



Narrative
of
Samuel Sleith



July 2022

Introduction:

Samuel Sleith was born on 6th February 1952 and served as a full-time Private in the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) based in Lisburn from 1976 to 1977, and then as a part-time member of the 7th/10th (City of Belfast) Battalion UDR from 1989. During his time in 7/10 UDR he was based in Ladas Drive and Malone Road in Belfast. In 1992, he transferred to the Royal Irish Regiment (RIR) and was discharged in 1994.

During his service in both the UDR and RIR Samuel Sleith, along with many others, lived under a constant threat of terrorist attacks both on and off duty.

During his military service, between 1990 and 1993, Samuel was involved in the following incidents:

Bomb attack on 3rd August 1990ⁱ

At the time of this incident Mr Sleith was based at Ladas Drive. He commenced duty at 6:30pm and was detailed along with five other colleagues to carry out a mobile patrol at the Mountpottinger and City centre area of Belfast.

Samuel was the driver of the landrover. At approximately 11:20pm at the bottom of the Newtownards Road, the landrover was hit by a bomb that had been thrown at it.

The patrol returned to the area where they had been attacked to cordon it off in order to protect the public. Samuel provided a witness statement but it is still not known if the incident was investigated by the police.

Assault on 17th April 1992ⁱⁱ

On 17th April 1992 Samuel was on duty along with three colleagues and a Police Constable at a static Vehicle Check Point (VCP). At approximately ten to one in the morning the Police Constable stopped a blue Ford Sierra taxi. He checked the identify of one of the passengers and then asked the three other male occupants to get out of the taxi. The Police Constable then searched one of the passengers.

The three other males attempted to walk away but were stopped by Samuel and two of his colleagues. They started shouting abuse at Samuel and his two colleagues.

One of these men, who was known to Samuel, lashed out with both his fists. Samuel sustained injuries to his mouth and neck and was taken to Musgrave Park Hospital on the outskirts of Belfast. Samuel noticed that a Police Constable was talking to the man who had attacked him and informed the Police Constable that he had just been assaulted by the man, who was then taken away by the police.

Samuel gave a witness statement regarding this assault, dated 19th April 1992.

Shots at a Checkpoint on 26th May 1993ⁱⁱⁱ

At the date of this incident, Samuel was a part-time Private attached to F Company, Royal Irish Regiment (RIR). He commenced duty at 6:30pm. Following a briefing, Samuel along with three other colleagues commenced their foot patrol. After completing a general patrol in Belfast City Centre they went to East Bridge Street where their task was to stop incoming traffic. At this checkpoint, the patrol was accompanied by a Police Constable.

Whilst at this checkpoint, shots were fired at the patrol and a Lieutenant Corporal colleague of Samuel's was hit. Samuel and a Police Constable moved the Lieutenant Corporal to a place of safety. Samuel remained with his colleague until the arrival of the ambulance. He accompanied his colleague to the hospital and produced a written statement on the incident to the Police, dated 27th May 1993.

Assault and death threat on 2nd September 1993^{iv}

Samuel was part of a vehicle patrol in the Linenhall Street area of Belfast when they noticed a youth throwing a stone at a vehicle. Then a man appeared from Clarence Street running with a bottle in his hand. When he saw the patrol, he set the bottle on a window ledge of a building at the corner of Linenhall Street. Samuel approached the man and asked him his name. The man unleashed abuse at Samuel, went for his weapon and attempted to take it from him. Samuel stumbled backwards, was punched on the shoulder, thigh and chest, and kicked.

Samuel was assisted by a colleague in restraining the man. A group of women gathered and tried to release the man. While being apprehended he made threats to have Samuel shot and told him to check underneath his car. He was held until the police arrived.

Communication between Mr Sleith and the Police Service of Northern Ireland

Samuel Sleith sent a letter to the Chief Superintendent, Legacy & Justice Department of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), dated 30th November 2016, requesting the PSNI to re-examine the terrorist incidents in which he was a victim, the bomb attack on 3rd August 1990 and the shots at the checkpoint on 26th May 1993.

The Chief Superintendent of the Legacy and Justice Department responded in a letter dated 1st February 2017^v headed "Non Homicide Legacy Matters". He informed him that the PSNI did not have the necessary resources to review or investigate any non-fatal "Troubles" related crimes, committed against any persons including soldiers, police officers, the broader public or members of paramilitary organisations, where there is no binding legal obligation to do so.

Samuel was informed that the incidents he had reported had been recorded, but that his report did not fulfil the exceptional criteria and that no further action would be taken in respect of it.

Samuel and his wife felt very annoyed, angry, and frustrated at this decision and it only added to the hurt and stress that he felt about all that had happened to him whilst serving his country.

Conclusion:

As a result of these four incidents he was involved in, and the constant stress he suffered whilst serving in the UDR during the Troubles, Samuel Sleith has been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Samuel would attest that the incidents that he was subjected to while serving his country had a profound detrimental impact on both him and his wife. He would say that his life has never been the same since, especially as no one has ever been convicted or held accountable for any of these incidents.

Endnotes

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- ⁱ Statement from Samuel Sleith to the Police, dated 04/08/1990.
 - ⁱⁱ Statement from Samuel Sleith to the Police, dated 19/04/1992.
 - ⁱⁱⁱ Statement from Samuel Sleith to the Police, dated 27/05/1993.
 - ^{iv} Statement from Samuel Sleith to the Police, dated 03/09/1993.
 - ^v Letter from PSNI Chief Superintendent to Samuel Sleith, dated 1st February 2017.