

OPUS2

Manchester Arena Inquiry

Day 170

November 22, 2021

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Phone: 020 4515 2252

Email: transcripts@opus2.com

Website: <https://www.opus2.com>

1 Monday, 22 November 2021
 2 (10.30 am)
 3 MR GREANEY: Sir, as you know, the closed hearings concluded
 4 last Thursday. They lasted for 3 weeks and I can assure
 5 all core participants that they involved no lower level
 6 of scrutiny than the balance of the oral evidence
 7 hearings. Pursuant to the protocol that was issued with
 8 submissions of counsel to the inquiry of 30 September of
 9 this year, a proposed gist of evidence heard during the
 10 closed hearing was served on HMG and GMP at the
 11 conclusion of the closed hearing. Sir, by gist of
 12 evidence, I mean gist of the evidence which the inquiry
 13 legal team believes to be capable of being broken out
 14 into open.
 15 The inquiry legal team awaits a response from both
 16 GMP and HMG to that gist, and we have agreed an initial
 17 response to it by the end of this week. An update will
 18 be provided to core participants about the gist as soon
 19 as we're able after responses are received from GMP and
 20 HMG.
 21 Necessarily, the date for finalising the gist will
 22 need to be extended from the planned date of 26 November
 23 and in part, indeed in substantial part, that is because
 24 of a delay in the production of transcripts from the
 25 closed hearing. That delay is down to a practical

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1 matter outside of the hands of all of those involved
 2 in the closed hearings and the core participants do have
 3 information about the nature of that practical
 4 difficulty .
 5 It is likely , indeed highly likely , that transcripts
 6 will be needed before the final gist can be disclosed to
 7 all core participants , and an update on the revised date
 8 for when it will be available will be provided as soon
 9 as possible .
 10 So, sir , we hope that is a helpful update for all
 11 core participants who did not participate in the closed
 12 hearing.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I assure everyone, as far as I'm
 14 concerned, it has been an extremely busy and difficult
 15 period and I'm glad to see that other advocates in the
 16 case have been keeping themselves busy, I see from the
 17 press, in the meantime so I am glad everyone has made
 18 use of the time.
 19 MR COOPER: (Overspeaking).
 20 Two matters, and obviously I'll be careful how I ask
 21 the question. Before the hearings began, you indicated
 22 that if anything arose, which in fact after hearing it
 23 was not in fact national security sensitive , you would
 24 rule appropriately. We have not yet heard anything as
 25 a result of that. Can we presume from that, sir, that

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1 everything that was designated by the security services
 2 as national security was and if it wasn't will we hear
 3 of it in open session?
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's the point of the gisting process,
 5 as I understand it, to determine what actually is
 6 covered by national security and what isn't. I will be
 7 corrected by Mr Greaney if I'm getting it wrong, but
 8 that's as I understand the position.
 9 There will inevitably , when things are gisted out,
 10 which means those are the things which we heard which
 11 are not covered by national security, it will inevitably
 12 raise other questions in people's minds because the
 13 derivation of what information is gisted out may well
 14 come from national security matters. Therefore, as
 15 I say, it won't answer all your questions, and it will
 16 raise other questions as well, but all I can say is
 17 I have undertaken that so far as things were not covered
 18 by national security , and we have reconsidered that on
 19 the basis of the evidence, it will be gisted out to you.
 20 MR GREANEY: I know Mr Cooper has two points, but just to
 21 address his first and understandable issue. Sir,
 22 you have correctly understood where we are at the
 23 moment. The inquiry legal team has identified material
 24 which we believe can be broken out into open. We
 25 consider the appropriate way is by way of gisting .

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1 We have prepared a gist. That gist currently rests with
 2 those who have, if I can put it this way, equity in the
 3 material, namely MI5 and Counter-terrorism Policing.
 4 We expect an initial response from them by the end
 5 of this week and we're confident they will meet that
 6 date. However, it will not be possible to finalise the
 7 position, if an agreed position can be reached,
 8 in relation to the gist until the transcripts are
 9 available and there has been some unavoidable delay.
 10 So sir, can I be clear, there has not yet been any
 11 ruling by you. There is a proposal from the inquiry
 12 legal team. If that is agreed there will not need to be
 13 a ruling; if it is not agreed, there may well need to be
 14 a ruling by you, sir , at some stage. We understand the
 15 acute concern there is in relation to the last 3 weeks.
 16 We will deal with all of this as quickly as we possibly
 17 can.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper, can I also indicate that
 19 I will , of course, do the ruling . That is not
 20 necessarily an end of the matter. My ruling will be
 21 capable of being appealed. So I can't guarantee that
 22 enormous (inaudible) will take place but we'll do our
 23 best.
 24 MR COOPER: My observation, let me make it clear, was not
 25 meant to be in any way a criticism either of you, sir ,

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1 or indeed my learned friends. We know the process is
 2 being assiduously dealt with. It's just a matter to
 3 touch upon now.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: People need to know. It's well they
 5 understand and it's well that they don't have
 6 expectations that can't be met. So thank you for
 7 bringing it --
 8 MR COOPER: We'll see how the matter progresses.
 9 The other matter was simply this: a number of core
 10 participants, and certainly the families, indicated
 11 quite a comprehensive list of questions that we urged
 12 upon the inquiry to be asked of the security services.
 13 Can we presume that all those questions were asked and,
 14 if some weren't, in due course could we have notice of
 15 those that weren't?
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: My understanding is they all have been
 17 asked.
 18 MR COOPER: That's reassuring.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I will be corrected if I'm wrong.
 20 MR GREANEY: Every question was asked that the families
 21 wished to be asked of the appropriate witness or
 22 witnesses.
 23 MR COOPER: Thank you.
 24 MR GREANEY: Sir, may I echo your observation that the last
 25 3 weeks have been a challenging period for all involved

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1 within it, but I ought also to say that we consider that
 2 we have had a high level of cooperation from both those
 3 who represent MI5, those who represent Counter-terrorism
 4 Policing, and indeed the witnesses from those
 5 organisations.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That doesn't indicate it hasn't been
 7 anything but a challenging process on all sides.
 8 MR GREANEY: Absolutely not.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 10 MR GREANEY: But for the purposes of balance, it was
 11 appropriate I said that.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Absolutely, and I think in some ways
 13 we have been breaking new ground in what we have been
 14 doing. We'll see how much of that we can get out.
 15 MR GREANEY: I am sure that's right, sir. Let's hope as
 16 much as possible.
 17 Having given that update, we will resume chapter 13,
 18 our consideration of the radicalisation of Salman Abedi.
 19 The first witness will be Mr Alzoubare Mohammed. He
 20 will be called by Mr Henderson.
 21 MR ALZOUBARE MOHAMMED (sworn)
 22 Questions from MR HENDERSON
 23 MR HENDERSON: Good morning. Hopefully you have a copy of
 24 a bundle of papers in front of you and also can see the
 25 screen. And do you have some water as well?

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1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. Thank you. Could you please state your full name for
 3 the inquiry?
 4 A. Before I start, I would like to send my respects and
 5 condolences to the families. I hope that today a few
 6 things will be clearer in my regards.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We hope so too, thank you.
 8 MR HENDERSON: Thank you very much. Please could you
 9 confirm your full name for the inquiry?
 10 A. My name is Alzoubare Mohammed.
 11 Q. Thank you, Mr Mohammed.
 12 Can I start by understanding a little bit of your
 13 background. I understand you were born in London;
 14 is that right?
 15 A. That's right.
 16 Q. And you lived there for the first few years of your
 17 life?
 18 A. That's right.
 19 Q. When abouts did you move to Manchester?
 20 A. Exactly? About 2014/2015.
 21 Q. Why was that? Why did you make the move?
 22 A. There was a request from my parents due to an incident
 23 that happened when I was younger, where I was stabbed,
 24 and they felt it was better for me to move with my
 25 father.

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1 Q. Is your family from Libya originally?
 2 A. That's right.
 3 Q. Did you therefore, when you moved to Manchester, get to
 4 know other people in the Libyan community here in
 5 Manchester?
 6 A. That's right.
 7 Q. And did you get to know quite a lot of people in the
 8 Libyan community here, particularly in South Manchester?
 9 A. It's the Libyan community, we got to know each other.
 10 Q. We'd really like your help then in understanding that
 11 community a bit better and you might be well placed to
 12 help us with that given that you sort of moved into it
 13 and therefore got to know quite a few people as an
 14 adult.
 15 First of all, in the lead-up to the Libyan Civil
 16 War, so that started obviously in 2011 and then has
 17 sadly carried on since. Was the Libyan community in
 18 Manchester pro-Gaddafi, anti-Gaddafi, or a mix?
 19 A. It's a mix.
 20 Q. Were you aware of anyone who you got to know in the
 21 community going to fight in the Libyan Civil War?
 22 A. I wouldn't state names, but it was known to the
 23 UK Government and everyone that a lot of people went to
 24 Libya.
 25 Q. Why did they do that, as far as you were aware?

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1 A. As far as the UK Government, they allowed them to go
2 there to fight Gaddafi.
3 Q. So you have said that's as far as the government is
4 concerned, but in your view, as part of the community
5 did people say why they went? What was the impression
6 ---
7 A. It was obvious: they were against Gaddafi.
8 Q. Did you speak to anyone who had gone and done that and
9 asked them about their experiences?
10 A. No.
11 Q. Not at all?
12 A. (Shakes head).
13 Q. Have you yourself travelled back to Libya at any point
14 in the last 10 years?
15 A. Yes. I recently returned for this inquiry from Libya.
16 Q. So you've been back recently?
17 A. Yes.
18 Q. What did you do when you were there?
19 A. Visiting family, having a break, and then I got stuck
20 there due to corona.
21 Q. Did you ever consider getting involved in the civil war
22 in any way?
23 A. No.
24 Q. Did you experience anything of the problems that are
25 going on out in Libya at the moment as a result of the

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1 civil war?
2 A. Of course it's affected the Libyan community, but
3 personally, no.
4 Q. Can I ask you just one detail about that, Mr Mohammed.
5 I understand on 25 May 2017, you were arrested. We
6 don't need to go into the details of that, it wasn't
7 directly related to the attack on the arena. But when
8 you were arrested, the police found some paper in one of
9 your bags, including a series of drawings of things like
10 swords, of a gun, of a tank and your explanation of that
11 was it was doodles or drawings just to do with Libya.
12 Can you explain that a little bit? What was your reason
13 for drawing that? What did it say about your time in
14 Libya?
15 A. I'd actually like to go into the arrest itself because
16 I was arrested based on discrimination because of
17 a rucksack, if you want to go into the details of that
18 arrest.
19 Q. I wasn't planning to go into all the details of it ---
20 A. I was discriminated during that arrest.
21 Q. Okay. Could you just tell us a little about your
22 explanation of what was found and what it tells us
23 about ---
24 A. That picture that was found wasn't found in a rucksack,
25 it was found in the flat, and it was in regards to the

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1 situation that's going on in Libya.
2 Q. Right. In what way, what was it --- why were you doing
3 those drawings?
4 A. I can't explain exactly, but it was just doodling at the
5 time.
6 Q. Okay. Moving forward then a few years, by the time you
7 moved to Manchester --- you said it was about 2014/2015;
8 is that right?
9 A. That's right.
10 Q. By that point, the civil war had started up again.
11 There had also been the emergence of the group calling
12 itself Islamic State in Syria and Iraq by that point,
13 hadn't there?
14 A. Mm--hm.
15 Q. And Islamic State also emerged to some extent in Libya
16 around that time, didn't it?
17 A. Okay.
18 Q. Can you help us, what was the attitude of other people
19 that you knew in the Libyan community here in Manchester
20 about Islamic State at that point?
21 A. With regards to the Libyan community I know people that
22 personally fought against ISIS in Libya itself. That's
23 what I've got to say in regards to that.
24 Q. Did you come across anyone who was more supportive of
25 them?

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1 A. We didn't really talk about it here. But I'll tell you
2 from my personal experience that I know people that
3 fought against ISIS.
4 Q. What are your personal views about Islamic State?
5 A. What can I say? It's obvious. They cause problems
6 in the region. They cause problems in Libya. And like
7 I said, people that I know personally fought against
8 these people.
9 Q. Have your views changed over time as you found out more
10 about them and what they've been doing in Libya and
11 elsewhere?
12 A. In regards to?
13 Q. As you have found out more about Islamic State, seen
14 them on the news and heard from people what they do, as
15 that changed your views of them?
16 A. I made my position clear that they've caused problems in
17 the area.
18 Q. Okay. Can we move on then, please, to, a bit more
19 specifically, your relationship with Salman Abedi. When
20 did you first meet Salman Abedi?
21 A. I don't know exactly, but when I used to come as
22 a child, visiting my father, I knew of him. When
23 I moved up in 2015 or 2014, that's when I got to know
24 him.
25 Q. So did your father and his father, Ramadan Abedi, have

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1 a pre-existing relationship?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. And do you know what that relationship was, were they
 4 just friends?
 5 A. They were friends from the Libyan community.
 6 Q. Did you ever become aware, either as a child or when you
 7 moved up to Manchester more recently, of Ramadan Abedi's
 8 views on politics and religion?
 9 A. No, he's well older than me and I wouldn't sit with him
 10 and talk and whatnot.
 11 Q. Did you get any sense of whether he held extremist views
 12 or violent views?
 13 A. No.
 14 Q. Did you ever become aware of any links between him and
 15 a group called the LIFG, the Libyan Islamic Fighting
 16 Group?
 17 A. No.
 18 Q. Have you heard of that group?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. And can you give us an idea of what you have heard about
 21 them?
 22 A. All I know is that I've heard about them on the news,
 23 but that's it.
 24 Q. Have you become aware of anyone in the Libyan community
 25 here in Manchester who's got links with them?

13

1 A. No.
 2 Q. Let's come back to the Abedi brothers themselves then.
 3 When you moved up to Manchester more recently, did you
 4 get to know Salman Abedi as a friend?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Just give us a sense, how did you get to know him? What
 7 kind of things did you do together?
 8 A. Initially we'd play football, probably twice, three
 9 times a week. We'd watch football at his. He used to
 10 cook. We used to go eat at his. That's it.
 11 Q. What kind of things would you talk about?
 12 A. Like I said, football, the general things that lads
 13 would talk about.
 14 Q. Did you know his brothers as well?
 15 A. Yes.
 16 Q. So the older brother Ismail Abedi?
 17 A. Yes, but I wasn't too close with them, but I knew of
 18 them, yes.
 19 Q. Did you know the younger brother, Hashem Abedi, as well?
 20 A. Yes.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Tell us how old you are about this time?
 22 A. Probably about 19.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 24 MR HENDERSON: Did you ever get a sense -- you said you were
 25 mainly just talking socially about things like football

14

1 and so on, but did you ever talk a bit more about
 2 politics and what's going on in the world?
 3 A. Like I said, being Libyan and our background, if
 4 something occurred in the day or whatnot, we may have
 5 spoken about it, but that wasn't the main topic that we
 6 would just sit down and talk about, if that makes sense.
 7 Q. When things like that came up, so let's say something's
 8 happened in the news to do with the civil war in Libya
 9 or there's a terrorist attack somewhere, some form of
 10 discrimination, something that prompts conversation, did
 11 you get a sense of what Salman Abedi's views were at
 12 that time?
 13 A. Then it was -- I wouldn't remember, to be honest with
 14 you, but it was more general and we would talk about
 15 what happened on the day and we talked about whatever
 16 we were talking about then, just getting on with the
 17 day.
 18 Q. Did he ever say anything that made you think he had very
 19 strong views or even extremist views?
 20 A. Not at the time, no.
 21 Q. You say not at the time, so are we talking here about
 22 when you first moved to Manchester, those first couple
 23 of years, sort of 2015 time?
 24 A. You could say that, yes.
 25 Q. Did you see any change in him between when you first

15

1 moved and became friends and then late 2016/2017?
 2 A. Maybe in that period he distanced himself from the lads
 3 a bit, but... yeah.
 4 Q. Okay. Can you help us with that a little bit? What do
 5 you mean by distanced? What did he do?
 6 A. He would probably go to the mosque more often, he'd
 7 probably go to the gym whilst we were doing whatever
 8 we were doing.
 9 Q. Did his behaviour change? Were there certain things he
 10 stopped doing or started doing more?
 11 A. Not that I recall, but...
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Did he carry on playing football with
 13 you?
 14 A. I personally stopped playing football.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Right.
 16 MR HENDERSON: Did you get the sense that anyone was worried
 17 about him or thought it was odd?
 18 A. Not really, no.
 19 Q. Was there anyone -- did he start hanging out with or
 20 talking with different people from the group that you
 21 originally knew him as part of?
 22 A. No.
 23 Q. Did you get any sense of who might have been the sort of
 24 key influences on him, who the kind of main people in
 25 his life were, family, friends, anything like that?

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1 A. No, no.
 2 Q. Did you get any sense -- did he ever refer to things
 3 that he'd read or heard or listened to or watched online
 4 or other kind of media that made you think, that's kind
 5 of interesting or that's strange?
 6 A. Not that I recall, to be honest, no.
 7 Q. Let me move on then to some other relationships in the
 8 same, I think, group of friends. Is it right that one
 9 of your cousins is a man named Abdalraouf Ali?
 10 A. That's correct.
 11 Q. Can you describe, what's the exact relationship between
 12 the two of you?
 13 A. He's my second cousin.
 14 Q. How would you describe your relationship with him? Are
 15 you close to him?
 16 A. It's a good relationship, I see him till today.
 17 Q. What kind of things do you do together, talk about?
 18 A. General things, work, future.
 19 Q. Do you have any idea of his views about the Libyan Civil
 20 War or what's going on there?
 21 A. Like I said, we talk about it there and here when it
 22 pops up, but we don't sit there and just talk about
 23 politics and whatnot. We've got other things to get on
 24 with, do you know what I mean?
 25 Q. I understand. Have you ever got a sense though, of what

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1 his views are on groups like Islamic State?
 2 A. No. He doesn't support them, if that's what you're
 3 trying to indicate.
 4 Q. And how do you know that?
 5 A. Because like I said previously, in Libya we know people
 6 that fought against these people, so we don't support
 7 that ideology, if that makes sense to you.
 8 Q. You have mentioned before that, yes, you know some
 9 people who have actually gone out to fight against them.
 10 A. Not from here: they're in Libya.
 11 Q. Who are already in Libya?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. Are they fighting for groups? Obviously, sadly, it
 14 seems we have a lot of different factions at the moment.
 15 Are they fighting or other groups or other factions
 16 within the civil war?
 17 A. Without getting into details of what factions and
 18 whatnot, you just need to know that they were fighting
 19 ISIS.
 20 Q. Right. Do you know anyone in the community who's
 21 actively tried to support those people out in Libya?
 22 A. Not really. Libya is a muddle right now -- no.
 23 Q. Okay. Just coming back to your cousin, Abdalraouf Ali,
 24 has he ever encouraged you to support any group out in
 25 Libya or --

18

1 A. No.
 2 Q. -- get involved in fighting or anything like that?
 3 A. No.
 4 Q. Let me ask then about a few other people, if I may.
 5 Same sort of questions.
 6 We've already had evidence, in fact, from
 7 a gentleman called Ahmed Taghdi. He has come and helped
 8 the inquiry earlier. Do you know Mr Taghdi?
 9 A. Yes.
 10 Q. Again, how would you describe your relationship with
 11 him?
 12 A. It was a good relationship. That's it.
 13 Q. Just a friend?
 14 A. Just a friend, yes.
 15 Q. Again, do you have any sense from him whether he holds
 16 strong views about what's happening in Libya?
 17 A. Like I said previously, we'd talk about it if it popped
 18 up, but it wasn't like the main concern for us, if that
 19 makes sense.
 20 Q. Another person, Ayoub Sadigh.
 21 A. Yes.
 22 Q. Another friend?
 23 A. Yes.
 24 Q. Again, how did you get to know him?
 25 A. I got to know him after I moved up to Manchester.

19

1 I didn't know him from before, to be honest.
 2 Q. Right.
 3 A. That's it.
 4 Q. Did you know Mr Taghdi from when you were moving up and
 5 down as a child?
 6 A. I knew of him, but I got to know him after I moved up.
 7 Q. Right. But Mr Sadigh you only got to know when you
 8 moved up here?
 9 A. That's right.
 10 Q. And then finally I was going to ask you about
 11 Elyas Elmehdi.
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. Again, someone from knew from childhood or someone you
 14 knew when you came up?
 15 A. I knew of him but when I moved up to Manchester, that's
 16 when I got to know him.
 17 Q. Were you all part of the same friendship group?
 18 A. You could say that, yes.
 19 Q. Again, what kind of things would you do together, play
 20 football?
 21 A. Yes.
 22 Q. Anything else? Was there anything in particular that
 23 you would talk about or do together other than that?
 24 A. We'd socialise, do what lads do, but nothing political,
 25 nothing that would -- yeah.

20

1 Q. All right. Let me ask you then finally in terms of key
2 relationships about someone called Abdalraouf Abdallah.
3 How do you know him?
4 A. Like the other lads, when I moved up I knew of him, but
5 when I moved to Manchester, that's when I got to know
6 him. He's actually now considered family because
7 Abdalraouf Ali's married to his sister.
8 Q. So your second cousin is his brother-in-law?
9 A. That's right.
10 Q. You said you were aware of him before you came up to
11 Manchester.
12 A. Yes.
13 Q. Is that just because he was a sort of childhood friend
14 or did you actually --
15 A. Because he's from the community, so we'd know of each
16 other, but we only got to know each other after I moved
17 up.
18 Q. Again, what kinds of things would you talk about or do
19 with him?
20 A. Similar to everyone else, we'd talk about general
21 things.
22 Q. Were you aware he'd travelled to Libya to fight there?
23 A. Yes.
24 Q. And obviously suffered some life-changing injuries as
25 a result?

21

1 A. Yes.
2 Q. What did you and your group of friends think about that?
3 What was the sort of response to what he'd done and his
4 injuries?
5 A. Obviously, you feel a bit of sympathy to him, but that's
6 about it.
7 Q. What was the response to the fact that he'd been out
8 there fighting?
9 A. What do you want me to say? A lot of people were
10 fighting there.
11 Q. I'm genuinely interested in whether he was seen as
12 a sort of hero for going out and being a part of it or
13 whether it was seen as something that was a bit stupid
14 or whether it was something different to those.
15 A. It's something that happened and that's it. He wasn't
16 no hero, if that's what you're trying to say. We didn't
17 admire him, if that's what you're trying to say.
18 Q. Did he talk about it much?
19 A. Not really, no.
20 Q. What did he think about Islamic State?
21 A. We didn't even -- that wasn't our main topic of
22 discussion, to be honest with you.
23 Q. You say not main topic of conversation, but did it come
24 up?
25 A. It wasn't a topic that we would discuss really and

22

1 truly. If it had come up in the news, we might have,
2 but (inaudible).
3 Q. Did you ever get the sense that he had violent,
4 extremist views?
5 A. Not really because when you get to talk to this person,
6 most times conversations are not political, most times
7 we're talking about what's going on in our day-to-days,
8 if that makes sense to you.
9 Q. Were you aware though that he had helped some other
10 people from Manchester travel out to Syria to fight for
11 an extremist group?
12 A. To be honest with you, I only found out after the news
13 let it out. He didn't particularly tell us before that.
14 Q. When you say the news, do you mean the fact that he was
15 convicted --
16 A. Yes, yes.
17 Q. -- he was sentenced to prison?
18 A. Yes.
19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So he never tried to persuade you to go
20 to Syria to fight or anything like that?
21 A. No.
22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Were there discussions about what was
23 going on in Syria, the bombing of people out there and
24 things like that.
25 A. If it came up in the day we would talk about it, but it

23

1 wasn't our main topic of discussion.
2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: What was the general view about the
3 bombing going on out in Syria and the deaths of people
4 out there?
5 A. No one would be happy with that. It's a disgrace, it's
6 disgusting.
7 MR HENDERSON: After he ended up in prison, did you talk
8 about it a bit more? Did you talk to him about why he'd
9 ended up in prison?
10 A. No, he wouldn't really talk about his case, to be honest
11 with you.
12 Q. When you say he didn't talk about his case, was that
13 when he was first in prison or remand, so awaiting
14 trial, or was that even he wouldn't talk about it after
15 he'd been convicted?
16 A. When I moved to Manchester, I believe he was on bail.
17 Q. Yes.
18 A. During that period, he wouldn't talk about the case
19 whatsoever.
20 Q. Are you still friends with him today?
21 A. No, because he's in prison.
22 Q. Let's come to that. I understand you have gone to visit
23 him in prison a few times?
24 A. That's right, yes.
25 Q. And in particular, I wanted to ask you about a few

24

1 visits in 2017. So is it right that on 25 January 2017,
 2 you visited Mr Abdallah in Liverpool, at HMP Altcourse?
 3 A. I don't recall exact dates but if that's on the record
 4 then, yes.
 5 Q. And you visited I think with two other friends, someone
 6 called Emad Khalifa; does that ring a bell?
 7 A. I don't recall names, but if that's on the record, then
 8 yes.
 9 Q. Do you know Mr Khalifa?
 10 A. I know of him, yes.
 11 Q. And Khaled Elhaj Ali?
 12 A. Like I said, if it's on the record then ...
 13 Q. Can you remember this trip at all? How did you get
 14 there for instance?
 15 A. By car.
 16 Q. And why did you go?
 17 A. To visit Abdalraouf.
 18 Q. Purely as a social visit?
 19 A. Social visit, yes.
 20 Q. Did anyone sort of ask or suggest that you should go to
 21 see him?
 22 A. No.
 23 Q. What did you talk about with him?
 24 A. He's in prison, what are you going to talk about? It
 25 was a more social, more uplifting, because the guy's in

25

1 prison, you're trying to uplift his spirits, if that
 2 makes sense.
 3 Q. Yes. By that point obviously he had been convicted,
 4 he was in prison for a few years and he knew it.
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Did he talk to you at all about why he'd ended up there?
 7 A. Like I said, he wouldn't talk about the case, but in
 8 regards to Abdalraouf Abdallah, like I told you, he
 9 became family right now (inaudible) putting the case
 10 aside, culturally there's a, what's the word... Like
 11 this person, you should support him, if that makes sense
 12 in a cultural ...
 13 Q. Absolutely. So you felt a sort of duty?
 14 A. Duty, that's the word, yes.
 15 Q. When you visited him, even if he didn't talk about his
 16 case, did he talk about religion or politics in any way?
 17 A. No, not in prison, no.
 18 Q. Were you able to just talk freely about anything you
 19 wanted when you visited him or were there other people
 20 there that meant --
 21 A. No, there wasn't (inaudible) there.
 22 Q. Okay. You visited him again on 6 March 2017. Take that
 23 from me, that's what the records show.
 24 A. Yes.
 25 Q. This time, you planned to visit with Salman Abedi;

26

1 can you remember that?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. And Salman did not turn up to that visit; do you
 4 remember that?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Can you remember why?
 7 A. No, because I was texting him, trying to find out where
 8 he was, but he didn't reply, so no.
 9 Q. So he just didn't reply even when you reminded him?
 10 A. No.
 11 Q. When you saw Salman after that, did he ever say why
 12 he hadn't been there?
 13 A. I don't recall to be honest, but I think he said
 14 something along the lines that he had something to do or
 15 something like that.
 16 Q. Were you aware -- did he ever say afterwards that he'd
 17 travelled to Birmingham that day?
 18 A. No, but I read it in the bundle that you lot gave me
 19 after.
 20 Q. But you didn't know anything about that at the time?
 21 A. No.
 22 Q. And you mentioned, you're quite right, you sent him
 23 a text message on the day to say, "Do you remember we've
 24 got this visit?"
 25 A. Yes.

27

1 Q. And you asked him to call you?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. Why did you want him to call?
 4 A. Because he wasn't picking up and we had a visit to go
 5 to. That was it.
 6 Q. And he just never replied?
 7 A. No.
 8 Q. There was one other person went with you, I think, on
 9 that day, Hamza Azzouz.
 10 A. If you say so.
 11 Q. Can you remember what you talked to Mr Abdallah about on
 12 that visit?
 13 A. Not particularly, but if we went, it was for
 14 socialising, uplifting spirits, that's it.
 15 Q. Can you remember how Mr Abdallah was at that time? Was
 16 he quite down, was he actually doing all right?
 17 Do you have any sense of how he was in those months?
 18 A. No one's happy to be in prison.
 19 Q. Of course.
 20 A. I don't particularly remember, to be honest with you.
 21 We would go there to uplift his spirits and socialise
 22 with him more often.
 23 Q. Then I think you visited Mr Abdallah a third time
 24 in that first bit of 2017, on 19 April.
 25 A. If you say so.

28

1 Q. Take it from me, I think that's right. On this
 2 occasion, you went with two people we've spoken about
 3 already, Elyas Elmehdi and Ayoub Sadigh.
 4 A. Okay.
 5 Q. Again, can you remember anything about what you talked
 6 about?
 7 A. Not exactly, but we would uplift his spirits and
 8 socialise.
 9 Q. Can you remember how he was? Was there anything you can
 10 recall?
 11 A. Not particularly. This is like years ago, so ...
 12 Q. I understand.
 13 The other contact with Mr Abdallah I want to ask you
 14 about is by phone. It's right, I think, that he called
 15 you quite a few times in April and May 2017; do you
 16 remember that?
 17 A. Yes.
 18 Q. In particular, he phoned you a few times on the 20th,
 19 21st and 22 May.
 20 A. If you say so.
 21 Q. The one call in particular I'm interested in is on the
 22 afternoon of 22 May. He phoned you and I think the
 23 phone records show it was a long conversation, about
 24 38 minutes.
 25 A. Okay.

29

1 Q. Can you remember at all what that conversation was
 2 about?
 3 A. Not particularly, but he would call all the time because
 4 he was bored in prison. We would talk about what was
 5 going on outside, like general things that uplift him
 6 and more often if we would call me, I'd be around the
 7 lads, so it wouldn't be only me talking to him. That
 8 would be the reason for the phone call being so long, if
 9 that makes sense.
 10 Q. Would you put the call on speaker and all speak to him,
 11 hand it round? How would that work?
 12 A. It depends. More times it would be on speaker.
 13 Sometimes if someone wanted to speak -- that was the
 14 reason for the phone call being so long.
 15 Q. Would he be calling you but essentially trying to call
 16 the whole group of friends; is that the idea?
 17 A. Not necessarily because he had other numbers, but if he
 18 had called me, most times we'd be around and we'd talk
 19 to him.
 20 Q. The other set of conversations I want to ask you about
 21 are ones with Salman Abedi.
 22 A. Okay.
 23 Q. Obviously, you were friends, there's been contact, we've
 24 seen that in the records. But the one I want to ask you
 25 about is in May 2017. Did you realise that Salman had

30

1 left the UK on 15 April 2017?
 2 A. The particular date I didn't know, but I knew he'd left.
 3 Q. Did you know where he'd gone?
 4 A. To Libya. That's what we was told, yes.
 5 Q. So he told you he'd gone to Libya?
 6 A. Not him, but later on I found out that he was in Libya.
 7 Q. Did you find out why he'd gone?
 8 A. No.
 9 Q. Did anybody ask why or wonder why?
 10 A. Not really, because he would travel to Libya from
 11 before, so it wasn't like something shocking or
 12 surprising if he went back to Libya or anyone went to
 13 Libya.
 14 Q. Did you get any sense of how long he was planning to go
 15 to Libya for?
 16 A. No to be honest, no.
 17 Q. We understand from the phone records, he called you on
 18 15 May 2017 from Libya.
 19 A. That's right.
 20 Q. Do you remember that phone call?
 21 A. Not the specifics, but I remember the phone call, yes.
 22 Q. Were you expecting a call from him?
 23 A. No.
 24 Q. And did you recognise the number?
 25 A. I recognised the code being Libyan. The number itself,

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1 that's the first time that ...
 2 Q. Okay. Can you remember anything of what he talked to
 3 you about?
 4 A. From what I remember, it was a general conversation, how
 5 he'd been, how's the family, I asked him how's Libya, he
 6 asked me what's going on here and that was it.
 7 Q. Did he give any sense -- can you remember any sense of
 8 him being a bit different or --
 9 A. Not particularly. But I recall in my statement that the
 10 police, they asked me, but there was nothing....
 11 Q. When you were interviewed by the police, you said, with
 12 hindsight, after what happened, you thought he might
 13 have been saying goodbye.
 14 A. Probably, yes.
 15 Q. Was there any sense of that at the time?
 16 A. There was no indication whatsoever, but in hindsight I'm
 17 thinking, this guy knows what's going to do, he's
 18 probably calling -- and that's it.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Did you discuss when he was intending to
 20 come back?
 21 A. No.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Or whether he was going to come back?
 23 A. No, because we thought he was still in Libya.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I know he's in Libya, but you're
 25 a friend of his from Manchester, you'd be interested to

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1 know, wouldn't you, are you coming back, if so, when,
 2 when will we see you again?
 3 A. To be honest, I can't remember the exact details of the
 4 conversation, but it was general. I don't think I did,
 5 no.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 7 MR HENDERSON: Following the conversation, I think you sent
 8 back and forth a few messages with him.
 9 A. That's right.
 10 Q. Do you remember that?
 11 A. That's right.
 12 Q. On an application called Viber, which I think is quite
 13 a common application to use, particularly to overseas
 14 people who are in Libya or elsewhere?
 15 A. That's correct.
 16 Q. One of the things he asked for was the number of
 17 Elyas Elmehdi.
 18 A. That's correct.
 19 Q. One of your mutual friends?
 20 A. That's correct.
 21 Q. Can you remember, did he say why?
 22 A. No, he just wanted his number.
 23 Q. And you obviously gave him the number. Did you have
 24 follow-up, was there any suggestion of why he wanted to
 25 contact him after that?

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1 A. No.
 2 Q. Round about the same time, in fact I think it was
 3 a little later on the morning of 22 May itself,
 4 22 May 2017, you also got in touch with Ismail Abedi.
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Do you remember that?
 7 A. Not particularly, but when I looked at the bundle --
 8 Q. So you have had a chance to look at the reference to the
 9 messages?
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. And you sent back and forth some messages with
 12 Ismail Abedi, including an image?
 13 A. Yes.
 14 Q. Can you remember what that image was?
 15 A. Not really, but after finding out about it, it was to do
 16 with a bike because he asked me to buy -- in my area,
 17 I'm known to... I can get bikes, so he asked me that he
 18 wanted a bike so I made an enquiry in regards to that.
 19 Q. A pedal bike or motorbike?
 20 A. Pedal bike.
 21 Q. There is again a bit of back and forth following that
 22 image. Was that to do with the purchase of the bike or
 23 something else?
 24 A. I don't exactly remember the conversation, but it
 25 probably would have been, yes.

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1 Q. Again, at that point did you get any sense from
 2 Ismail Abedi that there was any concern about his family
 3 or about Salman or anyone else?
 4 A. At the time, no.
 5 Q. The final topic I want to cover with you, Mr Mohammed,
 6 is just your movements in the few days leading up to the
 7 attack. That's not to suggest that you were involved
 8 with it, but to understand who's there and what that
 9 group of friends were doing at the time. So I think
 10 you've had a chance to review some of the images of CCTV
 11 that were mentioned in the bundle; is that right?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. The first set of images you've hopefully seen show
 14 a visit by you and some others to Royston Court, which
 15 is a flat in South Manchester. Do you remember that?
 16 A. If it's in the images...
 17 Q. I can bring it up if you want but let me just remind
 18 you. It's on 20 May 2017 --
 19 A. If you say so, yes.
 20 Q. You went to Royston Court and I think you went with
 21 Elyas Elmehdi.
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. And met with Ismail Abedi and someone called Mohammed
 24 Akram Ramadan. Does that all make sense?
 25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. And can you remember that at all?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. Just help us, what were you doing there that day?
 4 A. It was in regards to -- I remember something to do with
 5 the tyres being flat on Elyas' car at the time. So we
 6 went to go change them.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Sorry, whose tyres were flat?
 8 A. Elyas' tyres were flat.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: On his car?
 10 A. Yes.
 11 MR HENDERSON: And that car was at Royston Court, was it?
 12 A. That's right.
 13 Q. Had anybody in that group heard from Salman Abedi at
 14 that time?
 15 A. No.
 16 Q. So was anyone aware that he was back in the UK?
 17 A. We thought that he was in Libya.
 18 Q. Then I think on the next day, 21 May 2017, you went to
 19 a different flat, Devell House; do you remember that?
 20 A. If you say so, yes.
 21 Q. Can you remember what you were doing there on that
 22 evening?
 23 A. It wouldn't have been a surprise for me to be there.
 24 Q. Why not?
 25 A. Because we would go there to socialise. If you would

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1 look at CCTV before that, you'd see me going in and out.
 2 Q. That may answer the next question. You returned to
 3 Devell House on 22 May and then again on 23 May?
 4 A. Okay.
 5 Q. Can you remember who you were visiting or socialising
 6 with?
 7 A. Details of names, but I would go there to socialise —
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. You're going to somebody's flat?
 9 A. Yes.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Whose flat were you going to?
 11 A. I believe Mr Blidi used to live there so we'd visit him.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: He was a friend?
 13 A. He is friend of a friend, you could say.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And then you would meet up with friends
 15 at his flat?
 16 A. Yes.
 17 MR HENDERSON: If you have been following the inquiry, you
 18 might know there was a Nissan Micra parked in
 19 Devell House; were you aware of that?
 20 A. After the news, yes.
 21 Q. And that was part of what was used by Salman and
 22 Hashem Abedi to store the materials for the bomb.
 23 A. Yes.
 24 Q. Was anyone in your group of friends aware of that car
 25 and it being there?

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1 A. Yes, because after the bombing itself, Elyas Elmehdi
 2 personally spoke to me about it.
 3 Q. What did he say about it?
 4 A. Because at the time, he thought he was doing a favour
 5 for Salman by leaving the car at Devell House. But
 6 after the bombing, he was shocked because this car's
 7 connected to Mr Salman, so he showed concern in regards
 8 to that. That's it.
 9 Q. So did anyone in your group of friends have any idea
 10 what Salman was trying to use the car for?
 11 A. Of course not.
 12 Q. Did he talk in any way about it or what their plans were
 13 with it before he left for Libya?
 14 A. Who?
 15 Q. Salman.
 16 A. No. I didn't even know that he'd parked it there until
 17 after the bombing and Elyas spoke to me about it,
 18 showing concern, but that's it.
 19 Q. Thank you, Mr Mohammed. Just a final question then to
 20 wrap this up.
 21 Was there anything in the way that Salman or
 22 Hashem Abedi behaved in those months before they went to
 23 Libya that just appeared out of the ordinary or strange
 24 or gave any of you or your group of friends concern
 25 about them?

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1 A. Like I said, they distanced themselves, but we were
 2 doing other things, so it wasn't like something that
 3 I would concentrate on, what was Salman doing. Does
 4 that make sense?
 5 Q. In particular, was there any concern that when they went
 6 to Libya, they were planning to do anything when they
 7 went out there?
 8 A. No.
 9 MR HENDERSON: Thank you very much, Mr Mohammed. I think
 10 that's all my questions?
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Help me a bit: we're obviously trying to
 12 find out what could have caused Salman to do this
 13 appalling thing. And I believe you were shocked at the
 14 fact that he did this as well; is that right?
 15 A. Of course.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It came as a complete surprise to you.
 17 We know that one of the causes of problems and people
 18 going out from the United Kingdom to fight was the
 19 setting-up of the caliphate and what happened after
 20 that. Was the setting-up of the caliphate something
 21 that you would talk about amongst yourselves?
 22 A. Not really, to be honest with you, no.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. You are of the Muslim faith, as
 24 we have heard, and one of the precepts of that faith,
 25 if I have understood it rightly, is the setting-up of

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1 a caliphate?
 2 A. Of course. No one is going to deny that, being Muslim.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, okay, so when it was set up in
 4 Syria —
 5 A. It wasn't set up, to be honest with you, because we've
 6 had scholars that have told us that whatever is going on
 7 there is not right.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So your teaching and your understanding
 9 is it wasn't right?
 10 A. No, the way it was set out, the way it was done wasn't
 11 the correct way, if that makes sense.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Was that the general view of your group
 13 of friends and people?
 14 A. You could say that, yes.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Were there any who were in favour of the
 16 caliphate that you knew?
 17 A. Not that I recall of, no.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: One of the consequences of the caliphate
 19 being set up was that that area was bombed by the
 20 allies. You know that and you'll have been seeing it.
 21 In the course of that, a large number of people died.
 22 Was that something which was talked about within your
 23 community and your friends?
 24 A. Not really, but if it happened on the day, we may have
 25 discussed it, but it wasn't a topic of our concern.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Some of the people who went from the
 2 United Kingdom to Syria went there to fight for IS, they
 3 say, because of the bombing which was going on.
 4 A. That's their decision, it's not mine. I can't speak for
 5 them.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand that. I'm trying to get
 7 what the atmosphere was, what could have caused this,
 8 what were the people who were concerned about that, who
 9 were saying, why should the western allies be doing this
 10 to our people, we need to take some action. Did you
 11 come across people like that?
 12 A. Not really, no.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I have real trouble with an answer which
 14 is "not really".
 15 A. No.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I would rather you say "no", if that's
 17 all right.
 18 So nothing like that, no discussion (overspeaking)
 19 you heard?
 20 A. No, because this is not what we -- this is not our
 21 ideology, if that makes sense.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Could you tell me, you don't need
 23 to of course, but do you attend the mosque?
 24 A. Not regularly, Friday to Friday.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Right. Thank you.

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1 MR HENDERSON: I understand Mr Cooper is going to lead the
 2 families' questions.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper.
 4 Questions from MR COOPER
 5 MR COOPER: I'm grateful, thank you.
 6 I ask questions on behalf of the families.
 7 I would like to go back over some ground that my
 8 learned friend covered a moment ago or a little earlier
 9 this morning about the Libyan community in Manchester
 10 and also the general community in Manchester so far as
 11 what your knowledge of it was.
 12 There is, I think we all agree, a significant and
 13 vibrant Libyan community in Manchester, isn't there?
 14 A. Yes.
 15 Q. And part of that Libyan community, and it may well be
 16 a very minority (sic) of that positive and
 17 community-minded section of people, but there's an
 18 extremist element within it, isn't there?
 19 A. What do you mean by that?
 20 Q. I mean individuals that may perhaps support what
 21 happened, if you want me to be precise, support what
 22 happened on 22 May 2017.
 23 A. No.
 24 Q. No. Are you aware, and this is a totally separate
 25 question, I wouldn't want it to be conflated with the

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1 last question, are you aware of criminal gangs in
 2 Manchester in any way? I'll ask it broadly to begin
 3 with.
 4 A. I don't wish to comment on that. I'm here to be asked
 5 about --
 6 Q. You may be and I'll be stopped, perfectly properly, if
 7 I'm wrong, but one of the issues the chair is
 8 considering in relation to radicalisation is involvement
 9 with criminal gangs.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Let me make it clear to you. All you're
 11 being asked is: do you know that there are criminal
 12 gangs in Manchester? I suspect most of us can answer
 13 that really.
 14 A. Yes, but --
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. If anything is asked of you which
 16 you think may lead to people believing you're involved
 17 in criminal gangs yourself personally, then you are
 18 perfectly entitled not to answer and say you won't
 19 answer; do you understand?
 20 A. Thank you, yes.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You don't have to involve yourself in
 22 criminal offences, as it were, or tell us that you are.
 23 But in general terms, you are aware, as I think
 24 everybody is, of criminal gangs in Manchester?
 25 A. Yes.

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1 MR COOPER: It was a deliberately broad question, sir.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's fine. I'm just explaining what
 3 the position is.
 4 MR COOPER: And criminal gangs, are you aware, in Manchester
 5 can and might be connected with extremist views
 6 in relation to terrorism? Is that anything you know
 7 about?
 8 A. No.
 9 Q. There is a link to this question, so bear with me. When
 10 you heard of atrocities in the past, not Manchester,
 11 bombs being exploded and people being killed, what do
 12 you think of that?
 13 A. What do you mean? Can you be more clear, please?
 14 Q. No, I can't. What do you think about that? I know what
 15 I'd say.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: If it's possible to refine the question
 17 a bit more, that would be a help. Bombs go off all over
 18 the world.
 19 MR COOPER: It's an introduction to a more specific question
 20 I'm about to ask. It's not just a wild question.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm not suggesting that at all. I'm
 22 trying to help the witness understand what you're
 23 getting at.
 24 MR COOPER: When you hear a bomb's gone off and people have
 25 been killed, how do you feel about that?

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1 A. Disgusted like anyone else would.
 2 Q. I'm going to ask you to look, please, at {INQ030737/18},
 3 please. This is a report by a police officer about you.
 4 A. Okay.
 5 Q. This particular document deals with the search of your
 6 home when you were arrested on 25 May 2017.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And you have had the opportunity to see
 8 this beforehand; is that right?
 9 A. I'm just looking at it.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Have you seen it before though?
 11 A. I got like at least 140 pages.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Fine.
 13 MR COOPER: It was, of course, as you'd expect, sir,
 14 highlighted.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes.
 16 MR COOPER: This deals with things that were found in your
 17 kitchen --
 18 A. Okay.
 19 Q. -- when you were arrested on 25 May 2017. There we see,
 20 in the top quarter, underneath "PC Gallagher",
 21 a notebook. It says:
 22 "This was found and written in it: White City, boom,
 23 boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom."
 24 This was covered in the intelligence interview with
 25 you and you stated that it was due to your part in

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1 a criminal gang while in White City, London.
 2 A. I don't recall this, but if you're suggesting that
 3 I want White City to be blown up, that's not the case
 4 because that's my home town.
 5 Q. Don't you worry, if I'm suggesting something like that,
 6 I'll put it directly to you. There won't be any
 7 confusion about that and that's not what I'm suggesting.
 8 A. Okay.
 9 Q. I'm simply asking you about this item that was found in
 10 your kitchen:
 11 "White City, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom,
 12 boom."
 13 And you were asked about it and you said it was due
 14 to your part in a criminal gang.
 15 A. I don't recall seeing this. If you could bring me the
 16 image, I'd appreciate that.
 17 Q. No, you may well know that the police have said they
 18 have no images. I don't know whether you knew that.
 19 I'm asking you about the police officer's record. If
 20 you're saying the police officer's record is wrong, say
 21 so.
 22 A. I would like to see it. I'm not going to tell you it's
 23 wrong or right. I would like to see what's there.
 24 Q. You have come here to help us and you very grandly said
 25 at the start of your evidence you're here to help the

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1 families --
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's an unfortunate comment.
 3 MR COOPER: (Overspeaking) you said you're here to help the
 4 families, so help the families. It's a rather graphic
 5 expression:
 6 "White City, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom."
 7 Surely you remember writing that, don't you?
 8 A. No, I don't, no, I don't, no.
 9 Q. You don't?
 10 A. No.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Do you know what it means? When you
 12 were writing it down, assuming you did, and they found
 13 the note, what do you think you had in mind?
 14 A. It was probably a doodle, but I'd like to see that
 15 image.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It could be relating to gunfire between
 17 gangs?
 18 A. I don't see where you're going with this.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm not going anywhere. We are just
 20 trying to find out what "boom, boom, boom, boom, boom"
 21 means.
 22 A. It definitely does not mean that I have an intention of
 23 blowing up White City if that's what you're trying to
 24 get at.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think it may be that because criminal

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1 gangs sometimes in London shoot each other, that may be
 2 what it's about.
 3 A. I don't like to comment into that.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I don't think he has to comment
 5 either.
 6 MR COOPER: I'm not suggesting, let me make it clear, that
 7 you were involved in any atrocity in White City.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, no, I think it is because he
 9 apparently said it was due to his part in the criminal
 10 gangs while in White City, which might involve criminal
 11 offences, which therefore -- I'm afraid I don't know
 12 what's in the interview so I can't say. Am I right, is
 13 there a lawyer here representing you?
 14 MS MORRIS: Yes, sir.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You will know the background of all
 16 these documents much better than I do, so don't hesitate
 17 to help us.
 18 MS MORRIS: I think Mr Mohammed is perfectly entitled to say
 19 he wants to see documents if he's being asked about
 20 them.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. I think it's not possible to see
 22 them, is it?
 23 MR COOPER: I saw Mr Suter leave. If the document is
 24 available, then obviously we'll assist the witness. I'm
 25 just giving him an opportunity of answering the

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1 questions. If he chooses not to, that's a matter for
 2 him.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 4 MR COOPER: Let me move on to a few other specific matters
 5 if I can. Again, touching upon ---
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can I just say this to you: you have
 7 said you'd like to clear the air as far as you're
 8 concerned.
 9 A. Of course.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And we're very keen for you to clear the
 11 air and for people to understand better, okay? So we're
 12 giving you that opportunity to do that now.
 13 A. I understand your position, Mr Chairman, but I feel like
 14 the questions being said to me is as a potential suspect
 15 or someone who at least has knowledge, and I'm none of
 16 them if that makes sense.
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We understand that.
 18 MR COOPER: And this is your opportunity of making that
 19 clear.
 20 A. I am.
 21 Q. The drawings of the guns and tanks that my learned
 22 friend put to you a little earlier. Your evidence was
 23 you can't explain exactly why you drew guns and tanks
 24 following your visit. Can you think a little more
 25 carefully why the particular topic of guns and tanks was

1 something that caused you to draw pictures of them?
 2 A. If I drew them, like I said in one of my statements, it
 3 was in regards to what was going on in Libya at the
 4 time.
 5 Q. And your view of Islamic State is that it is an
 6 abhorrent organisation; is that right?
 7 A. Yes.
 8 Q. Do you agree with me, Islamic State is an abhorrent
 9 organisation?
 10 A. Yes, I made that clear from the beginning.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, that's fine.
 12 MR COOPER: Thank you. That's helpful to hear it.
 13 And you've indicated in your evidence, they cause
 14 problems in the area. What sort of problems do you say
 15 they cause?
 16 A. It's all over the news, they kill more Muslims than...
 17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: When did you go to Libya?
 18 A. I go back and forth.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: This is not a criticism. I really want
 20 your help about what it was like in Libya when you went
 21 there.
 22 A. Recent?
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes. When have you last been there?
 24 You have been there very recently, haven't you?
 25 A. Yes.

1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Were you there in 2017?
 2 A. No, not 2017.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: When were you otherwise there?
 4 A. Late 2019, going into 2020, and then I came back.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Whereabouts were you in Libya?
 6 A. In the west, like Tripoli side.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. Were IS to be found in Tripoli?
 8 A. They were not found in Libya at the time at all.
 9 They're not in Libya. If they were, they're probably in
 10 deserts hiding but they're not apparent.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: In 2019?
 12 A. 2019, yes.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 14 MR COOPER: You were making regular trips to Libya. From
 15 what period of time, when did you first start visiting
 16 Libya?
 17 A. As a child to go and visit family, but exactly when
 18 I can't recall.
 19 Q. As an adult when did you start visiting Libya?
 20 A. I made a visit one time in 2013.
 21 Q. Again, to help you and me, let's go back to that
 22 document again, which I'll be heavily referring to,
 23 which is {INQ030737/1}, right at the start, please. And
 24 to be clear to the inquiry, as you will notice, sir,
 25 this is a report of DC James Hempstock regarding

1 intelligence surrounding this witness.
 2 I'm going to give you an opportunity of dealing with
 3 a few matters raised. Let's go to the start of it.
 4 MR HENDERSON: I'm sorry to interrupt, Mr Cooper, but if
 5 he is intending to refer to this particular document
 6 again, it's not a document which is on the evidence
 7 proposal for this witness. What was put instead are
 8 a couple of other police reports rather than this one,
 9 that contain similar information. The witness will not
 10 have seen this particular document.
 11 MR COOPER: Thank you for that. What I'll do is simply ask
 12 questions based on this, but it doesn't need a reference
 13 to it.
 14 Don't bother confusing yourself with that, please,
 15 sir. It contains, obviously, material which appears in
 16 other documents identically, but we won't bog you down
 17 with the technicalities.
 18 But it's right that you have travelled to Libya.
 19 When most recently did you travel to Libya?
 20 A. I just came back from Libya last year.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You got stuck there because of
 22 coronavirus?
 23 A. Yes.
 24 MR COOPER: Do you have family and friends out there?
 25 A. Of course.

1 Q. All right. A number of names have been mentioned and
 2 you've been asked about your connections with them.
 3 Mr Elyas Elmehdi for instance, he's a friend of yours?
 4 A. Yes.
 5 Q. And is he a good friend?
 6 A. Yes.
 7 Q. So for instance, and the records are there, in this
 8 document I can show you what page it appears at, and
 9 they're replicated elsewhere, for instance with him you
 10 had 65 calls between you and him between 30 April 2017
 11 and 19 May 2017. So 65 calls, so the police inform us,
 12 between you and Elyas Elmehdi between 30 April 2017 and
 13 19 May 2017. Can you help us, can you help the chair
 14 with what you were talking about in all those calls
 15 during that relatively short period of time?
 16 A. I don't recall 65 phone calls, but if your records show
 17 that, then that's the case. But he was a close friend,
 18 we would call each other. It wasn't irregular.
 19 Q. Again to assist those representing you, they'll see the
 20 information I've obtained is from the document
 21 {INQ030737/15}, if it assists my learned friend in
 22 simply seeing what I'm referring to there.
 23 It certainly seems that during that period of time,
 24 up to 19 May 2017 from the end of April 2017, you and he
 25 had a lot to talk about; would you at least agree with

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1 that?
 2 A. If you looked at my records before them dates, you would
 3 see regular phone calls as well, so that won't be
 4 a surprise.
 5 Q. That's helpful, thank you. So as well as the 65 calls
 6 that I just referred to, before then there were many,
 7 many calls before then as well, you say?
 8 A. That won't be a surprise.
 9 Q. What sort of things? I'm going to ask you similar
 10 questions about other individuals to build up a picture
 11 of your conversations. What sort of things were you
 12 talking to him about, football?
 13 A. Regular things that we would talk about, about general
 14 things, our day-to-days.
 15 Q. You've given that answer to other people about other
 16 people as well, which I'm going to come back to, but
 17 I want to get a picture of the sorts of things you were
 18 talking about. So far we've got football and general
 19 matters. Forgive me for trying just to dig a little
 20 deeper about that. I presume not all these people were
 21 football fans.
 22 A. To be honest most of our lads were football fans.
 23 Q. So were you talking to Mr Elmehdi about football?
 24 A. Yes, if it came up on the day.
 25 Q. Who does he support?

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1 A. Arsenal.
 2 Q. And what other matters did you speak to Mr Elmehdi
 3 about?
 4 A. A lot of matters.
 5 Q. Give any some idea, just the gist.
 6 A. Can you be more specific with your question?
 7 Q. No, because I wasn't listening to the phone call. What
 8 did you speak to Mr Elmehdi --
 9 A. (Overspeaking).
 10 Q. Pardon?
 11 A. I don't recall the phone call.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We're getting nowhere. What I would
 13 like to know is -- he's a friend, you talk to each other
 14 because you have things in common, you're going to meet
 15 up, you talked about football. Give us some idea what
 16 you and your friends would actually talk about. What
 17 did you chat about? You rang him lots of times. It may
 18 have been some of those calls didn't get through, so we
 19 quite understand that. But if you were ringing him up,
 20 just give us some idea of what you would be ringing him
 21 up for.
 22 A. Most likely when we're going to meet up.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Anything else? Any other topics of
 24 conversation?
 25 A. Topics that are -- I don't know, general topics, to be

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1 honest with you.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. It's not for me to suggest, you
 3 know what you talked to your friends about. Give us
 4 some idea of what you talk to your friends about, if you
 5 don't mind.
 6 A. With all due respect, that might implicate to other
 7 things, if that makes sense, not to do with the
 8 atrocity.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: If that's going to implicate you in
 10 criminal offences --
 11 A. Then I don't want to comment.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: So you might be talking to Mr Elmehdi
 13 about committing crime?
 14 A. Not specifically, but that would -- we would talk
 15 generally and that's it.
 16 MR COOPER: You'll forgive me, and obviously, as always,
 17 I will be guided by the chair. Simply to say, "We spoke
 18 generally", to avoid the question, I suggest that's what
 19 you are doing, is not helpful. And you've come here to
 20 be helpful, haven't you?
 21 A. In regards to showing the families that I'm not
 22 involved.
 23 Q. Indeed, you're very keen to --
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Just stop. Can you listen to me for
 25 a minute?

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1 A. Yes.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: There are obviously concerns about those
 3 people who had regular meetings or talking about
 4 Salman Abedi. There is concern about those who along
 5 with Salman Abedi went to visit someone in prison who
 6 has been convicted of sending people out to Syria to
 7 fight. There is concern about people being around
 8 Devell House at about the time that the bomb was done
 9 because the car was there.
 10 A. Okay.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's why people are interested to know
 12 why these people who you were with at the time, what
 13 your interests were, because it might look to some
 14 people that the interests might be something to do with
 15 what Salman Abedi did.
 16 A. No worries, but if you recall, I think last year,
 17 December time, when Mr Barraclough came here and gave
 18 evidence, I vividly remember him talking about what was
 19 going on in that flat and it had no association to the
 20 car itself. The details of what was going on in the
 21 flat may implicate me into other things, so I don't want
 22 to go into that, does that make sense?
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes.
 24 A. That's the only reason.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We know drug dealing was going on at the

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1 flat and you don't want to possibly implicate yourself
 2 in anything to do with drug dealing; is that right?
 3 A. You could say that.
 4 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Are you saying that?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: He doesn't have to answer the question.
 7 MR COOPER: Again, I'm not interested for my part whether
 8 you're involved with drug dealing --
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I know you're not, but he is perfectly
 10 entitled not to answer.
 11 MR COOPER: He is, sir. I'm trying to reassure him, sir,
 12 that my questions are about his conversations with
 13 people like Elyas Elmehdi and others which I'm going to
 14 press him upon, subject to --
 15 A. No problem, but that has nothing to do with the
 16 atrocity.
 17 Q. No, I'm not asking you about whether you're in
 18 connection with drug dealing, I'm asking you about a few
 19 other general matters that might have been spoken of
 20 with them.
 21 So I'll press you again: Elyas Elmehdi, putting to
 22 one side criminal matters that you might have been
 23 talking to him about, what else, apart from Arsenal and
 24 criminal matters, did you speak to him about?
 25 A. General day-to-days, and that's it.

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1 Q. That's why all these calls, the 65 at the end of April
 2 to 19 May, and you've admitted many, many beforehand,
 3 were all to do with general matters, crime and Arsenal;
 4 yes?
 5 A. That's it.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Let's move on, if that's all right by
 7 you.
 8 MR COOPER: Did he mention -- if I may, sir, on this, just
 9 this last question. Did -- at any stage, any mention in
 10 those series of calls between Elyas Elmehdi and you
 11 mention potential terrorist offences or potential
 12 bombing activity?
 13 A. No, because this is not our ideology. Does that make
 14 sense to you, Mr Cooper?
 15 Q. It's not a matter whether it makes sense to me. I'm
 16 simply asking you the questions.
 17 A. I'm telling you, that's not my ideology.
 18 Q. I'll move on.
 19 You had contact, significant contact, we suggest,
 20 with Salman Abedi, didn't you, and obviously I can refer
 21 you to the INQs if you want me to, but significant
 22 contact communicating with Salman Abedi, didn't you?
 23 A. Okay.
 24 Q. Well, you did, didn't you?
 25 A. If your records show that, then yes.

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1 Q. I can show you them, {INQ042354/385} --
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: He's a friend and you talked to him on
 3 the phone and things like that, right?
 4 A. Yes.
 5 MR COOPER: And a lot. I'm trying to assist with the case
 6 management here. A lot. You spoke to him a lot on the
 7 phone, didn't you?
 8 A. If your records show that.
 9 Q. Don't you remember doing that?
 10 A. Not particularly, but if your records show that, then
 11 that's the case.
 12 Q. Can I suggest to you, and I really don't want to
 13 exacerbate the patience of the tribunal, the way you're
 14 answering my questions does not seem too helpful?
 15 You have come here to help.
 16 A. What's not helpful? What do you want me to say.
 17 Q. Don't you know and can't you accept now that you
 18 contacted and spoke to Salman Abedi --
 19 A. I'm not denying that he was a friend, I'm not denying
 20 that I had contact.
 21 Q. Thank you. What did you speak about?
 22 A. General things. If your bundle shows, it will show
 23 a WhatsApp conversation between me and him about
 24 football further back, so conversations.
 25 Q. I am not again suggesting that you didn't mention at

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1 times football with him and even general conversation.
 2 What I am suggesting to you is that in the middle of all
 3 this general conversation and conversation about
 4 football, other matters were spoken of as well, weren't
 5 they?
 6 A. No not particularly. What are you suggesting?
 7 Q. Let me be blunt then ---
 8 A. Thank you.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, what we are really interested
 10 in --- other people have said they noticed a change in
 11 Salman Abedi.
 12 A. With all due respect, Mr Chairman, I'm not accountable
 13 for what other people have said.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I understand that, but we'd be quite
 15 interested to know, did you see any change? He became
 16 more withdrawn.
 17 A. Yes.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: More religious?
 19 A. You could say that, yes.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Well, I can say anything, but he became
 21 religious.
 22 Was he becoming more fundamentalist? Did you notice
 23 him becoming more radical?
 24 A. Not really, because we wouldn't conversate too much
 25 about it.

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1 MR COOPER: Was he a good friend of yours? I think you
 2 would accept that he was ---
 3 A. Yes, I'm not denying that.
 4 Q. Just as Mr Elmehdi was a good friend of yours,
 5 Salman Abedi was a good friend of yours as well? He was
 6 going through certainly significant changes in his
 7 outlook, wasn't he? Again I am trying to be as neutral
 8 as possible.
 9 A. Okay.
 10 Q. Did he not, as your close friend, explain to you the
 11 changes and the dilemmas, again I'll be as neutral as
 12 I can, the dilemmas and conflicts he was going through,
 13 which he clearly was? Did he not speak to you as his
 14 friend about them?
 15 A. For example?
 16 Q. Well, for example, and I'm paraphrasing it: I'm
 17 getting very angry with the West, I feel that people in
 18 Libya, good people, are being killed and damaged by the
 19 policies of the West and that's making me very angry?
 20 Did he say something like that? I'm not agreeing with
 21 that, but I'm trying to paraphrase. Something like
 22 that?
 23 A. No.
 24 Q. No. And yet we know, I suggest to you, I put it
 25 inelegantly, that's just the sort of process, of dilemma

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1 and conflict that he was going through, which led to
 2 this atrocity, I'm going to suggest to you, as his good
 3 friend, he would have spoken of these things to you, you
 4 particularly, his good friend, and ask you for your
 5 views? No?
 6 A. What's the question?
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: If your answer is no, just say no.
 8 A. No.
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm afraid barristers do sometimes make
 10 statements and tend to make them into questions.
 11 A. No then.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The inflection goes up at the end when
 13 it's a question, just so you understand. The answer is
 14 no anyway.
 15 A. No.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Cooper.
 17 MR COOPER: Did you have any cause to think that
 18 Salman Abedi was going through any crisis in his life?
 19 A. Not a crisis, no.
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Less than a crisis?
 21 A. No.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's a perfectly good question and
 23 perfectly sensible answer so far.
 24 So what, anything, any...
 25 A. He would distance himself. He wasn't like --- we

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1 wouldn't regularly see each other, if that makes sense.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Did you and your other friends say,
 3 "What's happened to Salman? We don't see him so much
 4 nowadays"?
 5 A. At the time we were doing other things. He wasn't
 6 a main --- yes, he was a friend, he wouldn't see him more
 7 often, but we'd think he was trying to be more religious
 8 and didn't want to be around us. That's how we saw it
 9 at the time.
 10 MR COOPER: I'm looking at the document that I have referred
 11 to, which is a document which contains information on
 12 other documents that you've been referred to, forgive
 13 that long approach. I'm looking at page 1 of that
 14 document for those that want to follow. About halfway
 15 down, it says this:
 16 "During his crime interview, he disclosed that
 17 Salman Abedi had contacted him a week previously from
 18 Libya. During a subsequent intelligence interview he
 19 made a comment believing it must have been his farewell
 20 call."
 21 "He made a comment believing it must been his
 22 farewell call."
 23 Did you make that comment?
 24 A. I said in my interview, in hindsight, when looking as to
 25 thinking why would he call me, I thought it was

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1 a farewell call because he must have known what he was
2 doing.
3 Q. In that farewell call, what did he say to you?
4 A. He didn't say, "I'm going to do anything". It was
5 a general conversation, "Hi, how are you doing?"
6 I asked him how's Libya, he asked me what was going on
7 here and that was it. But in hindsight I'm thinking
8 this guy knows what he was doing, I'm a good friend,
9 he was probably saying farewell.
10 Q. You accept this was a contact he had with you, he
11 contacted you a week previously from Libya and during
12 that interview, it was a farewell call. That was your
13 last conversation with him, was it?
14 A. Yes.
15 Q. And when was that?
16 A. I don't recall exactly, but it was probably around
17 a week before the atrocity.
18 Q. A week before the 22nd?
19 A. I don't know exactly, but around that time probably.
20 Q. Think carefully if you can and help us if you can.
21 In that call, which he made to you as his close friend
22 a week or so before this atrocity, what was he talking
23 about?
24 A. Like I told you already, it was a general conversation,
25 "Hi, how are you doing, how's Libya, how's the UK?",

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1 that's it.
2 Q. Hashem Abedi. You also, and again I can refer you to
3 {INQ042356/1}, {INQ042378/1}, you had numerous
4 conversations with Hashem Abedi, didn't you?
5 A. Yes.
6 Q. Was he a good friend?
7 A. He was younger than me but I knew of him, yes.
8 Q. Would you class him as a friend?
9 A. You could say that, yes.
10 Q. Yes. When you were speaking to Hashem Abedi on these
11 occasions, what did you speak to him about?
12 A. I don't particularly — I didn't have particularly
13 regular conversations with Hashem, he was younger than
14 me, but most of the time it would be to meet up or
15 generally, to be honest. I wouldn't recall exactly.
16 Q. During the course of the conversations you had with him,
17 did he mention or say anything which might lead you to
18 believe he would become a murderer of multiple people?
19 A. Hashem?
20 Q. Yes.
21 A. No.
22 Q. You visited also, as you have told us, Mr Abdallah in
23 prison.
24 A. That's right.
25 Q. And you said in evidence today that he's now considered

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1 family.
2 A. After he got married to my cousin, he is family, yes.
3 Q. When did he marry your cousin?
4 A. The wedding was in December, but Islamically the nikah
5 was done and that was done in July.
6 Q. This year?
7 A. No.
8 Q. Help me if you can.
9 A. 2016 or 2017, I don't exactly remember.
10 Q. Of course. So he became a member of your family in
11 2016?
12 A. The exact dates — but yes, you could say that.
13 Q. And how well did you know him firstly before 2016?
14 A. Like I said previously, when I moved up from London,
15 that's when I got to know him.
16 Q. How did you get to know him?
17 A. What do you mean?
18 Q. How did you meet him first?
19 A. I don't remember exactly the first time I met him.
20 Q. What were the circumstances? Where was it?
21 A. I don't remember.
22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Was he in a wheelchair by then?
23 A. Yes.
24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We have heard that because he had been
25 fighting in Libya, because he had been injured, he was

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1 a bit of a hero amongst the younger generation of people
2 and his group of friends. Were you aware of that or did
3 you share that view?
4 A. No, he wasn't. He wasn't considered a hero.
5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Obviously you feel sorry for him and
6 I understand that.
7 A. Of course we felt sympathy for him.
8 MR COOPER: I'll deal with the prison visits in a moment,
9 but when you were speaking to him in your telephone
10 contacts and electronic communications, are we talking
11 about football again here? Was he a big football fan as
12 well?
13 A. Not particularly, no.
14 Q. When you spoke to him, did you speak about general
15 matters?
16 A. Yes.
17 Q. And what sort of general matters, crime?
18 A. What's going on in the area. His day-to-days, how he's
19 feeling.
20 Q. Did that include, and I'm not going into detail, you
21 perfectly properly say you don't want to answer the
22 questions, but simply this: did your conversations
23 include, generally, crime?
24 A. Not really because he wasn't a criminal, but it was hood
25 politics, if you would like to ...

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1 Q. So you were talking to him in prison, were you?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. And you say he wasn't really a criminal?
 4 A. The conversations weren't criminal-based.
 5 Q. Again, I thought you said, and I might be corrected,
 6 that you didn't think he was a criminal.
 7 A. No, what I meant was our conversations weren't criminal.
 8 Q. Did you think he was a criminal?
 9 A. He's a terrorist, he's a convicted terrorist.
 10 Q. So he's a criminal, isn't he?
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. And as a convicted terrorist, as you have said, not the
 13 sort of person perhaps family or otherwise that you
 14 particularly want to have associations with from now on?
 15 A. Like I told the chairman previously, it's a cultural
 16 thing more than a — so I felt like this person, you
 17 should go visit him to uplift his spirits, that's it.
 18 Q. I can understand the — and I do understand — the
 19 cultural approach, of course I understand that. But
 20 that cultural approach doesn't mean that you have to
 21 visit him in prison and become real friends with him,
 22 does it?
 23 A. What do you mean?
 24 Q. Well, one can respect and have friends as a person is
 25 within the family, within the Muslim community, but it

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1 doesn't mean one has to go over the top, if I may say
 2 it, in visiting and being actively friends.
 3 A. You've got to put into consideration this man's in
 4 a wheelchair and he's in prison. Like, we would go
 5 there to uplift his spirits. That's the only reason
 6 that we would go there. It was a social thing.
 7 Q. When was the last time you spoke to him?
 8 A. The last visit.
 9 Q. And when was your last visit?
 10 A. I don't remember, but your records show something, April
 11 or something like that.
 12 Q. So this person whose spirits you are uplifting because
 13 he is part of the family, why don't you carry on
 14 visiting him?
 15 A. After the atrocity, I think I was one of the people that
 16 had conditions to not visit him again.
 17 Q. You knew before then he was a convicted terrorist, so
 18 why didn't you not visit him then?
 19 A. Say that again?
 20 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think he said he had conditions so
 21 he wasn't permitted to visit.
 22 Is that right, you're not permitted to visit?
 23 A. No.
 24 MR COOPER: Thank you, a fair answer. Since those
 25 conditions have been placed upon you, you have neither

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1 spoken to him nor seen him; is that right?
 2 A. Spoken on phone calls, but not seen since that last
 3 visitation.
 4 Q. So have you spoken to him on phone calls in the last
 5 year?
 6 A. No.
 7 Q. When you did visit him in prison, we've got the dates,
 8 they are for instance 25 January 2017, 19 April 2017,
 9 6 March 2017, the first three — when you were with him,
 10 try and help us, what sort of things did you talk about
 11 to this man who clearly had terrorist inclinations?
 12 A. What, during the prison visits?
 13 Q. Yes. He's a terrorist. You're visiting a terrorist.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: What did you talk to him on prison
 15 visits about?
 16 A. They were general conversations to try and uplift his
 17 spirits, what's going on in the area more often and that
 18 was it.
 19 MR COOPER: Can I suggest to you that during the course of
 20 your conversations with him, given that he was
 21 a convicted terrorist, he might have mentioned something
 22 about bombing Manchester.
 23 A. No.
 24 Q. Did he say anything about Salman Abedi when you were
 25 speaking with him during these general matters?

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1 A. No.
 2 Q. Nothing at all was mentioned about Salman Abedi?
 3 A. No, we don't sit and talk about so—and—so.
 4 Q. This is before the bombing I'm asking about, obviously.
 5 Salman Abedi is obviously close to Abdallah. We've
 6 heard that. You're close to Abdallah and Salman Abedi.
 7 During the times that you're uplifting his spirit, was
 8 not, for instance, a mutual friend mentioned?
 9 A. Not really, unless something occurred then yes, but it
 10 wasn't like we'd sit there and say...
 11 Q. Did he not say, "How's Salman"?
 12 A. He may have, he may have not. I don't remember exactly.
 13 Q. Let's try and dig a little deeper into these general
 14 conversations just by logic: mutual close friends —
 15 A. I don't recall exact specific conversations.
 16 Q. Would you have been surprised, given the closeness of
 17 all three of you, if he hadn't said, "How's Salman"?
 18 A. Not really, because we were close to all the friends.
 19 It wasn't like we'd ask every single person how's he
 20 doing. He would probably ask, how's the lads, and we
 21 would tell him that they were good and that's it.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Forgive me Mr Cooper, but I think
 23 you have tried. I'm not sure we're getting very far
 24 at the minute.
 25 MR COOPER: I'll take your lead, sir.

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1 Just to top and tail it then, not only were you
 2 having face-to-faces with Abdallah, you were having
 3 telephone conversations with him as well, weren't you?
 4 A. That's right, yes.
 5 Q. Again during those as well, general matters, I presume?
 6 A. That's correct.
 7 Q. All right. Did you ever attend at the Didsbury Mosque?
 8 A. I have, yes.
 9 Q. And during, say, 2016/2017 were you attending at
 10 Didsbury Mosque?
 11 A. I wouldn't go there every day, but if I did, it would
 12 probably be for Friday prayers, but not every Friday.
 13 Q. For instance, did you hear Mr Graf's sermon at all?
 14 A. Whose?
 15 Q. Mr Graf's sermon.
 16 A. No.
 17 Q. Did you listen to any sermons at Didsbury Mosque?
 18 A. If I was there at the Friday, then I would have.
 19 Q. And generally, you were there, give us some idea, what
 20 sort of things were they saying in these sermons?
 21 A. I don't recall, to be honest with you.
 22 Q. Did you think, from what you were listening to during
 23 the course of these sermons, that they contained some
 24 extremist views being expressed?
 25 A. No.

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1 Q. Did you know that Salman Abedi was attending the
 2 Didsbury Park mosque?
 3 A. A lot of people attended the Didsbury Park mosque.
 4 Q. And did you see Salman Abedi at the mosque when you were
 5 attending?
 6 A. On occasions, I would see him there.
 7 Q. And how was he behaving at the mosque when you were
 8 attending?
 9 A. I wouldn't recall exactly.
 10 Q. For instance, was he, for instance, being
 11 confrontational to other faithful people who were
 12 attending the mosque?
 13 A. I didn't witness any of that, no. Myself, I didn't
 14 witness that.
 15 Q. You didn't see any of that?
 16 A. Myself, no.
 17 Q. So your evidence effectively on Salman Abedi is normal
 18 guy, talks about football, general matters, pretty
 19 low-key in the mosque, nothing to see here, that sort of
 20 evidence; yes?
 21 A. You could say that.
 22 Q. Yes. And yet during all this time we're seeing
 23 Salman Abedi, and I'm not going to go over it again,
 24 deteriorating effectively into an extremist. You didn't
 25 know any of that?

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1 A. I said he distanced himself.
 2 Q. I'm going to suggest it to you, because it's only fair
 3 to suggest it to you, you knew far more, didn't you, of
 4 what was happening to Salman Abedi than you're telling
 5 the chair, didn't you?
 6 A. What are you --
 7 Q. You've asked me and I'll accept the invitation. You're
 8 trying to distance yourself, aren't you, from
 9 Salman Abedi, Hashem Abedi, Ramadan Abedi and others,
 10 aren't you?
 11 A. What do you mean, distance?
 12 Q. Distance yourself. Trying to keep yourself as far away
 13 from them as possible.
 14 A. I told you I knew them. I told you I'm a good friend.
 15 I'm not denying that.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think what's being suggested to you is
 17 that there was far more known in your community and
 18 among your friends about the way Salman Abedi was going
 19 at the time than you're letting us know and that among
 20 people of your age was far more concern about what was
 21 going on in Syria and generally and anti-Western views
 22 developing. Now, that's I think in general terms what's
 23 being suggested. Is that right or is that not?
 24 A. Can you rephrase the question, please? I don't get it.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Probably not, no.

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1 MS MORRIS: Sir, it may assist, if there are specific
 2 matters which Mr Mohammed needs to be asked about in
 3 terms of the state of his knowledge, if those specific
 4 matters can be put to him and then he can answer those
 5 questions.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm afraid it's not. This is an
 7 inquisitorial system and therefore we're trying to find
 8 out what he knows rather than putting a case to him as
 9 in the adversarial system. So I am putting it to him in
 10 general terms what's being suggested, okay?
 11 MS MORRIS: Yes, sir, I accept that, but he has already
 12 answered the question in terms of what he knew and
 13 seeing Salman Abedi distancing himself. He has answered
 14 that a number of times, sir.
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: He asked Mr Cooper to explain what he
 16 meant and to go into the details. That's what's
 17 happened. I don't personally think there's anything
 18 wrong with the question I asked, but you are of course
 19 entitled to your view.
 20 MS MORRIS: Sir, all I'm saying is that it may assist if,
 21 there are specific matters, if they can be broken down.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm quite happy to break down the
 23 general matters I have asked him.
 24 Okay. The question is: did you know more about what
 25 was happening, the changes to Salman Abedi, than you're

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1 telling us about?
 2 A. I saw that he distanced himself, but I was busy with my
 3 life, you've got to understand this. I'm not too
 4 bothered so—and—so — yes, he distanced himself.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Hashem Abedi? Do you know more about
 6 his views than you're telling us about?
 7 A. Hashem Abedi, like I said, is younger than me.
 8 I didn't ... I wasn't too close with him but I knew of
 9 him in the area.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The other general matter is: are you
 11 telling us exactly, and telling us in detail, about the
 12 sort of conversations going on between you and your
 13 friends about what was going on in Syria and in Libya
 14 and anti—Western views?
 15 A. Like I told you, we would talk about it if it happened.
 16 In regards to anti—Western views, we weren't
 17 anti—West because we live in the West. We may not agree
 18 with certain things that happen, but that does not mean
 19 we hate the West, if you know what I mean.
 20 MR HENDERSON: Sir, I think that might be a helpful point
 21 just to have the short morning break. I don't know how
 22 much more my learned friend has.
 23 MR COOPER: I'm coming to a conclusion, there's one further
 24 topic I want to ask.
 25 MR HENDERSON: I understand there are a number of procedural

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1 matters and it would be helpful to deal with those now.
 2 (12.12 pm)
 3 (A short break)
 4 (12.27 pm)
 5 MR COOPER: I would like to take you now, if I can, please,
 6 to 20 May and Royston Court. You told us you were there
 7 because there was a flat tyre problem. During that
 8 time, 20 May 2017, just remind me, who was there with
 9 you?
 10 A. I don't remember exactly who, but from the bundle, there
 11 was a few people.
 12 Q. And did anyone say, "Where's Salman Abedi, how is he,
 13 what's he doing, have you heard from him"?
 14 A. Not really, because we were there for the car.
 15 Q. I hear what you say about being there for the tyres, but
 16 that doesn't stop someone saying potentially, "How's
 17 Salman, where is he, what's he doing"?
 18 A. With all due respect, Mr Cooper, Salman Abedi is not the
 19 topic in our heads. We've got lives, we carry on with
 20 them.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Did you know he was back in the country?
 22 A. No, because the whole time we thought he was in Libya.
 23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 24 MR COOPER: I'm not suggesting that Salman Abedi was the
 25 centre of the world for you all, but he was your close

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1 friend and a number of people who were there with you
 2 also knew him and knew him well. He'd been out in
 3 Libya. Did not anyone even make the cursory of
 4 enquiries, "Have you heard from Salman, how's he doing"?
 5 A. With all due respect, at the time we were there for the
 6 tyres and the tyres only.
 7 Q. Then on 21 May 2017, at Devell House, and on the 22nd
 8 and 23rd, but let's just deal with the 21st and 22 May
 9 first, Elyas Elmehti was there, was he?
 10 A. The evidence shows, yes.
 11 Q. And Ahmed Taghdi was there, wasn't he?
 12 A. At Royston?
 13 Q. No, at Devell House.
 14 A. What days was this?
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: The 21st, the next day.
 16 MR COOPER: I'm asking first about the 21st and the 22nd.
 17 Was Mr Taghdi there on any of those occasions?
 18 A. In regards to Devell House, if you show me I can
 19 comment, but I don't recall to be honest.
 20 Q. I'm going to suggest to you that he was, I'll be
 21 corrected if I'm wrong. That's certainly what I'm
 22 putting to you. And again, was any question or issue
 23 raised as far as Salman Abedi is concerned, "Have you
 24 seen Salman, heard from him, how's he doing"?
 25 A. Not necessarily, no.

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1 Q. Not necessarily?
 2 A. Like I told you, he's not our main concern. We've got
 3 lives that we got on with it.
 4 Q. Of course he's not, but he's a friend of yours.
 5 A. We're not denying that.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think I understand that the answer to
 7 the question of whether you talked about him or any
 8 discussion is no.
 9 A. No, not really.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 11 MR COOPER: Were you concerned about him?
 12 A. No, because he was in Libya. What concern would I have?
 13 Q. Well, what could possibly happen?
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, stop. We'll get on much quicker
 15 if you just answer the question and don't ask more
 16 questions, and you avoid answering the questions,
 17 Mr Cooper, if he asks them, all right?
 18 MR COOPER: Of course.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's how the rules are: question then
 20 answer.
 21 MR COOPER: Let me ask the question: Salman Abedi was in
 22 Libya?
 23 A. Yes.
 24 Q. Was anyone worried about him being in Libya?
 25 A. No.

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1 Q. It was known, wasn't it, that things were very volatile
2 in Libya at the time; would you agree?
3 A. Yes.
4 Q. So again I ask you, given the volatility of the
5 situation in Libya and that one of your close friends
6 was in Libya, are you sure that no one asked about him,
7 how was he, "Have you heard from him"?
8 A. No, because at the time the region where he was, it was
9 safe, if that makes sense. The other region, that's
10 where conflict was going on, so no.
11 Q. Was not the question raised, "Not heard from Salman for
12 the last week or so", or whatever period of time --
13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay. He really has answered that now.
14 Thank you. I understand the frustration, but he has
15 answered it.
16 MR COOPER: I know and I shouldn't be feeling that. I shall
17 ask the questions.
18 Before 21 May, when you were at Devell House, had
19 you been to Devell House before?
20 A. Yes.
21 Q. And when did you first start going to Devell House?
22 A. I can't tell you exact dates.
23 Q. Had you been to Devell House before 2017?
24 A. I don't know exactly, but I've been there regularly. It
25 wouldn't be a surprise for me to be there.

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1 Q. Are you able to tell us on previous occasions, before,
2 that is, 21 May, why you were going to Devell House?
3 A. For social reasons.
4 Q. On 23 May, you were also there, weren't you?
5 A. If the records show, then yes.
6 Q. Yes. And remind us again, why did you go there on
7 23 May, the day after this atrocity?
8 A. It won't be a surprise for me to be there. I'd
9 regularly be there. It's not a surprise.
10 Q. Who was with you on the 23rd?
11 A. I don't remember. If you could show me, that would
12 refresh my memory.
13 Q. Can I suggest virtually the same group of people?
14 A. Okay.
15 Q. And on 23 May, you knew of the atrocity that had
16 occurred at Manchester Arena, didn't you?
17 A. Of course, yes.
18 Q. So did you all talk about it?
19 A. Yes, we was in a state of shock.
20 Q. Was any mention made of Salman Abedi or Hashem Abedi
21 during this shocked conversation?
22 A. After the news said that it was Salman, we were shocked.
23 Some of us were even questioning it because we thought
24 he was still in Libya. At first, there was disbelief,
25 shock. That was the first reaction, to be honest.

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1 Q. So let me try and draw this together now. You had close
2 friendships with Mr Abdallah and with Salman Abedi.
3 Lesser so, but a friendship with Hashem Abedi, and you
4 knew the Abedi family well. You visited Mr Abdallah in
5 prison. You were at Devell House and Royston Court on
6 20 May and had numerous and many telephone conversations
7 with other individuals such as Elyas Elmehdi, who was
8 also a good friend, and during all these occasions not
9 once was concern expressed or issues raised about
10 Salman Abedi being involved in terrorism?
11 A. No.
12 Q. Or not once during all these conversations and meetings
13 were any extremist views expressed?
14 A. No.
15 MR COOPER: Thank you, sir.
16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you, Mr Cooper.
17 MR HENDERSON: Sir, I believe Mr Weatherby QC has some
18 questions over the link. It looks like he is here.
19 Can you hear us and see us, Mr Weatherby?
20 Questions from MR WEATHERBY
21 MR WEATHERBY: I can, thank you very much.
22 Mr Mohammed, I only have a few further questions for
23 you, and they arise out of matters that have already
24 been raised. We know from the documents that have been
25 disclosed that you were referred to the Prevent

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1 programme in, I think, 2016 and you're aware of that,
2 aren't you?
3 A. I was only aware of it after the reports. I thought it
4 was counselling. That's what the college showed me
5 at the time. I didn't know it was Prevent.
6 Q. Right, okay. We know that the reason for that is that
7 there were reports of Mr Ali, Abdalraouf Ali, suggesting
8 that he was trying to radicalise you. Can you help us
9 as to why anyone would think that?
10 A. I'm actually confused about this, because this is
11 a shock to me, I don't know nothing about him trying to
12 radicalise me.
13 Q. No reason that you can think of at all? He never
14 expressed any radical views to you?
15 A. No, none whatsoever.
16 Q. And of course, you were not only his cousin but you see
17 a lot of him even up to this day, yes?
18 A. Say that again?
19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: He's your cousin?
20 A. Yes.
21 MR WEATHERBY: You see him even now, you're very close to
22 him?
23 A. Yes.
24 Q. You've been asked a lot of questions about 15 May and
25 that's the day that Salman Abedi called you from Libya.

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1 A. Okay.
 2 Q. And I think, have I understood your evidence correctly
 3 that you didn't recognise the number; is that right?
 4 A. Yes, but I knew the code was from Libya.
 5 Q. Yes. He called you and you spoke for a number of
 6 minutes and there were these messages that we've heard
 7 about.
 8 A. Yes.
 9 Q. You say with hindsight that you think this was
 10 a farewell message. Are you able to help us as to why
 11 out of his associates why he would call you with this
 12 farewell message?
 13 A. He never called me saying goodbye but in hindsight
 14 that's what I think, that was a farewell phone call.
 15 Why he would call me? To be honest, I was a good friend
 16 with him.
 17 Q. And why would he call you to get Mr Elmehdi's number?
 18 A. He probably didn't have Mr Elmehdi's number but he had
 19 mine.
 20 Q. During the course of this phone call, did you discuss
 21 Mr Abdallah?
 22 A. In that phone call?
 23 Q. Yes, in that call.
 24 A. No.
 25 Q. Did he not say, "How's Mr Abdallah, have you been to see

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1 him recently?"
 2 A. No, it was more general between me and him and how's
 3 Libya and how's — I think he asked me what's going on
 4 here, but it was more general.
 5 Q. Because of course he would know that you were in contact
 6 with Mr Abdallah, wouldn't he?
 7 A. That won't be a surprise, but he didn't mention Abdallah
 8 at the time.
 9 Q. We know, again from the police reports, that the next
 10 day, 16 May, Mr Taghdi, Ahmed Taghdi, took a screenshot
 11 of Salman Abedi's Libyan number off your phone. Why did
 12 that happen?
 13 A. I don't know.
 14 Q. Do you remember it?
 15 A. To be honest, no, but after I saw Taghdi's one, he
 16 probably needed the number.
 17 Q. Did you ask him why?
 18 A. Not really, because he probably wanted the number.
 19 There's no... There's nothing sinister in that. He
 20 probably wanted to get in contact with him.
 21 Q. You've been asked again questions about 20 May and
 22 Ismail Abedi. How close were you to Ismail Abedi?
 23 A. Not really close, but I knew of him.
 24 Q. You've been asked whether anybody asked you about
 25 Salman Abedi. Can I put the question the other way

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1 around? Having spoken to Ismail's brother only a few
 2 days earlier, did you not say to Ismail, "I spoke to
 3 your brother the other day"?
 4 A. No, because when he spoke to him it was in regards to
 5 a bike, so that wasn't the topic of conversation. He
 6 just wanted to get a bike. That's what I recall from
 7 that conversation.
 8 Q. Then after that meet—up in the car park with you and
 9 several of the others, Elmehdi, Bledi, Oun, Abuhdaima
 10 and Ismail Abedi, after that you had further contact by
 11 phone with him over the next couple of days, didn't you?
 12 A. I don't recall, but if it's on the records, then...
 13 Q. One of the records that I think has been referred to you
 14 is a text message that you sent to Ismail Abedi at just
 15 after 6.30 on the evening of the bombing, 22 May. Do
 16 you remember sending him a message on the evening of the
 17 bombing?
 18 A. No.
 19 Q. It just says:
 20 "That's it, boss, don't worry."
 21 That's the message. Does that jog your memory about
 22 what it was about?
 23 A. No, it doesn't. If you could show me that message, if
 24 you could show me what's before and after that, I'd
 25 appreciate that.

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1 Q. I could show you the document where the police report
 2 it, but it doesn't have the message or, if there is
 3 a message in fact, before it. So I'm not sure I can —
 4 A. Then I'm sorry, I can't comment.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Mr Weatherby, can you tell me whether
 6 the message is being sent by the witness to Ismail or
 7 the other way round?
 8 MR WEATHERBY: Yes, it's sent by the witness to
 9 Ismail Abedi.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 11 MR WEATHERBY: Let me just check that there's nothing else
 12 on the message, so I can put it up on the screen if it
 13 helps. Would you just give me a moment, please?
 14 A. The fact that the police don't have the conversation —
 15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Just wait, and then by all means give
 16 your answer.
 17 A. No worries.
 18 (Pause)
 19 MR WEATHERBY: Can I just give the reference so others can
 20 follow it. I don't think it will help the witness.
 21 Probably out of an abundance of caution, I probably
 22 shouldn't put up it on the screen. Just for reference
 23 and for this point, it's {INQ034649/350}. It's an
 24 appendix to Mr Barraclough's statement.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You stop, Mr Weatherby, for a moment.

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1 The witness wanted to say something and I stopped him
 2 because you were finding the document.
 3 Say what you want to, if you still want to say it .
 4 A. I don't like the fact that they are not showing the
 5 message before or the message after. So they could get
 6 that message but they can't get the other messages.
 7 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's one of the mysteries of life.
 8 A. That takes it out of context and puts me —
 9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: You think the context would help you
 10 understand what's being said?
 11 A. Exactly.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Fair enough.
 13 MR WEATHERBY: That's a fair point and I'm afraid I don't
 14 have those messages if there are any. Let me put it
 15 this way to you: this was a catastrophic night because
 16 it was the night of the bombing; yes?
 17 A. Yes.
 18 Q. And you would know, obviously you knew fairly quickly,
 19 that Salman Abedi was the bomber?
 20 A. I don't recall exactly when the news put it out, but
 21 I believe it was the next day.
 22 Q. Okay. But within a comparatively short period of time,
 23 within a day or so, you knew that Salman Abedi was the
 24 bomber?
 25 A. But if you're saying the message was sent on the 22nd,

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1 that means I wouldn't know that Salman was the bomber.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I think we've moved on to something
 3 else. If we need to clarify that, we will. You carry
 4 on with the question, Mr Weatherby.
 5 MR WEATHERBY: I'm just trying to help you here,
 6 Mr Mohammed, because I'm not asking you about a message
 7 on a day that didn't matter. What I'm saying to you
 8 here is that you were in touch with Ismail Abedi, the
 9 bomber's brother, less than 4 hours before the bomb went
 10 off.
 11 A. Okay.
 12 Q. I'm just asking you in general terms what it was that
 13 you were communicating with Ismail Abedi about.
 14 A. I previously told you, he asked me for a bike and
 15 I looked into it and that was it. But if you could show
 16 me the actual conversation, then I could comment.
 17 Q. I can't, so I'm going to move on from that.
 18 Finally, I'm going to ask you about contact with
 19 Abdalraouf Abdallah over the period around the bombing.
 20 We know, again from the records, that you had a series
 21 of phone calls with Abdalraouf Abdallah on 20 May. One
 22 of them was over half an hour long. We know that on
 23 21 May, you had two calls and a message. One of the
 24 calls being 9 minutes long and another call of
 25 19 minutes.

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1 Then on the 22nd, you had one effective call, which
 2 Mr Henderson referred you to, and that was 38 minutes.
 3 So over those 3 days up to the bombing, you spoke to
 4 Abdalraouf Abdallah at some length; yes?
 5 A. Yes, but like I explained earlier, it wasn't only me
 6 at the time of the conversation, so he'd converse with
 7 the lads as well.
 8 Q. During any of those conversations, did you discuss
 9 Salman Abedi with Mr Abdallah?
 10 A. Not necessarily. We would most likely be uplifting his
 11 spirits and talking about what was going on in the area.
 12 Our main topic of concern was not Salman Abedi.
 13 Q. Did you say to him, "I spoke to Salman the other day,
 14 he's still in Libya"?
 15 A. I don't recall the specifics of that conversation, no.
 16 Q. And finally, this, just to give you the opportunity
 17 again. Obviously, this last call of 38 minutes,
 18 it would have concluded about an hour and a half before
 19 the bomb detonated. Can you help us with the content of
 20 that call?
 21 A. Honestly, I wouldn't recall, but it was not irregular of
 22 him to call us, and the topic of our conversations would
 23 be to uplift his spirits.
 24 MR WEATHERBY: No further questions.
 25 MR HENDERSON: Thank you, sir, do you have anything arising?

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No.
 2 MR HENDERSON: I will just check whether Ms Morris has
 3 anything.
 4 Questions from MS MORRIS
 5 MS MORRIS: Just one question. Mr Mohammed, just so we're
 6 completely clear, did you have anything at all to do
 7 with the atrocity at the Manchester Arena?
 8 A. None whatsoever. I didn't even have knowledge or
 9 anything to do with this atrocity.
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And you know the things we're looking
 11 at?
 12 A. I understand.
 13 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Hang on. The radicalisation of Salman,
 14 how he came to do this, what led up to it, and
 15 you have — I want you to think. You have nothing more
 16 you can tell us to help us; is that right?
 17 A. No.
 18 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 19 MR HENDERSON: Thank you, sir. I think that's a convenient
 20 moment to break for lunch.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It is. We'll break for an hour.
 22 Thank you very much for coming to give your evidence.
 23 (12.48 pm)
 24 (Lunch adjournment)
 25 (1.50 pm)

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1 DCS SIMON BARRACLOUGH (recalled)
 2 Questions from MR GREANEY
 3 MR GREANEY: Sir, in the witness box is a witness you will
 4 recognise, Simon Barraclough, who remains sworn.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you for coming back,
 6 Mr Barraclough.
 7 MR GREANEY: Would you begin, please, by telling us again
 8 your full name?
 9 A. Simon Justin Barraclough.
 10 Q. As we'll all remember, you last gave evidence in
 11 early December of 2020 during the course of chapter 8 of
 12 the inquiry's oral evidence hearing.
 13 A. Yes, that's correct.
 14 Q. And you explained that whilst you were a Detective
 15 Chief Superintendent in CTP North-west, you had been the
 16 senior investigating officer for Operation Manteline.
 17 A. Yes.
 18 Q. That being the police investigation into the attack at
 19 Manchester Arena?
 20 A. Yes, that's right.
 21 Q. And over the course of 4 days, you addressed a number of
 22 topics, namely the initial investigation?
 23 A. Yes.
 24 Q. The device used in the attack and its construction?
 25 A. That's right, yes.

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1 Q. Finances?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. Your investigation into Salman and Hashem Abedi?
 4 A. Yes.
 5 Q. Persons of interest to the investigation?
 6 A. Yes.
 7 Q. And other areas relevant to the investigation and
 8 miscellaneous matters?
 9 A. Yes, that's correct.
 10 Q. Mr Barraclough, you'll recall that the issue of how and
 11 when Salman Abedi and Hashem Abedi came to be
 12 radicalised was left until this chapter, chapter 13 --
 13 A. Yes. That's correct, yes.
 14 Q. -- and we're turning to that now.
 15 So can we begin, please, with the ideology of the
 16 killers. Was it always the working theory of the
 17 investigation that the killers had been motivated by, as
 18 it was described by Dr Wilkinson, violent Islamist
 19 extremism?
 20 A. Yes, that's right.
 21 Q. And in simple terms, was that because of a number of
 22 factors? First of all, there were some general matters,
 23 such as the nature of the attack and recent events
 24 in the United Kingdom, notably the Westminster attack?
 25 A. Yes, that's right.

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1 Q. And more specifically, once you had identified the
 2 bomber, did you take into account the fact that the
 3 Abedi brothers had grown up with a father who had,
 4 according to open source material, extremist
 5 associations?
 6 A. Yes, that's correct.
 7 Q. As you discovered, they had spent time in Libya during
 8 a time when violent Islamist extremism was thought to be
 9 present?
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. That Salman Abedi, as you discovered, had an association
 12 with a convicted terrorist, Abdalraouf Abdallah, both
 13 before and after his conviction?
 14 A. He did.
 15 Q. And with a man tried and acquitted of terrorist
 16 offences, Ahmed Benhammedi?
 17 A. Yes, that's correct.
 18 Q. Moreover, there was material, albeit a limited amount of
 19 material, on Hashem Abedi's social media presence that
 20 indicated a pro-Islamic State mindset?
 21 A. Yes.
 22 Q. And also on their brother's device?
 23 A. Yes.
 24 Q. And furthermore, you were to discover that the brothers
 25 used, during the course of acquiring precursor

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1 materials, an email address that translated as "We have
 2 come to slaughter"?
 3 A. That's correct, yes.
 4 Q. So all of those, some of them no doubt individually, but
 5 certainly in combination, meant that from an early stage
 6 the investigation considered, that this attack was
 7 likely to be motivated by a pro-Islamic State mindset?
 8 A. From an immediate stage and I think that came from the
 9 nature of the attack and the other evidential issues had
 10 developed as time went on.
 11 Q. I understand therefore the way in which it operated was
 12 from the earliest stage, that was the working theory,
 13 and that everything you discovered about Salman Abedi
 14 and his brother thereafter served to confirm you in that
 15 working theory?
 16 A. I think that's a fair comment, yes.
 17 Q. Moreover, is it the position that the working and active
 18 theory of the investigation was then confirmed by
 19 what was said by Hashem Abedi when Mr Suter and
 20 Mr de la Poer interviewed him on 23 October 2019?
 21 A. Yes, it was.
 22 Q. Because, as you'll recall, when you last gave evidence,
 23 we summarised the position as follows: Hashem Abedi said
 24 that he was a supporter of violent jihad in the sense
 25 that he had supported the institution of Sharia law

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1 through violence.
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. And he said that he considered that violence was
 4 justified to bring about change in society.
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. He explained to Mr Suter and Mr de la Poer that he was
 7 a supporter of Islamic State.
 8 A. He did.
 9 Q. And asked the direct question by Mr de la Poer, "What
 10 actions have you taken to support Islamic State?", he
 11 answered, "The Manchester attack?"
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. Finally, as we summarised, he, Hashem Abedi, handed over
 14 a statement in writing that he had prepared before the
 15 interview in which he set out the motivations for having
 16 plotted the attack and, to summarise it in just a few
 17 words, it represents pro-Islamic State propaganda?
 18 A. It does, yes.
 19 Q. So does it come to this, therefore, that the
 20 investigation can be clear and the inquiry can be clear
 21 that the motivation for the Manchester Arena attack was
 22 support for Islamic State?
 23 A. Yes, I think that's pretty overwhelming, yes.
 24 Q. Does it therefore follow that what we, you and I and the
 25 inquiry, need to do is to examine how it was that

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1 Salman Abedi and Hashem Abedi became radicalised to that
 2 distorted mindset?
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. In your witness statement, which I hope you have a copy
 5 of in front of you --
 6 A. I do.
 7 Q. And can I warn you, there is going to be a lot of
 8 jumping around within your witness statement. What I'll
 9 seek to do at each stage, both to assist you and assist
 10 others, is give a page number and paragraph number.
 11 So I'm going to start at page 81, paragraph 337,
 12 where you make a number of preliminary points about the
 13 issue of radicalisation .
 14 In terms of preliminary points, first is it the
 15 position that, in your view, it may not necessarily be
 16 correct to consider Salman and Hashem Abedi jointly in
 17 terms of radicalisation ?
 18 A. Yes, it is .
 19 Q. By that, do you mean that there may be common
 20 influences, so that is to say the impact of family
 21 members potentially?
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. But equally, there may have been separate influences or
 24 at least direct influences in that, to give an example,
 25 if Abdalraouf Abdallah has anything to do with their

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1 radicalisation , Salman Abedi appears to have had greater
 2 contact with that person than Hashem Abedi?
 3 A. Yes, that's right . And I think the whole purpose of
 4 this is to recognise that it is an individual journey
 5 for each person who's radicalised .
 6 Q. Is that something that your experience not only of this
 7 investigation but of other terrorist investigations
 8 teaches you?
 9 A. Yes, that's right .
 10 Q. So first , the inquiry needs to bear in mind that what is
 11 likely to have occurred is individual journeys for each
 12 of these two. Secondly, you indicate in your statement
 13 that Salman and Hashem Abedi may have served to
 14 radicalise each other; what do you mean by that?
 15 A. I think in any joint venture, as this clearly was, there
 16 is bound to be a path to that joint venture which
 17 involves conversations and gatherings between the
 18 individuals involved, which would serve to further that
 19 objective and further that mindset. So as these boys
 20 have grown up, I think there has been a journey towards
 21 radicalisation , but as it has got nearer to the actual
 22 atrocity itself , the planning of the atrocity and the
 23 measures that were taken to carry out the bombing,
 24 I suspect that that has been a process of joint
 25 radicalisation where the two of them have probably fed

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1 off each other's ideas and concepts.
 2 Q. So there is likely to have been a period during which
 3 they are each subject to outside influences, potentially
 4 different outside influences?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. But there comes a point in time at which they are
 7 radicalising each other in the discussions that they're
 8 having?
 9 A. Yes, I think that's highly likely .
 10 Q. Thirdly, you indicate, and this may well be connected
 11 with the second point, that they may have been
 12 self-radicalised by their own efforts; what does that
 13 mean?
 14 A. That means, as is often the case and we see in
 15 counter-terrorism investigations, people will do their
 16 own research, they will come to their own conclusions
 17 based on what they read, what they hear, their
 18 individual experiences. That doesn't necessarily
 19 require the presence of another individual to persuade
 20 them, it's an argument that they develop within
 21 themselves.
 22 Q. So we have essentially three things which are happening,
 23 no doubt sometimes in combination: outside influences
 24 in the form of particular individuals who are forming
 25 their mindset; secondly, we have researches which they

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1 are carrying out, either on the internet or elsewhere
 2 that are serving to radicalise them; and thirdly, the
 3 two of them together feeding off each other in terms of
 4 their ideas?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. That leads to the fourth preliminary point that you
 7 make, namely that it is in your view likely that no one
 8 individual or circumstance led to the radicalisation of
 9 the two killers?
 10 A. I think there is such a combination of issues with these
 11 two young men that I think that's a reasonable point to
 12 make, that there are potentially so many different
 13 things that could have contributed to this.
 14 Q. Thank you very much indeed for that introduction.
 15 We're going to turn next to look at those
 16 circumstances which did or may have contributed to the
 17 radicalisation of the two.
 18 You'll remember that when you gave evidence in
 19 December last year, you told the inquiry about the
 20 family of Salman and Hashem Abedi.
 21 A. Yes.
 22 Q. And I'm not going to rehearse all of that again, but it
 23 may be worth reminding ourselves of a few points. First
 24 of all, you gave evidence that a cousin of the Abedi
 25 brothers had given a statement indicating that

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1 Salman Abedi had visited Libya following the downfall of
 2 Gaddafi. I'm at paragraph 226, page 53.
 3 The cousin had indicated that during that period in
 4 2011, Salman Abedi had been involved in raids, had his
 5 own flat and had enjoyed his life. Is that the
 6 position?
 7 A. Yes, that's right.
 8 Q. Did the cousin go on to explain that during that time,
 9 Salman Abedi had started using strong tramadol?
 10 A. He did, yes.
 11 Q. And that he had been able to show his cousin photographs
 12 of military vehicles?
 13 A. Yes.
 14 Q. Weapons?
 15 A. Yes.
 16 Q. And rocket launchers?
 17 A. Yes.
 18 Q. Was the cousin also able to explain that following that
 19 period in Libya, on his return to the United Kingdom,
 20 Salman Abedi had spent much time partying and taking
 21 drugs?
 22 A. Yes, that's right.
 23 Q. Indeed, moving forward just for a moment to
 24 paragraph 236, did your investigations reveal that the
 25 mother of Salman Abedi, in 2011, had attended the

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1 general practitioner of Salman Abedi to express concerns
 2 that her son was taking drugs?
 3 A. Yes, she did.
 4 Q. But that in short, there had been nothing the doctor
 5 could do about that due to what he regarded as
 6 confidentiality?
 7 A. That's correct.
 8 Q. Did the cousin go on to explain that Salman Abedi's
 9 taking of drugs and partying had changed dramatically in
 10 about 2015 to 2016?
 11 A. Yes, that's right.
 12 Q. I'm now at paragraphs 229 to 230. Did the cousin
 13 describe seeing a dramatic change in Salman Abedi in
 14 2015 and 2016?
 15 A. Yes.
 16 Q. That he had stopped drinking alcohol and stopped smoking
 17 cigarettes and stopped taking drugs?
 18 A. Yes, that's right.
 19 Q. And that during that period, he became more judgemental
 20 of other people and their behaviour?
 21 A. Yes.
 22 Q. And that he started to make new friends amongst older
 23 Libyan males within the South Manchester community?
 24 A. Yes, that's right.
 25 Q. And in particular, as we're going to see expressed more

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1 generally by family members later in your evidence, did
 2 that cousin see a coincidence in time between that
 3 change in Salman Abedi and Salman Abedi beginning to
 4 associate to a greater extent with Abdalraouf Abdallah?
 5 A. Yes. Yes, he did. It was at the same time.
 6 Q. The relative had also observed during that period that
 7 Salman Abedi became quick to argue and was judgemental
 8 about Libyan males with Western lifestyles?
 9 A. Yes.
 10 Q. Saying to his cousin that he should pray more?
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. And that he had grown out his beard, stopped going to
 13 the gym and started wearing religious dress?
 14 A. That's correct, yes.
 15 Q. And had been going to the mosque a good deal more, not
 16 just for prayers but also to take religious classes?
 17 A. Yes.
 18 Q. Was the cousin also able to give a description of the
 19 type of conversations that Salman Abedi was having with
 20 Abdalraouf Abdallah and other males around this period,
 21 2015 to 2016?
 22 A. Yes, he did.
 23 Q. In general terms, what did the cousin in that statement
 24 he gave to the investigation say the group would talk
 25 about?

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1 A. I'm sorry, could you just bring me to the paragraph?
 2 Q. Paragraph 230.
 3 A. Thank you. So these conversations often happened in
 4 this cousin's barbershop and they'd talk about politics
 5 in the Middle East and North Africa and that included
 6 Libya and Syria. The belief from these conversations,
 7 from the cousin, was that Abdallah was showing support
 8 for ISIS during these conversations and he took the step
 9 of throwing them out of the barbershop, so he didn't
 10 wish them to discuss these matters in there.
 11 Q. So the cousin in short was describing a significant
 12 change in Salman Abedi's attitudes over this period,
 13 2015 to 2016?
 14 A. Yes.
 15 Q. He was associating it with Salman Abedi spending more
 16 time with Abdalraouf Abdallah and another group of males
 17 and, without going through a lot of detail of what other
 18 relatives were able to say formally in statements to the
 19 police, other family members had also noted that change
 20 around that time in Salman Abedi; is that correct?
 21 A. Yes, that's correct.
 22 Q. At paragraphs 235 to 236, whilst we're dealing with what
 23 family members were able to say, a witness who gave
 24 evidence, I think at the trial, although his name was
 25 ciphred, was able to explain, is this correct, that

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1 in October of 2016 the mother of Salman and Hashem Abedi
 2 had travelled back to Libya?
 3 A. Yes, that's correct.
 4 Q. In consequence of which, Salman and Hashem Abedi were
 5 left alone at 21 Elsmore Road?
 6 A. Yes.
 7 Q. Whilst Ismail, their brother, was living at a different
 8 address with his family?
 9 A. Yes, that's right.
 10 Q. So this is during a time when it appears that the
 11 brothers are developing a very different attitude
 12 towards life?
 13 A. Yes, correct.
 14 Q. That they are now spending an increased amount of time
 15 just together with no other influences within the family
 16 home?
 17 A. That's correct, yes.
 18 Q. And does the investigation judge it likely that this is
 19 a period which may demonstrate the two serving to
 20 radicalise each other?
 21 A. Yes, I think that's fair.
 22 Q. Bearing in mind it's just a short time before they start
 23 to acquire the precursor materials?
 24 A. It is.
 25 Q. Also around this time, although a little earlier in

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1 2016, was an associate of theirs from the
 2 South Manchester Libyan community murdered in
 3 a gang-related incident?
 4 A. That's correct, yes.
 5 Q. Was that associate a man called Abdul Wahab Hafidah?
 6 A. Yes, that's right.
 7 Q. Who was, as open source material indicates, attacked and
 8 killed by a group in Moss Side in May of 2016?
 9 A. Yes, that's correct.
 10 Q. Which attack resulted in the conviction of, I think,
 11 more than ten men for offences of murder or
 12 manslaughter?
 13 A. Yes, that's right.
 14 Q. And were there reports that he, Hafidah, had been
 15 a member of a gang known as the Rusholme Crips?
 16 A. Yes, that's correct.
 17 Q. And again, without asking you to go into detail of it,
 18 is it the investigation's view that this may be relevant
 19 to evidence that we heard before we went into closed
 20 that there was recognised to be a risk that there might
 21 be a transition from ordinary gang criminal conduct into
 22 extremist criminal conduct?
 23 A. I'm not entirely sure that's been established and
 24 I would put it more that this association is really
 25 unknown to a great degree, so despite this reported

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1 effect on Salman Abedi.
 2 Q. So it seemed to have an effect upon him?
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. But quite why and what that effect was is difficult --
 5 A. We don't know.
 6 Q. -- to ascertain?
 7 A. I'm sure you're going to refer to this, but balancing
 8 that too with what we actually know about Salman Abedi
 9 and his criminal convictions, which don't really
 10 indicate gang affiliation. That is something of a jump
 11 in evidence, I think.
 12 Q. I think we have now better understood. Whilst we're
 13 dealing with changes that the family and others noted in
 14 Salman Abedi over this period of time, it may be
 15 relevant to consider the evidence given to the
 16 investigation by a man called Ibrahim Khalifa. This
 17 takes us to page 101 of your witness statement,
 18 paragraph 384.
 19 Was Ibrahim Khalifa a man who lived at
 20 21 Elsmore Road, together with Salman and Hashem Abedi,
 21 in August 2015 for 1 month?
 22 A. Yes, he did.
 23 Q. Was he able to recall a particular occasion in that
 24 month when he was watching the news on television with
 25 Salman and Hashem Abedi and some friends of theirs?

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- 1 A. Yes, that's correct.
- 2 Q. I'm now at paragraph 385. Did a particular item come on
3 the television which generated discussion amongst the
4 group?
- 5 A. Yes. This was a programme about ISIS in Iraq.
- 6 Q. What in particular occurred during the course of this
7 discussion?
- 8 A. So Salman's view, as reported by Khalifa, was that
9 he was supportive of ISIS, saying that he believed that
10 what they were doing was right.
- 11 Q. Did he add that Hashem seemed to agree with that, but
12 that others who were present disagreed?
- 13 A. I'm sorry, could you just take me to that paragraph?
- 14 Q. 385. After the sentence:
15 "Salman was quite vocal about his support for ISIS,
16 saying that he believed what they were doing was right."
- 17 A. I think that he conceded that he was not sure if
18 Hashem Abedi supported Salman's view.
- 19 Q. I think that's a fair way of putting it. In his
20 statement he expressed the view that Hashem seemed to be
21 supportive, but when he gave evidence at the trial of
22 Hashem Abedi, he acknowledged that he couldn't be sure
23 of that fact?
- 24 A. Yes, I think that's correct.
- 25 Q. As I indicated, he stayed for just 1 month in

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- 1 August 2015, leaving when the two brothers indicated
2 they were going abroad for Hajj and didn't want anyone
3 else living at the house. Was Ibrahim Khalifa able to
4 explain that the next time he had seen the brothers was
5 on 14 April 2017? That's paragraph 386.
- 6 A. Yes, that's correct.
- 7 Q. Did he tell the investigation about anything that struck
8 him during that period?
- 9 A. He described the Nissan Micra and he described having
10 seen it and seeing it full of junk, and he said that
11 both of the brothers had beards and they were wearing
12 a thawb, which is a traditional Islamic dress.
- 13 Q. Did he express the view that he had been surprised by
14 their appearance?
- 15 A. He was surprised, yes.
- 16 Q. So just pausing for one moment before we move on to
17 a different topic, did it seem clear to you as the
18 senior investigating officer that there had been a real
19 change in Salman and Hashem Abedi over this period, 2015
20 to 2016?
- 21 A. I think from the accounts that we've been given, I think
22 that's demonstrably the case, that there has been that
23 change, yes.
- 24 Q. And what I'm sure you'll agree is significant is that
25 this is a view that's been expressed across a number of

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- 1 people who encountered the two brothers?
- 2 A. Yes, and that's people who are quite close to the
3 brothers and traditionally would have been close, so
4 family members and also individuals who knew them as
5 friends.
- 6 Q. Next, I want to ask you about a different topic and
7 I apologise to you and others if some of this appears
8 disjointed, but we ultimately will try to draw these
9 strands together. The topic that I want to ask you
10 about now is the February 17th Martyrs Brigade.
- 11 First of all, before I take you to some particular
12 paragraphs, I'm certain you'll be able to agree, because
13 this derives from open source material, that the
14 February 17th Martyrs Brigade was an Islamist militia
15 that fought in the Libyan conflict?
- 16 A. That's correct, yes.
- 17 Q. That it was led by a man called Mahdi al-Harati, who
18 open source material indicates subsequently led
19 a fighting group in Syria?
- 20 A. I believe that's the case, yes.
- 21 Q. And again, open source material indicates that he is
22 believed to have links to Islamist terrorism?
- 23 A. Yes, I'm sure that's right.
- 24 Q. I want, with your help, to identify links between that
25 militia, the February 17th Martyrs Brigade, and this

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- 1 case, of which I believe there are two.
- 2 The first we can express shortly and simply. That
3 at his own trial, Abdalraouf Abdallah admitted that
4 he had fought on behalf of the February 17th
5 Martyrs Brigade.
- 6 A. I believe that's the case. I'm not particularly expert
7 in that trial.
- 8 Q. You'll maybe take that from me. We've received
9 transcripts of that conversation?
- 10 A. I do think you're right, but if you went into any
11 greater detail, then I would struggle, Mr Greaney.
- 12 Q. I will not with you, I'll ask him a little more about it
13 when, as we expect, he gives evidence later in the week.
14 It's the simple fact of that connection that I would
15 like you to acknowledge and you have, with apologies for
16 using you as a vehicle.
- 17 The second connection between the case and that
18 Islamist militia you are able to help us with because
19 it's dealt with in your witness statement, page 67,
20 paragraphs 278 and following.
- 21 Was an operation called Operation Traverso opened?
- 22 A. That's correct, yes, it was.
- 23 Q. Paragraph 278. What was that operation opened in order
24 to examine?
- 25 A. Operation Traverso was an operation that was run by

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1 SO15, and it was particularly to examine the extremist
2 activities of a person by the name of Akila Hafiane and
3 her family, and this was to do with travelling to Syria
4 in order to join and fight for IS.
5 Q. Just to give a few additional details, which I don't
6 believe to be sensitive given that they're in your
7 statement, Akila Hafiane's eldest son, Ibrahim, had been
8 killed in Syria in February 2013 whilst fighting for an
9 Al-Qaeda affiliate?
10 A. Yes, that's right.
11 Q. Two of her daughters — is Akila the father or mother?
12 She's the mother, I think.
13 A. I think that's the mother, yes.
14 Q. Two of her daughters had travelled to Syria and were
15 believed to have co-located with an Al-Qaeda affiliate?
16 A. Yes.
17 Q. Having left in 2013 and 2014?
18 A. Yes.
19 Q. On 2 January 2017, had Akila Hafiane and two of her
20 other children been stopped whilst trying to board
21 a flight for Istanbul at Heathrow?
22 A. Yes, they were.
23 Q. Were they subject to schedule 7 port stop examination?
24 A. Yes.
25 Q. Which involved questioning?

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1 A. Yes.
2 Q. And on being questioned about the reasons for their
3 travel, did they give inconsistent accounts?
4 A. Yes, that's correct.
5 Q. And in very simple terms, was it suspected that they
6 were travelling ultimately to Syria, with money and
7 goods for their Syria-based family members?
8 A. Yes, that was the suspicion.
9 Q. As a result, on 12 January of 2017, did officers from
10 SO15 — and you perhaps ought to indicate what SO15 is.
11 A. SO15 is the Metropolitan Police counter-terrorism unit
12 that investigates counter-terrorism in the capital and
13 some of the surrounding areas.
14 Q. On 12 January 2017, did officers of that unit attend the
15 home address of Akila Hafiane?
16 A. Yes, they did.
17 Q. And execute a search warrant pursuant to schedule 5 of
18 the Terrorism Act?
19 A. Yes.
20 Q. During the course of that search, I'm now at the top of
21 page 68, were a number of media devices seized?
22 A. Yes.
23 Q. One of which was a hard drive of a computer?
24 A. Yes.
25 Q. Did an examination of that hard drive lead to the

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1 discovery of five videos and 65 photographs, appearing
2 to have been made during the Libyan Civil War of 2011?
3 A. Yes, it did.
4 Q. What did many of the files that were recovered from that
5 hard drive appear to show?
6 A. They appeared to have been taken during the Libyan Civil
7 War of 2011. They showed a number of individuals in
8 camouflage uniforms, holding weapons, and in one of the
9 photographs, in fact in several of the photographs, the
10 Islamist militia of February 17th Martyrs Brigade logo
11 was seen.
12 Q. So in many of the files, Akila Hafiane's estranged
13 husband and her deceased son Ibrahim, they could be seen
14 in camouflage uniforms and holding weapons?
15 A. Yes, that's right.
16 Q. Alongside the logo of the Islamist militia that we've
17 been speaking about?
18 A. Yes.
19 Q. And for our purposes, potentially importantly, did one
20 of the 65 photographs show a male that has what might be
21 described as a strong resemblance to Salman Abedi?
22 A. Yes.
23 Q. In the photograph was that male carrying a rifle?
24 A. Yes.
25 Q. In due course, was work done by the SO15 photographic

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1 identification cell?
2 A. Yes, it was.
3 Q. Did their work come to this, that it wasn't possible to
4 say definitively that the person shown in that
5 photograph was Salman Abedi?
6 A. That's correct, yes.
7 Q. But the likeness was startling?
8 A. It is startling.
9 Q. In the photograph, can there be seen on the wall behind
10 that person an insignia which has been assessed of being
11 that of the February 17th Martyrs Brigade?
12 A. Yes, that's correct.
13 Q. Did the work of that unit, moreover, identify that the
14 image had been captured on 17 August 2011?
15 A. It did.
16 Q. And no doubt this was work that was based upon the
17 metadata of the photograph?
18 A. It was, yes.
19 Q. And the further work of your investigation, is this
20 correct, identified that that was during a period when
21 Salman Abedi was absent from school?
22 A. That's correct.
23 Q. Support for the view that the person shown in that
24 photograph alongside the logo of the Islamist militia
25 was Salman Abedi further came from work done during the

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1 search of the Abedi home address at 21 Elsmore Road;
 2 is that correct?
 3 A. That's correct, yes.
 4 Q. This is page 286.
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. And is that because an examination of a hard drive
 7 recovered from that address after the attack revealed
 8 images showing both Hashem and Salman Abedi in military
 9 uniform with weapons, with the metadata showing that
 10 they were taken in 2011?
 11 A. That's right, yes.
 12 Q. The way in which you put it in your witness statement at
 13 paragraphs 287 and 288 is this — I'll read them out and
 14 invite you to confirm them:
 15 "The images would indicate that Salman and Hashem
 16 did receive some level of military training. In one of
 17 the images Salman is in full military dress displaying
 18 an ID card, again indicating he was part of an organised
 19 group."
 20 Is that correct?
 21 A. That's correct, yes.
 22 Q. "Therefore [you add] it is not unreasonable to suggest
 23 that Salman Abedi may have either fought with
 24 the February 17th Martyrs Brigade during the
 25 Libyan Uprising of 2011 or attended a training camp or

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1 both."
 2 A. Yes, that's correct.
 3 MR GREANEY: I'm moving on to a separate topic, sir, I don't
 4 know if you have any questions about that.
 5 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, thank you.
 6 MR GREANEY: The next topic is social media.
 7 Is it the position that analysis by your
 8 investigation of social media played a part, although
 9 it would be right to say only a limited part, in
 10 establishing the mindset of Salman and Hashem Abedi?
 11 A. Yes, it did.
 12 Q. Mr Barraclough, this takes us to page 181 of your
 13 witness statement, paragraph 472.
 14 You begin by saying the following:
 15 "In summary, although a protracted and detailed
 16 investigation into the online presence of both Salman
 17 and Hashem Abedi has been conducted, relatively little
 18 material has been recovered relating to either brother."
 19 A. Yes, that's right.
 20 Q. So what that reveals, I think, is that there will be
 21 some cases in which a wealth of information can be
 22 obtained by such an analysis?
 23 A. Yes, that's right.
 24 Q. This is not such a case, although some material has been
 25 identified?

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1 A. No, it's not, and it's certainly reflected by the number
 2 of devices that we've recovered. I think we accept that
 3 they are very few in this case.
 4 Q. I'm going to go next to paragraph 474 where you explain:
 5 "Difficulties [in your social media investigations]
 6 were encountered because social media accounts were
 7 suspended or deleted after the identity of the bomber
 8 and his brother were publicised."
 9 A. Yes, that's right.
 10 Q. By that do you mean deleted by the operators or deleted
 11 by the users?
 12 A. Deleted by the users, so this was a problem that we
 13 encountered across the board and it's actually — well,
 14 it's my understanding, it's impossible to retrieve those
 15 once that's happened.
 16 Q. So an example of that, I believe, is that there was an
 17 account suspected to be attributed to Hashem Abedi on
 18 a particular website?
 19 A. That's right, yes.
 20 Q. That it was clear from what was available that he or
 21 someone connected with his account had answered "Osama
 22 Bin Laden" in answer to a question about who he regarded
 23 as his hero?
 24 A. Yes, that's right.
 25 Q. But that was the full extent of what you could retrieve

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1 because the account had been deleted post—attack?
 2 A. Yes, that's correct.
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Stopping for a moment, we've heard
 4 a great deal about the difficulties of getting some
 5 accounts or things that are on the net and social media
 6 deleted.
 7 A. Yes.
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Equally, in this case, it's a problem
 9 for you the other way round, evidentially?
 10 A. It is. Once these accounts are deleted, the service
 11 providers do not keep records that sit behind it.
 12 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: How big a problem is that for you
 13 carrying out investigations?
 14 A. It can be a big problem because — I mean, clearly from
 15 a business perspective, it doesn't make sense to keep
 16 stuff that they don't need, but from an investigative
 17 perspective, these things just completely disappear
 18 at the switch of a button.
 19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Is there anything you think we could say
 20 by way of recommendations which might assist in that?
 21 A. Sir, may I think about that —
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, please do.
 23 A. — and come back to you?
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's always a good idea to think about
 25 it.

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1 A. I'm sure that there certainly would be and I think that
2 would be very helpful.
3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
4 MR GREANEY: The chairman has gone precisely to the issue
5 I was going to ask you about, namely whether there
6 should be some ability on the part of the police or MI5
7 or the Home Office more generally to press a button --
8 it's more complicated than that no doubt -- where there
9 is an attack of this sort, which indicates to the social
10 media companies that they should not allow accounts to
11 be deleted. It's that kind of thing the chairman is
12 asking you to think about.
13 A. If that was a broad recommendations that was abided by,
14 that would be absolutely amazing by us.
15 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: We don't guarantee to do anything
16 amazing, but at least we can try.
17 A. The only thing I would say is I am not an expert in
18 social media.
19 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Nor me.
20 A. I think I'm completely the wrong age. So it would be
21 helpful if I could speak to the people who were.
22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Speak to someone younger?
23 A. Yes.
24 MR GREANEY: I don't want to put words in your mouth, but if
25 it could be achieved, it would be an excellent resource,

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1 but as we know, some of the suppliers of these services,
2 many of them are not based in the UK, are based in the
3 United States or in Russia or China and other locations,
4 so it may be easier to recommend than to achieve. We
5 quite understand that point.
6 A. They certainly can be. I think that in itself causes
7 problems because we have to get letters of authority or
8 MLATs to get that information.
9 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It's quite interesting because it's the
10 reverse of the normal problem.
11 A. Yes.
12 MR GREANEY: So it's certainly an issue worth thinking about
13 and the chairman is no doubt grateful that you have
14 undertaken to do so.
15 In terms of what you were able to obtain, so far as
16 Salman Abedi is concerned there were two Facebook
17 accounts. The first had nothing of the remotest
18 interest to you upon with the last log-in being in
19 November of 2014; is that correct?
20 A. Yes, that's right.
21 Q. Paragraph 477.
22 A. Yes.
23 Q. And the other Facebook account, believed attributable to
24 Salman Abedi, had been deleted before you managed to
25 access it?

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1 A. Again, correct, yes.
2 Q. In relation to Hashem Abedi, paragraph 479 and
3 continuing, you were able to obtain a little additional
4 material; is that correct?
5 A. Yes, that's correct.
6 Q. In particular, were you able to capture some material
7 from a Facebook account that was linked to him?
8 A. Yes, that's right.
9 Q. Was the content reviewed and a number of pages assessed
10 as showing radicalisation and/or an affinity for
11 violence?
12 A. Yes.
13 Q. Just to list those, was there on his Facebook account an
14 image of a well-known Islamic State member, Reyaad Khan
15 from Cardiff?
16 A. Yes.
17 Q. And he was a person who had left Cardiff to join
18 Islamic State?
19 A. Yes.
20 Q. And in due course had been killed in a drone strike --
21 A. Yes.
22 Q. -- on 21 August 2015?
23 A. Yes.
24 Q. And you'll take it from me, no doubt, he is described by
25 the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament as

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1 a prolific recruiter and attack planner for
2 Islamic State.
3 A. Yes, I believe that's the case.
4 Q. Had that image been posted by Hashem Abedi on
5 23 June 2014 on the Facebook profile of another
6 individual?
7 A. Yes, that's right.
8 Q. Was there conversation between Hashem Abedi and that
9 other individual that indicated that Hashem Abedi knew
10 full well who and what Reyaad Khan was?
11 A. Yes. I'm not entirely sure it went that far, to be
12 honest. I mean, this was very much about seeking
13 confirmation of Reyaad Khan's nickname.
14 Q. I might have put it slightly too high, but it showed an
15 interest in Reyaad Khan?
16 A. I think so. Without going into the details, I don't
17 think it was quite as detailed as that. I think it was
18 much more superficial to be honest.
19 Q. You're right to pull me back and ensure that the
20 accurate evidence is given.
21 On the Facebook accounts or accounts upon which
22 Hashem Abedi posted, were there also images of
23 Hashem Abedi holding assault rifles and a machine gun?
24 A. Yes.
25 Q. Was there an image posted on 3 October 2014, showing

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1 a convoy of pick-up trucks carrying armed militants
 2 raising Islamic State flags?
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. Other images related to Islamic State?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Including one showing Islamic State militants around
 7 a table, one of them holding a sword ready to chop off
 8 the right hand of a blindfolded male who was being
 9 forcibly held down on the table?
 10 A. Yes, that's correct.
 11 Q. And had Hashem Abedi made a comment in February 2014,
 12 which indicated that he agreed with the action about to
 13 take place in that image?
 14 A. Yes, that's right.
 15 Q. Finally, was there a photograph on Hashem Abedi's
 16 Facebook account showing a depiction of a passenger
 17 plane heading for a building, clearly meant to be one of
 18 the Twin Towers?
 19 A. Yes, that's correct.
 20 Q. Carrying the words "For Allah"?
 21 A. Yes.
 22 Q. I think I may have said that that was on Hashem Abedi's
 23 Facebook page. In fact, was it the position that
 24 Hashem Abedi had liked that photograph --
 25 A. He had.

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1 Q. -- which had been posted by someone else?
 2 A. Yes, he had.
 3 Q. And the someone else who had posted that photograph on
 4 7 November 2012 was who?
 5 A. That was Zuhir Nassrat.
 6 Q. Who, as we know, was someone involved in precursor
 7 purchases, albeit I think, from recollection, not ones
 8 which were actively successful.
 9 A. Yes.
 10 Q. Ultimately, was it the position that the work that you
 11 were able to do in relation to Hashem Abedi confirmed
 12 his attitudes and his associates too? Paragraph 481.
 13 A. I'm sorry, could you repeat the question?
 14 Q. Of course. Paragraph 481. Ultimately, to summarise the
 15 position, I think that the images that you recovered
 16 corroborated known facts about Hashem Abedi's associates
 17 and his attitudes as well, but they didn't offer
 18 additional investigative opportunities to Operation
 19 Manteline?
 20 A. I think that's correct, yes.
 21 Q. That deals with Hashem Abedi and Salman Abedi.
 22 Next, Samia Abedi, the mother of the Abedi brothers.
 23 You were, is this the position, paragraph 483, able to
 24 identify an active Facebook account for the mother of
 25 the Abedi brothers?

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1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. That many of the posts and likes referred to Islamic
 3 religious matters and the ongoing conflict in Libya?
 4 A. Yes, that's right.
 5 Q. There were likes for various different armed groups on,
 6 in fact, opposing sides of the Libyan conflict?
 7 A. Yes, that's right.
 8 Q. Including the Islamic militia we have referred to
 9 already, the February 17th Martyrs Brigade?
 10 A. That's correct, yes.
 11 Q. Was there also a like for Libya Shield Force, which is
 12 reported to have links to Al-Qaeda?
 13 A. Yes, that's correct.
 14 Q. Were there two pages relating to a person named
 15 Sulaiman Al-Alwan?
 16 A. Yes.
 17 Q. Who is that person?
 18 A. He is what is described as a militant Islamic scholar
 19 and he's previously made comments about killing
 20 Americans, he's justified suicide bombings, and he's
 21 been convicted for funding Al-Qaeda.
 22 Q. Next, Ramadan Abedi. Were you able to discover, after
 23 the attack, that he had a live Twitter account and
 24 a live Facebook account?
 25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. In common with Samia Abedi's account, have those both
 2 been translated and assessed?
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. Did the Twitter account of Ramadan Abedi contain posts
 5 about current affairs, both in Libya and the
 6 Middle East?
 7 A. Yes, it did.
 8 Q. So far as his Facebook account is concerned, did that
 9 contain a photo of a martyr, Abdel Munem al-Sayd?
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. A post supporting Hamas?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. And a post about a man called Abu Khattala?
 14 A. Yes, it did.
 15 Q. Who again, I'm sure you'll take it from me, open source
 16 material indicates had fought against Gaddafi but then
 17 became involved in terrorism and is currently serving
 18 a sentence for terrorism offences in the United States?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. Was there an image on the Facebook page of Ramadan Abedi
 21 of two executed males hanging from a tree?
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. And finally, Ismail Abedi. Did Ismail Abedi have
 24 a Facebook account which was viewed and assessed, prior
 25 to the attack, in July 2015?

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1 A. Yes, he did.
 2 Q. I'm at paragraph 487. What did the account in general
 3 terms contain?
 4 A. The account contained 58 captures and this includes
 5 numerous images and videos of males in camouflage
 6 clothing with military weapons. Ismail Abedi appears in
 7 numerous images, holding a pistol, an RPG launcher,
 8 holding what looks to be an artillery piece, an assault
 9 rifle, sitting on an anti-aircraft gun, holding
 10 a machine gun, and in camouflage clothing holding
 11 a machine gun with what appears to be an ISIS logo in
 12 flames behind him.
 13 Q. Pause there for one moment. Had he also posted
 14 a notorious image of a Jordanian pilot just prior to
 15 that man being set on fire?
 16 A. Yes, he had.
 17 Q. Had he posted a caption with that image?
 18 A. Yes, he did.
 19 Q. What was the caption he posted?
 20 A. The caption was, "Looking for seasoned firewood".
 21 Q. Were there on his account also a large number of images
 22 relating to conflict and war, including images of
 23 deceased bodies?
 24 A. Yes.
 25 Q. A decapitated body?

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1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. And a yet further image of a male being burned?
 3 A. Yes, that's right.
 4 Q. Was there a particular image that struck the
 5 investigation of Ismail Abedi sitting alongside
 6 a person?
 7 A. Yes, there was.
 8 Q. Could you describe that image for us, please?
 9 A. So this was an image of Ismail Abedi sitting beside
 10 a man by the name of Nazih Al-Raghie, who was the son of
 11 Anas al-Libi, and he's holding a pistol and -- I'm
 12 sorry, I think we move on to the next image then.
 13 Q. Yes. You were about to say there's also an image of --
 14 A. There was also an image of Ismail Abedi holding a rifle
 15 with the February 17th Martyrs Brigade flags behind him,
 16 which is similar to the image where Salman Abedi is
 17 present with flags behind him from what we previously
 18 talked about, which was Operation Traverso.
 19 Q. I indicated there were two links in the case to that
 20 Islamist militia, in fact here we have a third one,
 21 which is an image of Ismail Abedi holding a rifle with
 22 a flag of that militia behind him?
 23 A. Yes, that's right.
 24 Q. As for the first of those two images you have just
 25 described, namely an image of Ismail Abedi sitting

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1 beside the son of Anas al-Libi, am I correct that that
 2 person, Anas al-Libi, was what struck you about that
 3 particular photograph?
 4 A. Well, it was an aspect of the photograph that struck us.
 5 Clearly, the whole photograph is of relevance, but yes,
 6 there is relevance that Nazih Al-Raghie is in that
 7 picture.
 8 Q. That takes us to his father, Anas al-Libi. I did warn
 9 you there would be jumping around. Can we go back to
 10 page 60, paragraph 248, of your statement, please.
 11 What are you able to tell us about Anas al-Libi and,
 12 first of all, his association with the Abedi family?
 13 A. I can cover off what's in that paragraph, which is that
 14 Anas al-Libi was a friend of the Abedi family in the
 15 1990s. He was known as an Al-Qaeda commander, who was
 16 actually in exile in Manchester in 1995. So al-Libi was
 17 on the FBI most wanted list for terrorist offences and
 18 he had been linked to both US embassy bombings in
 19 Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Al-Libi was captured in
 20 Tripoli in October 2013 by US forces and held in custody
 21 by the United States and died whilst he was in custody
 22 of cancer before -- in fact I think immediately
 23 before --
 24 Q. Just before his trial?
 25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. And we were discussing earlier the Facebook profile of
 2 Ramadan Abedi, the father of Salman Abedi. Was there
 3 anything on that profile that related to al-Libi, this
 4 Al-Qaeda commander?
 5 A. Yes, there was. This was as a result of Ramadan hearing
 6 that he'd died while in US custody and he shared the:
 7 "The Prophet knows how many have a picture of this
 8 lion in their profiles. The weak are forbidden from
 9 sharing it."
 10 MR GREANEY: Thank you. That was all I wanted to ask you
 11 about what your work to analyse social media had
 12 identified. Sir, I'm going to move on to a different
 13 topic unless you have questions about that.
 14 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: No, thank you.
 15 MR GREANEY: Next, Mr Barraclough, we're going to deal with
 16 a series of individuals who may have been involved
 17 in the radicalisation of Salman and Hashem Abedi before
 18 dealing finally, but only in summary, given the evidence
 19 that is to come later in the week, with Didsbury Mosque.
 20 So I hope that's clear. We won't get through all of
 21 this before the break, so we'll take a break in about
 22 15 minutes or so.
 23 I would like to begin, please, with Ramadan Abedi
 24 and the role that he may have had in the radicalisation
 25 of his sons. This takes us back to paragraph 243,

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1 page 58.
 2 Has Operation Manteline conducted extensive
 3 investigations into Ramadan Abedi?
 4 A. Yes, as best we can, yes.
 5 Q. And you would, I know, very much like to have spoken to
 6 him; is that correct?
 7 A. That is correct, yes.
 8 Q. But has that proved impossible?
 9 A. It is impossible. He's in Libya.
 10 Q. Do your investigations reveal he was in Libya at the
 11 time of the arena attack?
 12 A. Yes, he was.
 13 Q. And that he has remained there?
 14 A. Yes, he has.
 15 Q. Or at any rate not returned to the United Kingdom?
 16 A. Actually, that's more accurate, yes.
 17 Q. As a consequence of the ongoing conflict and instability
 18 in Libya, has it proved impossible to conduct enquiries
 19 there in relation to Ramadan Abedi?
 20 A. Yes, I'm afraid it has.
 21 Q. But were you able to carry out investigative actions
 22 in the United Kingdom, including the interrogation of
 23 police systems, third party enquiries with relevant
 24 authorities, and interviewing those who know of
 25 Ramadan Abedi and his activities?

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1 A. Yes, that's correct.
 2 Q. When you last gave evidence, we worked through the
 3 chronology in relation to Ramadan Abedi's arrival in the
 4 United Kingdom in 1993 and his journey to citizenship.
 5 We don't need to go through all of that again. But what
 6 it is relevant for you to confirm, paragraph 245,
 7 is that Ramadan Abedi is reported to have associated
 8 with many exiled Libyans linked to an organisation we've
 9 heard of many times, namely the LIFG, or the Libyan
 10 Islamic Fighting Group.
 11 A. Yes. I think that's right. He has associated with many
 12 exiled Libyans linked to this.
 13 Q. And furthermore, is it correct that various open source
 14 reporting is to the effect that Ramadan Abedi was an
 15 active member of the LIFG?
 16 A. Yes, that's correct.
 17 Q. Over the page to paragraph 249, please. On two
 18 occasions in November of 2011, so during the period of
 19 the uprising in Libya, was Ramadan Abedi spoken to by
 20 the police in the United Kingdom?
 21 A. Yes, he was.
 22 Q. First, on 2 November, flying into Manchester from
 23 Tunisia?
 24 A. That's correct, yes.
 25 Q. And secondly on 17 November, travelling via Dover on his

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1 way to Libya?
 2 A. Yes, that's right.
 3 Q. What did Ramadan Abedi divulge on those occasions?
 4 A. He talked about his other name that he's known as,
 5 Abu Ismail, and that he had previously been part of aid
 6 convoys from the UK to Libya and had given medical aid
 7 to rebel fighters. He had not had any military or
 8 medical training and had not taken up arms against the
 9 government. He said also that whilst he had been
 10 working for the Libyan police in the early 1990s, he'd
 11 passed information on persons being watched to his
 12 brother-in-law and he became a member of a group which
 13 would distribute leaflets against the Gaddafi regime.
 14 He did, however, deny that he was a member of the LIFG.
 15 Q. But certainly he was recognising that he formed or that
 16 he had anti-Gaddafi views; is that correct?
 17 A. Without a doubt, yes.
 18 Q. And indeed you were to learn of that attitude from other
 19 sources as well, one of which we're going to come on to
 20 next?
 21 A. Yes.
 22 Q. Did the investigation post-attack obtain further
 23 information about Ramadan Abedi from his sister?
 24 A. Yes, Rabaa, yes, that's correct.
 25 Q. Is she the sister who lived in Canada?

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1 A. That's correct, yes.
 2 Q. In fact, a member of your team was to go to Canada in
 3 order to interview her?
 4 A. Yes, they did.
 5 Q. Did she provide a witness statement to the
 6 investigation --
 7 A. She did.
 8 Q. -- setting out some background, the top of page 61,
 9 in relation to the upbringing that she and Ramadan Abedi
 10 had received?
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. And essentially, suggesting that they had had
 13 a relatively liberal upbringing during which their
 14 parents had encouraged them to think for themselves and
 15 respect other cultures?
 16 A. Yes, she did say that.
 17 Q. What did Rabaa say about Ramadan Abedi's career path?
 18 A. She said that Ramadan joined the police at the age of
 19 17, graduating, this is in Libya, to become a police
 20 officer under the Gaddafi regime. Ramadan was pressured
 21 into disclosing information about their neighbours and
 22 people he went to school with. In 1992, Ramadan and
 23 Samia were married, but according to Rabaa both faced
 24 prosecution under the Gaddafi regime for practising
 25 religion. Ramadan feared for his life, so they fled

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1 Libya, through Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, and sought asylum
2 in the UK.

3 Q. Pausing for a moment. She was giving an account of
4 Ramadan Abedi and his wife being persecuted for their
5 views under the Gaddafi regime in Libya?

6 A. Yes, that's right.

7 Q. And did Rabaa go on to give an account of Ramadan Abedi,
8 contrary to what he had said in November of 2011,
9 returning to Libya to fight?

10 A. Yes, she did.

11 Q. Did she make plain that he had returned to fight against
12 the Gaddafi regime?

13 A. Yes. She went on to say that he'd received a shrapnel
14 wound in his back and that stopped him from fighting on
15 the front line.

16 Q. What did she say about the family of Ramadan Abedi, his
17 immediate family, during that period?

18 A. So Samia and the children travelled to Tunisia and
19 stayed there until Libya was liberated in October 2011.

20 Q. Just pausing there before we move to
21 Abdalraouf Abdallah. The investigation revealed
22 information to suggest that Ramadan Abedi had formed
23 anti-Gaddafi views?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Had been part of the anti-Gaddafi uprising?

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1 A. Yes.

2 Q. That he had fought against the Gaddafi regime?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. That he had strong associations with members of the
5 LIFG?

6 A. Yes, I think that's fair.

7 Q. And there is open source material that indicates that he
8 was an active member of the LIFG?

9 A. There is, yes.

10 Q. We know, moreover, that certainly two of his sons appear
11 to have had an association, to put it no higher than
12 that, with the February 17th Martyrs Brigade?

13 A. I think that's very fair.

14 Q. I'm next going to turn, as I said, to deal with
15 Abdalraouf Abdallah, and in passing with his brother
16 Mohammed. This takes us to paragraphs 495 to 528 of
17 your witness statement.

18 Sir, we've been going, I think, for over an hour.
19 This is going to be quite a long section and if we are
20 taking a break, as conventionally we do, this might be
21 a good point at which to break. I will certainly finish
22 my questioning today, so we're well on track.

23 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Fine, we'll have a conventional break
24 then. Ten minutes. Thank you.

25 (3.03 pm)

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1 (A short break)

2 (3.28 pm)

3 MR GREANEY: As I indicated, this is the final general topic
4 we're dealing with, although not the final individual,
5 and it's individuals who may have played a part in the
6 radicalisation of one or both of the Abedi brothers and
7 then, finally, the mosque.

8 We were dealing or about to deal with
9 Abdalraouf Abdallah. Is it the position that following
10 a meeting that was held by the investigation on
11 29 November 2018, he was made a suspect in the
12 investigation?

13 A. Yes, that's correct.

14 Q. I should have said I'm at paragraph 495, page 188.
15 Did you record the rationale for treating him as
16 a suspect?

17 A. I did.

18 Q. What was that rationale, please?

19 A. If Mr Greaney, if I may read that.

20 Q. Of course.

21 A. "Abdalraouf Abdallah is a convicted terrorist who in
22 2017 was in custody at HMP Altcourse. He is convicted
23 of facilitating the provision of men, weapons and money
24 to be used for terrorist purposes in Syria. Three of
25 the males he facilitated in their travel eventually

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1 joined IS. An influential member of the Libyan
2 community, he is highly regarded within the Libyan youth
3 element of that community particularly, having been
4 paralysed in conflict against the Gaddafi regime during
5 the Arab Spring of 2011. Salman Abedi visited Abdallah
6 on 18 January 2017 and was additionally booked in to
7 visit him on 17 January 2017 but the visit was
8 cancelled.

9 "Elyas Elmehdi also visited Abdallah on
10 18 January 2017 with Abedi and on a number of other
11 occasions with others. In November 2014, limited
12 communication existed between Abdallah and (who is now
13 identified as) Salman Abedi, where it may be assessed
14 that Abdallah was subtly imposing extremist views upon
15 him.

16 "At the same time, a male called Elyas had been
17 assisted by Abdallah to travel to Libya to engage in the
18 conflict, a fact of which Salman Abedi was also aware.
19 Elyas is believed to be Elmehdi given his travel
20 patterns during that period are precisely consistent
21 with the communications recovered. Given this
22 background information, influential status as a proven
23 extremist by his conviction, and links to Islamic State
24 and close association with Abedi before the execution of
25 the attack, it is highly suspected that Abdallah played

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1 some part in the planning, influence and ideological
 2 motivation of the attack. He was not previously
 3 arrested in 2017 for this investigation and presently
 4 remains in custody.”
 5 Q. And we need, of course, in that penultimate sentence to
 6 underline the word "suspected", do we not?
 7 A. Absolutely, yes.
 8 Q. And it is a fact that he has never been prosecuted for
 9 any offence arising out of the arena attack; is that
 10 also the position?
 11 A. That's correct, yes.
 12 Q. So what we do need to do is unpack some or maybe even
 13 all of what is contained within what gave rise to
 14 grounds for suspicion, and in part, substantial part, we
 15 need to do that out of fairness to Mr Abdallah, who has
 16 said that he will come and assist the inquiry by
 17 answering questions of Thursday this week, so it's only
 18 fair to him that he should know what was believed by the
 19 investigation to be the position.
 20 In terms of his background, was Mr Abdallah born in
 21 Pakistan?
 22 A. Yes, he was.
 23 Q. To a father, Nagah Abdallah, who had been born in Libya,
 24 and a mother born in Algeria?
 25 A. Yes, that's right.

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1 Q. Does he have an older brother who I will name for
 2 reasons that will become apparent, namely Mohammed
 3 Abdallah?
 4 A. Yes.
 5 Q. And four younger sisters who I won't name?
 6 A. Yes.
 7 Q. What was the reason why the family ultimately settled
 8 in the United Kingdom?
 9 A. Once again, the reason that we understand is that they
 10 fled Libya in the early 1990s after Nagah Abdallah was
 11 involved in political opposition to Colonel Gaddafi.
 12 Q. Moreover, had another relative, Mr Abdallah's uncle,
 13 been killed whilst a political prisoner in Libya in
 14 1996?
 15 A. Yes, that's right.
 16 Q. Over the page, page 190. In 2010, whilst on a gap year
 17 from his studies, did Mr Abdallah go to live with
 18 relatives who remained in Tripoli?
 19 A. He did.
 20 Q. So was he there during a significant period in the
 21 history of Libya?
 22 A. Yes, he was.
 23 Q. Why was that?
 24 A. Well, because this was the time when demonstrations were
 25 commencing against Gaddafi and it became the

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1 commencement of the Arab Spring uprising in Libya.
 2 Q. Is it believed by the investigation that at that point,
 3 Mr Abdallah and his brother, Mohammed, joined that
 4 militia that I've described, the February 17th
 5 Martyrs Brigade?
 6 A. Yes, that's right.
 7 Q. And that they did so in order to engage in the fight
 8 against Gaddafi?
 9 A. Yes.
 10 Q. We know, and indeed have seen, that Mr Abdallah is
 11 wheelchair-bound. Does the investigation have an
 12 understanding of how that came about?
 13 A. Yes. During the conflict, he was shot in the back
 14 twice. He was aged 18 at the time and flown to Germany
 15 for treatment, but that treatment and the injury
 16 resulted in his paralysis as we know it.
 17 Q. So he had been flown to Germany for treatment, but
 18 having been issued with a replacement British passport,
 19 did he subsequently return to the United Kingdom?
 20 A. He did.
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Can we just for a moment stop? We heard
 22 from a witness this morning -- I don't know whether you
 23 heard his evidence or not?
 24 A. I heard some of it, sir.
 25 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: One of the things he said is that the

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1 people who went from this country to fight against
 2 Gaddafi were being encouraged to do so by the British
 3 Government. Did your investigations support that or
 4 not? Or would you prefer not to answer?
 5 A. I couldn't say. I don't know.
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: That's fair enough.
 7 A. I find that highly unlikely. Certainly from my --
 8 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Who knows what went on in Libya?
 9 A. Who knows?
 10 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 11 MR GREANEY: Perhaps the height of it, so far as your
 12 evidence is concerned, is I have no doubt you'll be
 13 aware of open source material to the effect of what the
 14 chairman has just said?
 15 A. I'm sure that that's the case.
 16 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Okay, thank you.
 17 MR GREANEY: The investigation, as we know already, revealed
 18 that there developed an association between Salman Abedi
 19 and Abdalraouf Abdallah at some stage a number of years
 20 before the arena attack.
 21 A. Yes.
 22 Q. Did your investigation also establish that that
 23 association took a number of forms, certainly that they
 24 had met in person?
 25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. Both whilst Mr Abdallah was in custody and while he was
2 not in custody?
3 A. Yes, that's right.
4 Q. And also that they had contact by telephone?
5 A. Yes, they did.
6 Q. Was your investigation able to establish the date upon
7 which and the circumstances in which Salman Abedi and
8 Abdalraouf Abdallah were first introduced?
9 A. First introduced?
10 Q. It's paragraph 499.
11 A. No, I would say no.
12 Q. When was the first established telephone contact that
13 you were able to identify?
14 A. This relates to a telephone contact between the two
15 between a number that we've identified ending 3458,
16 which was activated on 14 September 2013. The
17 subscriber details to that phone were Salman Abedi with
18 a previous address.
19 Q. So that number 3458, does it follow that that actually
20 was subscribed, as you understand it, to Salman Abedi,
21 albeit at an address that he was not living at at the
22 time of the attack?
23 A. Yes, it did, and that number was in contact with
24 a mobile telephone which was seized from Abdallah's
25 address on 28 November 2014. That was attributed to

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1 Abdallah and certainly used later in his trial.
2 Q. And that phone, an important phone in the prosecution of
3 Mr Abdallah, was given the exhibit reference ICW/13?
4 A. Yes, that's correct.
5 Q. You refer to the address, 15 Searby Road. Was that an
6 address at which Salman Abedi had previously lived or
7 was it a made-up address?
8 A. No, it was an address he'd previously lived at.
9 Q. So in other words, that number which you do attribute to
10 Salman Abedi was subscribed to him in his name at an
11 address that he had a genuine association with?
12 A. Yes, it did, yes.
13 Q. Between 24 July 2014 and 6 November 2014, were there
14 a number of messages between the two devices, the two
15 numbers that you've mentioned, involving Mr Abdallah and
16 a number identified within his device as Meo?
17 A. Yes. But this causes an issue, which is probably quite
18 difficult to explain and understand.
19 Q. It is very difficult to actually understand, but the
20 upshot, I think, is very simple.
21 A. Yes.
22 Q. Which is that you, by which I mean your investigation,
23 were satisfied that the Meo was in fact Salman Abedi?
24 A. Yes, I think we're very satisfied that's the case, yes.
25 Q. Because messages were going to someone called Meo and

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1 the reply that was coming back, plainly replying to that
2 message, was coming back from Abedi?
3 A. Yes, this was something to do with Apple iMessages
4 at the time that this was being operated.
5 Q. And we definitely don't need to get into that. The
6 upshot is that these messages were, you established,
7 with Salman Abedi?
8 A. Yes.
9 Q. Between 5 November 2014 and 28 November 2014, which is
10 a period of 24 days, were there 714 contacts, not
11 including iMessages?
12 A. Yes, there were.
13 Q. But when one includes iMessages, does the number of
14 contacts over that period of 24 days increase to over
15 1,000?
16 A. Yes, it does.
17 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Do we need to take into account the fact
18 that some of these contacts may not have actually got
19 through?
20 MR GREANEY: I'm sure we do, sir, yes.
21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: I'm sure we can't estimate how many
22 there were, but that's inevitably going to be the case.
23 MR GREANEY: We'll be able to work it out. The reality
24 is that over that period, over 1,000 in a 24-day period,
25 that's 40 contacts or attempted contacts each day.

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1 That's my maths.
2 A. A 13-day period.
3 Q. Well, you say 13 in the statement, but 5 November to the
4 28th is in fact 24 days. It may not matter.
5 A. I'm sorry, that's my mistake. You're quite right.
6 Q. It doesn't matter at all. There is a lot of contact or
7 attempted contact?
8 A. Yes. Yes, I would say so.
9 Q. And certainly even though the chairman's point is
10 undoubtedly a fair one, there was real contact between
11 the two men over that period of time?
12 A. Yes.
13 Q. And indeed, because the police — not your
14 investigation, but the investigation into Mr Abdallah —
15 actually got their hands on ICW/13, the contact which
16 had been by way of text was able to be retrieved?
17 A. Yes, it was.
18 Q. I'm now at paragraph 503, trying to cut to the most
19 relevant material.
20 Was a search of the data within ICW/13,
21 Mr Abdallah's phone, carried out in 2018, so
22 post-attack, for a number of what were considered
23 relevant keywords?
24 A. That's correct, yes.
25 Q. Namely the words martyr, martyrdom, martyred, suicide

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1 and maidens of paradise?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. Did that search result in 35 hits on ICW/13?
 4 A. Yes, it did.
 5 Q. With five of those being between Mr Abdallah and
 6 Salman Abedi?
 7 A. Yes.
 8 Q. And the other 30 being with other people?
 9 A. Yes.
 10 Q. You produce as an exhibit to your witness statement,
 11 appendix 5, a table setting out those hits, do you?
 12 A. Yes, I do.
 13 Q. I don't believe, unless anyone is desperate for us to do
 14 so, we need to take you directly to that, but I'll give
 15 the reference. The reference is {INQ034649/149}.
 16 You and I can deal with it in summary, that what the
 17 table shows is that Salman Abedi and Mr Abdallah
 18 conversed about martyrdom, the maidens of paradise and
 19 a senior figure within Al-Qaeda and his martyrdom?
 20 A. Yes, that's right.
 21 Q. During 2014 -- I'm now at paragraph 505 -- was
 22 information received by the police that indicated that
 23 Mohammed Abdallah, so Abdalraouf Abdallah's brother, and
 24 others were travelling to Syria during the first part of
 25 2014 to engage in extremist Islamic activity?

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1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. In relation to Mohammed Abdallah, we'll just skip
 3 forward for one moment to understand a little about him.
 4 If we go to page 198, paragraph 527. Again, apologies
 5 for so much jumping around.
 6 Did the investigation establish that
 7 Mohammed Abdallah first travelled to Libya in 2011,
 8 alongside his brother, and that he fought there before
 9 returning to the UK?
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. But in 2014, had he travelled on to Syria, where he
 12 joined Islamic State?
 13 A. Yes.
 14 Q. Did he leave a few weeks later, returning to Syria and
 15 then Libya?
 16 A. Yes, he did.
 17 Q. Before returning to the United Kingdom on
 18 16 September 2016 by arrangement with the authorities?
 19 A. Yes, that's right.
 20 Q. And in due course was he then charged with a number of
 21 terrorist offences?
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. Including belonging to a proscribed organisation, namely
 24 Islamic State?
 25 A. That's correct, yes.

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1 Q. Was he, Mohammed Abdallah, convicted of those offences
 2 on 8 December 2017?
 3 A. Yes, he was.
 4 Q. And as a result, imprisoned for an extended sentence of
 5 15 years, 10 years' imprisonment and an extended licence
 6 period of 5 years?
 7 A. Yes.
 8 Q. So back to paragraph 505 now that we have a little more
 9 context, page 191.
 10 As you were telling us, information was received in
 11 2014 about the travel of Mohammed Abdallah and others.
 12 Did that result in the execution of a warrant at the
 13 family home of Abdalraouf Abdallah?
 14 A. Yes.
 15 Q. Resulting in the seizure of a number of items, including
 16 a mobile telephone?
 17 A. Yes.
 18 Q. Just to be clear, that was not ICW/13?
 19 A. No, it was not.
 20 Q. ICW/13 was seized on 28 November 2014 when a further
 21 warrant was executed at the family home?
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. And as a result of what was revealed by the
 24 investigation, was Abdalraouf Abdallah charged with an
 25 offence under the Terrorism Act and remanded into

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1 custody, initially at least to HMP Belmarsh?
 2 A. He was.
 3 Q. And we'll go through the dates of his imprisonment in
 4 due course. But on 29 July 2015, was
 5 Abdalraouf Abdallah granted conditional bail?
 6 A. Yes, he was.
 7 Q. And I think remained on bail until his trial?
 8 A. Yes, that's correct.
 9 Q. On 11 May 2016, was he convicted of the two offences
 10 with which he had been charged?
 11 A. He was.
 12 Q. The first charge being preparation of terrorist acts?
 13 A. Yes.
 14 Q. And the particulars of that offence are listed at
 15 paragraph 506 of your statement. But to identify just
 16 a small number of the particulars, he had arranged the
 17 provision of firearms for four men who were travellers
 18 or aspirant travellers to Syria for extremist purposes?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. And that he had encouraged two of those men to join in
 21 a battle?
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. And otherwise assisted with their travel?
 24 A. Yes, that's right.
 25 Q. And charge 2 was being concerned in a funding

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1 arrangement?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. Namely that he had assisted his brother,
 4 Mohammed Abdallah, by obtaining or assisting in the
 5 obtaining of a sum of money that was then used for the
 6 purposes of terrorism?
 7 A. Yes, that's correct.
 8 Q. And as a result, as we know, he too was sentenced to an
 9 extended sentence with a custodial term of 5.5 years and
 10 an extended licence period of 4 years?
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. Paragraph 508. We'll just identify his custodial
 13 history because it's relevant to the visits that were
 14 made to him.
 15 28 November 2014, arrested and charged and remanded
 16 to Belmarsh.
 17 A. Yes, correct.
 18 Q. 29 July, bailed to a particular address.
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. 11 May 2016, convicted --
 21 A. Yes.
 22 Q. -- but in the meantime, bailed. 15 July, sentenced --
 23 A. Yes.
 24 Q. -- and begins to serve at Belmarsh.
 25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. Then 6 December 2016, transferred to HMP Altcourse in,
 2 as we know, Liverpool.
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. The top of page 194. Did the investigation establish
 5 that Salman Abedi had visited Mr Abdallah or had planned
 6 to visit him in prison on a number of occasions?
 7 A. Yes, that's correct.
 8 Q. On 26 February 2015, did Salman Abedi visit him at
 9 HMP Belmarsh together with, as we heard from Mr Taghdi,
 10 Ahmed Taghdi?
 11 A. Yes, that's correct.
 12 Q. On 17 January 2017, was Salman Abedi due to have
 13 attended with another person but neither attended in the
 14 result?
 15 A. Yes, that's correct.
 16 Q. In fact, as we're going to see, was it established that
 17 the reason Salman Abedi didn't attend was because he
 18 attended the funeral that day of a man called
 19 Mansoor Al-Anezi?
 20 A. Yes, that's correct.
 21 Q. On 18 January 2017, did Salman Abedi visit Mr Abdallah
 22 at HMP Altcourse, together with two other men, Mr Sadigh
 23 and Mr Elmehdi?
 24 A. Yes, that's correct.
 25 Q. And then, finally, on 6 March 2017, was Salman Abedi due

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1 to have attended with two other men?
 2 A. Yes, that's right.
 3 Q. One, Mr Alzoubare Mohammed, and the other a man that we
 4 do not need to name?
 5 A. Yes, that's correct.
 6 Q. But he didn't attend on that occasion, Salman Abedi --
 7 A. No.
 8 Q. -- whereas the other two men did?
 9 A. Yes.
 10 Q. So two actual visits, two intended visits?
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. But what was discussed known only to those present at
 13 those visits; would that be fair?
 14 A. Yes, I think that's fair.
 15 Q. We mentioned earlier the gentleman who was attacked and
 16 killed in Manchester, who was an associate of
 17 Salman Abedi. On 18 January 2017, paragraph 514, has
 18 the investigation identified to whom Salman Abedi's
 19 final telephone call before entering the prison was?
 20 A. Yes. It was to a telephone attributed to
 21 Abdulrahman Abubaker.
 22 Q. Was he a man who lived in Birmingham at that time in
 23 2017?
 24 A. Yes, he was.
 25 Q. And was he shot and killed at a street barbecue on

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1 15 May 2018 in the Highgate area of Birmingham?
 2 A. Yes, he was.
 3 Q. To bring the position up to date, you may or may not
 4 know, but open source material reveals that men were
 5 convicted of his murder just last month, October 2021.
 6 A. Yes.
 7 Q. At paragraph 516 you confirm, as I indicated:
 8 "The inquiry has asked whether it is known what
 9 passed between those who attended the relevant visits.
 10 There was no RIPA authority in place to monitor visits
 11 to Abdallah at the time these visits happened. It is
 12 not therefore known what took place during these
 13 visits."
 14 Is that correct?
 15 A. Yes, that's correct.
 16 Q. Paragraph 521. Did the inquiry seek to identify whether
 17 there had been any written communications, so old-style
 18 letter writing, between Salman Abedi and
 19 Abdalraouf Abdallah during the period that the latter
 20 spent in prison?
 21 A. Yes, we did.
 22 Q. With what outcome?
 23 A. There are no details in relation to any correspondence
 24 and Abedi's details do not appear on the mail monitoring
 25 log, so that would suggest that nothing passed via that

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1 means.
 2 Q. Within prison, prisoners are permitted to use a prison
 3 telephone; is that correct?
 4 A. Yes, that's right.
 5 Q. Before being able to use such a telephone, are prisoners
 6 required to identify those that they intend to call?
 7 A. Yes, and the telephone number that they're calling.
 8 Q. What is such a list known as, a PIN list, I think?
 9 A. I'll take your word for it, yes.
 10 Q. That's certainly how I know it.
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. Paragraph 522. Was Salman Abedi on the PIN list for
 13 Abdalraouf Abdallah?
 14 A. There is ...
 15 Q. Paragraph 522, the first sentence. I do appreciate
 16 that, as Mr de la Poer would describe it, your statement
 17 is information dense. I think the upshot is that the
 18 investigation revealed that his details did not appear
 19 on the list of those he was approved to call.
 20 A. Yes, thank you, that's correct.
 21 Q. But the position was complicated, as you explain at
 22 paragraph 522, by the fact that on two occasions,
 23 Mr Abdallah was found in possession of illicit mobile
 24 phones in his cell?
 25 A. Yes, that's correct.

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1 Q. So the position, as the inquiry has understood it,
 2 is that in his cell was the approved prison phone that
 3 he was able to use up until 10 pm each night, but that
 4 he on two occasions had an illicit mobile phone?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Was the first of those seized on 17 February 2017?
 7 A. Yes, it was.
 8 Q. And the second on 26 May 2017?
 9 A. Yes.
 10 Q. With there being no contact between Mr Abdallah and
 11 Salman Abedi on the second of those phones, but there
 12 being some contact and attempted contact on the first
 13 phone, that seized on 17 February?
 14 A. Yes, that's correct.
 15 Q. On that first phone, were there 11 attempted calls to
 16 Salman Abedi?
 17 A. Yes, that's right.
 18 Q. With nine apparently going to answerphone?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. But two connecting?
 21 A. Yes.
 22 Q. Those being on 16 January 2017 at 11.25 in the morning,
 23 a call lasting 4 minutes and 28 seconds?
 24 A. Yes, that's right.
 25 Q. So that would be at a time when he was able to use the

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1 approved phone in his cell but he used the illicit
 2 phone.
 3 And the second, 24 January 2017, at 9.08 in the
 4 evening, a call lasting for 4 minutes and 17 seconds?
 5 A. Yes, that's right.
 6 Q. Again, at a time at which the approved phone could have
 7 been used. Do the records also reveal no telephone
 8 contact going in the opposite direction between
 9 Salman Abedi and either of the illicit phones?
 10 A. Yes, that's right.
 11 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Is it possible for you to tell me for
 12 how long Abdallah had the first illicit mobile phone in
 13 his possession? If not, perhaps we could find out.
 14 You've obviously got a record of calls. Whether it's
 15 complete or not, I don't know.
 16 A. If memory serves me right, it's from the previous
 17 October, but I'll check that, sir, if that's okay.
 18 I think it was for quite a long time, but I think you've
 19 also got to recognise that this phone was not just being
 20 used by Abdallah, it would have been used by...
 21 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Other people. They get passed round the
 22 prison?
 23 A. Yes.
 24 MR GREANEY: Sir, I'm sure everything that can be done to
 25 answer your question will be done. You will appreciate

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1 there is a good reason why I am seeking to restrict
 2 myself to --
 3 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Yes, of course. If it is not possible,
 4 it's not possible.
 5 MR GREANEY: Just finally in relation to Mr Abdallah and
 6 events in prison that draw in Salman Abedi, as you
 7 indicated, there is no evidence of written communication
 8 between Salman Abedi and Mr Abdallah over this period,
 9 but was a letter recovered from Mr Abdallah's cell from
 10 one of his sisters that is relevant in an indirect way
 11 to Salman Abedi?
 12 A. Yes, that's right.
 13 Q. This is paragraph 523. The letter from his sister isn't
 14 dated but is date--stamped, or at least the envelope is,
 15 either 3 or 8 January 2017.
 16 A. Yes, that's correct.
 17 Q. In that letter, does she list the details of three
 18 people with names, dates of birth and addresses?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. Are Salman Abedi's details recorded as one of those
 21 three?
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. Does that part of the letter commence:
 24 "And here's your friend's name and address"?
 25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. Obviously, there may be a number of reasons why that
 2 information may have been provided, but you identify
 3 that one was so that Mr Abdallah could submit those
 4 details so that those people could visit him?
 5 A. I think that's so. It's a requirement from the prison
 6 that those details are recorded for the visits to take
 7 place.
 8 Q. In your statement, between paragraphs 524 and 526, you
 9 deal with the observations of certain family members,
 10 cousins and others of Salman Abedi, about the impact
 11 that Abdalraouf Abdallah appeared to have had upon
 12 Salman Abedi and Hashem Abedi. I believe that we can
 13 deal with this by way of a high-level summary with
 14 a view to saving some time.
 15 Overall, those family members who had a view to
 16 express expressed the view, as I indicated earlier, that
 17 as Salman Abedi and Hashem Abedi's behaviour changed
 18 during 2015 and 2016, it appeared to them to coincide
 19 with a period when they were having contact with
 20 Abdalraouf Abdallah.
 21 A. Yes, I think that's a fair summary.
 22 Q. You've dealt with many matters in this statement in
 23 answer to questions that were posed by the inquiry. As
 24 you will appreciate, the issues are now much more
 25 focused than they were when we started out. And in

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1 terms of Abdalraouf Abdallah I can now invite your
 2 attention to paragraphs 539 and following of your
 3 witness statement, page 202.
 4 At paragraph 539 you address the assistance that
 5 Abdalraouf Abdallah is suspected, again to underline
 6 that word, to have provided in relation to the events of
 7 22 May. Is it the position that in light of the
 8 investigation that was carried out, the conclusion that
 9 was reached was that the assistance that
 10 Abdalraouf Abdallah is suspected to have provided is
 11 likely to have been ideological motivation and
 12 encouragement rather than, particularly given his
 13 incarceration, a more practical hands-on assistance?
 14 A. Yes, that's correct, but to stress this is mere
 15 suspicion. I don't know whether we're going to talk
 16 about evidence later, but it remains mere suspicion.
 17 Q. And it's very important, out of fairness to Mr Abdallah
 18 and in terms of public understanding, that you should
 19 have emphasised that fact.
 20 You asked whether we're going to deal with the
 21 evidence. I believe this is what you've sought to do at
 22 paragraph 540 and following. You identify that in order
 23 to provide practical hands-on assistance, Mr Abdallah
 24 would have needed to see or speak to Salman Abedi or
 25 otherwise communicate with him?

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1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. The investigation has explored whether such
 3 communication could have been in person or by way of
 4 a third party?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. And at the top of 203, what is the position so far as
 7 the investigation is concerned?
 8 A. The investigation has not discovered any evidence that
 9 any direct communication between Abdallah and
 10 Salman Abedi concerned the planning of the attack. So
 11 there is simply no evidence to show that there is that
 12 direct involvement in the planning. So the suspicion
 13 remains around the contact and what -- if I may put it
 14 this way -- what we don't know as opposed to what we do
 15 know through the evidence.
 16 Q. We do know that there was direct communication, both in
 17 person and by telephone, between Abdalraouf Abdallah and
 18 Salman Abedi at a time at which the planning for the
 19 attack was taking place because we know that there was
 20 contact in January 2017 in person, in fact on the very
 21 day that one of the precursor purchases occurred,
 22 17 January, and we know that into January and February
 23 there was communication by telephone.
 24 As a result of that, in terms of reaching
 25 a conclusion, even if it's a conclusion that will always

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1 be kept under review, has the investigation made an
 2 assessment of the available data and other information
 3 to explore how extensive the contact between the two men
 4 was?
 5 A. Yes, and I think that's possibly the most important
 6 point around this particular area.
 7 Q. I quite agree. Why is it important in terms of judging
 8 whether Abdalraouf Abdallah played an active part in
 9 planning to look at the extent of the contact over the
 10 period when we know planning was occurring?
 11 A. So if the suspicion -- and I don't necessarily want to
 12 say born out because this still remains a live issue for
 13 us. But if the suspicion is that Abdallah has
 14 radicalised to a degree Salman Abedi and has provided
 15 some degree of inspiration to carry out the attack,
 16 I think we would expect that contact to be relatively
 17 substantial, relatively discoverable, and potentially
 18 quite proximate to the event. And although this is --
 19 I mean, it's entirely speculative and supposition,
 20 that is the theory that we would work on, and I'm not
 21 sure that's entirely born out.
 22 Q. So let's just unravel that a little bit. In terms of
 23 physical meetings, I indicated a moment ago one of them
 24 was on 17 January. That, of course, was when in fact
 25 Salman Abedi attended the funeral of Mr Al-Anezi.

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1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. So in terms of physical meetings, this is your
 3 paragraph 542, you observe that there were two occasions
 4 when visits to Mr Abdalraouf Abdallah in prison were
 5 planned, 17 January and 6 March 2017 —
 6 A. Yes.
 7 Q. — when Salman Abedi in fact did something else.
 8 A. Yes, that's right.
 9 Q. You go on to observe, paragraph 544, that:
 10 "Whilst there was contact between Salman Abedi and
 11 Abdalraouf Abdallah on the first illicit phone, and
 12 whilst there were further attempts at contact, the total
 13 call duration for the calls was less than 10 minutes."
 14 A. Yes.
 15 Q. And that:
 16 "In terms of the second prison phone [this is your
 17 paragraph 545] that appears to have been obtained by
 18 Abdalraouf Abdallah on 13 May 2017, so more than a week
 19 before the attack."
 20 A. Yes.
 21 Q. But he did not appear to have used that in order to
 22 contact Salman or Hashem Abedi either whilst the two
 23 were in Libya or following the return of Salman Abedi on
 24 18 May?
 25 A. Yes, that's correct. I think the other issue is the

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1 change of number for Salman Abedi, in that he has
 2 changed his number and he has not provided that number
 3 to Abdallah. So to be fair in relation to this, if this
 4 were a major contributor to this conspiracy, one would
 5 expect that contact to continue and be up to date and be
 6 alive all the way up to the actual atrocity itself.
 7 Q. So these are all factors that were relevant to your
 8 investigation in terms of reaching a conclusion as to
 9 whether Abdalraouf Abdallah had provided practical
 10 hands-on assistance?
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. And those were matters that persuaded the investigation
 13 that the assistance he is suspected to have provided is
 14 likely to have been ideological motivation and
 15 encouragement rather than a more practical hands-on
 16 assistance?
 17 A. Yes, and that suspicion remains.
 18 Q. At paragraph 547, you remind us of something that you
 19 said earlier in your evidence by way of a preliminary
 20 point, page 204:
 21 "The investigation has [you say] interviewed
 22 Mr Abdallah and other members of his broader group.
 23 I am, however, unable to say conclusively that
 24 Mr Abdallah or members of this broader group were
 25 responsible for the radicalisation of Salman Abedi."

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1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. "As I note in the earlier section on radicalisation,
 3 it is probably wrong to try to reach the conclusion that
 4 one individual or one event served to radicalise
 5 Salman Abedi."
 6 A. Yes.
 7 Q. You add:
 8 "My focus has been on establishing sufficient
 9 evidence to be able to secure convictions for criminal
 10 acts."
 11 As of course you did with Hashem Abedi:
 12 "While it appears to some members of the extended
 13 Abedi family that Abdallah is responsible for
 14 radicalising Salman Abedi, the investigation has not to
 15 date established sufficient evidence to bring a charge
 16 against Mr Abdallah for any role in the attack."
 17 A. That is correct, and the emphasis to that is it remains
 18 to date and the suspicion continues.
 19 Q. I did say I'd finish well before the end of the day.
 20 I'm still confident I will finish before the end of the
 21 day, but there will not, sir, can I tell you, and
 22 through you, Mr Weatherby, be sufficient time for him to
 23 commence his questioning today.
 24 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: And the end of the day occurs at?
 25 MR GREANEY: The end of the day occurs at some stage

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1 between — I think before 4.30. I'll do my best.
 2 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you.
 3 MR GREANEY: I think, sir, we will need to take a short
 4 break at 4.30 if I have not finished by then; is that
 5 correct?
 6 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: It would help me. I'm sorry, I have to
 7 take a phone call, which is important, at 4.30, which is
 8 why we had discussions about the day finishing at 4.30.
 9 MR GREANEY: Yes. If I let you down, sir, I'll apologise.
 10 The next individual I would like to seek your views
 11 about takes us back to page 96 of your statement at
 12 paragraph 375(i) and following. Some of this ground
 13 we have covered already. This relates to Ismail Abedi.
 14 Was he the subject of a schedule 7 port stop at
 15 Heathrow Airport on 3 September 2015?
 16 A. Yes, he was.
 17 Q. And were, as a result, his electrical items downloaded?
 18 A. Yes.
 19 Q. Did the content of one of his devices, an iPhone 6 with
 20 the exhibit reference DAE/1, appear to indicate his
 21 religious and political views?
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. And show that in 2015, he was at the least showing an
 24 interest in Islamic State?
 25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. Did SD cards which were recovered during the same port
2 stop similarly support evidence of that particular
3 mindset?
4 A. Yes.
5 Q. With some of the images being images that, as you have
6 told us already, which had been posted to Ismail's
7 Facebook account?
8 A. Yes.
9 Q. In due course, moreover, was a hard disk recovered from
10 Ismail Abedi's home address, KLS/4?
11 A. Yes.
12 Q. And overall, on those devices did you find jihadi
13 nasheeds?
14 A. Yes.
15 Q. So a form of chant which can be entirely legitimate?
16 A. Yes.
17 Q. But the ones that you recovered were associated with
18 gunfire and explosions?
19 A. Yes.
20 Q. Did you recover imagery of an ISIS flag?
21 A. Yes.
22 Q. Images, as we've said already, of Salman Abedi holding
23 firearms and weapons?
24 A. Yes.
25 Q. A number of those?

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1 A. Yes.
2 Q. A number of lectures by a man called Anwar Al-Awlaki?
3 A. Yes.
4 Q. Who, as the inquiry has heard already, was an
5 Islamic State propagandist?
6 A. Yes, he was.
7 Q. And indeed, is known to be the person in 2016 who
8 promoted the idea of lone-wolf attacks?
9 A. Yes.
10 Q. A video of Salman Abedi firing weapons?
11 A. Yes.
12 Q. An image of the head and shoulders of Salman Abedi,
13 described by the professional viewer as "reminiscent of
14 a martyr-type photograph"?
15 A. Yes.
16 Q. And images of Ismail Abedi himself holding various
17 weapons whilst not in the United Kingdom?
18 A. Yes.
19 Q. The way in which you put it at page 99, the top
20 paragraph, is:
21 "There are indications that Ismail Abedi may have
22 been aware of the radicalisation or change in opinions
23 of Salman Abedi. In some respects it also appears that
24 Ismail was sympathetic to the ideals of ISIS as
25 evidenced by the material discovered on his devices,

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1 which were seized from his home address when he was
2 arrested."
3 A. Yes.
4 Q. So as you will appreciate, one of the issues the inquiry
5 would have wished to explore with Ismail Abedi, had he
6 attended on 21 October to give evidence, was whether
7 that had been his mindset in 2015 and, if so, whether it
8 remained his mindset through the period 2015 to 2017 and
9 what effect, if any, that had had upon his brothers.
10 A. Yes, agreed.
11 Q. The next individual is someone I've mentioned already,
12 Mansoor al-Anezi. This is paragraphs 367 to 369 of your
13 statement, so pages 93 to 94. Was he a Kuwaiti national
14 who resided in Plymouth after settling in the
15 United Kingdom?
16 A. Yes.
17 Q. During 2007 did he volunteer to act as imam at a mosque
18 in Plymouth, even though he appears not to have been
19 qualified for that role?
20 A. Yes.
21 Q. In 2008, was Mr Al-Anezi arrested and interviewed
22 in relation to Operation Basten, the investigation into
23 a failed suicide terrorist attack on 22 May 2008?
24 A. Yes, that's correct.
25 Q. Which is a well-known, in fact notorious, attempted

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1 attack by a man who was born Nicky Raymond Reilly and
2 was a Muslim convert?
3 A. Yes.
4 Q. Which was a failed suicide bombing at a restaurant in
5 Exeter?
6 A. Yes.
7 Q. Following which, having pleaded guilty, Nicky Reilly
8 received a sentence of life imprisonment, but killed
9 himself in October 2016?
10 A. Yes, that's correct.
11 Q. In summary, does it appear to be the case that the
12 arrest of Mr Al-Anezi was due to his close association
13 with Nicky Reilly and some concerns within the community
14 on the south coast about his anti-Western views?
15 A. That's correct, yes.
16 Q. Did Mr Al-Anezi die of cancer on 15 January 2017?
17 A. Yes, he did.
18 Q. Paragraph 370. Was Salman Abedi with him when he died?
19 A. Yes, he was.
20 Q. Is the reason Salman Abedi did not attend to see
21 Abdalraouf Abdallah on 17 January because he attended
22 the funeral of Mr Al-Anezi?
23 A. Yes, that's correct.
24 Q. Go to page 172, finally, please, on Mr Al-Anezi. Did
25 the investigation reveal telephone contact between

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1 Mr Al–Anezi and Salman and Hashem Abedi between
 2 October 2016 and January 2017?
 3 A. Yes, that’s correct.
 4 Q. You observe:
 5 “Despite this contact and what appears to be some
 6 sort of connection between [Mr] Al–Anezi and the Abedi
 7 brothers the investigation was unable to establish the
 8 reason for the contact (other than for funeral
 9 arrangements in the days after the death of [Mr]
 10 Al–Anezi).”
 11 A. Yes, that’s right.
 12 Q. “There is no evidence to date which would suggest
 13 Al–Anezi knew of or was complicit in the attack,
 14 although he was clearly a significant individual to the
 15 Abedi brothers.”
 16 A. Yes, I think that’s right.
 17 Q. Would it be fair to summarise the position in this way,
 18 that he may have been involved in the radicalisation of
 19 one or both of the brothers but no one can say with any
 20 certainty?
 21 A. That’s true.
 22 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: If you’re going to go beyond 4.30 in any
 23 event, shall we break there?
 24 MR GREANEY: I am not by very much at all, but let’s break
 25 and I’ll finish tomorrow.

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1 SIR JOHN SAUNDERS: Thank you very much. I’m afraid you’re
 2 going to have to come back tomorrow, but it may be your
 3 last appearance, I gather.
 4 (4.22 pm)
 5 (The inquiry adjourned until 9.30 am
 6 on Tuesday, 23 November 2021)
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