

THE TRIBUNAL OF INQUIRY INTO CERTAIN MATTERS RELATING TO
THE COMPLAINTS PROCESSES IN THE DEFENCE FORCES AND THE
CULTURE SURROUNDING THE MAKING OF COMPLAINTS AS
ESTABLISHED ON 20TH DAY OF JUNE 2024 BY S.I. 304/2024

PUBLIC HEARING OF THE TRIBUNAL OF INQUIRY BEFORE
THE SOLE MEMBER, MS. JUSTICE ANN POWER,
AT THE INFINITY BUILDING, THIRD FLOOR,
GEORGE'S COURT, GEORGE'S LANE, SMITHFIELD, DUBLIN 7
ON FRIDAY, 12TH JUNE 2026 - DAY 7

7

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1 THE TRIBUNAL RESUMED ON FRIDAY, 12TH JUNE 2026 AS
2 FOLLOWS:

3 SOLE MEMBER: Good morning, everybody. Now, this
4 morning's proceedings, as you know, will be taken
5 otherwise than fully in public. Once again, I want to 10:31
6 remind everybody that the Tribunal has made an order in
7 respect of the evidence of the next witness.

8
9 No report that contains material or information likely
10 to lead members of the public to identify the next 10:32
11 witness, who shall be referred to by the pseudonym
12 Mr. S, shall be published in any written publication
13 available to the public or by broadcast in any format
14 by members of the media or by any media organisation or
15 by any person or persons. The order which the Tribunal 10:32
16 has made will be available on the Tribunal's website.

17
18 So, after the witness is sworn in, we will begin his
19 evidence.

20
21 MR. S, HAVING BEEN SWORN, WAS DIRECTLY EXAMINED BY
22 MR. CUSH AS FOLLOWS:

23
24 1 Q. MR. CUSH: Good morning, Mr. S.

25 A. Good morning. 10:33

26 2 Q. Mr. S, as you're aware, the Tribunal is investigating
27 the effectiveness of the complaints processes and the
28 culture within the Defence Forces in relation to
29 complaints of abuse. It's not permitted to make

1 findings in relation to the well-foundedness of the
2 complaints of abuse, and for that reason you are
3 required to refrain from disclosing the names of any
4 alleged perpetrators in your evidence today. Where
5 it's necessary to refer to such individuals, you must 10:33
6 do so by using their rank. Do you understand that?
7 A. I do, indeed.
8 3 Q. Thank you. And the other thing that I just need to say
9 at the outset, Mr. S, is that insofar as we're touching
10 on the issue of Lariam, the Tribunal is not 10:33
11 investigating the rights or wrongs of prescribing
12 Lariam, or the rights or wrongs of how it was
13 prescribed in your case. But the Tribunal is
14 investigating the complaints processes around Lariam
15 and I'll be asking you some questions about that. Do 10:34
16 you understand that?
17 A. I do, indeed, yeah.
18 4 Q. Thank you. Mr. S, you joined the Defence Forces, I
19 think, in 1999, isn't that so?
20 A. It is, indeed. 10:34
21 5 Q. And you're still serving?
22 A. I am.
23 6 Q. So you'll be able to give your view as to whether and
24 to what extent things have changed within the Defence
25 Forces for the better, or at all, isn't that so? 10:34
26 A. Yeah, as I see it, yeah.
27 7 Q. Okay. All right. Your father was 21 years in the
28 Defence Forces, isn't that so?
29 A. He was, yeah.

1 8 Q. And, I think, indeed, your parents were stationed in
2 the married quarters when you were born?
3 A. Yeah, in Arbour Hill, yeah.

4 9 Q. So you have a longstanding connection with the Defence
5 Forces and you were attracted to the Defence Forces 10:35
6 yourself?
7 A. Yeah, born and bred around it.

8 10 Q. I just want to touch briefly on some of the issues in
9 your family background. I think, sadly, your father
10 became an alcoholic, isn't that so? 10:35
11 A. Yeah.

12 11 Q. And that had a profound effect on your family,
13 particularly your mother?
14 A. It did, unfortunately.

15 12 Q. And from the wider family, there were some issues of 10:35
16 sexual abuse, isn't that so?
17 A. Yeah.

18 13 Q. And that had an effect on you sisters --
19 A. Just to clarify, not by my father, but, yeah, there
20 was, yeah. 10:35
21 14 Q. No, I -- quite clearly, yeah. And your sisters were
22 affected?
23 A. Yeah.

24 15 Q. And, sadly, your mother took her own life?
25 A. She did, yeah. 10:35
26 16 Q. And I think you would readily acknowledge that those
27 difficulties in your family background have contributed
28 to some of your own difficulties?
29 A. Yeah, 100%.

1 17 Q. But you're also of the view that your experiences in
2 the Defence Forces, which you're about to describe,
3 have contributed to your difficulties?
4 A. It's all part of the jigsaw.
5 18 Q. You did your recruit training in Gormanston, I think, 10:36
6 isn't that so?
7 A. Yeah.
8 19 Q. And the Defence Forces also enabled you to go to
9 college, isn't that right?
10 A. Yeah, I went to Bolton Street. 10:36
11 20 Q. And I think, within recruit training, you will readily
12 acknowledge that people need to be pushed, that there's
13 an element of character building in recruit training,
14 but you have a view on the recruit training that you
15 underwent. Can you just explain that to the Tribunal? 10:36
16 A. Yeah. People, I think, need to -- when they come in
17 off civvy street, I think they do need to be broke down
18 and then rebuilt so that they have the mentality for
19 when you go overseas. You need to be able to trust the
20 person beside you or you need to be switched on, or you 10:36
21 need to be just able to do their job and be trusted to
22 do it.
23
24 But I think the way it is, or, well, the way it was
25 back when I was, there was lots of verbal and physical 10:37
26 abuse and torture positions, stress positions, or all
27 that sort of thing, like. Yeah, just not very nice or
28 productive.
29 21 Q. So, in your experience, when you were a recruit, did

1 you feel it went too far?

2 A. Oh, 100%. Well, back then you didn't know any better,
3 like. And it's you're going in, you don't know what to
4 expect or you're -- it's a lot of people's first time
5 away from home, and whatever else, and as soon as you 10:37
6 walk in the gate, it starts and no personal space and
7 whatever else. Now, don't get me wrong, personal space
8 is different people's prerogative or, especially these
9 days, it's completely different. But, yeah, like, it
10 was hard, mentally and physically, and it broke a lot 10:38
11 of people. And it's just -- yeah, like, it went too
12 far sometimes.

13 22 Q. Yeah. One of the points that you made in interview was
14 that you felt it needed to slow down and people
15 shouldn't be pushed through the system so quickly; is 10:38
16 that your view?

17 A. Yeah. I think, especially these days, now, I think
18 there should be a little bit more screening instead of
19 just trying to cast a wide net out and letting whoever
20 in. There was a lot of people that were in the job 10:38
21 that were unsuitable, has been -- over the years,
22 there's been lunatics. But, for me, I think it's
23 getting worse because the standards are dropping to let
24 people in, and then these people are making it through
25 training because they need the numbers, they're being 10:39
26 pushed through, and then, because there's lack of
27 numbers, these people can get the NCO's course or
28 whatever else and then that's just bringing the whole
29 standard down as well -- personally, I think.

1 23 Q. And some of the people then who you describe as being
2 pushed through too quickly, they become the trainers in
3 some instances?

4 A. Yeah. And it's, what way can I put it? The way you're
5 trained is the way you're going to train someone else, 10:39
6 especially if you have a tendency to let power go to
7 your head, which happens, it does happen a lot. But,
8 like, I've known lads that have gone before they've
9 gone on courses saying that they have little books with
10 names in it and saying they're going to come back and 10:40
11 -- you know that sort of thing? Yeah, like, I think
12 the only way it's going to get better is to stop all
13 the screaming, shouting, beasting, just for the sake of
14 it, because, if that happens, then when they go on the
15 NCO's course, it's happening again, and then when 10:40
16 they're going to train recruits, they're going to train
17 the people the way that they're training them. So I
18 think if it's all just slowed down, taken -- now, I'm
19 not saying kit gloves or anything else because it does
20 have to be done and it has to be done to a certain 10:40
21 level, but within the boundaries.

22 24 Q. One of the other things, Mr. S, that you've mentioned
23 in interview is your perception that there's a
24 disconnect, too big of a lack of connection between the
25 upper ranks and the lower ranks, is that your -- 10:40

26 A. Oh, there is, 100%.

27 25 Q. I think you would acknowledge that, to some extent,
28 that's inevitable within a hierarchical structure?

29 A. Oh, yeah, yeah, of course. Like, you don't expect the

1 GOC to know what's going on in the lines of a battalion
2 or a unit. But you expect the Battalion Commander or
3 the Adj -- well, maybe not even the Battalion
4 Commander, but you'd would expect the Adj to know if
5 there's anything going on under him. But the way it 10:41
6 is, the younger Officers are coming in and they're
7 putting in as the CO of the companies and then they're
8 being -- I won't say bullied, but they're being
9 railroaded by CSS, CQs, BQs, all that, because they're
10 only in two/three years, they've only got their second 10:41
11 pip or whatever, and then it's just, 'Yeah, this is the
12 way it's done', and then the Officers will go along
13 with it because they don't want any blowback, or they
14 don't want...

15 26 Q. And do you have a view on how that disconnect might be 10:42
16 lessened?

17 A. Yeah. Again, a few more Senior Officers to be -- not
18 Senior Officers, but the Company Commanders and the
19 likes of the Adjs and all, not in rotating whoever was
20 in or whoever's around. But, also, there should be a 10:42
21 mechanism -- now, I know there is a mechanism, you can
22 put out in writing 'Can I see such-and-such?' or 'Can I
23 see my CO?', or whatever else, but even at that,
24 there's a fear, especially with the younger lads,
25 there's a fear of approaching your CS or the Sergeant 10:42
26 that's in the office with a written form saying, 'Can I
27 go to see the CO?' and then it's 'Oh, why?', you know
28 that sort of way, and you say 'Ah, it's private, I
29 don't want to...', and then it will start from there

1 sort of thing, like.

2 27 Q. I just want to ask you about your own recruit training.
3 Can you just outline to the Tribunal the extent to
4 which you were informed about complaints processes?

5 A. Yeah, it was only brought in, A7 was only brought in 10:43
6 and the way it was explained to us is, 'This is what it
7 is, but you don't need to know because A7 is a billet
8 in the Glen of Imaal', so -- the Glen of Imaal is where
9 we train, Ma'am.

10 28 Q. And what was meant by that observation? 10:43

11 A. Basically, it's not worth the paper it's written on.
12 SOLE MEMBER: Could you just repeat that?
13 THE WITNESS: Sorry, yeah, it's not worth the paper
14 it's written on, really, like. Like, you're going to
15 complain against someone that's in your unit or someone 10:43
16 that's there with you, but you're complaining to their
17 friends or you're complaining to an officer that's
18 going to bring you in in front of these people and you
19 still have to work with their friends every day and all
20 that sort of thing, like. 10:44

21 29 Q. MR. CUSH: And can you just describe how you were told
22 about the existence of the complaints process? Was it
23 in a lecture?

24 A. I can't remember, to be honest with you. I know every
25 so often, especially when I was in the battalion, 10:44
26 they'd have -- they'd read out different SOPs, so maybe
27 it came up in that once.

28 30 Q. Okay. You went to the Lebanon, isn't that so, Mr. S?
29 A. I did, indeed.

1 31 Q. I think you were 19 years of age at the time?
2 A. 20.
3 32 Q. 20, I beg your pardon. And there was a football game
4 and an incident took place after that game, isn't that
5 so? 10:45
6 A. Yeah.
7 33 Q. Can you describe that to the Tribunal, please?
8 A. I was playing I think it was against the Ghanaians and
9 I hurt my knees -- hurt my knees, but then I had a
10 strain as well. And we had the interbattalion or 10:45
11 intercompany, whatever it was, match a few days later
12 and a certain individual turned around and said, 'Ah,
13 can help you', and whatever else, 'I can give you a bit
14 of physio on it', and I says 'Yeah, great.' And he
15 says 'Ah, just point me around at a certain time' or 10:45
16 whatever else and I said 'Yeah, no worries', as you
17 would like. And went in -- knocked on his door, went
18 in. And I'll never forget the room, it's completely
19 different to what we were in. A single man room; big,
20 wooden cot. All, like, completely different to what we 10:46
21 were in, so it stuck out, like.
22
23 And he just said, 'Right, just sit on the edge there.'
24 I did, and he took out, like, a homemade oil or
25 whatever it was -- it was like wintergreen or whatever, 10:46
26 I don't know what it was, but he started rubbing my
27 calf -- or my thigh, where it was sore, but, slowly but
28 surely, he started moving up and then when he just got,
29 like, in between my leg and my body, I just sort of

1 froze. Even, well, I froze just before that, like, and
2 he just kept on going, and then went on to my other --
3 like, my penis and done what he done. And when he was
4 finished then, I was just like a statue, to be honest,
5 and when he finished, he turned around and says, 10:47
6 'Right, now, that's all your stress gone' and 'You're
7 all better' and 'If it comes back or you need more
8 help, just come back to me.'

9 34 Q. And this gentleman, as you describe him, was clearly
10 senior to you in rank? 10:47

11 A. Yeah. A few ranks up.

12 35 Q. And he seems to have been calm and composed, from your
13 description?

14 A. He was, yeah. It was like it was normal to him. It
15 was... He was the cheeky chappy everyone got on with, 10:47
16 everyone loves, and you know that sort of thing -- life
17 and soul of the place and friends with everyone because
18 he can look after them. And I'd see myself as being
19 streetwise because of where I grew up and everything
20 else and you'd always hear people 'Ah, I'd do this to 10:48
21 them' and 'If they done that to me, ah, I'd do this or
22 do that', and obviously I probably thought that myself,
23 to be honest with ya, but when it happened, I just
24 completely froze. And, again, if it happened to me
25 today, I wouldn't be too sure what I'd do either 10:48
26 because I just don't know how I'd react.

27 36 Q. And this gentleman, he went on to have a very
28 successful career?

29 A. Yeah, promoted again and marched past and all when he

1 retired and all this sort of stuff.

2 37 Q. But you, on the other hand, you feel that this incident
3 had an effect on you and on your career?

4 A. I do, yeah. I came back and I was, for the rest of the
5 trip, I avoided what I could, but I just started 10:48
6 drinking and drinking and drinking. And, yeah, it did,
7 yeah, even when I came home then.

8 38 Q. And I think you contemplated, at least, the possibility
9 of doing NCO courses yourself, is that so?

10 A. I did, yeah. And I put in for them and obviously I 10:49
11 didn't get it, but then all interest sort of just, all
12 interest in the job just sort of went.

13 39 Q. Okay. Did you make any complaint about this incident?

14 A. No. No. I went to the MAP about my knees because of
15 the cuts on them, but I never made a complaint about 10:49
16 what was after happening.

17 40 Q. And can you explain why not?

18 A. Well, (1) it's hard to believe that it actually
19 happened to you, in your own mind; (2) I knew nothing
20 would happen; (3) it would be me against him and I 10:49
21 know, I know 100% it probably would have cost me my
22 job. In the long run, either through being forced out
23 or just everyone, the way the job is, you can't really
24 even fart without someone talking about it, you know
25 that way, like, and it's just... That's the way it is, 10:50
26 like.

27 41 Q. So, there are a couple of reasons there, but one of
28 them is that you think it would have ended up costing
29 you possibly your job?

1 A. Oh, 100%, yeah.

2 42 Q. why do you believe that or why did you believe that at
3 the time?

4 A. Because you've seen things like that happen before and
5 you've seen -- well, I've seen people make complaints 10:50
6 and then all their friends, they'll get around you and
7 make you feel like it was you that done something
8 wrong, or, 'Oh, look at you, you're a rat' or 'You're
9 this or you're that', or 'It didn't even happen, he's a
10 nice fella', or -- you know all this sort of thing. So 10:51
11 that's why, like, it's because you still have to work
12 and sometimes even live with these when you're away, or
13 you're on the ground, or say you go overseas or that
14 sort of thing. It broke my trust in the job.

15 43 Q. I think you also mentioned that there would be a lack 10:51
16 of confidentiality if you complained, that, in your
17 view, there would have been ?

18 A. Oh, that, as I said, yeah, it's his mates that are
19 dealing with it. It's his mates that would have been
20 saying, 'Yeah, like, it's -- oh, you're making this 10:51
21 complaint, you're saying it about him.' Now, they'd
22 probably take -- sometimes, they might have taken the
23 actual complaint, but then they're still dealing with
24 it and they'll investigate it, "investigate it" in
25 inverted commas. They'll ask 'Did it happen?' -- 10:52
26 'No.' Or 'Did it happen?' -- 'Yeah, but it was
27 consensual', or, you know, like, and then you're
28 branded as being a troublemaker, you're branded as
29 being a rat and then, that's it, like, that's you done

1 on the job then.

2 44 Q. There was an occasion, Mr. S, when you indicated that
3 you were going to stand up to authority, that you were
4 going to contest something, do you recall that? This
5 was an occasion when it was said that you had reported 10:52
6 back at a particular time?

7 A. Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah. I was on a driving detail and I
8 was told when I got back there after, I think it was
9 six o'clock or something, that I would be off the next
10 day. I came back about half six/quarter to seven. 10:52
11 Then I closed down the car, or whatever else, filled
12 out the paperwork, put it on the desk, went home and
13 was off. I got a phone call off the Sergeant in Charge
14 of the transport screaming and shouting at me, asking
15 me where I was and 'You're absent from this and that' 10:53
16 and I said 'No, I'm not', I said, 'I'm -- you told me I
17 could be off, like.' And he said, 'No, no, you got
18 back at a certain time' and I said 'No, I didn't.' So
19 then I was brought in and then over the next few days I
20 was interviewed by the CO, I was brought into the CO. 10:53
21 Then all of them. I turned around and said, 'No, I got
22 back at a certain time' and he said 'No, we have a
23 witness saying that you got back earlier.' And I said,
24 'No, just check the cameras on the gate.' I said
25 'Check the cameras on the gate and you'll see what time 10:53
26 I came in at.' And it was an NCO from the battalion
27 that was on the gate at the time, so I was marched back
28 out; then a few minutes later, I was marched back in
29 and there was the CO there and there was four or five

1 of his mates, basically, all screaming at me and
2 shouting at me, 'No, no, he's an NCO, he didn't take
3 the -- he didn't put it down on the log. You just take
4 it because, if you take it, it'll be easier for you,
5 you'll just get a slap on the wrist, where, with him, 10:54
6 it'll be all this sort of stuff.' And that's... Yeah,
7 that's what happened, like. And I ended up, because of
8 how I felt, I ended up having to take the charge for
9 it.

10 45 Q. So, that incident may not have been a complaint 10:54
11 process, as such, but it formed your view or
12 contributed to your view in relation to --

13 A. Yeah, yeah.

14 46 Q. -- how it might work?

15 A. Yeah, yeah -- not how it might work, it's how it does 10:54
16 work.

17 47 Q. You went on an overseas mission to Liberia, I think,
18 isn't that so?

19 A. I did, yeah.

20 48 Q. What year was that, Mr. S? 10:55
21 A. 2024. Or, sorry, 2004, I think, 2003/2004. It was the
22 first battalion trip over to Liberia.

23 49 Q. Okay. And you had to take Lariam?

24 A. Yeah.

25 50 Q. Okay. And when you were in Liberia, did you suffer 10:55
26 some physical symptoms?

27 A. Yeah. Nightmares. Couldn't sleep. Bursts of anger.
28 Problems remembering. There was -- I didn't know until
29 I got home, but my Mam was still alive at the time and

1 my wife - girlfriend at the time - told me I was
2 ringing home at half three/four o'clock in the morning
3 screaming down the phone at them, blaming them on
4 everything, just... And I didn't remember anything.

5 51 Q. Then did you see an Army doctor when you were in 10:56
6 Liberia about these effects?

7 A. I did, yeah, I went sick twice with it.

8 52 Q. Right?

9 A. The first time I went sick was because there was one of
10 the lads standing over my cot with (inaudible) in his 10:56
11 hand, threatening to hit me because the way I was
12 screaming because of the nightmares. My mossie net, I
13 thought it was a spider web. And, outside as well,
14 because there was thunderstorms, obviously the bangs or
15 whatever else, I thought it was something else -- well, 10:56
16 I take it I thought it was something else - I was
17 asleep - and apparently it was happening every night
18 and they weren't getting any sleep, so I went to the
19 doctor as well

20 53 Q. Did you raise with the doctor the possibility that your 10:56
21 --

22 A. Oh, 100%, yeah. He said that it could -- more than
23 likely, it was the Lariam.

24 54 Q. And did you enquire about taking a different drug?

25 A. Yeah. we took Lariam, or we were forced to take 10:57
26 Lariam, and the Officers and Senior NCOs were given
27 doxies, which had less side effects and, basically,
28 they were better, but --

29 55 Q. Don't worry, Mr. S, I'm not terribly concerned with the

1 different drugs and whether one --

2 A. Yeah, yeah, no, that's -- but it's just because the way
3 I went to ask the doctors, that's how I knew about them
4 --

5 56 Q. Yeah, okay. 10:57

6 A. And I said it to the doctor and he told me that I
7 couldn't be, even though I was having side effects, I
8 couldn't be trusted to take the doxies because the
9 doxies, you had to take every day, where, Lariam, you
10 took once a week. 10:58

11 57 Q. So we're not really concerned just with the detail
12 around Lariam, Mr. S.

13 A. Yeah, yeah.

14 58 Q. But you attributed your effects to Lariam when in
15 Liberia, that's what you're telling the Tribunal? 10:58

16 A. Yeah.

17 59 Q. And when you came back from Liberia, what did you do?

18 A. A while after, I went to see the psychiatrist in
19 Bricin's.

20 60 Q. Did you see a doctor first when you came home? 10:58

21 A. Yeah. Oh, I went -- yeah, like, I constantly was
22 having problems with sleep and headaches and all that
23 sort of thing, and that was over a few years. And I
24 reported it to the doctors that that's what it was,
25 like, that I couldn't sleep and had headaches and all 10:59
26 that sort of thing, and my mind and the anger and all
27 that. And that's... Yeah.

28 61 Q. Just before that, so immediately on coming back, either
29 before --

1 A. Oh, sorry, yeah --

2 62 Q. No, no, before you leave Liberia or immediately after
3 you arrive home, is there a form of medical
4 examination?

5 A. A debrief? No, not really. You were given a form, 10:59
6 told, 'Right, any side effects? Any this/any that?',
7 and you were told if you put anything on it that you
8 could lose your job. And we were also told before we
9 went over that, if we got malaria and they took blood
10 tests and found that you hadn't taken your Lariam, that 10:59
11 you'd be charged and you could be threw out of the job
12 as well.

13 63 Q. I'm interested just in the medical debrief, if you
14 like --

15 A. Yeah, sorry. 11:00

16 64 Q. No, that's okay. You say that you were told that if
17 you say side effects, you could lose your job, is that
18 right?

19 A. Yeah, yeah, medical-wise. And then it did actually
20 happen lads as well. 11:00

21 65 Q. And without naming names, who were the people who were
22 telling you this?

23 A. From NCOs. Before we came home, there was the NCOs in
24 charge of us was saying it, and then the Officers when
25 you got back. 11:00

26 66 Q. And were you asked as part of that medical debrief
27 whether you had suffered side effects?

28 A. Not even asked, you're just handed a piece of paper.

29 67 Q. And what did you write on that paper, can you recall?

1 A. Like most of the people, I'd say I wrote 'No' and I
2 signed it, because I was afraid of the repercussions.

3 68 Q. And I think you would acknowledge that if somebody had
4 certain medical conditions, it may, indeed, be
5 appropriate that they be limited in their duties, is 11:01
6 that right?

7 A. Oh, I do, yeah, 100%. That's where I am at the minute,
8 like. I do, 100%. But I also believe that what
9 happened was wrong because the people are coming back
10 with side effects or with mental illnesses or what has 11:01
11 happened over the years, lads taking their own lives,
12 it's -- for me, I think it was the Defence Forces' or
13 the Government's responsibility to look after us.

14 69 Q. So, when you came back, you did see a doctor some time
15 afterwards about your ongoing side effects, is that 11:02
16 right?

17 A. Yeah.

18 70 Q. And was that an Army doctor?

19 A. It was, yeah.

20 71 Q. And was that helpful? 11:02

21 A. No.

22 72 Q. You also, I think, engaged around this time with the
23 Personnel Service, is that right?

24 A. The PSS, yeah.

25 73 Q. And was that helpful? 11:02

26 A. No.

27 74 Q. And why do you say "No" in relation to the Personnel
28 Service?

29 A. Because one of the first things you're told is it's not

1 strictly confidential, that anything you say can be
2 said back to your Battalion Commander or to your unit.

3 75 Q. But some things might have to be said back, is that
4 right?

5 A. Not that it might have to be; it's whatever you say 11:02
6 could be said back.

7 76 Q. Okay.

8 A. But, yeah, obviously I understand if they think someone
9 is suicidal or is a danger to themselves or someone
10 else, obviously, 100%, go, because that person cannot 11:03
11 have a rifle. And I understand that and I believe that
12 myself. But when you're going in there, especially as
13 a younger pup, and you feel that these people don't
14 have your back, or you believe they don't because of
15 the wording that they use or because the way it was 11:03
16 done, then I don't think it was helpful at all.

17 77 Q. Okay.

18 A. And, like, after the first time that I used it, I
19 talked about my father and how he died, and I went and
20 tried to kill myself. And there was no, eh... There 11:03
21 was no, not barrier or anything else, but it's like I
22 pushed, that the pressure of what I was after saying as
23 well, and I didn't indicate that I was, like, that I
24 was feeling the way I was or anything like that, but,
25 again, I think it was -- yeah, just... Sorry, I don't 11:04
26 know how to explain it, like, it's...

27 78 Q. That's all right. I think - and this is maybe out of
28 sequence - but some years later you did engage more
29 significantly with the services from the Army, isn't

1 that right, the Mental Health Service?

2 A. I still am to this day.

3 79 Q. Yeah. And I think you found them helpful, in fact?

4 A. Oh, 100%, yeah. The Mental Health Team, there's two
5 doctors, the psychiatrist and the psychologist, and the 11:04
6 psychologist is an absolutely wonderful person.

7 80 Q. But this is more recently that you felt able to
8 re-engage, is that so?

9 A. Yeah.

10 81 Q. But back at the time when you came back from Liberia 11:05
11 suffering as you've described, and I think you said you
12 were drinking, at that time, you were, I think you said
13 in interview, your head was gone?

14 A. Oh, it was, yeah.

15 82 Q. And, at that time, do I understand you to say that you 11:05
16 didn't find the services helpful?

17 A. No, I didn't, not at all.

18 83 Q. Separately, and this isn't in sequence, but you've had
19 some engagement with the Padre, as some people call
20 him, or the priest? 11:05

21 A. Yeah, the -- yeah, yeah.

22 84 Q. And I think you speak well of that?

23 A. Again, yeah, he was amazing when I was really bad or
24 when I went into work and I felt like I was just... I
25 could go up to his room and talk to him or I'd go up 11:05
26 and he'd just let me sit in his room for a half an hour
27 or... My mother and father had to be exhumed and I had
28 a complete breakdown and the priest helped me a lot,
29 and helped me organise through [REDACTED] to

1 get some funds off them to put it towards it as well.

2 85 Q. Okay. I think one of the features of talking to the
3 priest that you emphasise is this confidentiality and
4 this assurance of confidentiality, is that so?

5 A. Yeah, 100%. 11:06

6 86 Q. And that makes that a valuable service?

7 A. Yeah, if you walk into a room knowing someone is going
8 to listen to you, but you also know that what you say
9 isn't going to be said back to someone is a massive,
10 massive thing. Because, in the job, the walls have 11:06
11 ears and people like to talk. So, if you can walk in
12 and you now 100% that you're going to talk to someone,
13 unless they think you're a danger to yourself and
14 someone else, then, to me, that's invaluable.

15 87 Q. One of the points that you emphasised in interview, 11:07
16 Mr. S, was that what goes on in the Defence Forces
17 doesn't just affect the members of the Defence Forces
18 but has effects for their wives and children, is that
19 so? You strongly believe that?

20 A. Oh, I do now, yeah. I do, 100%. Just one story I can 11:07
21 say is Number 1s and my medals, like, just even to the
22 hotel after the church just so that I could get a
23 picture with my wife, and my wife flatly denied it and
24 said '██████, why...' - sorry, I apologise - says 'why
25 should I respect that uniform, when the uniform and the 11:08
26 organisation doesn't respect you?', and that's how my
27 wife feels, how much my wife feels about -- and she
28 doesn't support me being here today because she
29 believes that there's a high chance that there could be

1 other repercussions or it won't bring any good.

2 88 Q. I think she has been an incredible support to you?

3 A. Oh, she has. Like, I wouldn't be alive without her.

4 without her and my kids, I wouldn't be alive. And I

5 mean that. 11:08

6 89 Q. So, particularly as a serving member, Mr. S, coming

7 forward to the Tribunal and giving the evidence that

8 you're giving, that's been difficult, and your wife

9 doesn't agree with the wisdom of it, is that right?

10 A. No, she doesn't, no. 11:08

11 90 Q. And why have you done it then? Why have you come here?

12 A. Well, with my sisters being abused the way they were

13 and with how much it affected my Mam, my Mam brought my

14 sisters to the Police Station and they said that there

15 was nothing that they could do, and I think that really 11:09

16 affected my Mam and that was part of the reason why she

17 killed herself, because she put it in her note saying

18 'I'm sorry I let you down.' And I feel that if I

19 don't speak out and put my story across, then I'd be a

20 hypocrite and I'd be letting her down, really, like. 11:09

21 It's my chance to, first of all, just publicly say what

22 happened me and that it wasn't right.

23 91 Q. So speaking up is important?

24 A. Oh, it is, yeah. That's -- if more people in the job

25 spoke up, not just about sexual abuse or anything else, 11:10

26 but any sort of bullying, whether you see it or it's

27 happening to you, then the job would be a better place.

28 92 Q. And in the time that you've been there, Mr. S, from '99

29 to today, have things improved, in your view?

1 A. In some ways they have, yeah. Like, it's -- but a lot
2 of ways, it hasn't. A lot of the changes are just skin
3 deep. It's, like, you're marched into an auditorium,
4 you're made sign a piece of paper, you're made to sit
5 there and watch a thing for half an hour so that the 11:10
6 Army can say that 'we ticked the box and we've given
7 that lecture now' sort of thing, like.
8
9 And, with the training, obviously kids these days are a
10 little bit softer, to put it nicely, the way they're 11:11
11 attached to their phones and whatever else. They're
12 given more phone time, they're given more home time,
13 all that sort of thing. And that's all well and good
14 because it let's people connect, but it also hinders
15 the training of people, personally, I think, as well, 11:11
16 like. But, again, with the likes of the bullying and
17 all that sort of thing, it hasn't changed.
18 93 Q. And going back to speaking up and the importance of
19 speaking up, has the facility to speak up, has that
20 improved? 11:11
21 A. It's still the same. It's -- you're still reporting to
22 your -- you're still reporting to your CO, you're still
23 reporting to your Company Officer. It's still the same
24 people dealing with the same things.
25 94 Q. And what, in your view, would represent improvement? 11:12
26 what needs to be done, in your view?
27 A. First of all, the way people are trained, especially in
28 the NCO's course, because the way they're trained is
29 the way they train the new recruits, and then the new

1 recruits will go sometime, somewhere down the line, and
2 do the NCO's course and then they'll do the standards
3 course and it's just like an endless circle, basically,
4 like. If they get the training right, then I believe a
5 lot of it could be changed. 11:12

6 95 Q. Okay.

7 A. But, also, I believe that there's -- because of the way
8 the organisation is or any organisation and what we do,
9 with our hierarchical structure, that there will always
10 be some sort of fear of coming forward, unless it will 11:13
11 be anonymous, which you can't really do.

12 96 Q. Okay. And you mentioned in interview that you thought
13 it would be helpful if there was an outside, an
14 external or a civilian element to the complaints
15 process? 11:13

16 A. Yeah, 100%. If you can go to someone outside -- and,
17 personally, I believe if you could go to someone
18 outside, you might get a few more that would speak up
19 and just -- again, even if it's anonymously, and then
20 get advice off them or whatever else. Now, I know 11:13
21 that's what PDFORRA are for, but, again, as I said, the
22 walls have ears and everything else. And if you can go
23 to someone or, even, like myself, you could go to the
24 Padre or whatever else and get advice or -- but then
25 again you have still have to go through the same 11:13
26 complaints process at the minute. But, yeah, if there
27 was an outside thing that deal with it, then, I believe
28 it might be... Like, a lot of times it would be the
29 troublemaker, perceived troublemaker or whatever else

1 that will get the blowback off it and they'll be moved
2 from their unit or they'll be cast aside, like.
3 MR. CUSH: Mr. S, thank you very much. Some of my
4 colleagues may have just a few questions for you.
5 THE WITNESS: Thank you very much. 11:14
6 SOLE MEMBER: Do we have any applications? Mr. Lehane?
7 MR. LEHANE: Yes, Judge.
8
9 MR. S. WAS CROSS-EXAMINED BY MR. LEHANE, AS FOLLOWS:
10 11:14
11 97 Q. MR. LEHANE: Mr. S, good morning.
12 A. Good morning, Sir.
13 98 Q. My name is Darren Lehane. I'm a barrister and I'm
14 representing the Defence Forces, and I'm going to ask
15 you some questions. 11:14
16 A. Work away.
17 99 Q. So just again, so you can follow me, what I'm going to
18 do first is I'm going to explain what our various roles
19 are, and then, secondly, I'm just going to deal with
20 some of the evidence that you've just given, okay? 11:15
21 A. Yeah, yeah.
22 100 Q. So you heard Mr. Cush at the start tell you that you're
23 here today to help the Tribunal in relation to
24 complaints processes and your experience of complaint
25 processes? 11:15
26 A. Yeah.
27 101 Q. And you heard Mr. Cush, and I think you're aware of it
28 yourself, that it's not a role of the Tribunal to make
29 a finding or reach a conclusion as to whether a

1 particular incident of abuse did or didn't happen?

2 A. Yeah.

3 102 Q. Okay. And --

4 A. As I said, I'm only here to put my side across.

5 103 Q. Absolutely. And, as a result of that, I don't have to 11:15
6 ask you any questions about the abuse, the allegation
7 of abuse that you've described?

8 A. Oh, yeah, yeah, you can only ask me what you need to
9 know.

10 104 Q. I think it's just important that you understand that 11:15
11 that's not part of my role.

12 A. 100%.

13 105 Q. So I won't be asking you, for example, to go into
14 details of the allegation of sexual assault that you've
15 described. I also won't be dealing with any of the 11:16
16 repercussions, mental health repercussions that you've
17 spoken about in detail. So I just want to put your
18 mind at ease about that at the start. Because my
19 function, as the barrister for the Defence Forces, is
20 to ask you questions about the process. 11:16
21

22 And I think if I can just go on to that now in terms of
23 your evidence, I listened very carefully to what you
24 said and I read the transcript, the record --

25 A. Yeah. 11:16

26 106 Q. -- of your interview with the Tribunal legal counsel,
27 both of them, and the other documentation that we were
28 provided around you, and I think it's fair to say that
29 you divided your discussion of complaint processes into

1 what you heard during your training, and then what you
2 heard during the course of your continuing career in
3 the Defence Forces?

4 A. Yeah.

5 107 Q. And, sorry, I should have said this at the start; 11:17
6 again, I note that you're very proud of your time in
7 the Defence Forces?

8 A. I am, I'm very proud of my medals and I'm very proud of
9 my service.

10 108 Q. And, again, it's a great honour to be able to serve 11:17
11 your country and it's a way you can show loyalty to the
12 State and I just want to acknowledge that as well, that
13 I heard you when you said that.

14 A. Yeah.

15 109 Q. But just again going back to your training, I think you 11:17
16 told the Tribunal that you did get training in the
17 complaints processes; you were told about it. There's
18 a difference between, I appreciate, and the Judge was
19 very clear about this at the start, about being told
20 something and being feeling you're able to avail of it. 11:17
21 But just in terms of your evidence, I think you said --

22 A. There's a difference between a box-ticking exercise and
23 being taught something --

24 MR. BRADLEY: Excuse me, Chairperson, I'm going to
25 interrupt my Friend, but if there are specific excerpts 11:18
26 from the transcript to be put to the witness, I think
27 it's only fair that they are referred to and brought
28 back for review in the context of the questions being
29 asked.

1 MR. LEHANE: Again, I'm trying to deal with this in a
2 sensitive way, Judge, and my primary basis is relaying
3 what the witness said a few minutes ago. I don't yet
4 have access to the transcript that's gone up on the
5 screen. 11:18

6 SOLE MEMBER: But you could take a note of it as it is
7 said if you're going to put it to the witness.

8 MR. LEHANE: Oh, yes. Okay, so if you want to put it
9 up on the screen from page 1035 --

10 SOLE MEMBER: Could I just ask you to put the question 11:18
11 that you want to ask the witness too?

12 MR. LEHANE: Oh, yes.

13 SOLE MEMBER: Thank you, Mr. Lehane.

14 110 Q. MR. LEHANE: It's just -- and I thought I had. I'm
15 dealing with your recruiting phase -- 11:18

16 A. Yeah, yeah.

17 111 Q. And I think I'm correct in understanding that you
18 received training in complaint processes during your
19 recruiting phase?

20 A. We were given a short lecture, but then we were told 11:18
21 that in no way, given shape or form that you could use
22 it.

23 112 Q. Who told you the reference to the, you know, A7 is a
24 hut in the Glen of Imaal?

25 A. Training NCOs. 11:19

26 113 Q. Okay, the training NCOs.

27 A. And it's still said to this day.

28 114 Q. In relation to the training that you received about the
29 complaint processes during your time after your

1 training, I think during the course of your interview -
2 and again this is on page 1036 and you said it again
3 this morning - that you received a lecture or a toolbox
4 in relation to complaints; these were on an ongoing
5 basis? 11:19

6 A. Once. I said possibly once.

7 115 Q. Possibly once?

8 A. Yeah, yeah.

9 116 Q. Okay. And, again, you described to the Judge just a
10 few minutes ago being brought into an auditorium, 11:19
11 watching a video, and then ticking a box, as you
12 described it, at the end?

13 A. Over the last few years, yeah.

14 117 Q. Okay.

15 A. Again, it's a box-ticking exercise. It's you're given 11:19
16 it and then you're got given any information after it
17 or you're not given any -- after I went to the actual
18 NCO -- or the actual -- it could have been the Deputy
19 Chief, I think, that actually gave one of the speeches
20 when all this first came out, and I went to him after 11:20
21 it and I told him what was after happening to me,
22 and --

23 118 Q. You told him what had happened to you?

24 A. I told him what was after happening to me and it was
25 more or less looked down the nose and back away. 11:20

26 119 Q. Again, I'm just trying to break it down. Just bear
27 with me. You said that when all of this came out, you
28 went to a Senior Officer, is that right?

29 A. After one of the --

1 120 Q. One of the training --
2 A. Yeah.
3 121 Q. And you told him what had happened to you?
4 A. Yeah.
5 122 Q. And when you say you told him what had happened to you, 11:20
6 what did you tell him?
7 A. I told him overseas I was sexually abused.
8 123 Q. Okay. Thank you. You'll appreciate that's the first
9 time I'm hearing that from you.
10 A. No, I know, but that's -- you're asking me questions 11:20
11 and I'm here to answer them.
12 124 Q. And, again, it's very important that you tell because,
13 again, all you can say, sir, is what happened to you
14 and what you said to other people. So, that's
15 something now that, because I'm hearing it for the 11:21
16 first time, I'm going to have to look into. So you're
17 saying -- and when did you say this to this Senior
18 Officer?
19 A. After the toolbox talk.
20 125 Q. Okay. Can you just, roughly, and I know this is -- 11:21
21 A. No, I couldn't -- no, I don't know.
22 126 Q. You're not able to assist the Tribunal with a date,
23 okay.
24 A. Well, I signed a form, so surely the Defence Forces has
25 all the forms that we signed. 11:21
26 127 Q. Well, again -- and, again, just I know you're in the
27 Defence Forces since 1999 until now, but, even roughly
28 -- you've described coming back, you've done this --
29 A. I already said the last two years.

1 128 Q. In the last two years?
2 A. In the last few years, yeah.
3 129 Q. In the last two years or few years, sorry, I might have
4 misheard you?
5 A. Well, two years/few years, whatever, when all this 11:21
6 first came out, when they started pushing out all the
7 lectures or whatever else, and how to speak to women
8 and all that sort of stuff, and that's... Yeah. So
9 that should narrow it down for you.
10 130 Q. Okay. That's great, and I'll do that. But, again, 11:22
11 because the Tribunal is looking at complaints processes
12 --
13 A. Yeah, yeah.
14 131 Q. And, again, you know, you didn't tell the Tribunal 11:22
15 during the course of the interviews -- you're telling
16 the Tribunal now, for the first time, that you
17 communicated this to another person. Okay, that's
18 fine.
19
20 So, again, just because you're continuing your service 11:22
21 in the Army until now, and you've described, I think,
22 the instruction that you're getting -- is it fair to
23 say that receiving these lectures or toolboxes -- I'm
24 not talking just in complaints, but across a variety of
25 different topics, happens on a fairly regular basis in 11:22
26 the Defence Forces?
27 A. No.
28 132 Q. No. You don't?
29 A. Just since all this came out and since the Tribunal was

1 announced, a lot of the stuff was rushed, rushed out,
2 and more or less that's -- yeah, you wouldn't get
3 anything for years, and then something else comes up
4 and then you're given a toolbox talk on it, just so
5 that the Defence Forces can cover themselves. 11:23

6 133 Q. Can I ask you a question -- and maybe you're not able
7 to answer this, because I appreciate and I acknowledge
8 that it's stressful talking about events that happened
9 in the past to strangers, even if they're ordinary
10 events -- 11:23

11 A. Oh, no, no, I'm all right to talk about it.

12 134 Q. Why didn't you tell the Tribunal during the course of
13 the interviews that you told somebody in authority
14 about this incident in the last two years?

15 A. Because I forgot. 11:23

16 135 Q. You forgot?

17 A. Not forgot, just... Like, it's -- even when I was
18 talking to the Tribunal and whatever else, there was
19 times I can't remember names, there's times I can't
20 remember where I was yesterday, but the way my mind 11:23
21 works, if I'm talking to someone about something, it'll
22 come up and I'll remember it -- but you're after asking
23 something there and it just triggered something in my
24 head and that's why it was said.

25 136 Q. And, again, I think you had two interviews? 11:24

26 A. I did, yeah.

27 137 Q. -- with the Tribunal barristers, and you're telling me
28 that now for the first time. Thank you.

29 A. That's the way it is.

1 SOLE MEMBER: Mr. Bradley, do you have any questions
2 you wish to put?
3 MR. BRADLEY: I do, Judge, arising out of Mr. Lehane's
4 examination of the witness.
5 11:24
6 MR. S. WAS CROSS-EXAMINED BY MR. BRADLEY, AS FOLLOWS:
7
8 138 Q. MR. BRADLEY: Mr. S, I want to focus on your
9 memory-related issues --
10 A. Yeah. 11:24
11 139 Q. I think you're on antidepressant medication?
12 A. I am, yeah, antidepressant medication and ADHD
13 medication.
14 140 Q. I believe that you have concentration and
15 memory-related problems that you link back to your time 11:25
16 with Lariam?
17 A. I have, yeah, and it's been, as far as I know, it's
18 been in the medical files as well from me going to the
19 doctors and actually complaining about headaches and
20 memory problems and all that sort of stuff. 11:25
21 141 Q. Are you satisfied that you told that Senior Officer in
22 connection with the event you considered it abuse?
23 A. Oh, I am, yeah, 100%.
24 MR. BRADLEY: Thank you very much.
25 SOLE MEMBER: Thank you, Mr. Bradley. Does anybody 11:25
26 else wish to put a question to Mr. S?
27 MS. McGRATH: Can I just briefly, Judge?
28
29 MR. S. WAS CROSS-EXAMINED BY MS. McGRATH, AS FOLLOWS:

1

2 142 Q. MS. McGRATH: Thank you, Mr. S. Mr. S, my name is
3 Sinead McGrath and I'm one of the barristers here on
4 behalf of the Minister for Defence. And, really, what
5 I just want to ask you about is the very end of your 11:25
6 evidence and, in particular, Mr. Cush asked you today,
7 you know, had things improved, and you said "in some
8 ways"?

9 A. Yeah.

10 143 Q. Can I just ask you what you mean by that? 11:26

11 A. Well, again, I'm not on the lines at the minute, but
12 when you go in, there's always going to be bad apples
13 in every job. There's always going to be the one
14 person or the -- not just the one person, but you know
15 what I mean. But younger lads seem to be able to talk 11:26
16 to the older lads now a bit more. Like, myself, I have
17 two or three people under me and they have come to me
18 with problems and it's great being able to be there for
19 them.

20 11:26

21 The mental health team being there, they're a lot more
22 approachable. If young lads have the trust and don't
23 want to be stigmatised as having mental health
24 problems, but they are there. The private health now
25 is after coming in. That's a very big step for lads as 11:27
26 well because it means that you're not waiting around
27 years or whatever to get injuries that you sustained to
28 be able to get them done fairly sharpish or be sent for
29 an MRI or all that sort of thing, you don't have to pay

1 for it yourself.

2

3 The fitness side of it, obviously, the bigger push for
4 the -- it's not just used for beasting or it's not just
5 used to punish people. You have the gyms there now. 11:27

6 There's more equipment. There's better equipment, not
7 just in the gyms, but military wise. Yeah, that's...
8 But, personally, at the minute, the morale is at an all
9 time low in the job. There's a lot of belief in the
10 job, and myself included, that this will just be 11:28
11 another box-ticking exercise, and that's just
12 personally and what I've been told as well.

13 144 Q. And just in relation to the services that are now
14 there, we heard from a witness last week, his name was
15 Cmdr. David Lyons, and he's the head of the Personnel 11:28
16 Support Service --

17 A. Yeah.

18 145 Q. And he described the various both internal and external
19 options that are there now to support members, and he
20 also talked about addressing the stigma of mental 11:28
21 health issues in the Defence Forces. And he told the
22 Tribunal, effectively, and I'm paraphrasing, but work
23 was afoot in that efforts were being made, there was
24 now -- you talk about -- you very positively talk about
25 a mental health team, isn't that right? 11:29

26 A. Oh, I have, yeah. They've helped save my life.

27 146 Q. Okay.

28 A. They've helped -- that's, for years, with the
29 psychologist, Dr. ██████, up in Bricin's. She works

1 wonders. And because she's more streetwise and she's
2 outside of the rank structure, it's a lot easier to
3 talk to her and it's like she understands, if you know
4 what I mean, as well. But, there is an awful lot of
5 people, old and young, in the job that are afraid to go 11:29
6 near the Mental Health Services in the job. I've had
7 lads come to me and tell me that they were feeling down
8 and feeling really bad and whatever else, and my advice
9 to them was to either go and see the doctor or phone me
10 whenever they needed me. But that's just because of 11:30
11 what I've been through. But they have no trust to go
12 to the doctor or to try and get -- I know lads that
13 paid their own money to go outside and talk to someone
14 instead of going through the Defence Forces so it's not
15 on paper. 11:30

16 147 Q. And, you know, Cmdr. Lyons would have talked about the
17 externalised involvement in the PSS, namely, that there
18 are civilian social workers throughout the --
19 nationwide in the PSS and they work with members, day
20 in/day out. Do you have a view on those civilian 11:30
21 social workers and how valuable they are and how
22 external they might seem or trustworthy?

23 A. I didn't even know that there was a lot of civilian
24 social workers in the job.

25 148 Q. Okay. So it's a communications or an education issue, 11:30
26 really?

27 A. Both. It's both. Because you always had someone from
28 inside the ranks that are trained in the care bear
29 course -- sorry, the care bear course, the course for

1 just being able to notice people and being able to
2 approach them or whatever else. But they're all -- and
3 even the PSS, they were always in-house.

4 149 Q. Okay.

5 A. And that's from my own personal experience from when I 11:31
6 went. And, again, I know you're saying that they're
7 from the outside, but, again, they're still within the
8 ranks structure and it's... But, yeah, there has been a
9 lot with the posters with the numbers if you're feeling
10 suicidal or if you're feeling this or feeling that, 11:31
11 there is a few of those posters around. And, as I
12 said, the lads would still be really unwilling to use
13 it because they just don't feel comfortable.

14 150 Q. Well, what about, have you heard of there was a service 11:32
15 set up in, as early as 2003, so it would have been the
16 year before you were deployed, for example, and it was
17 called, I think, right at the beginning, was it called
18 "Carecall" and it was a fully externalised confidential
19 helpline and, over the years, the name changed and it's
20 now called Lena (By Inspire) and you're still serving, 11:32
21 so you've probably seen the name --

22 A. No.

23 151 Q. Okay. Can I just ask you about that, your awareness of
24 this external aspect of support services?

25 A. No, I'm not aware at all. Well, sorry, I am, I'll 11:32
26 correct myself there, sorry. Of course I am aware
27 because I've seen all the phone numbers and all that
28 sort of thing. But, again, lads in the job, I'm not
29 going to say every lad or every girl or whatever else,

1 every soldier, but, yeah, I'd still say a large percent
2 of them would be unwilling to use those services.

3 152 Q. And I think, in fairness, it's definitely advertised, I
4 understand, as a fully external, independent,
5 confidential service for serving members, and I think 11:33
6 you, as you're still serving --

7 A. Yeah, yeah.

8 153 Q. Would you still remain of that view in 2026, do you
9 think?

10 A. Oh, 100%. 100%. As I said, like, I've had lads come 11:33
11 up to me and talk to me themselves and it's -- I
12 wouldn't use the phone number myself, and I'm still in
13 the mental health team in Bricin's and they've actually
14 sent me on a course down to -- well, an outpatients'
15 course down in [REDACTED]. 11:33

16 **SOLE MEMBER:** I think we might just strike that from
17 the record in terms of the identification of the
18 witness.

19 **THE WITNESS:** Sorry, I apologise.

20 **SOLE MEMBER:** That's okay, that's okay. It's just to 11:34
21 make sure that people don't make reference to it.

22 A. Yeah, yeah, I apologise. But I understand what you're
23 trying to say, but there is still a massive stigma
24 there because, if you go there, a lot of the younger
25 lads will believe that they can be threw out of the 11:34
26 job, where, where I am in my life and I am in my
27 service - [REDACTED]
28 - but it's since I went on the antidepressants, for
29 years and years and years, I wouldn't go on

1 antidepressants because it would bring down my medical
2 grade. I can't hold a rifle. I can't do -- it stopped
3 me going overseas, it stopped all that sort of thing.
4 But where I am in my life, my life is more important to
5 me than the job, and that's what I say to all the young 11:34
6 lads that will come into me or talk to me in the unit,
7 is 'Your family is worth more to you than any job
8 because you're just a number to the Army or to the
9 Defence Forces.' And, at the end of the day, it's your
10 family you go home to, it's your kids you go home to, 11:35
11 and that's what it is, like. It's look after
12 themselves and -- but the lads still won't because
13 they're afraid that they'd lose their job.

14 154 Q. And I think one of the issues I think the Sole Member
15 was very interested in with the witness, in particular, 11:35
16 last week, Cmdr. Lyons, was change on paper and change
17 on the ground are two very, very different things and I
18 think the Commander said that one of the things that
19 they were doing in the PSS is they carry out surveys
20 with the members and one of them was called, I think, 11:35
21 "Value Our People". Would you have any awareness or
22 knowledge of that?

23 A. The now app, I think, that they launched a while ago,
24 they're trying to reach more people, but I'd be very
25 interested to see the numbers. All these surveys and 11:36
26 all they do, I'd be interested to see the breakdown of
27 Officers, Senior NCOs, but then see what your Privates
28 and your Corporals are saying. Again, for me, it's a
29 disconnect again. It's if you look at the boots on the

1 ground, or the young lads or whatever else, if you look
2 at their answers to people that are sitting in offices
3 or looking out windows at the lads being beasted, or
4 whatever else, I can tell you now, 100%, your answers
5 or your things would be skewed. And I can guarantee 11:36
6 that there's more NCOs, Senior NCOs and Officers that
7 are answering those surveys than there is -- and I know
8 personally that there's lads that won't answer those,
9 even though they're anonymous, the lads won't answer
10 surveys 100% honest either because that's how much the 11:37
11 distrust is in the job.

12 155 Q. Okay. Now, again, and this is the last thing I'm just
13 going to ask you; when you finished your evidence, you
14 placed some emphasis on an outside process, an external
15 process. But, yet, I think, listening to your 11:37
16 evidence, you're saying that change is required
17 internally?

18 A. Well, internally and externally, yeah. Internally,
19 honestly, I can't see how that change is going to come
20 internally because, like, one of my examples was about 11:37
21 the driving detail and being surrounded and screamed at
22 and more or less bullied and forced into taking the
23 charge. If that happened today or somewhere down the
24 line, it's still his mates that are going to deal with
25 it. It's still his mates that I had to report it. 11:38
26 It's still his mates that are telling the officer what
27 the officer needs to hear and, again, that's a
28 disconnect that's there again with -- the officers are
29 being told by the lads in the units before they go in

1 on these charges or whatever else, and that's never
2 going to change, unfortunately, unless it's looked at,
3 by, say, Officers of a different unit or an
4 independent, two independent people come out and
5 actually sit there and look at the evidence or look at 11:38
6 this and take -- because, like, even with the MPs and
7 that, a lot of the things don't go to the MPs because
8 they try to deal with it in-house in the battalions.
9 And if you say, 'Right, I don't accept those charges',
10 you're brought up to your Battalion Commander and, as a 11:39
11 young lad, if you're brought in in front of your
12 Battalion Commander, nine times out of ten you're going
13 to do what you're told.

14 156 Q. I think what you said there about, you know, different
15 units being involved, so you do foresee a scenario 11:39
16 whereby the Defence Forces are still in play in dealing
17 with issues, but just not in the immediate people that
18 you're talking about, effectively?

19 A. Yeah.

20 157 Q. -- or you're complaining about? 11:39

21 A. Yeah, a bit of separation, I think. I think. Now, it
22 mightn't be 100% guaranteed or it mightn't work at all,
23 but it's just something that might help or might change
24 even a little bit. If it makes a few people come
25 forward, then it has to be a good thing. 11:39

26 MS. McGRATH: Thank you, Mr. S.

27 THE WITNESS: Thank you very much.

28 MR. CUSH: Judge --

29 SOLE MEMBER: Yes, Mr. Cush.

1

2

MR. S WAS RE-EXAMINED BY MR. CUSH, AS FOLLOWS:

3

4 158 Q. MR. CUSH: Sorry, Mr. S, just arising from your
5 evidence this morning. I think you've told the 11:40
6 Tribunal that, in relatively recent years, you did
7 mention the sexual assault to a Senior Officer, is that
8 right?

9 A. Yeah.

10 159 Q. And when I say relatively recent years, do you think 11:40
11 it's three, four, five years ago?

12 A. No, I reckon it could be within the two years.

13 160 Q. Within the last two years?

14 A. Yeah. It would have been after the toolbox talk, after
15 all this came in. 11:40

16 161 Q. Okay. And can you just say where did that talk take
17 place?

18 A. McKee.

19 162 Q. McKee Barracks?

20 A. And I'm sure I can get -- because I know I said it to 11:40
21 someone in the unit that I said something to the
22 officer, so if you needed corroboration, I could get
23 it.

24 163 Q. Well, just stay with this for a moment. So, within the 11:41
25 last two years, you mentioned it to a Senior Officer in
26 --

27 A. Sorry, two to three years, sorry, it's -- I'm just
28 trying to work it out --

29 164 Q. No, no, no, that's fine -- to a Senior Officer in McKee

1 Barracks, is that right?

2 A. Yeah.

3 165 Q. And without naming that person, would you be able to
4 supply the name of the Officer to --

5 A. No. 11:41

6 166 Q. No?

7 A. I just know that he was there at the toolbox talk. I'm
8 almost certain he actually gave the toolbox talk.

9 167 Q. And are you saying that there was somebody who you
10 spoke to and said 'I have mentioned this to -- 11:41

11 A. Yeah, yeah.

12 168 Q. And that person could be identified?

13 A. Ah, yeah, the person that I said it to?

14 169 Q. Exactly.

15 A. Like, the person that I confided in, sort of thing? 11:41

16 170 Q. Yeah.

17 A. Yeah, yeah.

18 171 Q. And did you say in your evidence that you signed a
19 form?

20 A. Yeah. 11:41

21 172 Q. On this occasion that you're speaking of?

22 A. Yeah, yeah.

23 173 Q. All right. And was this in an office somewhere?

24 A. The auditorium in McKee.

25 174 Q. And the form that you signed, was that given to you on 11:41
26 that occasion when you mentioned it?

27 A. It was on the desk when you walked in, or the easel,
28 and you just signed it to say that you attended.

29 175 Q. That you'd attended the talk, is that right?

1 A. Yeah.

2 176 Q. But that form wasn't anything to do with you saying 'I
3 was sexually --

4 A. Oh, no, no, there was nothing in writing or nothing in
5 -- I went up after because I felt, and I said it, that 11:42
6 I felt it was a box-ticking exercise, and I felt that
7 just build up inside me. And I welled up at the thing
8 and just I knew that this was after being announced and
9 I was after being talking and I just, yeah, and I went
10 back across and I know for certain I said it to 11:42
11 someone.

12 177 Q. But you say, if I understand you, you're saying,
13 'I went to the Senior Officer, I told him that I
14 thought the training exercise was a box-ticking
15 exercise', and are you then saying 'and then I went on 11:42
16 to describe --

17 A. Yeah, yeah, no, I said that -- yeah, yeah.

18 178 Q. Okay.

19 A. Now, obviously I didn't go into detail or anything, but
20 I did say that something happened to me overseas, like. 11:43

21 179 Q. And did you say it was an assault or a sexual assault,
22 can you recall?

23 A. I can't remember.

24 180 Q. But you mentioned that something had happened?

25 A. Yeah, yeah. 11:43

26 181 Q. All right. And were you asked any questions about it,
27 do you recall?

28 A. No, no, it was more just, 'Oh, yeah, it's not a
29 box-ticking exercise, it'll all come out, it's this and

1 that' and then just sort of backed away.

2 182 Q. So the conversation was really then about the training
3 exercise, rather than you mentioning --

4 A. Yeah, yeah.

5 183 Q. Any other detail that you can recall around that? 11:43

6 A. No.

7 184 Q. And do I understand that there was no follow-up then to
8 what --

9 A. Ah, Jesus, no.

10 MR. CUSH: No. Thank you, Mr. S. 11:43

11

12 MR. S. WAS QUESTIONED BY THE SOLE MEMBER AS FOLLOWS:

13

14 185 Q. SOLE MEMBER: Mr. S, thank you for coming here today to
15 give your evidence to the Tribunal. Mr. Cush has asked 11:43
16 most of the questions that I wanted to ask you about
17 the incident in question, but I think earlier on in
18 your evidence, you said you told the Senior Officer
19 about the sexual assault and I think, in answer to
20 Mr. Cush's questions just now, you said you don't 11:44
21 remember whether you told him?

22 A. No, I told him that I was assaulted. I can't remember
23 -- like, I didn't go into details --

24 186 Q. Yes.

25 A. I don't know if -- no, actually, I don't know if I used 11:44
26 the words "sexual assault".

27 187 Q. Okay. And in terms of your memory as to what was said
28 back to you - and again you don't have to identify the
29 person - but can you just give me a little bit more

1 detail about what was said back to you?

2 A. Just 'I hope that everything is all right and
3 everything will get better' and that's -- and I said,
4 'It's a box-ticking exercise, it's just going to be
5 threw out again, like, like it has been throughout the 11:44
6 years.'

7 188 Q. Thank you. Can you tell me what do you mean -- and I'm
8 sorry coming to this from a civilian perspective --

9 A. Ah, no, no.

10 189 Q. -- but you used two phrases and when you talk about a 11:44
11 "toolbox talk", what's in the toolbox?

12 A. It's literally you're brought in, you're sat down in
13 the auditorium and you're just -- I don't know, just
14 one was about a survey on how to speak to women in the
15 Defence Forces and all that sort of thing. And then 11:45
16 the other one was the complaints process and it was
17 just signed and then, after that, you didn't hear
18 anything else about it.

19 190 Q. And was this a long talk, a once-off talk --

20 A. Oh, a once-off. 11:45

21 191 Q. -- or a series? Did it last for long?

22 A. Half an hour, I think.

23 192 Q. And you got all that information in a half an hour?

24 A. Yeah.

25 193 Q. And there's another phrase you've used, and I've seen 11:45
26 it in papers -- could you tell me what being "beasted"
27 means?

28 A. There's different ways it can happen. It can in happen
29 stress positions; you can be beasted physically, like

1 overexertion. what else? Screaming in your personal
2 space, in your face. Hitting you. Making you run so
3 far with your backpack and all that that it's,
4 actually, there's no -- there's no genuine reason for
5 it, where it's just for punishment. 11:46

6 194 Q. Is this a phrase that's known amongst all of the ranks?
7 A. Oh, yeah. Beasting is -- it is what it is, like. It's
8 part and parcel of the job, like.

9 195 Q. It's part and parcel of?
10 A. The job. 11:46

11 196 Q. The job. And it's a form of punishment, you say?
12 A. Yeah, yeah. well, most of the time, it's used as a
13 source of punishment, but sometimes it can be just,
14 'Right, you're getting beasted.' But, no, it is, yeah,
15 it's a form of punishment, basically. 11:47

16 197 Q. Now, you said your wife didn't support you coming here
17 and speaking up because I understood you to say she
18 thought there would be repercussions for you?
19 A. That there could be, yeah --

20 198 Q. That there could be. 11:47
21 A. -- and that she couldn't see any good coming from it.

22 199 Q. Are you aware that the Tribunal asked the Chief of
23 Staff to provide it with an assurance that if anyone
24 came forward to assist this Tribunal with its inquiry,
25 that no repercussions -- I want to read exactly the 11:47
26 assurance he has given. As Chief of Staff, he says:
27
28 "I wish to provide, as required, and in accordance with
29 the Terms of Reference, paragraph (e), my assurance in

1 my capacity as Chief of Staff that no serving member of
2 the Defence Forces will be penalised by reason of their
3 disclosure of any complaint, complaints of abuse or
4 complaint of hazardous chemicals at the Tribunal."

11:47

5
6 Were you aware that he gave that assurance?

7 A. Yeah, but it doesn't mean anything. It doesn't mean
8 the paper it's written on. He's that far detached that if
9 they want to -- if they want to punish you or they want
10 to do anything to you, there's a million different ways
11 it can happen, not just -- like, it doesn't have to be
12 out in the open or it doesn't have to be anything like
13 that. It could even just be spreading rumours or it
14 could be that sort of thing, like, it could be just as
15 simple as that. But how is he meant to know that if
16 you step one foot out of line -- now, again, I'm okay
17 where I am and where I am in my career, that I'm well
18 enough to speak up for myself at this stage. But even,
19 at that, it doesn't stop your name being tarnished or
20 it doesn't stop you being branded a troublemaker, a
21 liar, a rat, all this sort of thing.

11:48

11:48

11:49

22
23 But, also, if I was able to do courses or if I want to
24 do courses or go overseas, it's very easy for that to
25 be not recommended. Or, say, that there was a horrible
26 duty coming on, say, a bank holiday Sunday or a Monday
27 or whatever else, 'Oh, we don't have any other bodies,
28 you're doing it', but then you're back in too the next
29 day, 'Ah, we can't give you the extra day off because

11:49

1 we don't have the bodies or...'. There's ways of
2 wording things and there's ways around things without
3 it being punishment. But it's still a tool, basically,
4 to be used against you and held against you.

5 200 Q. And, that assurance, the Tribunal asked him to 11:49
6 communicate to every member of the Defence Forces
7 through the chain of command, do you remember that?

8 A. No.

9 SOLE MEMBER: Okay. Well, I just want to say thank
10 you, Mr. S, for coming forward to give your evidence. 11:50

11 THE WITNESS: Thank you very much for listening, Ma'am.

12 SOLE MEMBER: I'm very grateful to you for doing so.
13 You've helped me to answer the questions which I've
14 been asked to answer, and I appreciate that very much.

15 11:50

16 Before rising, I just want to remind people that the
17 witness inadvertently mentioned his name and that it
18 should be struck from the record, as should the name of
19 the hospital and the group he's attending.

20 11:50

21 We're going to rise now for about 30 minutes. The
22 screens have to be taken away. It's now 11:50, so we
23 should probably start at about twenty past twelve with
24 the next witness. And could I ask everybody to remain
25 in the room until the witness leaves, and somebody will 11:50
26 come back in to tell you when it's okay to leave. It
27 shouldn't be too long. Thank you very much.

28

29 THE TRIBUNAL ADJOURNED BRIEFLY AND RESUMED AS FOLLOWS:

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SOLE MEMBER: Good afternoon again. Mr. O'Hanlon.

MR. O'HANLON: Thank you, Judge. The witness is Mr. Ronan Taheny.

SOLE MEMBER: Mr. Taheny.

12:22

MR. RONAN TAHENY, HAVING BEEN SWORN, WAS DIRECTLY EXAMINED BY MR. O'HANLON, AS FOLLOWS:

201 Q. MR. O'HANLON: Good afternoon, Mr. Taheny. Thank you for attending to give your evidence today. You provided a statement to the Tribunal and it's at page 819 of the booklet of documents, and you have attended two interviews. The first of those interviews is at page 824 of the booklet, and the more recent interview with me is at page 4068 of the booklet.

12:22

12:23

Mr. Taheny, before we proceed, I must remind you that the Tribunal is investigating the effectiveness of the complaints processes and the culture within the Defence Forces in relation to complaints of abuse. The Tribunal is not permitted to make findings in relation to the well-foundedness of complaints of abuse. For that reason, you are required to refrain from disclosing the names of any alleged perpetrators in your evidence today. Where it is necessary to refer to such individuals, you must do so by using their rank. Do you understand?

12:23

12:23

A. Yes.

1 202 Q. Mr. Taheny, I know from your statement that you joined
2 the Defence Forces in 1999 and you served until 2007;
3 is that correct?
4 A. That's correct.

5 203 Q. What age were you when you joined the Defence Forces in 12:24
6 1999?
7 A. 21.

8 204 Q. And what led to you joining the Defence Forces?
9 A. We would have had a family tradition, my grandfather
10 and so on and so forth. 12:24

11 205 Q. You initially enlisted as a recruit in Finner Camp, is
12 that right?
13 A. That's correct.

14 206 Q. Did you do recruit training?
15 A. Yes, I did it in Finner camp. 12:24

16 207 Q. Can you describe what that training entailed to the
17 Tribunal?
18 A. Once you were sworn in, it was initial basic training
19 for to bring you up to Two Star grade.

20 208 Q. And how long did that training last? 12:24
21 A. I think 16 weeks in total.

22 209 Q. And was that training provided by members of the
23 Defence Forces?
24 A. It was provided by all members in the Defence Forces,
25 yes. 12:25

26 210 Q. And what ranks were those individuals?
27 A. You had an Officer, a Sergeant and some Corporals.

28 211 Q. And during that training, Mr. Taheny, did you receive
29 any training in relation to the complaints processes in

1 the Defence Forces?

2 A. No, we never received any training. We were told that
3 -- of the command structure for dealing with
4 complaints, it was you reported it to their Senior
5 Officer -- or to your Senior Officer and it went up the 12:25
6 line from there.

7 212 Q. And do you recall any training in relation to Redress
8 of wrongs?

9 A. No, I don't recall having any training.

10 213 Q. Were you informed about a PSS, the Personnel Support 12:25
11 Service in the Defence Forces?

12 A. We had an initial meeting with the BPSO at the time,
13 who would have met with us initially for to introduce
14 himself and to hand out forms, as he was the area rep
15 for the credit union at the time. 12:26

16 214 Q. And was that individual, was he a member of the Defence
17 Forces or was he a civilian?

18 A. He was a Sergeant in the Defence Forces, and also the
19 barracks' Personnel Service Support Officer.

20 215 Q. Okay, so at that point in time, you knew who the 12:26
21 barracks' Personnel Support Officer was?

22 A. Correct.

23 216 Q. And during that initial recruit training in the Defence
24 Forces, Mr. Taheny, were you taught about the core
25 values of the Defence Forces? 12:26

26 A. Yes.

27 217 Q. What were those values?

28 A. Integrity, and a bond of togetherness and that kind of
29 stuff.

1 218 Q. Were you taught how to behave as a soldier?
2 A. We were taught how to behave and have manners.
3 They're, basically, taking the civilian out of you and
4 turning you into a rigid member of the Defence Forces,
5 yes. 12:27
6 219 Q. Okay.
7 SOLE MEMBER: Could I ask you just to move a little
8 closer to the microphone, please? Thank you,
9 Mr. Taheny.
10 220 Q. MR. O'HANLON: You mentioned earlier on that you did 12:27
11 the Two Star training; did you move on to do Three Star
12 training as well, Mr. Taheny?
13 A. Yes, we done Three Star training in Donegal also.
14 221 Q. Okay. And I understand from your statement and your
15 interviews that you passed out from that training? 12:27
16 A. That's correct.
17 222 Q. You joined the Transport Section in the 28th Battalion
18 in Finner Camp, is that right?
19 A. Yes, later on in my career, yeah.
20 223 Q. So what section did you join after recruitment 12:27
21 training?
22 A. You were in the Infantry section and then, further, I
23 went on to the Transport Section.
24 224 Q. Okay. But you were a Private throughout?
25 A. That's correct. 12:27
26 225 Q. You joined the shooting team in Finner Camp, is that
27 right, Mr. Taheny?
28 A. That's correct.
29 226 Q. Did you enjoy that?

1 A. Immensely, yes.

2 227 Q. I believe you were also on the orienteering team?

3 A. Yes, we won awards in both the shooting and the

4 orienteering teams.

5 228 Q. Mr. Taheny, I know that you served in Eritrea during 12:28

6 your time in the Defence Forces. When was that?

7 A. We deployed in 2001 and returned in 2002.

8 229 Q. During that mission, you were part of the Number 2

9 Irish Guard, is that right?

10 A. That's right. 12:28

11 230 Q. And the Number 2 Irish Guard, was that made up of

12 members of the Defence Forces all over Ireland?

13 A. Yes, that's correct.

14 231 Q. And were there other individuals there from Finner

15 Camp? 12:28

16 A. Yes, there was -- the main body was made up from

17 individuals from Finner Camp.

18 232 Q. And would some of them have been in the 28th Battalion?

19 A. Yes, that's correct.

20 233 Q. So is it fair to say that you knew a lot of individuals 12:28

21 in the Number 2 Irish Guard?

22 A. Yes, correct.

23 234 Q. Okay. Mr. Taheny, I understand that there was a

24 requirement to take antimalarial medication on that

25 trip and that was Lariam? 12:29

26 A. Yes.

27 235 Q. And you were required to take that for a period

28 pre-deployment, during deployment and during

29 repatriation?

1 A. Yes, four weeks prior to deployment and four weeks
2 after returning home.

3 236 Q. Mr. Taheny, the Tribunal is not investigating whether
4 or not the use of Larium was right or wrong, but it is
5 concerned with the complaints processes related to any 12:29
6 issues that may have been suffered. Were you medically
7 examined before the trip?

8 A. Yes.

9 237 Q. How frequently did you take the medication?

10 A. I took it weekly, starting four weeks before 12:29
11 deployment, and up until we came home.

12 238 Q. How did you receive the medication?

13 A. It was brought to us on a Thursday and the Sergeant
14 would hand it out from there to you individually and
15 wait there while you ingested it. 12:30

16 239 Q. And was that done in private?

17 A. No, it was done in front of everybody else.

18 240 Q. Can you explain that to the Tribunal, please,
19 Mr. Taheny?

20 A. You would line up in your different sections and, at a 12:30
21 certain time, the Sergeant would come around,
22 accompanied by the Lieutenant, and they would go to you
23 individually and they would hand it out and you would
24 have to take it in front of them, as they had
25 previously warned if you didn't take it, you would have 12:30
26 no place on this trip and you couldn't form up for the
27 battalion to go with them.

28 241 Q. What rank were those individuals?

29 A. A Lieutenant and a Sergeant.

1 242 Q. Just to be clear, they observed you taking the Lariam?
2 A. Yes.

3 243 Q. I know from your statement and your interviews that you
4 began to feel unwell, Mr. Taheny. At what stage was
5 that? 12:31

6 A. When we landed in Eritrea, possibly the second or third
7 week, I reported having symptoms of insomnia, bouts of
8 different mood swings, tummy upset.

9 244 Q. You said you reported those symptoms?
10 A. Yes, I would have went to the medic over there on site 12:31
11 on the camp.

12 245 Q. How did the medic react to that?
13 A. They would have, at the time, put it down to -- they
14 were saying it was the excessive heat, it was blending
15 into the new surroundings etc. 12:32

16 246 Q. Were you given any medication?
17 A. No, nothing.

18 247 Q. Were you medically downgraded?
19 A. Not there, no.

20 248 Q. What happened after you attended with the medic in 12:32
21 Eritrea?
22 A. The sergeant that was over us would have found out we
23 attended the medic that day and wasn't too happy about
24 the complaints that we were making, that I was making
25 in the medic's office, or the symptoms that I was 12:32
26 presenting with.

27 249 Q. Can you expand on that, please, Mr. Taheny?
28 A. The sergeant went to the medic and found out that I had
29 presented with several different symptoms and would

1 have came back and relayed the message that if I had an
2 issue with taking Lariam tablets, that I could eff off
3 home and that there was no place there for me at the
4 time, and that if I was going to talk about those
5 symptoms or referred a report to the medics, that he 12:33
6 would not release my LA30, which is the book you need
7 to present to the medics with, that he wouldn't be
8 actively giving me this book for recording purposes and
9 that, if I was to continue down such a line, there
10 would be no place there for me and that I could eff off 12:33
11 home.

12 250 Q. where did this conversation take place?
13 A. In my accommodation block.

14 251 Q. Was that in private?
15 A. No, it was in front of the people that was sharing my 12:34
16 personal accommodation with me.

17 252 Q. What type of accommodation was that?
18 A. It was a Portakabin-style accommodation. There was
19 rows of them and we were in one, which happened to be
20 directly opposite the Sergeant and the Lieutenant's 12:34
21 accommodation also.

22 253 Q. And you said that you spoke to a medic. Were you
23 monitored from that point onwards?
24 A. I believe so, yes.

25 254 Q. Did you return to that medic and was that medic a 12:34
26 Defence Forces doctor, Mr. Taheny?
27 A. The medic was a Defence Forces doctor and I believe
28 that any time I presented, the information was relayed
29 back to the Lieutenant and the Sergeant.

1 255 Q. Okay. Did you discuss your situation with anybody
2 else?
3 A. I discussed my situation with a Corporal that was also
4 sharing my accommodation with me, who was my team
5 leader at the time. 12:35
6 256 Q. In your most recent interview, Mr. Taheny, you
7 described that Corporal as a Section Commander?
8 A. Yes.
9 257 Q. Is that right?
10 A. That's correct. 12:35
11 258 Q. And was he part of the 28th Battalion also?
12 A. He was.
13 259 Q. So he was in Finner Camp?
14 A. That's correct.
15 260 Q. You shared a room with that individual, Mr. Taheny? 12:35
16 A. That's correct.
17 261 Q. What did you tell the Corporal?
18 A. I told him of all the symptoms that I presented to the
19 medic with and how I was feeling and about the change
20 in moods and my general concerns around how I was 12:36
21 feeling at the time.
22 262 Q. And what was the purpose of that conversation?
23 A. The purpose for me was that I hoped he would relay
24 those concerns to the Sergeant and the Lieutenant and
25 that maybe they would understand where I was coming 12:36
26 from, rather than being, as reported, a thorn in their
27 side.
28 263 Q. Did the Section Commander take notes during that
29 conversation?

1 A. He did.

2 264 Q. And did he relay those issues you were experiencing?

3 A. I'm not sure, 100%.

4 265 Q. Okay. Can you tell the Tribunal what happened next,
5 Mr. Taheny? 12:36

6 A. The person in question returned home, that Corporal,
7 and he never came back. He failed to return to duty.

8 266 Q. And the treatment you received, Mr. Taheny, or were
9 receiving, did that stop?

10 A. No, it got worse. 12:37

11 267 Q. Can you tell the Tribunal about that? And please take
12 your time, Mr. Taheny.

13 A. They would question me about where he was, when was he
14 coming home, did I have any -- did I know any of his
15 whereabouts and could I get in contact with him or any 12:37
16 of his family. Then, later, they entered our
17 accommodation and took all of his belongings, to which
18 I can only believe now that they took his notes and his
19 findings that were in his locker or his foot locker,
20 and they had full disclosure of everything that was 12:38
21 said from that point on.

22 268 Q. How were your interactions with the Sergeant and the
23 Lieutenant from that point on?

24 A. Terrible.

25 269 Q. Could you expand on that, please? 12:38

26 A. They would have given me horrendous duties. They would
27 have -- they did leave me on the outpost for several
28 hours longer than they should have in extreme heat --
29 come up with excuses not to relieve me, that other

1 people couldn't attend, or there were patrols late
2 coming back. When I did come back, they were giving me
3 shorter rest periods. Anything that they could do to
4 affect me -- make me miss my meal times -

5 270 Q. And when you say "they" -- 12:39
6 A. The Sergeant and the Lieutenant.

7 271 Q. And were they members of the 28th Battalion?
8 A. Yes.

9 272 Q. So you knew them previously, also?
10 A. Correct. 12:39

11 273 Q. Did you continue to take Lariam throughout the tour,
12 Mr. Taheny?
13 A. They continued to come around every Thursday and
14 administer the Lariam, yes.

15 274 Q. Can you tell the Tribunal about that? Please, please, 12:39
16 take your time. You have a glass of water there.
17 A. They would come to the accommodation block on a
18 Thursday and administer the Lariam and, once again, it
19 was with the same force and consequences that if you
20 didn't take it, you could pack your bags and leave. 12:40

21 275 Q. And was that said in private, Mr. Taheny?
22 A. No.

23 276 Q. Who was that said in front of?
24 A. Colleagues, roommates, friends.

25 277 Q. Did anybody have a discussion with you in relation to 12:40
26 going home, a discussion in private, Mr. Taheny?
27 A. The Sergeant told me that if I continued to be a thorn
28 in his side, that he would march me to the airport,
29 which was beyond the camp, and I could walk in front of

1 the bus or the transport and that he would send me back
2 home and repatriate me.

3 278 Q. I think at some point, Mr. Taheny, you were called
4 names, is that right?

5 A. That's correct, yes. 12:41

6 279 Q. Can you elaborate on that for the Tribunal?

7 A. They would abuse me and call me several different names
8 and question my sexuality and try to plant rumours
9 about me to get my other colleagues to not engage with
10 me. 12:41

11 280 Q. Now, Mr. Taheny, you spoke about a Corporal earlier on,
12 a Section Commander, and you said that you told him
13 about issues you were having. Did you tell that
14 Corporal -- well, what did you tell that Corporal? Was
15 that about the side effects and the treatment you were 12:42
16 receiving?

17 A. Correct, yes.

18 281 Q. And that Section Commander has been interviewed by the
19 legal team of the Tribunal. He has said that you did
20 speak to him about the side effects you were suffering; 12:42
21 however, he has suggested that those discussions were
22 limited to that, and you did not discuss the treatment
23 from the Sergeant and the Lieutenant, okay?

24 A. [Witness nods].

25 282 Q. At what point did you leave Eritrea, Mr. Taheny? 12:42

26 A. I came home with the rest of the contingent in June of
27 the following year.

28 283 Q. And did you continue to suffer symptoms?

29 A. Yes.

1 284 Q. And did you speak to a doctor?
2 A. Yes.

3 285 Q. Was that a Defence Forces doctor or a civilian doctor?
4 A. Defence Forces and then a civilian doctor.

5 286 Q. Were you diagnosed with anything, Mr. Taheny? 12:43
6 A. I was diagnosed with depression and then I was in
7 St. Bricin's Hospital in Dublin for a couple of days
8 with stomach problems.

9 287 Q. Did you receive medication in relation to that
10 diagnosis? 12:43
11 A. Yes.

12 288 Q. And who was that from, was that from the Defence Forces
13 doctor or the --
14 A. From my GP.

15 289 Q. And when was that? 12:43
16 A. That was towards the end of 2006/2007.

17 290 Q. So towards the end or after you went back to the
18 Defence Forces?
19 A. Coming up to my end of time in the Defence Forces, yes.

20 291 Q. And how were your interactions with the Sergeant and 12:44
21 the Lieutenant on your return home to Finner Camp,
22 Mr. Taheny?
23 A. They were horrendous.

24 292 Q. Can you explain that to the Tribunal?
25 A. They carried on their feelings towards me on a personal 12:44
26 level when I returned home. They would make -- I was
27 dropped from both the sporting and shooting teams.
28 They made my working day as difficult as they possibly
29 could. The Sergeant was, unfortunately, the same

1 Sergeant that was in the Transport Section when I came
2 home, so there was no getting away from him. The
3 Lieutenant was also in the camp. I filed for a number
4 of trips overseas afterwards and I didn't get them
5 because I had a contract to fulfil. I found it 12:45
6 extremely difficult to pass my fitness test because,
7 when I was taking part in them, the Sergeant would
8 immediately make a beeline for my position and he would
9 fail to count my sit-ups, my press-ups. Like, you have
10 to achieve a certain number and, even after achieving 12:45
11 it, he'd count backwards instead of forwards, to the
12 point where you'd be fit for collapse. That was all
13 done to hinder my career.

14 293 Q. Did you ever make a formal written complaint in
15 relation to the treatment you received or in relation 12:46
16 to the issues you were experiencing?

17 A. No. No.

18 294 Q. Why was that?

19 A. I suppose, things were difficult enough for me. I was
20 trying to figure out a way to come to work every day, 12:46
21 to get out of bed, to face into turning up in the camp.
22 I couldn't, at the time, see how, or who I was going to
23 approach, especially after going to a corporal and
24 telling him how I was feeling and then if that was the
25 reaction after they got that, what would be the next 12:47
26 reaction be for me? And, also, I didn't know the
27 procedure in place or was there a procedure in place
28 for that.

29 295 Q. I think you did engage with the PSS, Mr. Taheny?

1 A. I reported to him, yes.

2 296 Q. And what rank was he?

3 A. A sergeant.

4 297 Q. What did you tell the PSS?

5 A. I told him I was finding it difficult to come to work 12:47
6 every day. I told him about my concerns around trying
7 to pass a fitness test. As a fit person, about my
8 concerns about being dropped from several winning all
9 Army teams. I told them about my concerns with those
10 people involved, and about the position where I was 12:47
11 working at the moment in transport and how difficult
12 life was down there.

13 298 Q. How did that go?

14 A. I was informed by him that there would be consequences
15 for my actions and that maybe my career lay outside the 12:48
16 gate and not inside it.

17 299 Q. How did you receive that information, Mr. Taheny?

18 A. He told me, when I was sitting in with him in person,
19 that there was consequences for what I was saying and
20 that he felt my career lay outside the gate, if that's 12:48
21 the route I wanted to go down.

22 300 Q. Okay. The PSS, that Sergeant in question, has also
23 been interviewed by the legal team at the Tribunal and
24 he has said that you did not speak to him about side
25 effects and you did not speak to him about any 12:49
26 treatment you were receiving, okay.

27

28 Mr. Taheny, did you apply for any further overseas
29 trips?

1 A. Yes.

2 301 Q. Did you go on them?

3 A. No, I was never selected.

4 302 Q. Can you tell the Tribunal about that, please?

5 A. Any application I put in for further overseas trips 12:49
6 were handed in to my Company Sergeant, or whoever was
7 the lead at the time, and I never got accepted for any
8 of them. There was some junior members of the
9 Defence Forces who were selected over me, which would
10 sometimes be jeered or jovial remarks made about it 12:50
11 afterwards.

12 303 Q. Mr. Taheny, I asked you earlier on about the core
13 values of the Defence Forces and I think you said that
14 you were taught about integrity and respect; in your
15 experience, were you treated with those values? 12:50

16 A. No, I don't believe I was.

17 304 Q. Mr. Taheny, I asked you at interview, and I'm going to
18 ask you again; what prompted you to come forward to the
19 Tribunal?

20 A. I don't want anybody else to go through what I went 12:50
21 through, and, I suppose, I want my family to understand
22 why I had to change career from something that I loved
23 and break a family tradition. And I want somebody
24 somewhere to look into how the whole process is being
25 evaluated. 12:51

26 305 Q. Mr. Taheny, at the interview in May, with me, I put a
27 question to you, and that is at page 4082 of the
28 booklet of documents. If Ms. Heavey could pull that
29 up. Mr. Taheny, on that occasion, at line 24, you will

1 see that I asked:
2
3 "Did you attend a doctor outside of the Defence
4 Forces?"
5 12:52
6 And you said:
7
8 "I would have, yes. My own GP."
9
10 I asked: 12:52
11
12 "Were you ever diagnosed with anything?"
13
14 You responded:
15 12:52
16 "No."
17
18 Mr. Taheny, you have told the Tribunal today that you
19 were in fact diagnosed with depression in 2006 or 2007;
20 can I ask you why there is a change in that answer? 12:52
21 A. At the time I obviously thought it was by the Army
22 doctor, by the Defence Forces doctor, the diagnosis.
23 306 Q. Can you repeat that, sorry?
24 A. I would have -- at the time I would have thought it was
25 the diagnosis by the Army or the Defence Forces doctor, 12:53
26 not by my own GP.
27 SOLE MEMBER: I think with reference to line 17, he's
28 talking about going to see the medic in Finner and you
29 say it was in that context you were answering?

1 THE WITNESS: Yes.

2 SOLE MEMBER: Thank you.

3 MR. O'HANLON: I have no further questions. Thank you

4 very much, Mr. Taheny.

5 SOLE MEMBER: Thanks very much, Mr. O'Hanlon. Does 12:53

6 anybody want to put a question to the witness?

7 Mr. Brady.

8

9 MR. RONAN TAHENY, WAS CROSS-EXAMINED BY MR. BRADY AS

10 FOLLOWS: 12:53

11

12 307 Q. MR. BRADY: Judge, I just have a couple of questions

13 for Mr. Taheny. Mr. Taheny, I wanted to clarify one

14 point. You were asked about complaints that you said

15 you made to a corporal overseas and then to the PSS 12:53

16 Officer in Finner Camp. It was put to you that they

17 said that they didn't receive those complaints but your

18 clear evidence is that you made complaints to them

19 about the abusive behaviour you were receiving?

20 A. Absolutely. And the Corporal that I would have made 12:53

21 the complaints to took notes.

22 308 Q. And, essentially, all of this abusive behaviour that

23 you suffered was as a result of the first complaint

24 that you made in relation to Lariam?

25 A. I believe so, yes. 12:54

26 309 Q. And when you came back to Ireland, the Sergeant that

27 you had the issues with overseas, that Sergeant, when

28 you moved into the Transport Section was the Transport

29 Sergeant, was he?

1 A. Correct.

2 310 Q. And did the abusive behaviour stop when you came back
3 or did it continue?

4 A. It accelerated when I came back.

5 311 Q. And did you make any complaints in relation to that? 12:54

6 A. I would have informed the PSSO when I met with him
7 about the situation and, as I said, to see could he
8 understand what I was going through.

9 312 Q. And this abusive behaviour that you said that continued
10 to happen to you, I mean would that have been visible 12:55
11 to other members of the Defence Forces, you suffering
12 from that?

13 A. Yes.

14 313 Q. And would these have been other Privates, NCOs,
15 Officers? 12:55

16 A. There would have been an overall awareness of it, but
17 more so by my colleagues in Transport, in the Transport
18 Section, the other drivers and the Privates and those
19 kind of people. And then, as I was let down from
20 several different teams, for no apparent reason, they 12:55
21 would have been aware that there was something going on
22 as well.

23 314 Q. And what would the make of those teams be, within the
24 Transport Section, maybe you can just explain to the
25 Tribunal what was the make-up of the rank structure was 12:55
26 in there. Was there other just a sergeant, was there
27 other NCOs, was there Officers?

28 A. There was a sergeant and an NCO there and then there
29 was certainly officers.

1 315 Q. And those teams as well, would there have been NCOs,
2 officers on those teams?
3 A. There would have been Officers, NCOs and Privates on
4 them, on all the teams.
5 316 Q. And your view is that it was clearly visible that some 12:56
6 form of abuse was going on, was it?
7 A. It was clearly visible, yes. They knew how -- the
8 affect it was having on me as a person.
9 317 Q. And at any stage did any of those other members of the
10 Defence Forces come to you and say, 'You should make a 12:56
11 complaint,' or explain the complaints procedure to you
12 or give you any support, do you feel?
13 A. No.
14 MR. BRADY: Thank you, Mr. Taheny.
15 SOLE MEMBER: Thank you. Mr. Lehane. 12:56
16 MR. LEHANE: Yes, Chair, I have some questions for this
17 witness, if I may.
18
19 MR. RONAN TAHENY, WAS CROSS-EXAMINED BY MR. LEHANE AS
20 FOLLOWS: 12:57
21
22 318 Q. MR. LEHANE: Mr. Taheny, I'm not going to detain you
23 for too long. My name is Darren Lehane and I'm a
24 barrister for the Defence Forces. Just at the outset,
25 I don't represent the Section Commander that's been 12:57
26 referred to, I don't represent the Sergeant that's been
27 referred to so I'm not going to deal with what you say
28 about them and what they say about you. Similarly,
29 because of the nature of the Tribunal, Mr. Taheny, I'm

1 only concerned with the complaint process, I'm not
2 concerned with the allegations that you make and
3 whether they're true or not. So I just want to
4 acknowledge that at the start.

5
6 I should also say, Mr. Taheny, I know this is very
7 stressful for you. It's not pleasant to come in and
8 talk to strangers about these events. And if at any
9 bit during my questioning you want a break, or anything
10 like that, let me know, or you want to take a sip of
11 water.

12
13 Just as I said, I'm going to follow the same general
14 scheme or order that Mr. O'Hanlon did, okay? And I'm
15 going to ask you questions in relation to that.

16
17 Do you remember when Mr. O'Hanlon was asking you about
18 the training you received?

19 A. Yes.

20 319 Q. And you described, in a little bit of detail, the
21 training you received on your Two Star training course;
22 do you remember much about that course? And I
23 appreciate it's 27 years ago.

24 A. I remember all of it.

25 320 Q. Okay. Do you remember whether you received any
26 lectures, as opposed to practical instruction, lectures
27 during the course of your training?

28 A. Yes, we received lectures, yes.

29 321 Q. Can you help the Judge understand the type of lectures

1 credit union as he was the area representative at the
2 time and he made us aware that he was in an office in
3 one of the blocks.

4 327 Q. Can I move on now to your awareness of just complaint
5 processes during your time of service after you've
6 completed your Two Star course, Mr. Taheny.

13:00

7
8 During your time in the Defence Forces, would it have
9 been regular or would you have been aware of people,
10 say, complaining about the fact that they didn't get
11 selected for overseas posting?

13:00

12 A. You would ad hoc hear people were disgruntled by maybe
13 not getting a place on an overseas trip.

14 328 Q. And similarly, just to use your expression there, would
15 you hear about people disgruntled about not getting
16 selected for a course, for example?

13:01

17 A. I never heard of anybody in my time about being
18 disgruntled about that.

19 329 Q. Okay. Just in terms of the people who were disgruntled
20 about not getting a place on an overseas trip, were you
21 aware of how they went about, you know, making their
22 disgruntlement - if that's a word - known?

13:01

23 A. No, each individual has different ways of doing their
24 stuff in the Army.

25 330 Q. Just in terms of your experience as a soldier now, not
26 as somebody doing recruit training, how would you have
27 gone about, you know, taking issue with something you
28 were disgruntled about, not in relation to a specific
29 issue but just to explain the process as you're aware

13:02

1 of in terms of how you would have done that?

2 A. well, I reported my disgruntlement overseas to my
3 Section Commander and when I came home and I couldn't
4 take the treatment anymore I reported it to the PSSO or
5 the PSS as he's now referred to. 13:02

6 331 Q. You mentioned during your interviews the Redress of
7 Wrongs procedure and I just want you to just to help
8 me. what's your knowledge or was your knowledge at the
9 time of the Redress of Wrongs procedure?

10 A. I didn't mention anything about the Redress of Wrongs. 13:02

11 332 Q. what is your knowledge of the Redress of Wrongs?

12 A. I have no knowledge of it when I was serving.

13 333 Q. Okay.

14 A. So I didn't make any reference to it in my interviews.

15 334 Q. Okay. I think you've said that in relation to the 13:02
16 Redress of Wrongs procedure, that it was when you went
17 to the Department of Justice, I think, that you became
18 familiar with it?

19 A. Yes. Like I said, I had no knowledge of it while I was
20 in the Defence Forces. 13:03

21 MR. LEHANE: Thank you very much.

22 SOLE MEMBER: Thank you, Mr. Lehane. Does anybody else
23 want to put a question to the witness?

24

25 MR. RONAN TAHENY, WAS CROSS-EXAMINED BY MR. MCGUINNESS 13:03
26 AS FOLLOWS:

27

28 335 Q. MR. MCGUINNESS: Good afternoon, Mr. Taheny. My name
29 is Diarmaid McGuinness, I'm appearing for the Minister

1 for Defence. Can I just ask you two questions. Did
2 you have a repatriation medical before returning from
3 overseas service?

4 A. We had a repatriation medical, yes.

5 336 Q. And did you answer all the questions on the form? 13:03

6 A. We filled out the form. We signed it at the top and
7 put our Army number on it and we handed it in as we
8 were turning up for the medical.

9 337 Q. And did you meet the doctor?

10 A. At the time, yes. 13:04

11 338 Q. And can you remember whether you'd made any complaint
12 about Lariam to him?

13 A. I would have made my concerns at that medical prior to
14 going home also.

15 339 Q. Could I ask you to just focus on the very precise 13:04
16 question; did you make any complaints to the doctor, at
17 that pre-repatriation medical, about your Lariam
18 symptoms?

19 A. Yes, I raised my concerns with the doctor prior to
20 going home, prior to returning back to my family. 13:04

21 340 Q. And how did you do that?

22 A. In person.

23 341 Q. And do you remember who that was?

24 A. It could have been [REDACTED]. It's 25 years
25 ago. 13:04

26 **SOLE MEMBER:** You don't have to name the doctor as yet.
27 You say you did tell the doctor. Sorry,
28 Mr. McGuinness, I just want to ensure that -- he was an
29 officer, the doctor?

1 **THE WITNESS:** Yes.

2 342 Q. **MR. MCGUINNESS:** I think am I correct in saying you
3 were never medically downgraded for overseas service,
4 isn't that correct, throughout your career?

5 A. I was never medically downgraded, throughout my career, 13:05
6 yes.

7 343 Q. Is it possible that you saw ██████████ on a different
8 date when you were doing an annual medical?

9 A. We would see the doctor before we done our annual
10 medical, yes. 13:05

11 344 Q. But did you see him on another occasion other than your
12 repatriation medical?

13 A. No, not overseas, no.

14 **MR. MCGUINNESS:** Okay. Thank you.

15 **SOLE MEMBER:** Thank you. 13:05

16

17 **MR. RONAN TAHENY WAS QUESTIONED BY THE SOLE MEMBER, AS**
18 **FOLLOWS:**

19

20 345 Q. **SOLE MEMBER:** Mr. Taheny, could you give me a little 13:06
21 bit more detail about the discussion you with your Team
22 Leader or Section Commander when you shared with him
23 the difficulties you were having?

24 A. Yes, Judge. I would have spoke to him, as we shared a
25 room together anyways I would have spoke to him about 13:06
26 the symptoms and how I was feeling as a person, and did
27 he think that it was due to the weather, or -- he had
28 previous experience overseas, it was my first trip.
29 So, I was kind of bouncing off him to see was it

1 settling in time or was it the weather or was it these
2 things, to see how he felt about it or could he specify
3 more about it for me.

4 346 Q. And even though you were sharing a room with him, he
5 was your Team Leader so he was senior to you -- 13:06

6 A. Oh, yes.

7 347 Q. -- in rank?

8 A. Yes.

9 348 Q. And when you were telling him these symptoms, did you
10 understand that you were telling a senior person that 13:07
11 you were having difficulties?

12 A. Yes, I trusted him. He formed up with us and he was a
13 Section Commander with us from the start. So I trusted
14 that it was going to a good heart.

15 349 Q. A good heart. I think you said he took notes, you saw 13:07
16 him taking notes?

17 A. Yes.

18 350 Q. The fact that he took notes, what did that convey to
19 you?

20 A. I know he went to a daily briefing and there was a 13:07
21 weekly, kind of a weekly meeting about all the people
22 on the trip and I took from his note-taking, and he
23 asked some good questions, that he would raise those
24 concerns as to why I was going to the medics or how I
25 was feeling with the Sergeant and with the Lieutenant, 13:08
26 that he was the conduit between both of us.

27 351 Q. Did he tell you he would raise those concerns?

28 A. Yes.

29 352 Q. And then can you explain to me a little the sudden

1 disappearance of this Corporal and why all his things
2 were left behind and why the room was then raided, as
3 you described, or...

4 A. Yes. He went home on his leave.

5 353 Q. On leave, okay. 13:08

6 A. And he just never came back. He had his own issues
7 with Lariam and he never came back and he never
8 returned.

9 354 Q. But even though he was going home on leave, you believe
10 he left his notes and his findings in the locker? 13:08

11 A. Absolutely, yes. And, to that point, I didn't know had
12 he previously spoke to them about his note-taking or
13 had he been waiting to speak to them about his notes.

14 355 Q. And is it your evidence that you believe that when
15 other superiors came into the room -- I think you said, 13:09
16 was it, the Sergeant and the Lieutenant, when they came
17 in, you believe they took his notes?

18 A. They took his full -- there was a locker at the end of
19 his bed, like a foot locker, and they took the actual
20 foot locker, the whole thing. 13:09

21 SOLE MEMBER: Mr. Taheny, thank you for coming to the
22 Tribunal. I understand it's a difficult thing for you
23 to do. I think it's commendable of you to want to
24 come, and for the reasons you gave, to share your story
25 and I wish you all the very best going forward. Thank 13:09
26 you very much, Mr. Taheny. The Tribunal will resume
27 again on Tuesday at 10:30.

28 THE TRIBUNAL WAS THEN ADJOURNED UNTIL TUESDAY, 16TH
29 JUNE 2026 AT 10:30 A.M.

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