12 A. Relative B .

13 Q. Relative B , as you know, we are referring to you in
14 these proceedings as Relative B. Do you have a s.46 redaction
15 by the name of TW2 ?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Again so that you know, we are referring in these
18 proceedings to TW2 as Trial Witness 2.

19 A. Okay.

20 Q. In January of 2007 (sic), did you own a takeaway?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Approximately for how long in January 2017 had you owned
23 that takeaway?

24 A. Can you repeat the question, please?

25 Q. Of course I can, yes. When did you first own that

- 1 takeaway?
- 2 A. In 2014.
- 3 Q. As part of the material that you used to cook, did you
- 4 use oil?
- 5 A. Of course.
- 6 Q. What brands of oil did you use?
- 7 A. KTC, Pride, any oil I found from the supplier, like
- 8 a wholesale.
- 9 Q. You mentioned wholesale. Did you buy these in large
- 10 cans?
- 11 A. Large cans, about 20 litres.
- 12 Q. We're going to ask to have a couple of photographs
- 13 brought up on screen. They're going to appear on the
- 14 screen in front of you or the screen up there.
- 15 Mr Lopez, {CPS000190/3}, please.
- 16 A. Yes.
- 17 Q. Is that an image of a can of the brand you used to buy?
- 18 A. Yes.
- 19 Q. And the volume?
- 20 A. Yes.
- 21 Q. We can see this particular can has been opened, the lid
- 22 has been cut partially.
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 Q. When you were removing oil from it, did you need to cut
- 25 the can like that or was there another way to get the

1 oil out?

2 A. No, we don't need to cut it like that. We used to use
3 this one in here (indicating), the plastic things --

4 Q. You're pointing at the plastic --

5 A. Yes. We used to open it from here (indicating). That's
6 it. Sometimes we need to open it like that if we need
7 to take the old oil out of the fryer.

8 Q. I understand. So there would be sometimes when you'd
9 have to open this like that?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Next, please, page 20 of the same document
12 {CPS000190/20}. You mentioned another brand, KTC.

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. It's on its side there. But is that an image of the
15 brand and volume that you used to buy?

16 A. Yes, 20 litres.

17 Q. Thank you very much indeed.

18 Did you employ your relative, Trial Witness 2, at
19 your takeaway?

20 A. Yes. He used to come and help me.

21 Q. Approximately when did he come and help you from?

22 A. I have no idea at all because even before I opened the
23 shop, we used to build it up, he used to come and help
24 me with the shop. He's s.46 redaction : any time I want him
25 to help me with something, I used to call him to help

1 me.

2 Q. So he'd certainly worked there for some time by the time
3 we get to 2017?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Did you employ Hashem Abedi at your takeaway?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And again, how soon before January 2017 or how long had
8 he worked for you in January 2017?

9 A. About 1.5 years before 2017.

10 Q. So some time in --

11 A. 2016. 2015/2016.

12 Q. How regularly would he work for you?

13 A. Whenever we need him.

14 Q. So could that be as many times as seven times a week or
15 would it be less than that?

16 A. Less than that because I had a Mini driver at the time.

17 Q. Was there a period when, as far as you understood it, he
18 went abroad?

19 A. Yes, he went to Germany.

20 Q. For approximately how long do you recall him being in
21 Germany for?

22 A. Over the Christmas time, about 2 months.

23 Q. Did he return to working for you when he got back from
24 Germany?

25 A. Yes, he asked me, yes.

1 Q. What sort of worker was Hashem Abedi for you?

2 A. A delivery driver.

3 Q. Did you find him to be a good worker?

4 A. I think he came just to do the job.

5 Q. What did you understand Hashem Abedi's religious views

6 were?

7 A. He is religious, but I think he got the wrong idea of

8 Islam.

9 Q. Would you describe him as a Muslim?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. When you say he had the wrong idea about Islam, what do

12 you mean?

13 A. As a Muslim, we have to be honest, we don't have to

14 cheat at each other or others. We don't have to, like,

15 do bad things, smoking weed, for example. That's about

16 our religion, but Hashem, he used to do all that.

17 Q. So you understood he used to smoke weed?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. You mentioned honesty. Did you think he wasn't honest?

20 A. No, he wasn't.

21 Q. Why do you say that?

22 A. One time we were in the shop and he said to me, "If this

23 one is a cash order, I want to take it". I asked him,

24 "Why do you want to take it", and he said to me, "I will

25 tell the customer I don't have enough change, so they

1 would say to me, 'Keep the change'", the rest of the
2 money order. For example of an order of £16, he would
3 say to the customer he doesn't have enough change, so
4 the customer will give him that £4 tip.

5 Q. Did he ever talk to you about his view of Islam? Was
6 that something that you talked about?

7 A. No, I wasn't -- when I'm inside the shop, I was very
8 busy preparing things, doing things. I don't like to
9 talk about a private life of the staff at all or what
10 you do after work. It's between 5 to 12 or 5 to 1
11 in the morning, you know, and that's it. I used to go
12 to my family. I don't want to, like, interfere on any
13 other things.

14 Q. At any point when he worked for you, did Hashem Abedi
15 ask to take anything away from your shop?

16 A. Yes, he asked me to take metal tins and anything
17 including metals.

18 Q. What did you say to him?

19 A. Yes, you can take it.

20 Q. Did he give a reason why he wanted to take tins?

21 A. He said he wanted to put it all together and trade it
22 for cash or weigh it for scrap metal.

23 Q. Once you had given him permission to take metal away,
24 did you see what he took away or was it just for him to
25 go and help himself?

1 A. No, just to go, you know. He used to -- when we opened
2 the metal things, he used to go and keep it on the side,
3 inside the shop, and end of the night he used to take
4 it.

5 Q. Are you able to estimate how many items he took away?

6 A. No. No idea. Like every day used -- so maybe sometimes
7 we used two or three tins a day, and sometimes we used
8 maybe one a day. The oil tins we used maybe one a week.

9 Q. The conversation that you had with him about him asking
10 to take things away, do you remember whether that was
11 before or after he went to Germany?

12 A. No idea. I can't say it, I can't. I think after. I'm
13 not sure, to be honest with you.

14 Q. If I was to ask you to put your best estimate of a date,
15 would it be a guess or do you think you could give us an
16 approximate date when that conversation took place?

17 A. (Pause). I think it's after. Yes. I think it's after.

18 Q. When did Hashem Abedi stop working for you?

19 A. About 6 months before the attack.

20 Q. About 6 months before the attack?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And the conversation that you had with him about the
23 metal, how long did he work for you after that
24 conversation?

25 A. I can't remember.

1 Q. Do you think it would have been weeks or months?

2 A. Months. I can't remember.

3 MR DE LA POER: All right. Thank you very much indeed.

4 Sir, I don't have any more questions for this
5 witness. I understand that Mr Welch is leading for the
6 family teams on this.

7 Questions from MR WELCH

8 MR WELCH: Thank you, sir. Just a few questions, please.

9 Relative B , did you know Hashem Abedi's father,
10 Ramadan?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Did you know of him?

13 A. None of his family at all.

14 Q. So you didn't know his brother, Salman?

15 A. Any of his family, no.

16 Q. During the course of the year, year and a half, he
17 worked for you, did he ever mention any of his family,
18 his brother or his father?

19 A. No.

20 Q. When he came back from Germany did you notice in change
21 in Hashem's behaviour?

22 A. No. Same things.

23 Q. Just so we can be clear, how often was he working for
24 you in this period?

25 A. Well, I had a Mini driver at the time and whenever

1 I needed him over the weekend, for example, maybe I need
2 two drivers on the weekend because the weekend is busy
3 on takeaway. So I used to call him if s.46 redaction don't
4 want to cover on that day or anybody let me down.

5 I used to call him in an emergency. If we get very busy
6 I used to call him and maybe he can help for like a
7 couple of hours.

8 Q. We all understand the concept of casual work, but how
9 many hours a week roughly do you think he was working
10 for you on average, if you can assist?

11 A. About 24, 24 to 32.

12 Q. 24 to 32 hours a week?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. And over the course of his employment, with that number
15 of hours -- you said in your witness statement that he
16 was religious?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Those are the words that are there.

19 A. Yes, he used to pray.

20 Q. He didn't dress in a particularly traditional religious
21 way, did he?

22 A. No.

23 Q. He'd wear things like tracksuits, hoodies, western
24 clothing?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. So you'd see him pray?

2 A. Yes, I used to see him pray.

3 Q. Was there any discussion between you and Hashem over the
4 course of his employment about religion?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Not once?

7 A. No.

8 Q. He never mentioned anything about religion?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Or his religious beliefs?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Did he ever mention his trips with his family to Libya?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Nothing?

15 A. I don't ask -- when I am inside the shop I don't ask any
16 question of people, whatever they want to do in their
17 lives. I used to go to my shop, to do my business and
18 that's it. So whatever they want to do after work or
19 after they finish, if they want to go a nightclub, it's
20 nothing to do with me. If they want to go to the
21 mosque, that's nothing to do with me. I used to close
22 the shop and go back to my house and my children and
23 that's it. I don't care about that, what they want to
24 do.

25 Q. Please don't misunderstand, I'm not being in any way

1 critical at all, not at all.

2 A. Okay.

3 Q. It is in the spirit of inquisitiveness to find out what
4 was happening with Hashem Abedi at the time.

5 A. Okay.

6 Q. Did you discuss with him, with s.46 redaction , anything
7 in relation to Hashem? Did you have any conversations
8 with s.46 redaction concerning him?

9 A. Regarding?

10 Q. Regarding Hashem. Was there any discussion between you
11 and s.46 redaction about Hashem?

12 A. No. No.

13 Q. After the attack on 22 May, did you discuss anything
14 in relation to Hashem or his brother with s.46 redaction ?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Nothing?

17 A. Nothing at all.

18 Q. There's an attack in Manchester in which 22 people are
19 killed.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And you don't discuss it at all with s.46 redaction
22 in relation to Hashem Abedi?

23 A. No. We said it's crazy, that's crazy things.

24 Q. I understand, but in relation to the individuals
25 involved, was there any discussion about the fact that

1 you had employed the bomber's brother?

2 A. No.

3 MR WELCH: I think I have taken that as far as I can.

4 Thank you, sir.

5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.

6 MR DE LA POER: I think Mr Cooper has a couple of questions.

7 Questions from MR COOPER

8 MR COOPER: Whilst Hashem Abedi was working at your

9 premises, did you ever see any friends or associates of
10 his visit him or speak to him?

11 A. No. I wasn't allowed that at all because he is busy,
12 you know, we are all busy, so I wasn't allowed that.

13 Q. Did anyone attempt to or can you remember?

14 A. No.

15 Q. All right.

16 When Hashem Abedi was taking metal -- sorry.

17 A. Just one question. About the attempting, if they are
18 attempting outside, because the shop was quite big and
19 I used to cook by myself, so I cannot see what's going
20 on outside the shop. If they are seeing each other
21 outside the shop for like 5 minutes and disappear,
22 I won't see anything like that.

23 Q. Just so you understand, sir, I'm only asking you what
24 you saw, so don't worry about that.

25 A. Okay, that's fine.

1 Q. The second of my three questions: when Hashem Abedi took
2 metal away from your shop, how much metal did he take;
3 can you just clarify that?

4 A. No idea, because sometimes we go -- like on the weekend,
5 we go like maybe three tins of ^{s.46}redaction sauce a day on the
6 weekend. But on normal days, we go maybe through one,
7 one and a half, so we open two and how many did he take
8 of that period of time, I have no idea. He used to take
9 some from the other restaurant next door as well as
10 metal tins because they use the same brand, KTC oil.

11 Q. Let me understand that. So the same brand of tins of
12 metal that he took from your shop he would take from
13 other shops as far as you're aware?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. How do you know that?

16 A. Because the back door, the two back doors, my takeaway
17 and the restaurant next door, is very close to each
18 other and we have the bin, the commercial wastebin. We
19 used to put the oil tin outside the bin. So end of the
20 night, he used to collect them together and put them in
21 his car.

22 Q. So you don't know whether he asked permission of this
23 restaurant next to you?

24 A. No idea.

25 Q. He simply was, for want of a better expression,

- 1 scavenging around the bins for metal? Is that as you
2 understand it?
- 3 A. Yes, you can say that, yes.
- 4 Q. Did you see him doing that?
- 5 A. Yes, I did.
- 6 Q. When he was doing it, was he putting all this metal into
7 a bag or a bin liner or carrying it under his arm?
- 8 A. No, just the back of the car. The back of his car, yes.
- 9 Q. I'll ask you one last time if you can try and remember
10 quantity. I know it's difficult and I'm not asking you
11 to be exact, but given that you saw him putting this
12 metal into his car, no one's suggesting any criticism of
13 you, but given the fact that you saw him take the metal
14 from the bins to his car, was he filling the boot with
15 his metal?
- 16 A. No. If you're talking like a day, we're talking about
17 approximately five to six tins.
- 18 Q. I thank you.
- 19 A. Okay? If you're talking every day, every day.
- 20 Q. Every day?
- 21 A. Every day, yes, five to six.
- 22 Q. And every day over what period?
- 23 A. That's approximately.
- 24 Q. All right. Every day over what period of time is he
25 taking five to six tins? How long was he working with

1 you for, approximately?

2 A. Oh... About 1.5 years.

3 Q. You're not suggesting, or are you --

4 A. To be honest with you, I can't remember. The memory is

5 like --

6 Q. I understand. Let me help you. You're not suggesting,

7 or are you, that he was taking these tins every day

8 during the 1.5 years he was working with you for?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Over what period of time every day was he taking these

11 tins, approximately?

12 A. What period of time?

13 Q. Yes. For a week or 2 weeks?

14 A. Since I give him the permission.

15 Q. All right.

16 A. And he carried on doing it.

17 Q. We're getting there. So after you gave him permission,

18 was he doing this for week or months or days?

19 A. No idea. Until he left.

20 Q. Try and give us some idea if you can. It's difficult

21 because -- after you gave him permission, how long did

22 he work with you for then, approximately?

23 A. I can't say.

24 Q. Was it weeks or months?

25 A. I can't say. I don't remember because when he asked me

1 to take them, the metal things from the shop, like the
2 time I was working inside, so I cannot remember the date
3 when I come -- just take it because when he take it, he
4 will... As a commercial business we have to pay for the
5 waste, so he will save me the space on my bin.

6 Q. I am not criticising.

7 Sir, I think I have taken this as far as I can.

8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand, Mr Cooper.

9 MR COOPER: Last question. After Hashem Abedi left your
10 work, did you ever see him or speak to him again?

11 A. Maybe I saw him behind my house once with somebody and
12 said hello to him while I'm driving.

13 Q. And you wouldn't have known who he was with, I presume?

14 A. No idea.

15 MR COOPER: Thank you, sir.

16 Further questions from MR DE LA POER

17 MR DE LA POER: Just arising out of the question you have
18 just had about whether you spoke to Hashem Abedi again
19 after he stopped working for you, you used to have
20 contact with Hashem Abedi over the telephone; is that
21 right?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Did you ever speak to him on the telephone after he
24 stopped working for you?

25 A. Maybe I phoned him up to do like a shift for me or

1 something like that, but not much.

2 Q. Not much?

3 A. Not much, no.

4 MR DE LA POER: Do you have any questions, sir?

5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No. Thank you very much for coming,
6 you're free to go.

7 A. Thank you so much.

8 (The witness withdrew)

9 MR DE LA POER: Sir, as this witness is just resolving
10 matters in the witness box, the next witness is slated
11 for later in the afternoon, but I understand he's in the
12 building, so with a short break we should be able to
13 proceed directly.

14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So you'd like me to rise?

15 MR DE LA POER: Yes, sir.

16 (9.56 am)

17 (A short break)

18 (10.36 am)

19 MR DE LA POER: Sir, our second live witness today is with
20 us in the witness box. As with our previous witness,
21 his evidence is subject to a restriction order that you
22 made, meaning his evidence will not be broadcast on to
23 YouTube and a redacted transcript will be made available
24 in due course. Those remarks made, can I ask, please,
25 for the witness to be sworn.

1 TRIAL WITNESS 2 (sworn)

2 Questions from MR DE LA POER

3 MR DE LA POER: Can you begin, please, by you giving us your
4 full name?

5 A. Trial Witness 2 .

6 Q. As has been explained to you, we are referring to you in
7 our process as Trial Witness 2 by reason of an order
8 that the chairman has made and we are referring to your
9 relative with whom you worked as Relative B.

10 A. Okay.

11 Q. In 2017, did you work in Relative B's takeaway?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. For how long had you worked there in 2017?

14 A. I can't remember.

15 Q. Had it been for several years?

16 A. On and off, yes.

17 Q. Whilst you were working there, did you meet someone
18 called Hashem Abedi?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Was that the first time that you had met Hashem Abedi?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Did you come to be friendly with him?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. As a result of that, did you hold conversations with him
25 whilst you were at work?

1 A. It was really busy at work, so not a lot.

2 Q. But did you speak to him out of work, when you were
3 outside work?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. When you met up outside of work, what did you tend to do
6 with him?

7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right. I understand that some of the
8 answers you gave at the criminal trial may suggest that
9 your answer to that question may incriminate you in
10 criminal offences. Everyone has the right against
11 self-incrimination. Do you understand?

12 A. Yes.

13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So if a question is asked of you, the
14 answer to which may involve you in a criminal offence,
15 then you're entitled not to answer. Do you understand?
16 I have no doubt you were given a similar warning in the
17 criminal trial. These things get forgotten about rather
18 too often, unfortunately. Anyway, you do have that
19 right, but it may be that as you've already made these
20 things public in the criminal trial, it may not make
21 much difference now.

22 A. It's already there anyway.

23 MR DE LA POER: I'll ask my question again and I'm sure
24 you will have the chairman's comments in mind.

25 How did you and Hashem Abedi spend your time outside

1 work?

2 A. We used to smoke, smoke weed.

3 Q. So did that involve you meeting up in each other's homes
4 or did you meet up in public areas?

5 A. Public areas.

6 Q. Did you become friends, would you say, with
7 Hashem Abedi?

8 A. Not friends. It was like a really short time, so it was
9 more like a colleague.

10 Q. A colleague?

11 A. Yes. Friendly, but not a friend.

12 Q. When you met up, would it just be the two of you or
13 would anybody else be there?

14 A. Just the two of us.

15 Q. Are you able to estimate for us how frequently it was
16 that you met up together?

17 A. No, but it wasn't more than, like, once or twice a week
18 maybe, after work or something.

19 Q. And over a period of how many weeks?

20 A. About 2 months.

21 Q. What did you talk about when you met up?

22 A. Just general, you know, guy stuff. Just general stuff,
23 like I can't remember, I can't point out exactly what we
24 used to talk about, but we used to talk about cars, you
25 know, girls, just general -- football.

- 1 Q. Did you ever discuss politics with him?
- 2 A. No.
- 3 Q. Did you ever discuss religion with him?
- 4 A. No.
- 5 Q. At any point did you form a view about whether
- 6 Hashem Abedi was a religious person?
- 7 A. Sorry?
- 8 Q. At any point did you form a view about whether
- 9 Hashem Abedi was a religious person?
- 10 A. Like did I think that?
- 11 Q. Did you think he was religious?
- 12 A. No.
- 13 Q. Did you ever discuss Libya with him?
- 14 A. No. Well, actually, when he asked me to buy him the
- 15 acid, he was telling me about the electricity problem
- 16 that they have in Libya and that's the only time we've
- 17 mentioned it.
- 18 Q. Let's just see if we can identify it. You said that you
- 19 had a period of a couple of months when you were meeting
- 20 up with him?
- 21 A. Yes.
- 22 Q. Can you estimate for us, please, when that was?
- 23 A. When it happened?
- 24 Q. Which months it was.
- 25 A. It was like January/February/March.

1 Q. Of 2017?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. About what point into this period,
4 January/February/March, did he mention Libya?

5 A. I can't remember.

6 Q. Was it at the start of you going --

7 A. No.

8 Q. Was it towards the end of the period?

9 A. No, I'd say towards the end.

10 Q. As best you can recall, what exactly did he say to you?

11 A. He said that they've got a generator in Libya and it has
12 a large battery inside it and then that's been tipped or
13 something and it ran out of acid and if I can help him
14 buy some acid so he can send it to Libya and get that
15 problem solved.

16 Q. Did he give any indication to you about why he was
17 asking you specifically to do this?

18 A. He said his bank card doesn't work, he doesn't have
19 a bank card, so if I can help him do it.

20 Q. Was the idea that you would pay for it and he would pay
21 you back or just that you would buy it for him as
22 a favour?

23 A. Most likely he was going to pay me, but we didn't
24 discuss it like that. It was just like a quick
25 10-second thing.

1 Q. So he mentioned this. Did he mention the type of acid
2 that was required?

3 A. No.

4 Q. In that first conversation, did he say anything more
5 that you can recall about the acid?

6 A. No.

7 Q. What, if anything, did you do as a result of the
8 conversation you had with him?

9 A. I searched it online, if I can -- if you can buy it and
10 then I found out that you can get it in small amounts,
11 so when I got back to him I was like, you know --
12 because said he wants larger -- it's a big battery so he
13 needs a larger amount. I was like, I can't do it, and
14 he was like, all right, and just never brought it up
15 again.

16 Q. Let's just go over that nice and slowly to make sure we
17 don't miss anything.

18 A. That's fine.

19 Q. So you conducted some research on the internet?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And as a result of your research, you identified that
22 you could buy it in certain quantities?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Had he said exactly in litres how much he wanted before
25 you did that research?

1 A. No, he didn't say it, to be honest. He just said
2 a large amount. In the statement I do say something,
3 but I was just trying to estimate with the police, of
4 like 30, 40 litres, but this is just me assuming, but he
5 didn't actually say anything.

6 Q. He didn't put a number on it?

7 A. No.

8 Q. So you understood that he wanted a large amount?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. You conducted the research and you discovered that it
11 was possible to buy it in certain volumes on the
12 internet?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. When you identified that, did you immediately know that
15 that wouldn't be enough or did you have to speak to him
16 about it to discover that that was not what he had in
17 mind?

18 A. No, I knew straightaway.

19 Q. So at the point of time that you did your researches,
20 you already had an idea about what he meant by a large
21 amount?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. After you conducted the researches, did you make any
24 attempt to purchase acid?

25 A. No.

1 Q. When it next came up, was it Hashem bringing it up or
2 was it you bringing it up first in the conversation?

3 A. I can't remember.

4 Q. But in any event, there was a second conversation?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. In the course of which you told him, did you, about what
7 you'd found on the internet?

8 A. I told him I can't get it, yes.

9 Q. And did he just accept that from you or was there any
10 further conversation?

11 A. No, he just accepted it, like, "Okay, don't worry about
12 it, I'll sort it out".

13 Q. When he'd given you the explanation and you had
14 discussed it, as you've told us, on those two occasions,
15 did you have any sense from him about what the true
16 purpose of that acid was?

17 A. No.

18 Q. In other words, to be used in an explosive?

19 A. No, not even the slightest.

20 Q. At any point did you doubt the account that he was
21 giving to you about why he wanted it?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Other than those two occasions that you've told us
24 about, was there any other time that you discussed
25 acquiring acid for Hashem Abedi?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Did you ever meet Hashem's brother Salman Abedi?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Did Hashem ever speak about his brother?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. What did Hashem say about his brother?

7 A. He used to -- I can't remember exactly what he said

8 about him, but he used to give the indication that

9 he was very controlling, he makes him go to the mosque

10 a lot, he makes him -- doesn't let him chill around with

11 people that smoke, people that party. So it was just

12 like -- he was just talking about how controlling he is

13 of him.

14 Q. That's Hashem saying that his brother Salman was

15 controlling?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Of him?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Because Salman didn't want him to smoke weed?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And Salman wanted him to go to the mosque?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Did Hashem ever speak about any of his other family

24 members?

25 A. No.

- 1 Q. When he spoke about Salman, was that just one
2 conversation or did it come up more often than once?
- 3 A. I think sometimes -- because he used to call him a lot,
4 so he'll -- when he calls him, the conversation might
5 come up, but it was like a quick comment on him, "Oh,
6 he's doing it again", and then it'll just be it.
- 7 Q. When was the last time, approximately, that you saw
8 Hashem Abedi?
- 9 A. I think it was in March. Before he left -- because he
10 flew out of England and that was it.
- 11 Q. We know he travelled to Libya in April. Were you
12 continuing to see him up until just before his departure
13 or was it some time before that that you stopped seeing
14 him?
- 15 A. No, I stopped seeing him a bit before that.
- 16 Q. Your relative has given evidence about the fact that
17 there came a point when he stopped working for the
18 takeaway.
- 19 A. Yes, I think that's when it died down.
- 20 Q. Did you continue to see Hashem Abedi after he stopped
21 working for the takeaway?
- 22 A. No, no.
- 23 MR DE LA POER: Thank you very much indeed. Those are my
24 questions.
- 25 There are some further questions. Mr Atkinson, who

1 represents one of the bereaved family groups, just to
2 your left, has some questions.

3 Questions from MR ATKINSON

4 MR ATKINSON: Do we understand that until Hashem started
5 working at your relative's takeaway, you had not met
6 him?

7 A. No.

8 Q. And you got to know him through working with him and
9 then spending time after work with him?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Would it be just the two of you or would there be
12 a group of people from the takeaway who would hang out
13 together?

14 A. No, just the two of us. The other guys were older guys.

15 Q. Did you ever know someone called Mohammed Soliman?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Through the takeaway who worked there?

18 A. Oh, actually, I don't know his surname, but I think
19 there was a Mohammed.

20 Q. Is that someone who Hashem knew?

21 A. I don't know.

22 Q. All right.

23 A. I think that other guy was new to England or something.

24 Q. I'm having some trouble hearing you.

25 A. I think that guy was new to England.

1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can we stop for a moment because I'm
2 having the same trouble you're having and I suspect
3 quite a lot of people are.

4 I know it's difficult because you're turning round
5 and having a chat with Mr Atkinson, which is normally
6 fine, but we're not picking you up on the mics. Keep
7 your voice up a bit if you can. Thank you.

8 MR ATKINSON: So look across the room rather than at me,
9 which many people would say is an advantage.

10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's counter-intuitive. Okay.

11 MR ATKINSON: In terms of when you were spending time with
12 Hashem, we know that there was a period of time when he
13 went to Germany to work. Did you first get to know him
14 before he had gone to Germany when he was working at the
15 takeaway?

16 A. Yes. I think so, yes.

17 Q. But did you spend more time with him after he'd come
18 back from Germany and was working at the takeaway again?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Was it about the same?

21 A. Yes, just nothing changed.

22 Q. Then after he had come back from Germany and worked
23 at the takeaway for a period of time, at the beginning
24 of 2017, he stopped working there and you stopped seeing
25 him?

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. I think you said you were spending less time with him
3 before he stopped at the takeaway; is that right?
- 4 A. Yes, I started going... I think after he found out that
5 I'm not going to help him, he just started going --
6 seeing me less.
- 7 Q. We'll come on to the request he made of you in just
8 a minute, but just so we can get what you knew about him
9 first and then we'll look at when things were happening
10 in a moment. All right?
- 11 A. Okay.
- 12 Q. So you learned from him that he had a brother?
- 13 A. Yes.
- 14 Q. Salman?
- 15 A. Yes.
- 16 Q. Did you learn from him that his brother was a more
17 devout Muslim than he was?
- 18 A. Yes.
- 19 Q. And that that was a problem between them?
- 20 A. Yes.
- 21 Q. Because in terms of Hashem, he would dress in western
22 clothes rather than a kameez, for example?
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 Q. He would smoke weed with you?
- 25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And did you understand from talking to him that he would
2 smoke weed with other people?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. That he would go out partying?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. That he and his friends would go and spend time with
7 girls?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Did he drink alcohol?

10 A. I didn't see him do that, but --

11 Q. Did he say that he did?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Did you understand from him that his brother Salman
14 disapproved of each of those things?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. The smoking, the drinking, the partying?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And gave him a hard time about it?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Did you get the sense that he was anxious about his
21 brother finding out, for example, that he had been
22 smoking weed with you?

23 A. A bit, yeah. Yeah, I'd say.

24 Q. In terms of timing, to see if this helps -- and you will
25 tell me, I'm sure, if it doesn't -- we have a record

1 that was prepared for the trial of phone contact between
2 people. I'd ask if that could be put up.

3 {CPS000157/1}.

4 This is not the easiest document to read, not least
5 because it's quite small. If we could have the upper
6 half of the page, Mr Lopez, and it's really more the
7 left than the right that I'm interested in, if that
8 helps.

9 In this document you are identified as
10 Trial Witness 2; all right?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. So do you see that in the left-hand column, there are
13 numbers sequentially down the page, starting at 1 at the
14 top and going down?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Do you see row 8?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. If you go along that row, this is the end of December,
19 New Year's Eve, going from 2016 into 2017. There are
20 two entries there relating to you, one at 22.26.02 and
21 one at 22.26.44.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. They're both from your phone, first to Hashem and then
24 the next line down, to Salman Abedi. Were you in phone
25 contact with Salman Abedi?

- 1 A. No.
- 2 Q. Can you help us as to how it came about that you were
3 phoning his phone?
- 4 A. Hashem used to use a lot of numbers and he'd sometimes
5 call me with Salman's number. But he'll be like, you
6 know, make sure you don't call it back when I -- when
7 I tell you, don't call it back, you stop calling it
8 back. And sometimes he'll call me private numbers.
- 9 Q. So just so we understand that, we can see on this
10 occasion that you had first off called Hashem on
11 a number for Hashem. Do you see if you move along that
12 row, just beyond where his name is on that blue shaded
13 box, it says "call forward". So that looks like you
14 tried to phone him and it went to voicemail.
- 15 A. Yes.
- 16 Q. And then you called a second number, which is a number
17 that is identified here for Salman, but was that, do we
18 understand, a number that Hashem had given you that you
19 could call him on?
- 20 A. Yes.
- 21 Q. And that he had a number of numbers over the time you
22 knew him?
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 Q. Did they keep changing?
- 25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Then we see, as we go down the page, that that
2 Salman Abedi number is then calling you on 1 and
3 2 January with a bit of calling back and texting back
4 between the two. Is that Hashem speaking to you rather
5 than Salman?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. What this document shows, if we just move up the page,
8 is quite a lot of contact between you and Hashem at the
9 beginning of January 2017. Does that fit with your
10 memory, he'd come back from Germany, back at the
11 takeaway, and you and he are spending time together?

12 A. I can't remember, but we used to call -- I used to call
13 him a lot, especially if it was work time, because we
14 used to do delivery, and he'll enquire about things,
15 I can't find this address, stuff like that. So some of
16 these calls are work related and then the others must
17 have been, you know, I don't know, whatever.

18 Q. Chatting about stuff?

19 A. Yes. Could be anything, to be honest. I can't
20 remember.

21 Q. So if we move on to {CPS000157/2} of that document,
22 please. Again we can see a fair degree of contact
23 between you and him, as we move towards the middle of
24 January.

25 If we go on to {CPS000157/5}, please. Rather less.

1 There's one call towards the top of that page.

2 {CPS000157/9}, please. I'm working on the page
3 numbers of the document -- I'll try and add one. We can
4 keep going down the page, please. We can see we're now
5 towards the bottom of that page, row 463, 464. We are
6 on 23 January, so later in January, further contact
7 between you and him.

8 What we can see, if we go through the document,
9 perhaps you will take it from me, is that there's quite
10 a lot of contact between the two of you in January, less
11 in February, and very little at all in March. Does that
12 accord with your recollection of how things were, that
13 you were spending more time with him in January and then
14 it started to get less after that?

15 A. Yes.

16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Atkinson, before you go on, you will
17 be well aware, but not everyone, just looking at the
18 number of calls will not appreciate that some of --
19 quite a lot of the calls appear not to get through
20 because they're timed at 0 seconds. So just so everyone
21 appreciates that it doesn't mean there's as much contact
22 as it might appear from simply looking at the phone
23 records.

24 MR ATKINSON: Perhaps to illustrate that with this example,
25 you see that the first entry relating to you there,

1 which is row 463, is a call from Hashem Abedi's phone to
2 you that has no duration. So it doesn't get through and
3 is then followed up by a series of text messages and
4 then a call back from you, row 468, that goes to his
5 voicemail. So you haven't actually managed to speak to
6 each other in that period of time, but there had been
7 that contact.

8 The broader point, do you agree, is more contact in
9 January, less in February, very little at all in March?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Which is what the phone record shows us. Thank you,
12 Mr Lopez, we can take that down.

13 So does that help you as to when it was that he
14 asked for your help? Was it more in the period when you
15 were in regular contact and before things started to
16 reduce that he asked you to help him?

17 A. I can't remember exactly.

18 Q. That would put it, sort of, late January/early February;
19 does that sound possible?

20 A. I can't remember.

21 Q. In terms of what he was asking you for, were you aware
22 that he was taking empty oil tins from your relative's
23 takeaway?

24 A. No.

25 Q. Did you ever see him do that?

- 1 A. No.
- 2 Q. And did your relative ever mention to you that Hashem
3 was doing that?
- 4 A. No.
- 5 Q. Would that have struck you as odd that he was taking oil
6 cans away?
- 7 A. Sorry?
- 8 Q. Would it have struck you as odd that he was taking oil
9 cans away if you had been told about that?
- 10 A. Yes, probably. I don't know.
- 11 Q. Because it would be an odd thing to do?
- 12 A. Yes, I'd definitely ask why.
- 13 Q. Yes. At the takeaway, was there a blue barrel that was
14 used for the waste oil to be put into?
- 15 A. Yes.
- 16 Q. What kind of size barrel are we talking about? Are we
17 talking waist height or smaller than that?
- 18 A. It was pretty big (indicating). Like I'd say...
- 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Chest height?
- 20 A. Yes.
- 21 MR ATKINSON: Was it plastic?
- 22 A. Yes.
- 23 Q. Blue?
- 24 A. Yes.
- 25 Q. Did it have a red lid?

1 A. I can't remember -- no, I think it was black, but
2 I don't know, I can't remember, sorry.

3 Q. Do you remember Hashem ever expressing any interest
4 in that?

5 A. No.

6 Q. But what he did express an interest in was getting hold
7 of some acid?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Before that conversation about him needing the acid, had
10 he talked to you much about Libya at all?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Or his family there?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Or how they lived there?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Or him spending time there?

17 A. No.

18 Q. So this did rather come out of the blue?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Him saying that he needed a lot of acid?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And given that he was asking you to help him, he must
23 have given you some idea as to what that meant as to how
24 much he was talking?

25 A. No, he just said it's a big battery, so enough for that,

1 but he never said -- I think he was waiting for me to
2 find out if I can get it or not. But we never discussed
3 the quantity.

4 Q. Other than it was a lot he needed?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Because you knew that what you'd seen online was not
7 going to be enough?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And at the trial you said you were seeing
10 litre/half-litre type size --

11 A. Yes, yes, it was smaller bottles.

12 Q. And so you knew he needed multiple litres?

13 A. Of course, yes.

14 Q. Did you ask him why he couldn't get it in Libya?

15 A. He said because of the war, there's no shops that --
16 a lot of this stuff is missing in Libya, like petrol and
17 chemicals and stuff.

18 Q. Did he say how he was going to get it there?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Was it that detailed a conversation or was it just
21 a "Can you get me some acid"?

22 A. Yes, so he explained what happened with the battery and
23 he's like, "Can you help me buy it because my bank card
24 doesn't work?"

25 Q. And was there any conversation between you and him as to

1 how he was going to pay you for this before you started
2 making your enquiries?

3 A. No.

4 Q. But clearly, you weren't going to do it as a favour, you
5 were expecting to be paid for anything --

6 A. Yes, exactly.

7 Q. But that wasn't talked about?

8 A. No, I just assumed.

9 Q. You said no, having done your research, and he saw less
10 of you after that?

11 A. I think so, yes.

12 Q. And at any point in that, did you think this is
13 something I need to draw to the attention of someone
14 else?

15 A. Never.

16 Q. Your relative?

17 A. Never.

18 Q. Or the police?

19 A. He was never in my head. He's not a guy that I think
20 of, so it never crossed my head, no.

21 Q. Did you know how you would go about telling the police
22 if you'd wanted to?

23 A. I just never thought of that, yeah.

24 MR ATKINSON: Thank you very much.

25 MR DE LA POER: There are some questions from Mr Cooper.

1 Questions from MR COOPER

- 2 MR COOPER: Do you know anyone called Ahmed Taghdi?
- 3 A. No.
- 4 Q. Are you sure?
- 5 A. Yes.
- 6 Q. Never heard of him?
- 7 A. I'm really bad with names. I might have, but I don't
- 8 know.
- 9 Q. Did Hashem Abedi speak about him at all?
- 10 A. No.
- 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You couldn't repeat the name for my
- 12 benefit, could you?
- 13 MR COOPER: Yes. This is a witness we'll hear from,
- 14 Ahmed Taghdi.
- 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
- 16 MR COOPER: I would like to take you back, if I can, to some
- 17 of the questions that you answered at the trial. So
- 18 there's no trick about it, I'm getting my questions from
- 19 that. For those that want to follow that, it's
- 20 {INQ031167/64} of the transcript.
- 21 You were asked questions by Mr Kamlish, were you
- 22 not, on 11 February 2020 on behalf of Hashem Abedi?
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 Q. Did you give honest answers to Mr Kamlish when he was
- 25 asking you questions --

1 A. Yes, I tried.

2 Q. -- on behalf of his client Hashem Abedi?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. So let's just try and draw some of that together if
5 we can.

6 Did you agree that the first time that you met
7 Hashem Abedi was in July 2016? We can go to the
8 transcript if we need to. You say no?

9 A. No, I don't think so.

10 Q. All right. Let's do that then. If we can go, please,
11 to -- I have page 66 of the transcript. It'll be about
12 page 18, I think.

13 For context let's go to the bottom of page 17,
14 page 64, last line. So the question right at the bottom
15 of page 64 is:

16 "Question: Right, but you liked him when you first
17 met him?"

18 And then we go down to the next page:

19 "Answer: (Witness nods).

20 "Question: And that would have been
21 around July 2016?

22 "Answer: Yes.

23 "Question: When you started working at ^{s.46}
redaction

24 ^{s.46 redaction} --

25 "Answer: Yes.

1 "Question: -- s.46 redaction shop?"

2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, we haven't actually got -- I don't

3 think we were watching at the time, were we? Unless

4 I have got lost. (Reads sotto voce).

5 MR COOPER: Do you see that?

6 I'm sorry, sir, am I confusing matters?

7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's my fault, I'm really sorry. I just

8 wasn't following and I should have been.

9 MR COOPER: I have to say the way these pages are laid out

10 is difficult sometimes to navigate.

11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I was wondering at the shorthand writer

12 putting "witness nods", that was all.

13 MR COOPER: We will have a look at that. You have told us

14 you were telling the truth and we're going to come to

15 a number of matters. Were you not telling the truth

16 there?

17 A. No, not reading this. I said I'd met him the first day

18 he started working and just before, when I was talking

19 to the gentleman here, they said that was the beginning

20 of January. So I was like, I'm really bad with dates,

21 but if that's when he started, that's when I met him.

22 But now it's saying that it was July 2016, then that is

23 when I met him.

24 Q. It may well be, sir, it's simply a matter of memory and

25 time going on and things get confusing.

1 I asked you at the start of my questions, so
2 hopefully to short circuit it, is what you told
3 Mr Kamlish at trial on behalf of -- the questions being
4 put to you on behalf of Hashem Abedi, were you telling
5 the truth, and you said yes. So would it be right to
6 say that what you said in this transcript is all the
7 truth?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. So you have it there that you're meeting him -- first
10 seen meeting him July 2016. Let's read on. I promise
11 I'm not going to read the whole thing. Almost the next
12 question is this:

13 "Question: You quite quickly, you and he,
14 discovered an interest in smoking weed, didn't you?"

15 And you say yes; is that right?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. And:

18 "Question: And he liked to take other drugs as
19 well?"

20 And you nodded, didn't you, during the course of
21 that trial?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. In terms of the drugs that Hashem Abedi was taking as
24 well -- and I can take you to it if needs be, it's
25 page 68 at {INQ031167/18} of the inquiry documents, but

1 I'll ask you straightaway. Did you agree that he took,
2 that is Hashem Abedi, tramadol?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. MDMA?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Ecstasy?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And you also confirmed that he drank alcohol?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Did he drink a lot of alcohol?

11 A. I don't know.

12 Q. Looking at that, and we'll come on to his spliff-making
13 expertise, you touch upon that a little later as well.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. These are certainly things that are frowned upon
16 generally in society, you'd accept that, wouldn't you?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And they're particularly frowned upon in the Muslim
19 community?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. So if he was ever to say he was a good Muslim or
22 speaking on behalf of good Muslims, this indicates he's
23 not, doesn't it?

24 A. Exactly.

25 Q. In fact, he's a bit of a hypocrite?

1 A. Yes.

2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I don't think we need to -- I think he's
3 said enough for me to draw my conclusions about it.

4 MR COOPER: So be it, thank you.

5 You saw him reasonably regularly, would that be
6 right? Again, I'm going back to what you told
7 Mr Kamlish. There was a gap when he went to Germany and
8 then you carried on seeing him again after Germany?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. You would smoke weed in s.46 redaction reasonably regularly
11 with him?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And that s.46 redaction, people called the hot box, would that
14 be right?

15 A. I can't remember that, but that's what he said.

16 Q. That's page 66, {INQ031167/18}. Let's refresh our
17 memories. It may well be we're not at odds with each
18 other.

19 A. This is because you can't call something the hot box,
20 it's a thing you do, so you're hot-boxing the car.

21 Q. Let's look at it. At page 66, towards the bottom,
22 Mr Kamlish puts it this way:

23 "Question: When you and he and others used to do,
24 for example, something called 'have a smoke in your hot
25 box', which was s.46 redaction ?

1 "Answer: Yes.

2 "Question: You used to call it your hot box, didn't

3 you?

4 "Answer: Yes, some guys did, yes.

5 "Question: Because it was full of smoke?"

6 Correct?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And you and Hashem Abedi used to regularly sit in your

9 hot box and smoke a lot of weed?

10 A. Most of the time it was outside the car, but...

11 Q. All right.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Did you tell Mr Kamlish, and we can look at it, it's

14 {INQ031167/18}, page 69 of the transcript, that the

15 speciality of Hashem Abedi was to make big spliffs?

16 He had a speciality of making big spliffs?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. So an experienced drug taker was Hashem?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And a regular drug taker?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. I just want to ask you one more question based upon

23 a theme, one more theme and a couple of questions. Was

24 Hashem Abedi involved in any gang disputes at all in the

25 area?

1 A. Not that I know of.

2 Q. For instance, there was a time, wasn't there -- and
3 again it's covered at page 75, {INQ031167/19} of the
4 inquiry bundle -- there was unpleasantness between two
5 gangs in Manchester at one stage, wasn't there?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. The Rusholme gang?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And the Moss Side gang?

10 A. Moss, yes.

11 Q. Some pretty serious violence?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. I won't go into it, but some of it which directly and
14 tragically impacted on you?

15 A. Not me.

16 Q. I don't mean you personally.

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Was Hashem Abedi, from what you're aware, ever involved
19 in gang disturbances or gang rivalries?

20 A. Not that I know of.

21 Q. Was he a member of a gang, for instance?

22 A. No.

23 MR COOPER: Thank you.

24 MR DE LA POER: I'll just see whether Mr Wagner has any
25 questions.

1 forewarning that this is unfortunately likely to happen,
2 but we will obviously do everything we can to make
3 things move as smoothly as possible, and if we're going
4 to save time, which is the reason for the witness asking
5 to come, do it at the end of the day rather than during
6 the day if and when we can.

7 MR TARIQ NADEEM (sworn)

8 Questions from MR DE LA POER

9 MR DE LA POER: Sir, I should have said this before, but
10 I say it now: we are no longer in a restricted session
11 as we were with our last two witnesses. However, I have
12 been told that there is a global issue with Google at
13 the moment, meaning that we will not be broadcasting
14 contemporaneously on YouTube. That's nothing to do with
15 the inquiry, but a much larger problem. However, when
16 that is available, it will be published.

17 Please can you give us your full name.

18 A. Tariq Nadeem.

19 Q. Mr Nadeem, are you a self-employed taxi driver?

20 A. Yes, I am.

21 Q. And do you work as such in the Greater Manchester area?

22 A. Yes, I do.

23 Q. Has that been your job for in excess of 10 years now?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Were you working as a taxi driver on 22 May of 2017?

- 1 A. Yes, I was.
- 2 Q. And did you commence your shift at about 5 o'clock in
3 the evening?
- 4 A. Yes, that's true.
- 5 Q. Having picked up a number of fares since you started
6 your shift, did you find yourself at Piccadilly Railway
7 Station?
- 8 A. Yes, I did.
- 9 Q. And was that about 7.30 in the evening?
- 10 A. Yes, approximately.
- 11 Q. At Piccadilly Railway Station, is there an area in which
12 taxis can queue whilst waiting to pick up fares?
- 13 A. Yes, there is.
- 14 Q. Did you put your vehicle in that area?
- 15 A. Yes.
- 16 Q. And wait for your turn to get to the front of the queue
17 in order to pick up a fare?
- 18 A. Yes, that's how it works.
- 19 Q. We know and you know that the fare you picked up on that
20 night is a man by the name of Salman Abedi. You're
21 aware of that now, aren't you?
- 22 A. Yes, I am aware of it.
- 23 Q. So we'll describe him as Salman Abedi, although you
24 didn't know him before that night, did you?
- 25 A. Yes, of course not.

- 1 Q. When he got into your taxi, what did he say to you?
- 2 A. He approached me from the front nearside window, and
- 3 said to me, "Can you take me to Shudehill, via
- 4 Granby Row?" Them were his words, then he got into my
- 5 taxi.
- 6 Q. Presumably that was no problem for you?
- 7 A. No, it wasn't.
- 8 Q. So Shudehill via Granby Row?
- 9 A. Yes.
- 10 Q. Did you drive directly from Victoria Station to --
- 11 A. It was Piccadilly Railway Station.
- 12 Q. To Granby Row?
- 13 A. Yes, I did.
- 14 Q. Was there any conversation between you and Salman Abedi
- 15 between Piccadilly and Granby Row?
- 16 A. The only thing I remember he said to me was, "Are you
- 17 a Muslim, brother?", to which I replied yes.
- 18 Q. Was that during the journey to Granby Row or was that
- 19 after Granby Row?
- 20 A. Can I go back to my statement?
- 21 Q. I'm sure that will be fine, yes.
- 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Of course, yes.
- 23 MR DE LA POER: You may wish to have a look at page 2,
- 24 at the top, Mr Nadeem.
- 25 A. Yes, it did take place.

- 1 Q. I think you can find the conversation that you're
2 referring to, and that conversation took place before
3 you got to Granby Row?
- 4 A. Before I got to Granby Row, because, yes, the
5 conversation started when he said, "After Granby Row you
6 need to stop at an ATM". That's the first time he
7 mentioned ATM. And then his next question was, "Are you
8 a Muslim, brother?", to which I replied yes and that was
9 the end of the conversation then.
- 10 Q. So from Piccadilly to Granby Row, the only conversation
11 was, firstly, him telling you where he wanted to go?
- 12 A. Yes.
- 13 Q. Secondly, mentioning the fact that there would be a stop
14 at an ATM?
- 15 A. Yes.
- 16 Q. And thirdly, asking you that question, "Are you
17 a Muslim, brother?", to which you replied yes?
- 18 A. Yes.
- 19 Q. Once you arrived at Granby Row, you pulled your vehicle
20 to a stop. Was there any conversation at that point?
- 21 A. No.
- 22 Q. Did any money change hands at that point?
- 23 A. Yes. I can't remember correctly, but the fare at that
24 point was under £5 and he left me with a £5 note and
25 told me to wait.

- 1 Q. Effectively, booking you for more time than he had
2 already used?
- 3 A. Yes.
- 4 Q. And he went into Granby House for a period of time;
5 is that correct?
- 6 A. I didn't see him going, but he told me he was going to
7 Granby House.
- 8 Q. Up until this point, had he had any backpack on?
- 9 A. No.
- 10 Q. And up until this point, how had he seemed to you in
11 terms of whether he was happy, sad, relaxed, tense? Did
12 you form any view about --
- 13 A. The first thing that struck me, he looked very weak and
14 my first impression, because we deal with people to
15 a day-to-day basis in our job, was that this is someone
16 with some mental health issues or some other issues.
- 17 Q. So there was something about the way he was acting that
18 made you wonder if he had any mental health
19 difficulties. Just thinking about it now, are you able
20 to be more specific about what it was about him? Was it
21 the way that he held himself, the way that he spoke, or
22 can you put your finger on it all?
- 23 A. I think it was more to do with he spoke in a very low
24 tone and even though he had good English, I can still
25 recall, but the way he spoke, it was like -- because it

1 looked like someone in late teens, early 20s, and the
2 way he spoke was someone who was ill or weak, to be
3 precise.

4 Q. Weak?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. That's a word you've used more than once and that was
7 your impression?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. So he went into the property which, as you told us, you
10 didn't see, and emerged a short time later; is that
11 correct?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. At that point did you see that he was wearing
14 a rucksack?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. We, as you'll appreciate, have seen that rucksack many
17 times on closed-circuit television, but you saw it with
18 your own eyes. Can you just describe to us how that
19 rucksack appeared whilst he was standing up and carrying
20 it?

21 A. The first thing that struck me was the rucksack appeared
22 very heavy. It was a standard rucksack. It was
23 strapped on his back. I could tell that he was carrying
24 it with a degree of difficulty.

25 Q. Do you remember thinking that at the time that you first

1 saw him?

2 A. I did. The first thing that struck me is: this is

3 heavy.

4 Q. And did you see him walk to your vehicle carrying it?

5 A. Yes, I did.

6 Q. When he got in, did he take it off?

7 A. No, he didn't.

8 Q. So the straps remained over his shoulders?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. When he got back into your vehicle, was there any

11 conversation between you?

12 A. Can I go back to my notes again?

13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Absolutely. Do any time you need to.

14 MR DE LA POER: We're about halfway down page 2 now.

15 (Pause)

16 Look towards the bottom of that page.

17 A. Yes. There was no conversation.

18 Q. So if we just -- what you say in the bottom paragraph on

19 page 2 is --

20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think this is after stopping at an ATM

21 machine, isn't it?

22 MR DE LA POER: I beg your pardon, sir.

23 Did you go to an ATM machine?

24 A. Yes, we did.

25 Q. And did he get out of your vehicle to go to the ATM

1 machine?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And having got out of your taxi, did the rucksack stay
4 on his back?

5 A. It did, yes, all the way through.

6 Q. Did you see him with that rucksack walking away and
7 coming back again to your taxi?

8 A. Yes, very close to the ATM, he exited my taxi on the
9 rear nearside, and walked round the car to the cash
10 machine, but it was like a few steps.

11 Q. When he got back into your cab, did you speak again,
12 either of you?

13 A. Yes, we did.

14 Q. What was said?

15 A. As I was driving, the first thing that struck me when he
16 got into my taxi for the first time and then the second
17 time, this rucksack looks heavy, and I said, "It's
18 heavy, isn't it? It looks heavy", along the lines, to
19 which he said, "I'm weak, aren't I, brother?"

20 Q. Anything else said other than that?

21 A. Yes, there was. I'll have to go back to my notes again.

22 Q. Yes.

23 A. As we were driving along high street, he said to me,
24 "Can I give you a gift, brother?", to which I replied
25 "Okay". Then he handed me a copy of a pocket Koran,

1 a small copy that people normally carry on them to read
2 at their convenience. It was a second-hand copy that
3 was used, it wasn't brand new, it didn't look brand new.
4 He handed me that copy.

5 Q. Is that something that you had experienced before when
6 driving a taxi?

7 A. People have given us gifts. Being a taxi driver, you
8 meet some nice people, you meet some not so nice people,
9 and you meet some lovely people, and people had given us
10 gifts all the time.

11 Q. What about a copy of the Koran?

12 A. That was the first instance, but I have had books in the
13 past.

14 Q. After he'd handed you the pocket Koran, did he say
15 anything?

16 A. Yes. Then we had a conversation -- I mean, when he
17 handed me the copy of the Koran I said thank you. Being
18 a Muslim, the Koran is very dear to us as a message of
19 Allah and I was very thankful to him and I said
20 thank you. He said, "Please pray for me, brother".

21 Q. Did he say anything more specific than that or was it
22 just, "Please pray for me"?

23 A. No, please pray. These were his words.

24 Q. Did the conversation continue between you?

25 A. Yes, it did. At that point, what I said next to him

1 was, "Are you from Saudi Arabia?" because the male did
2 look like from a Middle Eastern background to me, or his
3 face appeared so, so just to carry on the conversation,
4 I said, "Are you from Saudi Arabia, brother?", and he
5 said, "No, Libya". He asked me my name, to which
6 I replied Tariq, I asked his name and he said Suleman.

7 Q. You have spoken about the rucksack and whether it was
8 heavy and he described himself as weak.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. He's offered to give you a gift, which you have accepted
11 in the form of the pocket Koran. He has asked you to
12 pray for him?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. You then discussed whether he's from Saudi Arabia and he
15 says Libya.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. You've exchanged names?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Was there any other conversation between you during that
20 journey?

21 A. Yes. Being a taxi driver, it's a normal procedure that
22 if you're taking someone to a bus station or a train
23 station, normally it seems that that person is making
24 a journey out of Manchester, and for fare purposes we do
25 have a conversation with them, where they are going, we

1 might be able to offer them a good deal and use us
2 instead of public transport. Thinking of that, I said
3 to him, "Are you going far, brother?", to which he
4 replied, "No, only local".

5 Q. Was it because he was in your taxi that you asked him
6 whether he was travelling far or the fact that he had
7 a rucksack as well?

8 A. No, no, it was because he was going to a bus station.
9 He was carrying a rucksack. We pick up people all the
10 time with luggages, suitcases, bags, rucksacks. That
11 might have played a part, but we ask that question all
12 the time.

13 Q. So you asked him, "Are you going somewhere far?", and
14 his reply, as far as you can recall --

15 A. "No, only local."

16 Q. Did there come a time when you reached the area of the
17 Shudehill bus station?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And was the time then some time around 8.15 in the
20 evening?

21 A. Yes, approximately.

22 Q. Was there any further money given to you, given that
23 he'd already given you £5?

24 A. No, there wasn't. On the meter -- by that time, the
25 meter was something £8 something, and he had already

1 given me £5, and as a goodwill gesture, because he'd
2 given me a gift, I said to him, "I'm not taking any more
3 money from you".

4 Q. Did he say anything else that you can remember?

5 A. No.

6 Q. He got out of your taxi. Was the rucksack still on his
7 back at that stage?

8 A. Yes, it was.

9 Q. Was there anything further said to you by him?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Or you to him?

12 A. No.

13 Q. And did you then drive away?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Can you think of any other conversation or exchange that
16 you had with him that you haven't told us about already?
17 Any other words?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Once you got into your taxi with the rucksack on, did
20 you notice whether he was the same as he had been before
21 on the journey to Granby Row or was there any change in
22 him?

23 A. The same, I would say the same.

24 MR DE LA POER: Thank you very much indeed.

25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I have obviously got your statement in

1 front of me and I note it's dated 25 May 2017. That's
2 the date on the statement. You can see for yourself, if
3 you like. So it's 3 days after these events happened
4 and presumably everything was as fresh in your memory
5 then as it could be.

6 A. Yes.

7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I just wonder, it's a very little
8 difference, but if you look on page 2, the last
9 paragraph, which is the bit about when you've been --
10 he's been to the ATM machine and you have seen him walk
11 there and walk back. Then you say:

12 "When the male got back into my taxi, I said to him,
13 'It's too heavy for you isn't it?'"

14 A. Yes.

15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: What you actually remembered was that
16 you'd said, "It looks heavy", or something like that.
17 Is it more likely to be right what's in the statement?

18 A. Yes, it is.

19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you. It's not much of
20 a difference, but if we can get as close to the words as
21 we can, then we will.

22 MR DE LA POER: Thank you. I am told that there's one
23 question for clarification.

24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think we actually have time today,
25 Mr Cooper.

1 Questions from MR COOPER

2 MR COOPER: It is genuinely for clarification, looking at
3 your statement, if I can, please, page 2 of 3. About
4 a quarter of the way down, you deal with the payment of
5 the fare. You say:

6 "At this point the fare was £3.70 and the male
7 handed me a £5 note and asked me to wait. I think he
8 handed it to me with his right hand."

9 And then you say:

10 "I noticed on the back of his hand..."

11 And the statement rather finishes abruptly there.
12 Can you explain what you said when you said simply,
13 according to the statement, "I noticed on the back of
14 his hand"? Was there something that should go in there
15 that hasn't made its way into the statement?

16 A. I can't recall anything... I mean...

17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We could check on the original perhaps,
18 couldn't we?

19 MR DE LA POER: We'll certainly seek the help of the
20 Operation Manteline team to see if the original sheds
21 any further light on it.

22 Sir, those are the questions then for Mr Nadeem. If
23 Mr Nadeem wouldn't mind just waiting there for a moment,
24 I can bring the inquiry up to speed in relation to the
25 rest of the day.

1 Firstly, in relation to YouTube, that is now
2 working, I'm pleased to report. I think a couple of
3 minutes were missing from the session, but that would be
4 made available later today.

5 In terms of the remaining witness evidence, we do
6 have a fourth witness today. I'm told that he should be
7 with us some time around 1.30 and that is earlier than
8 he had been scheduled for, so he too has put himself out
9 to make himself available. I'm really in your hands as
10 to whether we take a short lunch and then deal with
11 him -- that will be the last live evidence of today --
12 or whether we treat it as a break and then --

13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think we will have an earlier lunch
14 and resume at 2 o'clock. The reason I'm saying more
15 than an hour is because sometimes it does take us time
16 before the witness is spoken to, a lot of times people
17 are, I'm afraid, just waiting around for a bit. So
18 if we make it 2 o'clock, hopefully we'll be ready to go.

19 MR DE LA POER: Can I just add something to the sum of your
20 knowledge, sir, as far as this witness is concerned:
21 I have just been told that this witness is now present
22 in the building and I think that with a break of about
23 15 minutes for him to be spoken to, we should be able to
24 start him and I would have thought complete him by
25 2 o'clock. That would be to start at some time around

1 rapidly.

2 MR DE LA POER: Yes.

3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you very much for coming at such
4 short notice.

5 Did you give evidence in the criminal trial?

6 A. No.

7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.

8 (12.52 pm)

9 (The lunch adjournment)

10 (2.00 pm)

11 MS CARTWRIGHT: Good afternoon, sir. The gentleman in the
12 witness box is Christopher Taylor. Could I ask that he
13 now be sworn, please.

14 MR CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR (sworn)

15 Questions from MS CARTWRIGHT

16 MS CARTWRIGHT: Good afternoon. Could you give your full
17 name, please?

18 A. Christopher Alan Taylor.

19 Q. And I think you work for Shield Batteries?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. In front of you there, there should be a witness
22 statement that you provided and that witness statement
23 is dated 26 May 2017.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Have you had an opportunity to refresh your memory from

- 1 that witness statement today?
- 2 A. Yes.
- 3 Q. Are the contents of that witness statement true to the
4 best of your knowledge and belief?
- 5 A. Yes.
- 6 Q. So could I ask you, first of all, to give us a little
7 detail about what your role is at Shield Batteries,
8 please.
- 9 A. Basically, I oversee the sales and profitability of the
10 north and the depot in the north, which then was in
11 Manchester. It all comes under my responsibility.
- 12 Q. So you said the depot. If we deal with what you're
13 going to tell us about today, which is March 2017, where
14 was the depot for Shield Batteries?
- 15 A. Then it was in Viaduct Street, Salford.
- 16 Q. You're described in the witness statement as the depot
17 manager?
- 18 A. Yes, of a sort. Strictly speaking, Paul is the depot
19 manager. Paul answers to me. I'm probably more
20 a general manager, but that's what it is. I was in the
21 depot on the day in question, obviously, and I spoke to
22 the gentleman and I left Paul his instructions when
23 I went out.
- 24 Q. We'll come on to that in a moment.
- 25 I think you've described Paul; is that Paul Gosling?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. You have already mentioned the day in question, so
3 I wonder if you could assist the inquiry in respect of
4 the conversations you had on 3 March 2017?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Can I ask, first of all, just very briefly to identify,
7 because I think you're aware from attending at the
8 trial, that those telephone calls made to the Shield
9 depot were captured by the work of the criminal
10 investigation.

11 Very briefly, could I ask please for {CPS000157/36},
12 please, Mr Lopez. If we could expand, if possible, on
13 to line 1,951.

14 I hope you're able to see that, Mr Taylor. What
15 I want to draw your attention to is we can see there are
16 two telephone calls to Shield Batteries, one timed at
17 14.03, which lasted 32 seconds.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And then a second call at 14.06, that lasted 47 seconds?

20 A. That's right.

21 Q. Were those calls made to you?

22 A. Yes. They were effectively both the same call, but if
23 memory serves he got cut off and he rang back in again
24 pretty much straight after.

25 Q. You have mentioned "him", so can you now tell us about

1 those telephone conversations, please, and what was
2 discussed during them?

3 A. Yes. He wanted to buy a battery what basically members
4 of the public just do not buy. It was a huge industrial
5 battery, designed for huge industrial applications, but
6 when he spoke to me and described what he wanted,
7 I tried explaining to him that that was way over and
8 above in terms of power, performance and everything else
9 for what he probably needed. I tried to glean out of
10 him exactly what he wanted this battery for and I got
11 some garbled stories.

12 Initially, he said it was for his caravan, which
13 just doesn't make any sense, it's way too big to go in
14 any caravan. Then it changed to his motor home or
15 rather his mother's motor home, who wanted it, and again
16 I tried to explain that these batteries just did not fit
17 in caravans or motor homes, but he was adamant it was
18 what he wanted. Did we have it in stock, how much was
19 it? So in the end, I ended up quoting him a price, if
20 that was what he wanted, and he said he would be down
21 later on in the day to pick one up.

22 Q. Thank you.

23 A. I was hoping that when he came down later on and he
24 physically saw it with his own eyes how big this battery
25 was, that would basically lead to a re-think and he

1 would realise that it was way over and above what he
2 wanted. So I had to go out --

3 Q. Pause there. So the gentleman who rang, did he identify
4 himself or did you have a name for him?

5 A. No, we didn't have a name at that point. All I knew was
6 he was what we call a retail customer.

7 Q. I think you described in the witness statement that the
8 gentleman on the phone, his English was very poor?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And you described it as broken?

11 A. Yes, he was obviously of ethnic -- ethnicity, yes.

12 Q. What you described, I think, is a gentleman who knew the
13 specific size of battery that he wants?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. That you've described as a large, would it be fair to
16 say, specialist industrial battery?

17 A. A specialist industrial battery, yes.

18 Q. So you've sought to clarify with the gentleman over the
19 telephone was that really what he wanted?

20 A. Yes, I knew it was wrong. My big worry whenever you get
21 this scenario, means one of two things. We're always on
22 guard when someone is looking to pay by card and take
23 something away which is clearly not right, for two
24 reasons. One, I worry it's possibly fraud on the credit
25 card or, two, if he gets it wrong, he's going to end up

1 bringing it back and I'm stuck with a battery what has
2 been used, it will probably be damaged, marked, all
3 sorts of things.

4 So the reality is, I didn't really want to sell this
5 battery to this particular person. But he was adamant
6 he wanted it and I thought, my last hope was when he saw
7 it, that might spark a re-think kind of thing, but sadly
8 it didn't --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- and he still went ahead.

11 Q. We'll come on to that. So in terms of then when you
12 have had the discussion with the gentleman, in short
13 saying you thought he was wrong, that the battery
14 wouldn't do what he has explained to you that the
15 intention was, he was still adamant that was the one he
16 wanted?

17 A. He was adamant, he was adamant that's what he wanted,
18 yes.

19 Q. Can you assist then? You give a price over the phone.
20 What was the price you gave for the battery the
21 gentleman wanted?

22 A. We didn't even have a price to sell one of those over
23 the counter. I had to actually check out what would be
24 a reasonable price for a member of the public -- we've
25 never, ever sold one, so I worked out a price of £300.

1 Q. Okay. So when you say you have never sold one over the
2 counter, did Shield at that time sell over the counter
3 to domestic or was it all commercial?

4 A. Yes, but obviously only small stuff for cars, caravans,
5 that kind of thing, smaller batteries which are a more
6 normal public purchase, if you like.

7 Q. So then having had those conversations, I think you said
8 the gentleman said he'd be down, come down?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. What did you then pass on? Because I think you
11 indicated you were leaving.

12 A. I told Paul what had gone on, I told him my concerns, my
13 worries, but I said to him if he does come in, we need
14 to, if you like, cover ourselves as much as possible.
15 I want as much information off this customer. I knew
16 we'd already have his phone number from our call log
17 system. I told him to make sure we got his car
18 registration number as well because I just didn't trust
19 it, it wasn't right, and I had serious misgivings about
20 selling the battery. But that's as much as we could do
21 and that's what subsequently happened: we got the car
22 registration, we had the phone number, so if it did go
23 wrong, from our point of view, if it was a fraudulent
24 purchase and we had the card company coming back on to
25 us in 2 weeks' time saying, "This is a fraudulent

1 purchase, you're not being paid for this battery", at
2 least we had some kind of comeback to try and give us
3 some form of -- way of getting the battery back or
4 pursuing him for payment.

5 Q. Just pause there again. When you said that you didn't
6 trust -- just so we're clear, you didn't trust because
7 of -- was that solely because of the fraud that you've
8 indicated?

9 A. Yes. It wasn't what I would -- it wasn't a genuine
10 purchase, I knew full well. Nothing about it was right:
11 what he wanted to do, the fact he wanted to pay on the
12 card, the fact he wanted to take it away with him. When
13 he turned up, he turned up in a tiny little hatchback
14 car --

15 Q. We will come on to that in a minute because I don't
16 think --

17 A. There was nothing about it right and I was on guard as
18 much as I could possibly be.

19 Q. So in terms of what you described being on guard, was
20 that anything to do with the actual product, the battery
21 itself?

22 A. Not so much the product itself. It's an outstanding
23 product, but it's not for what he made out that he
24 wanted. The product is an outstanding quality battery
25 and they serve a very good purpose in other industries,

1 but for him I was worried that it just didn't make any
2 sense at all what he wanted.

3 Q. Perhaps then just to assist the chairman, these sorts of
4 batteries, what would they usually be used to power?

5 A. The most common application is if you're ever driving
6 down the motorway and they've got the roadworks and you
7 see the Portakabins on the hard shoulders, we normally
8 fit them in the Portakabins in sets of 12 at a time so
9 they can power the cabins for the workers, to go into
10 the canteen, to do offices, because obviously being
11 standalone units, they have no access to any mains
12 power, so they need serious batteries to be able to give
13 them the power for the lighting and the heating and all
14 the things you'd expect: refrigerators, microwaves,
15 everything of that nature. That's the type of thing
16 they go on.

17 Q. Whilst we're dealing with what the battery does, in
18 terms of the battery's content, the inquiry's heard
19 various things about batteries and components. Can you
20 confirm, is this battery a sealed unit?

21 A. Yes, it's a specialist battery. It's what we call
22 a form of gel battery. It's an AGM gel battery, which
23 means it is completely sealed, you cannot get into it at
24 all, and there is no acid or any liquid of any type
25 floating around inside it. It's a completely sealed

1 product. Obviously of a substantial weight.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. 62 kilos or so.

4 Q. So there's no wet content of acid?

5 A. No, none whatsoever.

6 Q. And so just to complete that point, you couldn't tip
7 acid out of the battery nor could you put acid into it?

8 A. No, no, no, you can't tip anything out of it, no.

9 Q. Could you then deal with what you passed on -- was it to
10 Mr Gosling -- when you left the depot?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Can you just deal with what you said to him when you
13 left that day?

14 A. Basically instruction, I did not like it one bit, to be
15 on guard, I wanted every possible gleaned bit of
16 information from this guy. As we've already mentioned,
17 I wanted his registration number and everything. I also
18 told him I wanted to speak to him if he came in again.
19 My hope was, if he came in and physically saw the
20 battery, I could get into him again and say, look, this
21 ain't going to fit or do whatever you're looking for it
22 to do, have a look at it, have a look at some of the
23 smaller ones what we've got what are far more practical
24 for you.

25 That subsequently came to happen. When he came in

1 again, obviously you've got the phone records, I spoke
2 to him again, and had another attempt at saying, "Look,
3 you've seen it, it's not what you need for what you
4 require", but he was adamant that's what he wanted.

5 Q. Okay. Let's just deal with that. I think you in the
6 witness statement estimate that call is at 3.45?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And, if need be, we can go to the receipt, but we do
9 have the receipt for this transaction, so we can see
10 that £300 was put through on a receipt at 3.58.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Can you deal with then what happened when you were put
13 on the call to the gentleman again at 3.45 when you're
14 away from the depot? What discussion did you have with
15 him at that into?

16 A. It was pretty much the same discussion, but I was
17 pinning it on the fact that he had now physically
18 seen -- obviously he was on the premises, Paul had
19 physically shown him the battery, how big it was.
20 I said, "You've now seen it, it's not going to work for
21 what you want it to work, it ain't going to fit, you're
22 getting the wrong one, have a look at the other ones
23 we do", but he was adamant that's what he wanted.

24 Q. Having had that discussion with him again, did you speak
25 to Mr Gosling over the phone?

1 A. Yes, he came back on the phone, I said there's nothing
2 we can do, he's paying for it, that's what he wants.
3 You can't not sell someone a battery on that basis. So
4 I just said, make sure -- take a good look at him, make
5 sure you've got all the details we would normally get if
6 we've any security issues, which he subsequently did.

7 Q. I think it's right to say that Mr Gosling did do as you
8 instructed.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. So he had the details of the bank account but also he
11 took down the car registration number?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And just perhaps I wonder if you can assist. You don't
14 deal with it in your witness statement, but we have
15 a statement from Mr Gosling which, was the -- YK56 OBH
16 was the registration number and we know from the inquiry
17 that was the Toyota Aygo car.

18 A. Yes. It was a tiny little car, as you say, a hatchback,
19 and these batteries -- he had to, when we took the
20 battery out to the car --

21 Q. Pause there. When you say when "we took it out" --

22 A. Sorry, when he took it out, yeah.

23 He had to physically stand it on the passenger seat
24 and wrap the seat belt round it to get it to fit. It
25 was a ludicrous situation but that was what he wanted to

1 do, and the two of them had to -- they are very heavy,
2 so the two of them had to try and get it into the car to
3 stand it so it was -- well, safe, for want of a better
4 word, but I wouldn't have drove a car with that on the
5 passenger seat. I would have been worried if I'd been
6 in an accident and it broke, that would have been a lot
7 of weight. I wouldn't have been happy at all but that's
8 what he wanted to do.

9 Q. So Mr Gosling had told you that he had physically
10 carried that battery out with the gentleman and helped
11 him secure the battery in the passenger seat of the car?

12 A. Yes, that's right.

13 Q. And I think other than those dealings, when the police
14 made contact, you were able to give all that information
15 to them?

16 A. That's correct.

17 MS CARTWRIGHT: Mr Taylor, that concludes my questions. If
18 you wait there, there are some indications that others
19 may have questions for you.

20 Mr Atkinson perhaps.

21 Questions from MR ATKINSON

22 MR ATKINSON: Just to get your help, Mr Taylor, as to
23 whether there are improvements that can be made to the
24 system in relation to identifying potentially suspicious
25 purchases. I make clear at once that I'm not suggesting

1 you did anything wrong at all, or indeed your colleague,
2 come to that. But when you gave evidence at the trial,
3 you described saying to Mr Gosling, "I don't trust this
4 for one minute".

5 A. No.

6 Q. And you didn't, did you?

7 A. No.

8 Q. This was someone, a member of the public, coming to buy
9 something that you would not ever normally sell to
10 a member of the public?

11 A. That's right.

12 Q. In fact you probably sell only very rarely even to those
13 in the construction industry because they were -- but it
14 would mainly be there?

15 A. That's correct.

16 Q. You were immediately concerned that this was --
17 something was wrong here. You took what precautions you
18 could in case what was wrong here was some kind of
19 fraud.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. But did it cross your mind that this was something that
22 you needed to involve the police in at that stage?

23 A. Hindsight is a wonderful thing.

24 Q. Absolutely.

25 A. I can't... At the time, what happened was 2 years prior

1 to this incident. We do get -- in the battery industry
2 what we work in, a large portion of a battery is made up
3 of lead. Lead has quite a high value in the commodities
4 market, so we've had previous instances of people trying
5 to ring up on a card, pay for a battery or batteries on
6 a card, come down, collect them, take them away. We
7 never see them again and then 2-3 weeks later, we get
8 a call from the card company telling us that that's
9 a fraudulent transaction and we ain't going to be paid.
10 That has happened once a few years ago and that's the
11 only time it ever happened. So obviously we are now
12 wise to that.

13 We probably get at least two/three attempts a year,
14 people trying to do this, but we have policies set up.
15 We are very, very wary, particularly if they're asking
16 for more than one battery -- invariably you can get
17 asked for 10 or 20 of the same part number, if you will,
18 which stands out a mile, it's not right, there's
19 something wrong, we won't even sell them. Or we will
20 ask the customer, not a problem, pay for them, we've got
21 them coming in in 2 weeks' time, let us know where you
22 want us to deliver them to and we will deliver them.
23 The idea being by that point, if it is genuine, we will
24 have been paid and there'll be no comeback on the card
25 and we'll also be delivering to their premises, which

1 obviously puts them off.

2 In this instance, he only wanted one battery. It's
3 difficult to do that when it's a general public sale.
4 It's very, very rare -- in fact it's probably the only
5 instance ever we've had this situation. So hindsight's
6 a wonderful thing. I had no idea what he was going to
7 do. My big concern was us getting paid or him bringing
8 the battery back, realised he got it wrong, by which
9 point it'd be damaged, it'd marked, and I am then stuck
10 with that and then he's found a different battery, so...

11 Q. Clearly, on the one hand, the size and nature of this
12 battery was one of the things that made you wonder why
13 on earth this --

14 A. Just doesn't happen, yes.

15 Q. -- (overspeaking) does he want this and the fact that he
16 was coming out with different explanations at different
17 points in your conversation as to why he wanted it added
18 to that. But in terms of thinking, is this something
19 I need to report to anybody else, and I don't want to go
20 into details about different types of battery and what
21 might be more useful to someone than another for obvious
22 reasons, but did the nature of this battery make you
23 less worried that there might be something nefarious
24 that he had in mind for the battery or did that just not
25 enter your head at all?

1 A. The thing about -- the fraud factor with this battery,
2 because it is a big, heavy 62kg battery, it has got
3 a high lead content, so theoretically, if that went to
4 a scrapyard/smelter, that kind of thing, it goes off
5 weight. So he's then effectively getting money, he
6 could either have -- they're not officially meant to
7 have cash in hand or money in his account for that
8 battery, what he's just paid for on a card, what may not
9 have been his, so you can see how my thought went down
10 that path straightaway. He would have got quite a few
11 pounds for that because it's a big heavy battery if that
12 would have been his intention. So the fact what he was
13 picking up led me to think that way, but I didn't think
14 any more than -- it was the fraud aspect what,
15 obviously, I was -- what made me wary.

16 I didn't want to sell him that battery, I'll be
17 absolutely honest with you, but it's very difficult to
18 tell someone they can't have a battery. In this world
19 of social media, you can imagine he would have been all
20 over: Shield Batteries refused to sell me this battery.
21 You can't do it. You can't do it.

22 Despite my misgivings, unfortunately I had little
23 option. I wasn't happy with it and it goes out saying,
24 if I'd known what was coming next, but hindsight is
25 a wonderful thing.

1 Q. At the trial you were shown a photograph, I think
2 a rather out-of-focus photograph, of what you were being
3 suggested might be your battery in Libya.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Certainly nothing said to you by this customer suggested
6 he wanted a battery to send out to Libya?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Or that he had sloshed some acid out of something and
9 needed a replacement?

10 A. No. The photograph I got shown in truth was
11 nonsensical. It was two completely different batteries,
12 of which had acid in, what we call truck batteries,
13 starter batteries, and they are acid batteries. But it
14 was just a photograph of two of these truck batteries
15 put together with an inverter and I think the inference
16 was that back in Libya, this was what they were using to
17 power, but it was nonsensical. It was nothing like
18 that. You do not use that type of battery with an
19 inverter to do what was trying to be maintained on the
20 thing. It was just ludicrous.

21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Just so we all understand, and me in
22 particular, this is a photograph shown to the witness at
23 the trial?

24 A. Yes.

25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: By the defence?

1 MR ATKINSON: By the defence, yes.

2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand. And you say it didn't
3 make sense?

4 A. It was ludicrous.

5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.

6 MR ATKINSON: But certainly we can agree on this, that you
7 did all you could to protect your business and, if
8 he was making a mistake, the customer from this
9 purchase, that battery and whatever attracted him to it,
10 was adamantly what he wanted?

11 A. Yes. Just to follow up on your point what you made,
12 lessons -- since then, in fact it was only maybe
13 6 months ago, we had another enquiry for not just like
14 this, but for different types of batteries, random,
15 different types of batteries, which again didn't make
16 sense to me, but the gentleman who wanted to buy them
17 actually told me or tried to tell me he wasn't paying
18 any VAT on the purchase because he was taking them back
19 to Libya, bizarrely. So straightaway, I was, like, hang
20 on a minute. So I explained to him that the VAT aspect,
21 that was his affair, whenever we sold anything, he pays
22 VAT, whether he liked it or not. To which he
23 fundamentally agreed in the end. But the batteries he
24 picked, I wasn't happy, so I actually reported it,
25 picking up on what you're saying, to the authorities

1 just in case. I mean, I've never heard anything back
2 since and I hope I never do, but to me, that lesson has
3 been learned and if I think anything of this ilk could
4 ever happen again, then obviously, you know, we've
5 learned a lesson on that, and if I think for one minute
6 I'm not happy with what we're thinking, I will report
7 it, and at least it's on file.

8 Q. Hindsight, as you say, is a wonderful thing. Do you
9 think if there'd been more advice to people in your
10 position from the authorities before this to look out
11 for, if you don't feel happy about a transaction, you
12 think something is wrong, this is the number to call, do
13 you think that would have helped you back then --

14 A. Um...

15 Q. -- as another thought going through your head?

16 A. Yes, possibly. I could certainly have reported it,
17 albeit back then it would have been totally a fraud
18 aspect.

19 Q. Yes.

20 A. Rather than -- we didn't know what was coming. From
21 a fraud aspect, certainly. Now, obviously, the world
22 has changed given what's happened and it's taken on
23 a different slant, hasn't it? So yeah, definitely,
24 I would certainly be contacting should that scenario
25 ever happen again, yes, very much so.

- 1 MR ATKINSON: Thank you very much indeed, I'm grateful.
- 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Dealing with the second occasion when
3 you say you have learned the lesson and you reported it,
4 did you nevertheless carry on with the sale?
- 5 A. Yes, you can't not sell to someone.
- 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, I know you think you have no option
7 because then you'll be on social media --
- 8 A. Yes, I can't not sell --
- 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So you sell it but you report it?
- 10 A. I reported it, yes. I thought at least, you know --
11 yes.
- 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay.
- 13 MS CARTWRIGHT: Mr Cooper indicates he has questions
14 arising.
- 15 Questions from MR COOPER
- 16 MR COOPER: Mr Atkinson's dealt with in the latter question
17 to you much of what I was going to ask you, but
18 do you have a trade organisation, for instance,
19 a representative body?
- 20 A. Yes. The battery industry does have, yes, they do.
- 21 Q. Do they give any guidance? What are they called?
- 22 A. I have never actually been to one of -- they do have...
23 What are they called? Off the top of my head, I can't
24 remember.
- 25 Q. Do they give out bulletins or information to people?

1 A. It's always the managing director who goes to things.

2 Q. I'm not asking about attending events. Do they send out
3 bulletins to people or newspapers?

4 A. I have never seen one.

5 Q. Are they aware, as far as you're concerned, of the risks
6 that you now tragically have become aware of, of selling
7 batteries or other precursor items?

8 A. I think the main issue was the acid factor.

9 Q. Yes.

10 A. A lot of, if you like, the [subject to Restriction Order]
11 [subject to RO] batteries, that kind of thing, have
12 obviously got an acid content inside them, which is
13 [subject to Restriction Order]

14 But the law changed not long, 2-3 years ago, and we were
15 forbidden in any way, shape or form from selling acid,
16 not that we did anyway. I always was very, very thingy
17 on that, I wouldn't sell it anyway. But it doesn't
18 cover -- if someone's adamant they want acid, [subject to RO]
19 [subject to Restriction Order]
20 [subject to Restriction Order]

21 [subject to RO] It doesn't cover that scenario.

22 Q. So far as you're concerned --

23 A. If someone's adamant they want to do it, they can do
24 that. So we're all very much -- on the acid side of it,
25 we are very much compliant with the law on, that and

1 batteries what used to -- for example [subject to RO]

2 [subject to Restriction Order]

3 [subject to Restriction Order]

4 [subject to Restriction Order]

5 [subject to Restriction Order]

So all

6 that has stopped and they have to be filled and sealed

7 before they can go out.

8 Q. And this is to stop --

9 A. Stop public access to acid. It's not done enough

10 completely because, obviously, if someone is hell-bent

11 on doing it, they've only got to [subject to Restriction Order]

12 [subject to Restriction Order]

13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, I don't think we need to know too

14 much information about it.

15 A. Sorry.

16 MR COOPER: But as far as batteries such as this that we're

17 dealing with, without acid, as far as you're aware,

18 there's no rules, laws or regulations --

19 A. Nothing that I know of, no.

20 Q. -- in that respect? Do you think, perhaps, your trade

21 organisation, whatever it may be called, and you'll tell

22 us later, should perhaps be getting involved a little

23 more in educating members?

24 A. That's not for me to say. I've never been to this

25 organisation. I wouldn't like to comment on that.

1 Q. I understand it may not be for you to say, but had they
2 done so, you'd have been aware and maybe -- no criticism
3 of you at the time, hindsight and all that. But had
4 they done so, you may have been a little more aware of
5 the risks that were created by --

6 A. Possibly, possibly.

7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper, I will need some help at some
8 stage about this. Clearly, the battery was not going to
9 be used as part of the explosive device because then
10 it would be quite impossible to carry around in any way.

11 MR COOPER: Yes.

12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: As I understand it, the possible use may
13 have been to try and get acid from it, which actually
14 wasn't possible because there wasn't acid in it anyway.
15 So the concern about getting acid would not relate to
16 this type of battery, as I understand it. Am I right?
17 There is no evidence that this battery was in fact used
18 in any way together with the explosive device, as it
19 happens. I'm not suggesting the questions aren't
20 perfectly valid, I just need to know where we're
21 actually going.

22 MR COOPER: Let me finish with one question. When someone
23 in the future comes to you, and I think you've touched
24 upon this, with an unusual purchase in relation to
25 batteries, which just simply isn't logical, do you feel

1 empowered enough now to say no, regardless of what
2 social media may say? If you, as an experienced man
3 in the business, knowing what you know now, let alone
4 what others may or may not know, and I'm asking you
5 personally, do you now feel emboldened to say no?

6 A. If this situation was to repeat itself, I wouldn't sell
7 the battery, no. Knowing now what I know now, no,
8 I wouldn't. I just wouldn't sell it. Any flak what
9 came back our way, you've now got a fallback, obviously,
10 given what's happened previously, so the situation has
11 changed now because of what's happened previously.

12 Q. The families are obviously reassured to hear you say
13 that in the context of this hearing.

14 A. Yes.

15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Perhaps not with this type of battery,
16 ironically, but if an unusual request were to come for
17 batteries and you're not happy about what's going on,
18 would it help if there was some official guidance, so if
19 someone says something on social media, you could
20 actually say, well, we can't do it because here's the
21 guidance, it says we have to be very careful about what
22 we do with these --

23 A. Yes, yes.

24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.

25 MR COOPER: Thank you, sir.

1 Further questions from MS CARTWRIGHT

2 MS CARTWRIGHT: Mr Weatherby indicated there were no
3 questions. I have one matter arising.

4 Very briefly, Mr Atkinson asked you a question about
5 the photograph you were shown at the trial.

6 A. Oh yes.

7 Q. And I think you have indicated today that what was
8 in that photograph was two different batteries to the
9 one here?

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. I just want to check because in the transcript of what
12 you said about the battery, you said:

13 "I can almost say it looks to be the same. Whether
14 it's exactly one or not, I have no idea."

15 I just want to be clear as to -- I have not got the
16 photograph here to show you, but --

17 A. The photograph I was shown at the trial was of two
18 different types of battery.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And the question, as I recall, was: are these your
21 batteries? I think I'm right in saying that.

22 Q. Yes.

23 A. I could clearly see the Shield label on the side of
24 them, so yes, we sell all different types of batteries,
25 so they look to be, if you like, our batteries, but they

1 certainly weren't the same type of battery what --

2 Q. Was purchased on 3 March?

3 A. Yes.

4 MS CARTWRIGHT: Thank you, that's helpful.

5 Sir, do you have any questions?

6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No.

7 Thank you very much. I'm grateful to you for
8 coming.

9 MS CARTWRIGHT: Sir, that concludes all the live evidence
10 for today. Tomorrow we have three witnesses scheduled:
11 Trial Witness 1 and Relative A, who'll both be over the
12 video link, and then we have Mr Zreba at 2 o'clock
13 in the afternoon. I'm told he can only come at that
14 time.

15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: When you say the only live evidence,
16 does that imply there's some other evidence which is not
17 live?

18 MS CARTWRIGHT: No, sir, it's just that that's the evidence
19 for tomorrow, which is three witnesses. That concludes
20 the evidence for today.

21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.

22 (The witness withdrew)

23 MR ATKINSON: Sir, I know from conversations that were had
24 before that witness gave evidence, there was a concern
25 about what could or could not be asked of the witness in

1 relation to batteries more generally as opposed to his
2 battery in particular. I just wanted everyone to be
3 happy that nothing had been said during his evidence
4 that might be a problem before our 10 minutes of
5 YouTube --

6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think you may be leading to
7 conversations taking place, but thank you for checking
8 about that.

9 MS CARTWRIGHT: I am told that in fact the YouTube feed was
10 cut during that evidence. We're going to just look at
11 that now as well.

12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Because of concerns about --

13 MS CARTWRIGHT: It seems to be, yes.

14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thanks for raising that. That's
15 happened and it will be looked at. Anyone else?

16 Thank you. I'll see you tomorrow. I'm sorry for
17 the short day, but it is unusual.

18 (2.36 pm)

19 (The inquiry adjourned until 9.30 am on
20 Tuesday, 15 December 2020)

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