



Protokollbilaga

Aklnr
AM-77418-18

Signerat av
Cecilia Hector

Signerat datum
2023-11-20 16:38

Datum: 2024-01-02
2023-08-04
AKTBIL: 31

Enhet

Nationella Operativa Avdelningen, Krigsbrott i UtrS NOA

Arkiv/Åkl. ex

Handläggare (Protokollförare)

Cecilia Hector

Bitr. handläggare

Ann-Catrin Jansson

Undersökningsledare

Karolina Wieslander

Polisens diarienummer

5000-K622888-18

Personer i ärendet

Förtursmål Nej	Beslag	Målsägande vill bli underrättad om tidpunkt för huvudförhandlingen Nej
Ersättningsyrkanden		Tolk krävs
Misstänkt (Efternamn och förnamn) Hamo, Mohammed		Personnummer 19581020-0559
Brott		Förhandsgodkännande enligt RB 48:10 Nej
Misstänkt har delgivits information om att förenklad delgivning kan komma att användas av polis och tingsrätt (skriftligt överlämnad vid ett personligt sammanträffande).		
Misstänkt har delgivits information om att tillgänglighetsdelgivning kan komma att användas av tingsrätt (skriftligt överlämnad vid ett personligt sammanträffande).		
Underrättad om slutförd förundersökning / utredning enligt RB 23:18a 2023-08-04, muntlig underrättelse		Yttrande senast (rådrum) 2023-11-15
		Resultat av slutunderrättelse Ingen erinran
Försvare Kilman, Mari, förordnad 2021-12-07		
Underrättad om slutförd förundersökning / utredning 2023-08-04, muntlig underrättelse		Yttrande senast (rådrum) 2023-11-15
		Resultat av slutunderrättelse Ingen erinran

Notering

Innehållsförteckning

Diariernr	Uppgiftstyp	Sida
	Förhör vittnen	
5000-K622888-18	Förhör med vittne, Wood, Paul <i>Bilaga: Artikel</i>	3
	Personalia	
	Bilaga skäligen misstänkt, Hamo, Mohammed.....	56
	Personalia, Hamo, Mohammed.....	57

Förhör

Signerat av

Signerat datum

Enhet
Nationella Operativa Avdelningen, Krigsbrott 1 UtrS NOADiarienummer
5000-K622888-18

Hörd person Wood, Paul		Personnummer	
Den hörde är Vittne	ID Styrkt Ja	Sätt Rob Grant - engelsk polis	Ställning till misstänkt - målsägande - vittne
Tolk	Språk		

Ytterligare information om anledning till förhör
Hörd om sina iakttagelser i samband med att han som journalist gjorde reportage i
Syrien 2011-2012

Underrättad om misstanke

Underrättad om 12 § FUK Underrättad om rätt till försvarare Godtar den försvarare som rätten förordnar Försvarare/ombud närvarande

Försvarare/ombud önskas

Förhørsledare Ann-Catrin Jansson	Förhørsdatum 2023-05-09	Förhör påbörjat 09:24	Förhör avslutat 11:13
Förhørsplats Hammersmith Police station - London	Typ av förhör RB 23:6	Förhörssätt	
Förhörsvittne	Utskrivet av		

Berättelse

PW: Paul Wood, hörd person
FL1: Ann-Katrin Jansson, kriminalinspektör, förhørsledare
FL2: Lena Viktorsson, kriminalinspektör, förhørsledare
FL3: Rob Grant, brittisk polis
Plats: Hammersmith Police station
Tid: 23-05-09, kl 09:24

FL1: Då ska vi ha förhör med Paul Wood, i diarienummer: K6222888-18. Paul är brittisk medborgare.

Och datum är 2022-05-09 (2023?) och klockan är 09:24.

Förhørsledare är kriminalinspektör Ann-Katrin Jansson och kriminalinspektör Lena Viktorsson.

Och vi är på Hammersmith Police station i London.

Anledning till förhöret är att Paul hörs med anledning av hans iakttagelser, upplevelser i Homs i Syrien i sitt arbete som journalist. Och vi hör honom om hans upplevelser under perioden slutet av 2011 till juli 2012.

Och innan förhöret startades så har Rob Grant förklarat för Paul vad, vilka rättigheter han har här i förhöret och att han är här frivilligt och att han vittnar och att han kan lämna eller be Rob om hjälp om det skulle vara så. Är det någonting mer där?

FL2: Nej.

FL1: Nej, då så. Then we'll start. I just want you to just give me a short background, background history and then maybe we can dig in to the questions.

PW: By me?

FL1: Yeah.

PW: Okay, I'm Paul Wood. I was a BBC correspondent for 27 years. 5 years as a foreign correspondent. Covering 12 wars, including Syrian civil war. I first went to Syria early 00's after Bashar al-Assad came to power. We, I was Afghanistan correspondent. The BBC asked me to cover the rebel side of the Syrian civil war that just starting.

FL1: Mm.

PW: First tried to enter Syria in summer of 2011. The plan was for me to go on a tourist visa. And for Lebanese cameramen to cross the border with smugglers. Lebanese cameramen got drunk and fell down an escalator in a shopping center night before we're supposed to leave.

(silent laughter)

PW: So we postponed. And ended up traveling in with smugglers in November of 2011. A journalist called Anthony Shadid, New York Times, since died, done it first. We were the first tv-crew to do it. We managed to enter Homs and specifically Baba Amr, which was then under siege. A very, ehm, the military operation to take, it had resumed. We spent some time there and came out to the outskirts of Rastan to meet some rebel commanders. We came back at the end of January 2012. Entering Baba Amr which was the under a proper military siege through an underground storm drain in first week of February.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Stayed there for about a week. And in my judgement, and my cameraman who's covered absurdly 25 wars, it was too dangerous to do any proper work. It wasn't worth the risk.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So we left. I think our judgement was correct, because Marie Colvin from the Sunday Times...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... asked me in Beirut to help her get here. Which I did against my better judgement and she was killed in the press center where we've been staying.

FL1: Mm.

PW: During that trip, I mean everything I did in Syria I had a recorder on me, everything was recorded, everything is transcribed. So if there's any vague impression which you find interesting I can zero in on it.

FL1: Alright.

PW: So yes, so we came out on that trip, went back in at the end of March because Baba Amr had fallen. We met refugees coming out, and we got in into Syria again but, eh, just to the

outskirts of Baba Amr...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... interviewing people fleeing. Multiple claims of atrocities...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... which I find quite credible. Including for instance, we met the survivors of an alleged massacre, a place called Jobar, a village. A family who gave us very detailed testimony of the kids, same as the parents, very hard to fake.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And then later, there's features in the film which I sent you a link to, we got some footage apparently taken by the people who done the massacre to show the dead bodies on the ground which fitted with the witness statements.

FL1: Mm.

PW: We were smuggled in again in April, May, this time we went in Rastan which I believe was also varied interest for you.

FL1: Mm.

PW: The place was pretty empty. And a constant shellfire. Ehm, I think from my own experience and what I was told, civilians and civilian infrastructure were being deliberately targeted. We sat up a camera in the press center and got an artillery attack on the press center as it happened. And I get nothing (inaudible) but leaving the place over to you.
(00:05:01)

FL1: Mm.

PW: We got stuck in Syria then for about a month. Because the government put a whole army unit in the border. Rebels couldn't get their wounded out, wounded were dying. We didn't know what to do. We, we couldn't find a way out in the end we sort of waited for three weeks and then made a dash for it and very nearly getting caught.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Ehm, then we decided (short laugh) to switch up north, it was getting too difficult to move in and out in Syria from the Lebanese border. I was living in Lebanon, went to Aleppo several times. Then in 2013 we started going back into Syria from Lebanon. Eh, we then made several trips to Damascus. In one of those trips we got kidnapped. Held for about ten days by a group affiliated to Nusra, al-Qaida. We escaped after ten days.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Took a bit of a pause from Syria.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Went back a couple of times to the north. And then I think 2014, no 2015 was my last trip. That was it really.

FL1: Alright. Then we will, I will ask you some more detailed questions regarding these journeys that you've made. So, when you went in in February, or, sorry, in November in 2011...

PW: Yeah.

FL1: ... what sort of knowledge did you have before you went? Or did you get the information and how much?

PW: I mean, a lot of being a foreign correspondent is just turning up and getting people to help you...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... so not very scientific.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So I spent about a month in Lebanon researching how to cross. Including, out to Jordan to meet people connected to rebel groups. I mean I covered civil wars in Kosovo, Macedonia, Darfur.

FL1: Mm.

PW: It's never a, a proper structure to these things. It's usually family connections...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... criminal groups. So, there wasn't some commander officer we could go and find.

FL1: Mm.

PW: The cross boarder smuggling from Lebanon to Syria and vice versa traditionally controlled by families and groups loyal to the regime, they are just criminals. It's a lot of people smugglings, a lot of gasoline smuggling.

FL1: Mm.

PW: At some stage these criminal groups decided that the rebels are going to win, and they switched sides. So, people had two approaches. Some people paying these criminal groups to smuggle in...

FL1: Mm.

PW: what was, which those are trying to do. I didn't want to do that because I rather find people ideology committed to the revolution.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, we spent a long time in places like Tripoli where there was a sort of rear support for the Free Syrian Army as it called itself. Active members of the Lebanese military, Sunnis.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Who put us in touch with the right families. And then we spent some time on the border and just, somebody literally turned up at said; Okay, hop on back on his motorbike...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... and I get you across. So pretty much every trip into Syria was a bit like that. It starts off with an initial contact. Then you get on handed on to somebody that you didn't know. And then they handed you over to somebody else that was a known initial contact.

FL1: Mm.

PW: People tended to control small bits of territory. Somebody takes you a couple of miles down the road. This off course meant you were treated with quite lot of suspicion when you got to where you were going. Because you know you hadn't had a proper introduction. This is entirely normal for covering guerilla conflicts and civil wars.

FL1: Mm.

PW: This is how it's usually works.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: So essentially, we hitchhiked our way in, we hitchhiked our way out.

FL1: So, so did you have any information regarding the, the, how it was for the civilians and where the attacks took place and what, what sort of attacks it was and?

PW: Yeah, I mean that the, these are wars where even the poorest person has a camera phone.

FL1: Mm, yeah.

PW: There's a lot of video, really bad video, coming out. Which had little value because it was propagandistic...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... and in fact you often meet even so, there was a, the rise of a so-called citizen journalists, which sounds great but often citizen journalists were there to do propaganda.

FL1: Mm.

PW: To the extent that we caught some people, when we're in Baba Amr once, setting on fire a pile of tires so they could film a piece to camera with a sort of fire behind.

FL1: Mm.

PW: (short laugh)

FL1: Mm.

PW: Lot of the citizen journalists were affiliated to military units. Some of them were very good. There was a guy that I became friendly with called Jedy (?) who was captured when Baba Amr fell. He was just a, a fruit and vegetable seller on the street.

FL1: Mm.

PW: But he knew what objective journalism was. Tried to do a good job and was eventually paraded on state television making a false confession before I assume he was killed. I assumed he was killed.

FL1: Ah right, mm.

PW: He was pretty mad at the rebels for abandoning Baba Amr. This is also a pattern you get in, guerilla conflicts where military, the regular military forces pull the tigers tail, the tiger turns around and they run away and there's the civilians who catch it. So, ehm, lot of times you hear about the attacks and you'd witness attacks on civilians but probably there been rebel military forces in area who done something.

FL1: Alright.

PW: And I think that maybe within the law of war, I was with the US Marines when they...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... when they went in to Fallujah in 2004. And the Iraqi rebels there would stick a gun in place on top of a hospital or a school. And the Americans had 155-millimeter artillery so absolutely devastating but it's within the law of war.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Somebody fires at you, you fire back even if there's civilians there.

FL1: So, when you were going in to, to Syria in November in 2011 were there people coming out, civilians coming out that you met or did you talk to anyone?

PW: We talked to civilians everywhere we went. There was a track of civilians coming out. This was still the phase were the regime was largely in control.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And we conceived of this as a trip not in to civil war were there'll be front lines...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... but in to a police state where we had to sneak around. Very good journalist called Ramita Navai from Channel 4 had done that and was hidden by some activists in a house and there was a search next door and people were banging on the door.

FL1: Mm.

PW: It didn't seem to me or what I anticipated was a situation which the rebels didn't really have territory, they was still being hidden. That was almost the case, except in Baba Amr they established this tiny little enclave where the regime security forces didn't really dare to go. What you were hearing, and I can read from transcripts now...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... our transcripts too, is really stories of people being arrested, taken away and disappeared and tortured.

FL1: Okay.

PW: Some of this had a... there were two things going on, one is the regime using its repressive power, but this is a regime dominated by Alawites, with a lot of loyal Sunnis. So, there's a kind of village against village flavor to it.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And, you know, some Alawite officer from the next village would come and arrest somebody. And one of his relatives would disappear, then they come back and take 20 people.

FL1: Alright.

PW: We're hearing a lot of stories like that.

FL1: Mm.

PW: The regime was panicked. The way the panicked regime was responding was with brutality. So, I think they let all these multiple security agencies just off the leash. Particularly air force intelligence. So, we heard a lot of stories on that trip and on subsequent trips. About quite a large arrest of men who just didn't come back.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And, as we know from people like Caesar where then tortured and killed.

FL1: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

PW: I got multiple quite credible testimony from people describing it just, weeks of weeks of brutal thuggish torture.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Arrested because they were near a demonstration or at a demonstration.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Or because their cousin was at that demonstration. Having said that, that first trip to Baba Amr we interviewed, Baba Amr's kind of an area...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... that the outskirts of Homs that Bedouin settled. So, we're meeting this sort of Bedouin man, he was telling me this terrible tale how his brother been arrested, he been arrested for no reason, they've been tortured. I believed him. Cause later I discovered he was involved in arms smuggling and...

FL1: Alright.

PW: ... shooting on soldiers.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Ehm, there was a logic to what the regime was doing. But in its fear and its confusion it was lashing out.

FL1: Mm.

T: Torturing children, killing children. There's an interview in here I got which I remember it because it's one of the very few Alawites that I interviewed. The rebel propaganda was, was a movement of everybody but it was mainly a movement of poor, poor rural Sunnis. This man, an Alawite, was, say the reason why he flipped and defected was that he was at his base when the brought in a 16-year-old boy who was already shot in the arm and the leg, already wounded, already in pain. They trough him to the ground. And the officer didn't kick him but put his boot in his mouth.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Very humiliating thing in our culture, for some of us, yeah.

FL1: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

PW: And a couple of days later then they shot the boy. And then a couple of days later they brought an old man and shot the old man and this guy, who I believed, his testimony is quite credible.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: I said that was the moment that he flipped. Getting ahead of myself, cause interviewed him in February but, his, his interview is valuable because he was very explicit to me and told me word for word what the officers had said about shooting anything that moved in Baba Amr or that came out of Baba Amr. Whether it was civilian or military. And I think that was an order that came from a captain that the captain had been told by a mayor and so on. This was the environment.

FL1: Alright. So, okay, so if we go back to the, I've seen the films that you sent me, if we go back to that film: Journey to hell. What I've seen there's a lot of, you've, you've visited demonstrations on the film. Can you describe, was it, what sort of demonstrations was it, how did that work? Eh, and, and...

PW: Yeah, so Syria erupted in mass protests in the summer of 2011.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: And while everybody was filming that I think there was, there was probably the beginnings of an armed movement as well. I mean, Syrian army officers turning up dead. Somebody was killing them. But this was a war which was not very visible.

FL1: Nej.

PW: But every time the regime suppressed a demonstration, shot at demonstrators, very stupidly at the beginning arrested children and tortured them and returned the maim bodies. These are famous incidents which are very well documented...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... but you hear about them everywhere that more and more people go with the rebels. So, when we arrived for the first time in November 2011. There were still demonstrations where we went. There's a town called Qusayr (?) on the way in to Syria and then Baba Amr. But these were no longer mass demonstrations with people sort of marching on...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... the centers of power. These were small demonstrations of frightened people trying to be defined. And the, the explanation we got for the armed men we were seeing then was how they were protecting the demonstrators. But this was the last gasp of demonstrations before people really took up arms.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: Ehm, so the commander in Baba Amr was a guy called Abu Mohammed. I say commander, one of the people who seem to be running things. Who'd been a petrol smuggler, he was a mafia guy. I mean, often in these conflicts you get armed the...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... criminal groups were the first to take up arms. Abu Mohammed was actually quite an educated man. But felt, because he didn't have family connections and he was a Sunni. He could never make any money honestly so started being a petrol smuggler. He told me that he was, I mean he already had weapons because that was his business but he was counseling people to take up arms from the first mass demonstrations in Homs. He told me he didn't really get anybody to do that until Syrian army started shooting demonstrators and then of course it took off.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I can't remember what your question was now.

FL1: Ah. I was just, I was thinking about the demonstration and, and the follow-up question regarding that, is, you've already touched upon it, if the opposition or the rebels were getting armed and in to what extent they were getting armed and what sort of weapons did they have at that time?

PW: Well, the criminal groups who ha weapons, and probably a lot of people hade weapons in rural Syria...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... cause they just did. But then you started getting army defections.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: So, we interviewed, after that first trip we went to stay in Tripoli and Lebanon for a little while to interview army defectors. So typical story, we got a couple a defector, they were, you know, it was just a few hours after they managed to cross the border and the day after they managed to defect. The testimony was quite fresh and convincing. Again, I got the transcript but they were two young Sunni guys who told me that they've been in Homs and their unit had been ordered to stand in front of demonstrators and then military intelligence

guys had put guns to the back of their heads and said: You shoot the demonstrators or we shoot you.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, they, they shot, they didn't have any choice, they tried not to hit anybody but it was, eh, so I think a lot of that was going on. And then people like that defected with their Kalashnikovs.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I think the regime still held the heavy weapons just in case they see the rebels or something heavier but not very often.

FL1: Alright.

PW: And there was always a terrible shortage of weapons through the war. I remember being smuggled in to Syria sort of, one of the trips, eh, March, April, May of 2013, and literally they take one clip of ammunition and divide it between four or five guys. The black-market Kalashnikovs 5200 dollars at the beginning of the war. I mean really, like 1000 dollars, 2000 dollars as the war went on. Weapons were very short on us, something the regime always had.

PW: Yeah, yeah. So, when you were there in February, or November in 2011 were there any armed vehicles or what sort of, had tanks or something been coming in to, to the area at that time?

PW: You talk about the regime?

FL1: Yeah, yeah the regime.

PW: Yes, so in Baba Amr I think I may have, we may have filmed this maybe in the documentary, but anyway Baba Amr's quite a small area...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... and you could walk or drive around it in just a few minutes. And you would see on all the main streets blue painted armored vehicles, blue for the Police. They were, probably had 30-millimeter canon on them, must be 20-millimeter canons, sort of you know troop carrying type of vehicles. And there was an incident which I didn't then film because it just sounded too dangerous where there was sustained exchange of fire. It sounded like the rattle of heavy machine guns and possibly 20, 30-millimeter canon for a period of couple of hours. That was to do with, ehm, very foolishly I reporter from Al-Manar television which is Shia, Hizbollah controlled. Tv and Lebanon, eh...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... entered, having been told by the sheik, this religious sheik, that he had permission to go. He was treated with suspicion. Abu Sufyan and others were discussing in my hearing whether I should just kill him. He managed to get a call out and then the army or the police, whoever it was, started firing in, the rebels started firing out. It was a sustained battle which I didn't witness, I just, we just stayed under hard cover. Before everything died down and they eventually swapped him for some dead bodies. So that was an incident in November 2011. And at that stage, eh, we asked to get out and see the Free Syrian Army and they took us

somewhere to what was clearly a stage filming incident were half a dozen guys with Kalashnikovs did silly poses and, I don't think they were doing much, the rebels and...

FL1: Mm.

PW: They were there at demonstrations because they told me that'd been drive-bys of, what they called, Shabihas. They called everybody Shabiha...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... as the regime...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... you know, bad guys. Drive-by shootings. But I don't think there as any active military operations. Abu Mohammed, the leader, went up to a high building and I was, I was I two minds about filming this, I, because I worried that they were just doing this so we could film it.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Several times on that visit people offered to do things which I refused cause they were clearly staging it for us...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... and wonder if you get killed just cause we didn't film but Abu Mohammed claimed to do this regularly. So, we went to film him going up to a high building, seeing the army base which was literally a couple of hundred meters away (laughter in the voice). And taking a potshot at some sentry, luckily, he missed. He ran away.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, there was, there was very low-level activity going on. But yeah, from the regimes point of view this was now a rebel held enclave and they had the right to retake it.

FL1: Ja, okay.

PW: There were weapons there certainly...

FL1: Yeah, yeah.

PW: ... there were armed men.

FL1: So, had they started to retake the area at this time?

PW: Everything was very static.

FL1: Okay.

PW: We, just these armed vehicles dotted around and I think, part from some territory in Aleppo and Deir ez-Zor I think Baba Amr was particular small little enclave...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... was the only bit of free Syria that existed.

FL1: Alright. Okay.

PW: These were not big organized forces, there were a few criminals with guns...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... a few defectors with guns. There weren't organized, they wouldn't do anything.

FL1: Mm.

PW: You know I, I suspect that they go, occasionally take and take potshots and things.

FL1: Mm.

PW: On the way out on that trip we stayed with a group in Qusayr. Two rival rebel commanders, one was a very handsome you officer that all the women wanted to marry.

PW: And one was a rather gruff old grouchy officer, he was rather more effective. We stayed with these guys for a few days and they attacked a, an army base, I think just, just because they wanted the propaganda value of us filming it. So, we all tripped out, nobody got killed on either side. There were about 40 or 50 guys. I think they were basically sitting around until we turned up, then they felt they had to do something because of the tv...

FL1: Okay.

PW: ... you know.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: Things I think were far more active. There was a huge change between November 2011 and when we went back in February 2012. Again we stopped in Qusayr. And there was a big very well-organized attack on the main army base which we filmed, that's the night vision film...

FL1: Yeah, yeah, Yeah.

PW: ... that you can see in the BBC. Where the rather stupid plan was to have an assault from the hill top to distract them while they drove a car bomb up to the entrance to blow the door and then they get in.

FL1: Ah, okay.

PW: The car bomb didn't, didn't destroy the front gate.

FL1: Alright.

PW: Or they shot the guy before he got in. And then the regime sent tanks out to, to chase the rebels away so we ran away with them. And, I think this is absolutely indicative of what was happening in Syria. Some poor guy came out of his house and started shouting at the rebel commander You fucking idiot. You know, we got to live here. You can attack this place and get away but we got to live here and now they going to come for us.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Those were a very common pact.

FL1: Ja, okay. Okay. Just a few questions regarding your first trip in November.

PW: Mm.

FL1: Did the regime have, started to have any checkpoints or anything or were there any checkpoints...

PW: Oh, sure, I mean, Syria was a country of checkpoints even before the war.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, we spent a lot of time walking through fields or being driven on agriculture roads. I mean, you know, in any guerilla conflicts really, state usually has the big towns, the main roads and some roads in the country is more of a grey area. So, there were checkpoints everywhere and on one of the times we were smuggled in, I don't think it was that trip, ehm, you know it was, if we did pass a checkpoint it was because either the people on that check-point had already defected but just hadn't told the leadership. Or they've been bribed or, I remember one checkpoint, they guy actually came into Lebanon, smokes marijuana with the rebels that we were talking to. Then went back out, and we had to lie on the bottom of a vegetable lorry, vegetables over us just in case. But we knew they guy on that checkpoint...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... wasn't going to search to hard. So yes, you were constantly scared to checkpoints and Rastan was a nightmare. Fast forwarding to May 2012 because stupid rebels. We snuck in to Rastan and they proudly told us that they announced on the radio and Twitter that the BBC were in town.

FL1: Mm.

FL2: Mm.

PW: A secret visit.

FL2: Mm.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, we had a very scary trip down the highway cause there were floating checkpoints and stuff. Entering the highway after the first checkpoint going down the highway, coming off after the second checkpoint hoping not to run in to, into a patrol. Yeah, there were checkpoints everywhere and, but the rebels, that was their business you know, smuggling people...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... and weapons. To get in to, in to Damascus once we were told that we could be welded into a metal box on the bottom of a lorry that was used as smuggling weapons or...

FL1: Mm.

PW: (laughing)

(laughing)

PW: In case they forgot about us...

FL1: Understand.

PW: ... and left us in there.

(laughing)

FL1: Nightmare.

PW: We entered Damascus, I can say this now cause the war is over but, there's a big reservoir of up Damascus and there's a water tunnel that goes back to Roman time, it's kind of quite beautiful sort of marble thing in places.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, we, we entered the tunnel above Damascus and walked in waist deep water for about a mile. All the way in and, yeah, so there where things like that.

FL1: Mm. Just to, so I understand you correctly, these were the rebel checkpoints, the regime checkpoints or...

PW: It's only regime checkpoints.

FL1: Ja, okay.

PW: There were rebel checkpoints but...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... obviously we were being...

FL1: No. Oh, there's (inaudible) yeah.
(00:27:22)

PW: ... hosted by the rebels. We weren't wandering around on our own...

FL1: No, no.

PW: ... the first thing to do. (short laugh)

FL1: (short laugh)

PW: There was always somebody with us. You know, a smuggler/criminal allied to the rebels. Probably he's flipped back to regime, what I said he's flipped back regime by now... So yeah, what you were trying to avoid, especially those early days. We didn't, it wasn't really an open war, it was more a kind of, there was some mysterious roadside bombs going off and...

FL1: Ja.

PW: ... sniper incidents. But mainly this was about a repressive state arresting people. And we were trying to move undercover in that repressive state. I didn't appreciate until I got to Baba Amr that there was actually a separate bit of territory. So, Abu Mohammed said to me; I knew a couple of months ago that they wanted to arrest me but they just sent two policemen on a motorbike, were they bothered, now we're going to send a regiment to get me.

FL1: Mm. Mm. Ah, understand.

FL2: Mm.

S So, so when you in, in February 2012 what, if you describe the difference and what's it like with the opposition or the rebels and the regime, eh...

PW: We went in as before, smuggled from (inaudible), smuggled over walked cross the border with people taking weapons by hand. A big movement of guns and ammunition from Lebanon were there was a lot of the stuff to Syria where it was needed. It was a commercial trade....

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... it wasn't people giving this stuff away. So, we went first to Qusayr were...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... these two commanders joined forces to attack the rebel base and we weren't even thinking of going to Baba Amr until somebody, we'd spend from about midnight till 10 AM filming this attack on the army base and just got to bed and we're very tired and somebody came in at 11 to say they started shelling Homs. There's a district next to Baba Amr who's name I forget...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... but that's where they started doing it. We kind of rolled over (inaudible), they had to shell Homs without us for a few hours but then we felt bad and got up and they were donating blood, so we got on the back of a little truck that was taking blood in. Eh, they deposited us and the blood at the mouth of an underground storm drain, as I will describe it...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... outside Homs. And then, this thing was like a couple of miles long and somebody came on a motorbike to get us. They took us on a motorbike to a place where we then had to walk. And that's in the film, you can see...

FL1: Yeah, yeah,

PW: ... the tunnels getting smaller and smaller. And then we popped up, eh, we realized that Baba Amr was the main target, we didn't try to head to this other area. There were incredible claims of casualties, the rebels were saying 300 dead in this other area. I mean you couldn't take these claims seriously.

FL1: Mm.

PW: People just making up numbers. So, we popped up on a fairly deserted street that was quite, it was, I think that was the occasional shell going off. Couldn't see anybody, ehm, just went and knocked on the door and said; Hi, we're journalists, can we stay with you? The guy said yes, but pretty soon the word went around and a guy called Abu Hanin sent a car to come and get us. Abu Hanin run the press center in Baba Amr.

FL1: Mm.

PW: He's a, he's a Syrian guy but he'd spent several years in Manchester, in the United Kingdom.

FL1: Yeah, yeah.

PW: He spoke very good English.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: He's now in Italy if you want to talk to him, I probably get you his contact details. So Abu Hanin had hosted us along with Abu Sufyan on the November trip. And somehow procured a WeSat which is a two-way satellite capable of doing internet and phone calls. I was very nervous about the WeSat because I think it potentially give us, somebody a means of locking on to where you are.

FL1: Mm.

PW: But WeSat have got quite low microwave emissions that's quite sensible for that point of view. So anyway, Abu Hanin offered to host us, which was great. The press center was kind of a good place to be, people came and went. When poor Jedy was captured and made to do a false confession on Syrian state tv they ran some pictures which appeared to show armed men at the press center.

FL1: Mhm.

PW: Obviously that would completely change the positions to whether shelling, it was no legal act. I never saw any armed people. I did meet a man who described himself as a defected colonel there but he was not carrying a weapon. He came to talk to us there. So, whether or not there are armed people that I don't know but, eh, we certainly, for my knowledge of what the regime was like, expected them to target the press center. It's very convincing evidence from a human source that I think is, has been used or will be used in legal actions arising to Marie Colvin but somebody came out and gave the regime the exact street and position of the press center and they deliberate killed Marie.

FL1: Mm, mm.

PW: They targeted her (inaudible) a very affective broadcast from there. We had our own satellite gear with us but I wouldn't, I wouldn't use from the press center because I thought...

FL1: No, okay.

PW: ... they going to target us, we used to go down the road to a deserted building, make sure there's nobody...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... you know the houses either side, set it up, send our piece, take it down.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Little satellite hand dish.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: So, I think they would, I mean I already been told by several sources I trusted that there was a capture or kill order out on me. And some hacked e-mails from the regime suggested that they'd back me and were trying to find me.

FL1: Mm.

PW: They said that with Marie there's very convincing evidence that there was an order from quite high up to kill her. So, in the Arab world in general a journalist is far more important or treated as if they're far more important than in normal functioning democracies.

FL1: Mm.

PW: It wouldn't surprise me that at a very high level, perhaps even Assad himself...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... that they decided to try to kill me, try to kill Marie.

FL1: Mm.

PW: The evidence for that, it's just a kind of jigsaw...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... but put together from rebel sources, from some intelligence, people that I have spoken to and spoke to me in Beirut. Ehm, yeah.

FL1: So, I just go to, back to the, to the sort of mili, rebel attack that was made to the military base that...

PW: Yes.

FL1: ... what sort of military base was it, do you have any knowledge regarding...

PW: I mean I looked at it from the top of a hill, it looked pretty big.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: Was it company strength, battalion strength I don't know. They said they had tanks they sent out after us. After the rebels who we were following. I would think a hundred plus rebels attacked it. And in, I saw about a hundred.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I was in the briefings when they went in, everybody was gathered there, it looked about a hundred. Possibly it was more. And you know the people leading these attacks, these two

Syrian rebels, one had been a mayor and one had been a captain.

FL1: Mm.

PW: These were proper soldiers. So, you're seeing a professionalization of the rebel forces. Because of the defectors.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: Because they really knew what they were doing. You know I met several ex special forces, soldiers who were rebels. One of whom was from a very famous family who's, who's uncle or great uncle was still the defense minister of Syria. So, yes, and my, ehm, this must remain confidential but my...

Stänger av bandspelaren (52.39 kvar av ljudfilen)

FL1: Then we need to...

FL2: We need to...

PW: ... my security advisor...

FL1: Then we need to, eh...

(Shutting off the recoding)

FL1: ... continue there.

PW: So, so the opinion of, of somebody with British military experience was, these was quite effective forces.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I mean it's all relative.

FL1: Yeah, yeah.

PW: But they, they didn't run away when they were attacked, rarely panicked. There seem to be a plan of attack even if it didn't quite work. Eh, this was not spray and pray, as he sort of...

FL1: Ja, ja. Mm. Do you have any knowledge regarding these military bases that was around Baba Amr? Do you have, do you know anything about them?

PW: I mean, in, for us to approach the military base risked the very least arrest and then we'd just being shot so we, we took care not to, to get to close. So, I only know what people told me. Ehm, I mean there were clearly big military forces around just, just from here in the artillery when it really started.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And our difficulty in moving back in to Lebanon in our trip in May and we were told there was a battalion on the border. I believed it, everybody was terrified, nobody could move around. But we only caught glimpses of the army from a distance, checkpoints and that kind of thing.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I never got an idea of what equipment they had, what strength they were...

FL1: No.

PW: ... you know let alone names of units, names of commanders. They were always a distant threat.

FL1: I understand. So, so you mentioned the artillery, so how did they, how did the military act, what sort of measures did they take against the rebels?

PW: It was a static war as far as Baba Amr was concerned up until first week of February. Then it was kind of, people being arrested, being disappeared, probably tortured. Bodies showing up. Rebels trying to do the same back, you know...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... it was a dirty war. Then, first week of February about 6 AM I heard, I heard a mortar land and it was like a metronome. Another one and another one, about every ten, fifteen, twenty seconds.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And then I heard rumbling of shells falling. It felt like really big stuff, like 155-millimeter artillery. So, we went outside to film and we saw, didn't see any armed men, saw people trying to, it was an old man that was shuffling along, somebody took him by the arm try to lead him off the street.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Everybody knew this was coming. The regime had been building up steadily. So, this, this, we stayed for about a week and we did not go out to film with the rebels to see what they were doing to invite this or otherwise. Or, or to, you know, but they were firing and firing back. I could hear the crackle of small arms fire pretty constantly and the crack sounded like it was people near firing out.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I never heard any motor fire or heavy weapons fire. Or even a heavy machine gun from the rebel side. I think it was them taking potshots with Kalashnikovs where they could.

FL1: Mm.

PW: The shelling was just, it was day and night, it was constant I thought, you know, this goes on at the end of a hammer, all over the place. I believe that civilian infrastructure was being deliberate targeted on the bases of interviews I did later. For instance, the Alawites I told you about.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Who very explicitly word for word said Yes, I was told by my officer, my captain, shot anything that moves. Animal... I mean literally shot any animals, shot any people, civilians or military.

FL1: Mm.

PW: What we learnt later about the death of Marie Colvin suggested they had deliberate targeted the press center. The only real filming we did was to go out to, there were two field hospitals, field hospitals, I mean one was literally...

FL1: Mm. Mm.

PW: ... a vet for animals, because they had surgical (inaudible) and stuff. And the other was just, just a room.
(00:38:44)

FL1: Mm.

PW: And when we got to one of these places, ehm, I think it was mortars not shells. We didn't sort of stop to debate it.

FL1: No.

PW: Stuff started falling quite near us. Ehm, the black clouds of smoke, so we didn't feel the impacts but we filmed the black clouds of smoke. And the only thing there was to see on that street was either the entrance to the clinic or the van that we were in. The regime had drones overhead, we could hear the buzzing. I suppose the defense of, of this military commander might be why we saw movement on the street. You know, could've been rebels, we thought, you know, it was the van for the journalists. But certainly, all the civilians believed as we heard later in Aleppo about bread queues being bombed. The hospitals were in deliberate targeted and it seemed to me, having filmed in both hospitals, stuff seem to be falling near it. And then one of them got hit one of the days, not the one we were filming at.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And that seemed to be incredible claim that they were deliberate targeting that hospital. Again they might say; Well our drone could see lots of people coming and going from this doorway...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... and we assumed they were rebels.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I never saw any weapons near these hospitals.

FL1: Mm, okay.

PW: Never saw any weapons in the heart of Baba Amr, we were mainly hiding out in buildings, cause it was, it was the worst artillery bombardment and I have been I Chechnya, I was in Iraq for the invasion, yeah my cameramen has done 25 wars. None of us had been in such an intense bombarding.

FL1: Mm.

PW: We just didn't feel that we could move around very safely. There also seem to be, it was

a horrible case of a kid who's about 7 years old who jaw has been ripped off by a large caliber bullet. Which we were told was snipers deliberately targeting children.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Again, I don't know how you mistake a child for...

FL1: No.

PW: ... for a military threat.

FL1: Mm.

PW: You would expect a high proportion of civilian casualties and a high proportion of those to be children just because in Arab societies, especially places like Baba Amr, there are a lot of kids running around. But to see a kid whose face had been taken off by a sniper bullet...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... or calling a sniper, by a large caliber bullet of some kind...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... suggest to me deliberate targeting. So, yes, I mean, then every night they take the dead out to try to bury them and my camera went to film it, on night vision it seemed that they were firing in to the cemetery when they were burying the bodies. Again, you know, if you're some jitterily soldier outside, you see movement, you think it's a rebel force or not. The only time I really saw the rebel forces on masse was when they all met. And there weren't that very many of them, Abu Mohammed, had told me once there were 500 rebels in Baba Amr.

FL1: Okay.

PW: About a 100 of them gathered to decide what to do. Whether that was all of them or just the leading figures, they basically decided to run away. That's the only time I saw them. I heard some small arms fire crackling around.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I don't think they were a very effective military force. Was, was the regimes response a breach of the law of war? I mean I suppose it'll be like the British army sectioning off West Belfast and shelling it to shit cause the IRA was there. Wouldn't be what the British army would do. I was with the US marines going to Fallujah 2004, they certainly ringed the place with artillery. They gave anybody who wasn't a fighter, good three or four months to get out. Then they attacked. And certainly, from what I saw they were very careful of the very few civilians who were left in there or they of course on their best behavior with the journalists there. There were two battles of Fallujah, April 2004 and November 2004. April 2004 the Americans rashly went straight in to the city, which was still full of civilians, and did kill a lot of civilians because if you have a firefight with civilians in the middle...

FL1: Mm, mm.

PW: ... that's what's going to happen. So, I do wonder being fair as an analogy's argument from the Syrian regimes point of view. Well it's our territory we got to take it back. You know, they're not unarmed people there, there are armed people there, we had, we got big

guns why should we sacrifice our men clearing house to house. I think there is an argument.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I don't, I don't accept that we been there but have to recognize there is an argument.

FL1: Mm. Okay. But the rebels did they have any heavy machinery or any heavy weapons at all?

PW: I never saw, saw any, there was a story about somebody defected with a tank, I never saw the tank. I only saw Kalashnikovs.

FL1: No. And the civilians...

PW: That may be different up in Aleppo and places like that.

FL1: Mm. And the civilians in the area, did you have any time to talk to them and see how they had been attacked and...

PW: So, we went to people's houses and people were just carrying in their houses. They were not, because there are all cheap buildings in Baba Amr, they were tended to be houses without basements so they were just...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... very scared, you know, in stairwells, little kids. And then when Baba Amr fell. And all these people streamed out it seemed that the regime was arresting all the men, as you'd expect, the Americans did that in Fallujah. But the Americans, you know, probably didn't torture people or shoot the on the spot.

FL1: Ja, ja.

PW: So, there was a lot of, there was a multiple testimony which I find incredible because, you know, you'd speaking to somebody face to face, the emotional temperature is apparent...

FL1: Yeah, yeah.

PW: ... that, you know, My husband was taken away in front of me, I never going to see him again. My brother was... There was a lot of those kind of stories, men disappearing.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And the occasional stories of horrible massacres, we interviewed a family in this village called Jobar who said that 35 people approximately were killed and had their throats slit. And then we saw a video of people with throats slit...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... laying on the ground and seemed quite credible, who was doing that, the locals kept saying Iranians, Iranians, Iranians at that point it was not publicly known that Iran was so deeply involved...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... with supply infantry fighters. We didn't use it because it sounded like propaganda to me, I didn't know. But I think they may have been Iranians or Iranian officers there.

FL1: Okay.

PW: And of course, Hizbollah from Lebanon. So, who was doing what and who was in, command, I don't know.

FL1: Mm. And there were, were they under the regime umbrella so to speak?

PW: Certainly, under the regime umbrella.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I'm sure that the Iranian...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... eh... revolutionary guard...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... would've been in day to day operational control. I've also interviewed people from Wagner group, the Russian mercenaries...

FL1: Okay.

FL2: Mm.

PW: ... fighting in Syria. And they were attached to these Syrian special forces' groups. Again, in theory Wagner answering to some Syrian general but they're not really...

FL1: Okay.

PW: ... doing what they're doing. So, eh, yeah I mean, your general was probably a operational command. And if he hears of a war crime and doesn't punish it then he's liable for the next war crime. But, I don't know whether orders were given to commit atrocities or whether people just did it. I suspect they just did it.

FL1: Mm.

PW: On both sides. And then it wasn't punished.

FL1: So, I think you said in the film when I saw that, it was indiscriminate attacks. Is that how you feel today or, eh?

PW: I mean, indiscriminate is a kind of a sloppy word...

FL1: Mhm.

PW: ... that we used when civilians are killed and people don't...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... appear to care. I mean I, I get the feeling. And I, I didn't witness, you know, what the army were doing first hand. And I didn't stand by their artillery piece and watch them fire. But I get the feeling that certain civilian infrastructure was being very discriminately attacked. That is the hospitals, there is the press center when they wanted to kill Marie Colvin. Eh, so I think there was an element of collective punishment a collective terror. If they shelled a building and killed civilians there or went into a village and slit throats of everybody they found there because that's where the rebel commander had lived. That was an objective. Do we have proof of that? No, I have multiple testimony from witnesses that built up a picture that that was taking place.

FL1: Mm. Mm.

PW: Rebels are no angels either, rebels kills prisoners. Many times, rebels admitted to me they'd done that.

FL1: Mm.

PW: They kill prisoners, they torture prisoners. I interviewed the famous cannibal rebel who'd been a low-level commander in Baba Amr and later was pictured biting in to a bit of heart, a bit of lung from somebody he killed. An incident sighted by president Putin. That went supported Assad. I mean people were driven crazy by the atrocities, I think the cannibal rebel's sister had been raped. And killed. So...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... you know, I get that's a deeply foul wound for Syria.

FL1: Yeah, yeah.

PW: They went a little crazy and what's, what's disturbing is the way that his act was celebrated by the people.

FL1: Mm. Yeah. But, when they were starting this shelling in February. So what sort of infrastructure did they shell, was there, could you?

PW: With Baba Amr is dense housing.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I'm calling these (inaudible) infrastructure, it was just rooms in a basement of a sort of four, five store houses. So, you know, in order not to die ourselves we didn't venture that much. I just heard constant rumbling, constant falling of shells.

FL1: Mm.

PW: You know, we went to the hospitals interviewing people where the wounded were coming in. And majority those're not any civilians but seemed to be children. Which as I said, might reflect was the spread of the population there might reflect the fact that, you know, people shooting at kids is a, as a means of terrifying people. So, my, what I witnessed about the shelling's were vey impressionistic I'm afraid. We didn't go around collecting sort of bits and things that been fallen...

FL1: No.

PW: ... to see what they were and, ehm. I mean it takes a lot to flatten a city, I've been in that outskirts of Grozny in the second Chechnyan war. You really got to shell a place for months constantly to really flatten in. So what sounds like a terrifying constant (inaudible) you go out on the streets and there's maybe like a hole down at the end of the building.

FL1: Mm.

PW: That's all you can see.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, we saw a few big holes.

FL1: Yeah, yeah. So what sort of, was there artillery or was there, what sort of, do you know what sort of ammunition or anything would sort of...

PW: I cannot tell you for certain I felt the rumbling and it felt like, we all felt that, so 155, so big gun, there's a long way of, 155 millimeters perhaps. There was also a lot of mortar fire. That sounds distinctive when it comes in. And we interviewed defectors after the fact, I can send you the transcript or read you the transcript now. Those interviews we talked about, the kind of artillery they were using.

FL1: So, at that time were there more checkpoints from the regime or had it, what sort of, could you see anything, any changes from the first in November?

PW: I mean we, we entered through this tunnel.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: And we went right under it. And we wouldn't, we didn't go to rebel front line positions which from my position would be just be a room on the top of some deserted building...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... to go and look. So we didn't see, our impression was that it was a ring of steel because that's what everybody was telling us.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I mean, again a ring of steel would be series of isolated positions. I can't give you (inaudible) on that.
(00:50:21)

FL1: No. Do you know, did they describe what sort of, eh, were they just small groups or were they armed vehicles at this...

PW: There were certainly tanks...

FL1: ... tanks.

PW: ... because, eh, we used hand held phone footage, some people came in and gave us phone footage of tanks, sort of doing this sort of probing in to Baba Amr.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And we heard a heavy machine gun, it sounded like a chain gun on top of a tank.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Just going constantly one morning all morning.

FL1: Mm.

PW: This is not very precise information, I'm sorry.

FL1: No it's fine. I just want to have your experience on it so it's fine. Har du något du kommer på där? Lena?

FL2: Nej.

FL1: Nej.

(silence)

FL1: So, the buildings that you, that you saw the second time you were there were there differences in the, were there more damaged the second time or, like and so how was it then?

PW: So, the first trip was November when there wasn't any shelling...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... and then the second trip was February when the shelling started. And then we left sort of a week into the shelling.

FL1: Mm.

PW: There was some damage evident, as I said it takes months of months of constant...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... you know, fire.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: So what will be a very intense brash, you know, one shell when it hits can take out a lot of people. May not scar the physical landscape as much you might think.

FL1: Mm. Yeah, yeah, I understand. And, so when you, when you were going in, or when you were going out did you meet civilians that were injured or did you talk to them and to see how, what did they describe?

PW: I mean the, you know the, in the hospitals obviously there was a constant flow of injured. As a young man brought in with his foot blown off...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... with a mortar, and his mother was screaming. The boy with his jaw ripped off. Eh, I mean lots of, lots of different injuries, some of the shrapnel wounds, some of them bullet

wounds, high velocity bullets. So, coming out, you'd see injured, got it around the place. And Paul Conroy, who I told you about...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... his dreadful journey out...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... where the tunnel would partly collapsed and they were dragging people with, you know, with their bones exposed, injuries like, with this rough concrete.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, we, we were brought out, we were told we're going to be brought out with a bunch of wounded going out but the feeling was that there was too much sniper activity cause you had to cross open ground to get to the tunnel. We did at night and luckily nothing to bad happened. We were told were going to be taken out with injured but I don't recall any injured, I think it was just us...

FL1: Ja, okay.

PW: ... and some rebels and they sort of took us to the mouth of the tunnels and off you go. And then about the time we got to the end of the tunnel the lines had changes a bit, we were in an area that was supposedly now quite heavy with regime patrols so we waited there quite intense few hours...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... for some rebels to come pick us up and get us out. So, you would see coming out in to Lebanon people trying to get their wounded in to Lebanon. I mean sometimes it would be on a motorbike...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... and there'd be two guys holding up the wounded guy in the middle of the motorbike.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Often they seem to be military casualties to me. Certainly, in May we saw a lot of wounded rebels, some of who were dying cause they were just being left in this orchard that was the last bit before you cross into Lebanon.

FL1: Mm.

PW: They couldn't get across. There was a room full of people, about 30 people all injured. But they all seemed to be fighters to me.

FL1: Okay.

PW: You know, cause most of the resources in these things go to fighters, the food, the weapon.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Civilians tend to be last in the queue for any help.

FL1: Yeah.

FL2: (inaudible) heard. Had you, how many do you think, civilian were in this area at the time? Not just rebels I think (inaudible). (inaudible)
(00:54:27)

PW: It was a small area.

FL2: Yes.

PW: I, I mean certainly tens of thousands, whether they're going to the hundreds, possibly, I doubt it. It's a very small area. Tens of thousands of people.

FL2: Okay.

PW: You know after they all run away, this is Syria all over, they, the regime basically said to us supporters go and loot the houses, you can take what you want.

FL2: Mm.

PW: There's sort of markets, popping up. I didn't see this but people told me about the markets popping up for looted stuff.

FL2: Mm.

(silence)

FL1: So... So, is it correct that, do I understand it correctly that the media center was something that deliberately targeted to, that was something that you think were coming from higher up?

PW: We wouldn't stand the media center knowing or me assuming that it would probably be targeted, that's why I took great pains to broadcast from down the road...

FL1: Yeah, yeah.

PW: ... with our satellite dish. And then what we heard subsequently was that an informer had come out and given the precise location to a general.

FL1: Mm.

PW: That was why Marie was killed and Paul will tell you. Paul's an ex artillery man at the British army.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: They were bracketing when the shots were narrowing in.

FL1: Mm.

PW: That's something I don't have first hand knowledge of but I, I've heard from sources who'd

spoken to sources.

FL1: Mm.

PW: It was just something I knew in my gut. That, that, you know, and then was corroborated by multiple sources telling me and the intelligence people, rebels, lawyers who'd spoken to defectors that the regime put a high priority on, on stopping foreign journalists getting in and that meant capture or killing you.

FL1: Alright.

PW: Calling it media center, it was Abu Hanin's apartment...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... on the third floor of an anonymous working tower block.

FL1: Yeah. I saw the films from, so yeah.

PW: Yeah.

FL1: It looked basic.

PW: Yeah.

FL1: So you went back again in March 2012.

PW: Yeah.

FL1: So what was the difference from, from February?

PW: So, I remember it's bitterly cold. We drove up to the mountains in Lebanon and there was thick snow on the ground. And snow everywhere and on the Syrian side we stayed in various houses and got taken to the outskirts of Baba Amr because Baba Amr had fallen. And caught just the tail end of an excess of people we got a couple of hundred people walking through the night. They crossed what they call the (inaudible) of Baba Amr, so we hadn't come on roads, they just gone...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... gone across the fields. Just a lot of people very chocked and disorientated. Mostly women and children. Couldn't see any, very few men. And the explanation was the men had been snatched up.

FL1: Mm.

F

PW: Could also be that the men had been fighting so you decided to leave separately. I interviewed I think the last rebels to escape it was a group of about a dozen of them they made a run for it. So, I don't know I think the regime probably was arresting people who mostly could...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... we couldn't get in to Baba Amr of course the regime.

FL1: No.

PW: The regime hade it. We saw some camera footage which shared a lot of shell damage, snow falling. Regime claiming it was giving bread to people. As far as I could see everybody had fled.

FL1: Mm.

PW: No reason to stay behind. Jedy, the citizen journalist, I don't know why he stayed behind. Rather foolish to stay behind. He said he dug a hole in his back garden and buried himself in it. Obviously that even worked because they arrested him.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And he called us from inside saying that the army were going door to door kicking in doors. Which is what you'd expect. He was furious with the rebels, he said they should've made a stand here.

FL1: Mm.

PW: The (inaudible) was watching, it was a chance to turn, he was quite right because the only way the Syrian rebels were going to win was with international support.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, sacrificing one place to get that international support might have made sense.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Instead the rebels runaway.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Jedy was very angry and bitter by that. We spent about a week there, slightly worried that we'd get, you know, who knows, the situation is very fluid. That we get picked up by the army. And I refused to run any of these atrocity reports unless we got witness to it.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, on the morning we were leaving somebody came and said; Oh, you know there's this family, you know about a quarter of an hour's drive away, they say that they saw something. It seemed all very convenient to med they'd produced a family who'd witnessed something when we'd been trying all week. But we went to see them. Their testimony was utterly pre, all to meet at this place called Jobar.

FL1: Mm.

PW: It was a father and, eh, two of his daughters who'd, a hundred meters out been laying in the family orchard watching this stuff happen. Some of their family members were killed.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And throats was slit. Throat slitting was a big thing at that time.

FL1: Ja.

PW: Seen it on both sides.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, we filmed that. And then we came out, we're smuggled at the back of vegetable truck through checkpoints and we're back in Lebanon.

FL1: Alright. So, if you compare the advancement from the, from the regime or the army at this point. Had that advanced more so to speak taking the control of Baba Amr at this time?

PW: Yes, so Baba Amr was geographically quite small symbolically...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... quite big and important. So, they took that and then, I think three or four months later they got Qusayr. Qusayr was a divided city, it was kind of split between rebels and regime and then they used Hizballah as infantry and they took it back.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, we went back, we stayed in Qusayr for a while. Things had settled down again. It was quite static, I think everybody was quite tired after Baba Amr.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, yeah I mean, in those early days at the uprising it seemed inevitable that, ehm, Assad would fall cause every other place...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... this had happened. What I didn't appreciate cause it also, Syria didn't make sense as a country and this tiny group of Alawites were ruling over a country...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... that's 70, 80% Sunni.

FL1: Mm.

PW: What I didn't appreciate was when you added the Alawites and the Christians together but also the moderate Sunnis and people had been coopted by the regime or just didn't like the religious nutcases who associated with the rebels. He had enough of coalition, and just people who wanted a quiet life.

FL1: Mm, mm.

PW: Who's just quite happy to live with a bit of repressive regime...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... as long as they left them alone. But in those early days, like hardly a week went by

without some Sunni member of the government defecting. I think on that trip in, in, ehm early March we met this Syrian deputy minister of oil, quite important minister.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... on his way out as a Sunni, he was defecting.

FL1: Mm.

PW: He was going to Dubai. So, it kind of seemed that things were with the rebels side on this, Baba Amr was this kind of last desperate gasp.

FL1: Mm.

PW: But of course, enough Sunni stayed loyal to the regime that they managed to survive.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And now once again honored members of Arab League as of yesterday.

FL1: Mm. Yeah. Shall we take just a short break here?

FL2: Ja.

FL1: Klockan är 10:27.

Paus.

FL1: Då fortsätter vi förhöret och klockan är 10:49. Okay then we will continue. I was thinking, you said that the regime and the army sort of sieged the Baba Amr. Could you describe that and how was it affecting the civilians?

PW: Yes, so, the split before about an Alawite defector who said...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... he captain had given them an order, just look at the transcript of the interview. So actually, his first lieutenant, first lieutenant said this comes directly from the colonel. And they were using in their unit what they called (inaudible) 120-millimeter rockets. I think these were multiple rocket launches. He was with the Sunni who defected, the Sunni told me that when their unit left for Damascus they were not told where they were going. And he, the Sunni was quite chocked, he discovered it was Baba Amr because he had family there.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And he was absolutely, eh, torn because he was shelling his relatives.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So by be sieged according to the testimony of these two defectors, I just reminded myself exactly what they said. They were giving coordinates of things to attack. The coordinates came from drones and the coordinates went to some intelligence unit then their officer came and said; Shell this, this and this. And they were not told this is the press center, this is a hospital.

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... or this is rebel position that later they put it together, the, at least some of those orders were to shell what was clearly civilian infrastructure.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Otherwise they were told to quote, unquote shoot anything that moves.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Whether it is an ant, whether it's an animal or whether it is a person or civilian.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Don't let anything come out of Baba Amr. And certainly, the Sunni felt that he was being given orders to kill his relatives.

FL1: Mm.

PW: That's why he defected. Food is very short of Baba Amr. Rereading the transcripts of my interviews people were complaining no bread.

FL1: Mm.

PW: But I think that's entirely to be expected, you know, military siege, you want to starve the army, you can starve everybody.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Quite surprisingly the electricity was on most of the time.

FL1: Alright.

PW: Dropped out a lot have a lot and people, some people had generators but, eh, they didn't cut of the electricity and therefor the water still seemed to be going...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... perhaps it was technically difficult to cut off Baba Amr...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... and not areas of the city loyal to the regime. And while I did not see the besieged forces, I was in, on to risk myself and my crew.

FL1: Mm.

PW: We knew we had to leave by the tunnel and we'd not going to walk out. And we'd been in the hospital and people had be brought in with sniper wounds. They'd just walking down an empty street so...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... we're not about to, you know, walk to the, the limit of what rebels' notional control to have a look. It was clearly understood by everybody that if you are on an empty street you risk a sniper bullet. If there's a drone over heads you might find the place being shelled.

FL1: Mm.

PW: People knew that without having to be explained.

FL1: Ja okay. So, could the, could the civilians, were they sort of, eh, warned in advance before this was going to happen. Were they, did the regime tell them to leave on, could they leave if they wanted to?

PW: Ehm, I try to remember whether they are explicitly asked that. Or whether it was a fool, kind of foolish question. Maybe I would've answered it. I, the triggering event seem to be there was an UN security council resolution that the Russians vetoed which the rebels felt would've opened the way to more active help. There were still at the phase where they expected foreign intervention. Therefor journalists were kind of...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... quite valuable people. They looked at for example of Libya.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I do remember one of the first conversations we had with the rebels when we got in in the first week of February was a special forces ex-Syrian army special forces that we'd met in outskirts of Rastan in the November trip. He was already saying Don't bother with these people, they're waste of time, nobody is coming to help us. All we got is ourselves and God. And was feeling quite angry or he thought was a betrayal by the...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... international community. But most ordinary people still thought that foreigners are here, NATO will come.

FL1: Mm.

PW: They will save us anyway. This UN resolution, everybody knew that something was coming and had seen the military build-up. People were afraid of being arrested because there was this continual sort of drum-beat of...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... specially male's disappearing but also women. And there was a belief that women were being raped in military installations. I find that credible. You can never get women to talk about this but for instance many months later in Aleppo I interviewed a captured Shabiha I think he was actually Shabiha...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... or the rebels called everybody, He said that he'd been released from a rape prison sentence and been ordered to, to snatch women off the street and rape them. It been a demonstration.

FL1: Mm.

PW: His testimony was detailed enough to be credible.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, for all these reasons I don't think people were back start marching up to checkpoints...

FL1: Ja.

PW: ... and saying Hello could you let us out of here. This wasn't a discussion that people were having.

FL1: Mm. I understand. When you were in the area in February and in March, could you sort of hear the shelling, was it constant or was it, could you describe the shelling, the intensity of it during your period of time?

PW: The, I mean, the trip of 1st of March was when Baba Amr had fallen.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And everything was silent then. We were...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... going to the outskirts and interviewing people with a trusty story as refugees. In the first week of February started kind of the second morning we're there with a 6 am mortar barrage.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And I've got, I got tape from the time...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... probably somewhere. You can just, it was constant, if it wasn't the rumble of something heavy falling, it was motors whistling and popping, it was heavy chain machine gun. There was a lot of experience of conflict coverage among our little group of cameramen and security advisor...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... fixer and me. And we never experienced anything like it. I was in Bagdad in 2003 when the Americans came in, and you know, chock and all obviously first few nights of chock and all, was a constant barrage with though clearly very carefully targeted. This went on for days and days.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Morning to night. And sometimes in the middle of the nights. Hour after hour...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... there were something falling somewhere, we're never experienced anything like it.

FL1: Yeah, okay. Thank you. Mm. Was it possible to establish a, what sort of areas these were coming from or was it from all over the area? Was it, was it coming from...

PW: Baba Amr is on the outskirts of Homs.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: It was an area settled quite recently by who would describe themselves as Bedouin or former Bedouin.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, this was coming from, not from within the city which was regime held but...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... the farmland that was, you know, think about it like pie wedge.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: The farmland around Baba Amr which we had snuck through and then under in this tunnel.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, I never saw any gun positions.

FL1: No.

PW: Never got any close, not, we didn't get close enough. We could hear tanks, plural I think, rumbling around.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Heavy machine guns from tanks which was another reason why we left. We assumed it was going to fall very quickly...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... and we at the very least they arrested and they would disappear like...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... lost in (inaudible) and later disappeared in to the regime prisons.

FL1: Mm. Mm.

(silence)

FL1: This might be a difficult question but, I'll ask it anyway. Do you know anything regarding the, what sort of military units and who were involved with this or close by or?

PW: I mean we were told the fourth brigade of Maher Al-Assad...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... eh, there were a lot of difference security agencies, I think 17 different security agencies in the Syrian military...

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, people were always very fearful of air force intelligence. But whether air force intelligence was this kind of boogieman.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Or sort of.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Units like Shabiha, again I think it was in February, that was in the February trip with Qusayr or maybe it was November. The rebels had captured a Shabiha and we went to see him, he was, he'd been injured while he was captured, had been shot and his leg was bandaged up and they're holding him in this room. He was clearly just a corporal who'd been on (inaudible) duty or something.

FL1: Mm.

PW: They're calling him a Shabiha. And eventually they swapped him out for a prisoner, they didn't kill him.

FL1: Mm.

PW: So, there's a lot of talk about Shabiha of an air force intelligence were about the Maher Al-Assads forces.

FL1: Ja okay.

PW: The defectors I interviewed were from the Republican Guard. Who have, Maher Al-Assad again.

FL1: Mm.

PW: This is the young Sunni, he said they were given orders to leave from Damascus and not told where they were going. Then he recognized he was outside Baba Amr...

FL1: Ja okay.

PW: ... because of his family.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I think, you know, we had doubts about the loyalty of large part of the army, there were these defections the whole time.

FL1: Mm.

PW: In Baba Amr for defection both in November and in February, and people literally break out of barrage start running for it. And the people shot from behind and, you heard all this, you did not really see. There's one at night, there's when tracer (inaudible) backwards and forwards and we interviewed the guys at night, it's in the film. They just, literally ran away.

FL1: Alright.

PW: So, yeah, I can't tell you the order of battle of the Syrian army.

FL1: No, no I understand. But do you have any knowledge regarding the units that was positioned outside Baba Amr or do you know anything about that?

PW: I don't know if I got a unit name from these guys I spoke to and we'd just see, I don't think I did. I think they'd just call themselves the Republican Guard, we have Republican Guard defectors. Eh... Okay.

FL1: (Inaudible)

PW: So, Haweed (?) 22 years old, original from Baba Amr didn't realize he was coming back to attack his home. Eh, he had advisor rank in the army which is, I think, equivalent to like a corporal or something.

FL1: Mm.

PW: He was from 104 brigade of the Republican Guard.

FL1: Okay.

PW: And his normal job was to protect palaces in Damascus.

FL1: Ja, right.

PW: Standing outside with a Kalashnikov I imagine.

FL1: Okay. Okay.

PW: So, I may be able to find more unit names if I can through my interviews. And I think this guy got no reason to make up that unit, I mean he's...

FL1: No, it's probably... correct. Okay. And we move forward to Ar Rastan. You have already told us a little bit about that but can you how was it when you, can you describe Ar Rastan when you were there?

PW: I think we went to Rastan just because we wanted to go somewhere different. It was quite difficult to get in to, it took about a week of approaching through a kind of network of smugglers' routs across the country.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And also, there's a patchwork of villages, you know Christian village here, Alawite village there, Sunni village there.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And Christian and Alawite villages were going to be loyal to the regime. So, we snuck in to Rastan at night. It was in a pretty bad way. No electricity, everything was in darkness.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Intermitting water. Not constant shell fire but occasionally shell fire would erupt. Even though the rebels said they held Rastan and we were in the center of Rastan there seemed to be an army base in Rastan as well. One day we went out with some rebels who thought it be a good idea to attack a tank with some Kalashnikovs so they sort of ran around a bit pointlessly firing on this tank.

FL1: Mm.

PW: The tank eventually sort of swung is heavy gun around.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: We all run away. I think that might be part of the film.

FL1: Mm.

PW: We filmed in the hospitals usual and the only casualties we saw were civilians and there was a young girl who'd been injured.

FL1: Mm, mm.

PW: Looked like a bullet wound. We're in the press center when shells started falling around it. It felt like the press center was targeted just cause everything seemed to be quite close. And we got some of the impacts on camera.

FL1: Okay.

PW: We (inaudible) the fridge to get a coke out. Rumble (inaudible)

FL1: Alright.

PW: And then we sort of left the press center, we didn't think it was safe. But it was quite a static war I think it was just...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... you know the rebels did a bit of sniping, the regime did a bit of shelling.

FL1: So, so when you were there in what way had the fighting have taken place before you arrived, was if, from what I've understand there's more the regime had, eh, some sort of, they had more, if you compare I to Baba Amr, they at least had some more resistance in, in Ar Rastan when you were there or?

PW: It didn't seem to be very big forces.

FL1: Mm.

PW: It was quite hard to get a sense of the geography of the city we were brought in at night. We weren't really around much in the day.

FL1: Mm.

PW: The rebels said they had Rastan but clearly, they didn't have none of it.

FL1: Okay.

PW: That was quite common, it was same in Qusayr. I think it was a divided city.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Nobody wanted to cause too much trouble for the other sort of, eh, part of it. Rastan, all the rebels I met had been defectors, including, I met a colonel...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... a full colonel. Possibly a brigadier. The rebels were trying to get organized at that point and there was a sort of FSA army council.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And ostensibly Rastan was part of that, it was no longer kind of mafia guys you know. Or demonstrators who'd picked up guns, it was, it seemed to be a large part of what had been Syrian army running it.

FL1: Alright.

PW: We weren't seeing, I didn't see any Jihadis around there and they way that we saw them up in Aleppo. And they were quite...

FL1: Mm

PW: ... dangerous to be around. And we actually interviewed Nusra up in Aleppo when they're Al-Qaida. But we didn't see that in Rastan. They seemed quite mainstream...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... not very Islamized.

FL1: Okay. So, had there been any shelling in the area from the army and regime, was it...

PW: Yeah, when...

FL1: ... if you compare it...

PW: ... you, no, you sort of be sleeping and the city be totally dark and for no reason that you can see there hadn't been any outgoing for, just get the rumble of shells for...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... it lasted a few minutes and then it would stop. There weren't that, it didn't seem to be that many civilians, people had fled. I don't know why people stay in war zones. I remember

interviewing some guy, he was right on the front line and he's got his wife and kid in the house still and while we're interviewing him a bullet came out, but why, why are you still here?

FL1: Mm. Mm.

PW: Just

FL1: Yeah.

PW: He had always been there. Couldn't really imagine sort of leaving...

FL1: No.

PW: ... so he hadn't left. Even there were a stupid place to remain.

FL1: Yeah. So, and the rebel forces that were in the area how were they armed? Were they, did they have any, have any...

PW: I mean it was all Kalashnikovs with a few sheller launch rocket propelled grenades.

FL1: Mm.

PW: But again, they were chasing this tank around, I think they had an RPG but they didn't fire it cause it was too valuable.

FL1: Mm.

PW: (Inaudible) a pointless military exercise. Again, I kind of wondered if it's being done for our benefits. Slightly worried that it might've been...

PW: I remember Free Syrian Army Council was a very distant, very ineffective body...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... but I think there were 14 members of it. The senior officer in Rastan was (inaudible) a member of it. He was telling us that he wanted to, still wanted the west to come in and help. And I was asking him about money coming in from the Saudis and the Qatari.

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... officially but un-officially it sustained you know Jihadis. Basically, he's involved, you know we have to take money from the devil if that's what we have to do but...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... we don't want to. We, if needs must. Yeah.

FL1: And the attacks in Al Rastan how did they collect, how did they point out the targets what the military...

PW: I mean...

FL1: ... did they have any sort of...

PW: I got the impression cause we ran out of motorcycles and sometimes you see an army checkpoint and it was like 150 meters down the road. It was all quite close. So, I don't think anybody on either side was doing much kind of operational planning.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I think it's just the occasional potshots.

FL1: Mm.

PW: Yeah. That was, it was not organized warfare. I think both sides were kind of tired and, but at some point Rastan was taken but I don't know, it was after we left.

FL1: Okay. So, do I understand you correctly, not even the regime did any sort of, the targets were randomly or was it...

PW: Well as I say, I couldn't see any reason for this...

FL1: Nej.

PW: ... thing in the middle of the night. But, you know, perhaps they had their reasons...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... perhaps they had informants said; Oh you know this rebel command you'd been trying to get for ages is staying in this house.

FL1: Mm.

PW: And although you would probably kill civilians, I don't think that's okay under the law of war.

FL1: Mm.

PW: That's what the Americans did invading Bagdad.

FL1: Mm.

PW: If they thought it was a target...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... they would tolerate up to 30 civilian casualties.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I mean that was that (inaudible).

PW. So, I guess it was very low-level skirmishing.

FL1: Alright. And the infrastructure when you came to Al Rastan, what did it look like? Had it been, eh, then was also this place under siege or?

PW: I mean, Rastan were we were, and you might see a bit of that on the film with the tank chasing us around. It was quite extensive artillery damage...

FL1: Oh yeah.

PW: ... in parts. Which I imagine is, show where the frontline would've be...

FL1: Yeah.

PW: ... when it was active fighting. The rebel showed us you know a fan video of a big attack they allegedly done sort of six weeks earlier...

FL1: Okay.

PW: ... on an army base. It seemed to be a lot of them. So, a very standard thing, people sort of rushing forward, without using cover and then running away.

FL1: Okay.

PW: Yeah. So there's a guy called colonel Qassem Saadedin who's the officer who hosted us in Rastan. Who was on the supreme military, the supreme military council as they called it, The Free Syrian Army. And he claims to command several dozen brigades. Groups under the formation they called the Free Men of Syria. You know, a brigade in the British army would be 2,5 thousand men. A brigade in the Free Syrian Army...

FL1: Yeah I know

PW: ... could be 25 men. I mean they'd several dozen brigades. And he told me in the few years men were fighting for a secular democracy so they knew all that right things to say. They had drawn up a human right charted the governor behavior. And had large ways that, this is like an interview in May 2012, and govern large sways of the country. From Idlib to northern Hamra. You know as ISIS got stronger and Nusra got stronger this guy just disappeared.

FL1: Mm.

PW: We'd never heard from him again. I imagine he went to live in Turkey or something. Yeah. So, our trip in Rastan from start to finish was basically hosted by this colonel and his unit.

FL1: Alright.

PW: Then we got stuck on the way out for several weeks on the border.

(silence)

FL1: So, our investigation is in between the late 2011 until July 2012. Did you go back anywhere after Al Rastan?

PW: Eh, May, June, I think possibly we didn't we went to Aleppo but it wasn't until August, September.

FL1: Ja, okay.

PW: And there would, Aleppo is out of your operational area. Aleppo was very different war with bigger forces obviously, it's a big city.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: Ehm...

FL2: Mm.

FL1: Jag tror faktiskt jag har...

FL2: Nej jag har...

FL1: ... frågat allt.

FL2: Ja.

FL1: I think we have covered all the, you have mentioned the, everything that we been thinking about. I don't think we have any more questions.

PW: Now that I know a little bit of what you're asking, if I get anything out of the notes I can send it on to you.

FL1: Yes. Please, thank you. Is there anything you want to tell us that we have forgotten to ask you or anything?

PW: I don't think so. My evidence about the regime such as ISIS is impressionistic because they were always a, the threat at a distance.

FL1: Yeah.

PW: I can tell you lots of bad stuff the rebels did.

FL1: Yeah.

FL2: Mm.

FL1: (short laugh) We are of course interested in that as well but as soon as we have someone that we, a suspect on that side we also investigate that of course.

PW: Yeah, I suspect it's a lot of people in Europe and Sweden. But it's low level stuff it's, they didn't have the (inaudible) to do much. I mean the young guy, this is how the war turned, all the two commanders in Qusayr was this young handsome guy that all the girl wanted to marry. And Qusayr was like a mixed Christian, Sunni town. And I remember sitting with this FSA commander and his men when somebody came in to say somebody is killing Christians. Basically, they started ethnically cleansing the Christians.

FL1: Mm.

PW: I'll interviewed some of the Christians after they fled to Lebanon. So, this guy sent out his men to protect the Christians in the town.

FL1: Alright.

PW: Fast forward a couple of years later. And I know this because the British army spent about 25 million dollars securing the Lebanese border. I went up to see what they were doing and there was a Lebanese Christian village just over the Syrian border that'd been attacked by ISIS. And the ISIS commander was this young, this you guy who...

FL1: Ah okay.

PW: ... I'd met a couple of years earlier. And what had happened in two intermediate years was that western support had dried up and Al-Qaida came with literally a bag of money...

FL1: Mm.

PW: ... and said swear a allegiance to Al-Qaida who then wasn't ISIS, it shortly became. And you can have this money and you know he got very bitter during the war and the he end up attacking a Christian village in Lebanon.

FL1: Mm.

PW: That was the ark of the war.

FL1: Okay.

FL2: Mm.

PW: Not really the, your investigation.

FL1: No. Could be. In the future. Okay then we will finish and the time is 11:13.

A hard slog with low-life smugglers is a small price for avoiding Syrian forces. By Paul Wood



In Syria, Facing Danger From All Sides

By Paul Wood

A dozen smugglers were squatting next to their mules. We should have left hours earlier. The four of us in the BBC team worried that if we didn't go soon it would be dawn before we reached Lebanon. A Syrian patrol might spot us on the bare hillside. We were on the edge of the mountains that run along Syria's border with Lebanon, falling away into the Bekaa Valley, and not all that far from the official border crossing on the Damascus-Beirut highway. There had been a gunfight in the next village, they told us, a battle for control of the smuggling routes (and for the big profits from selling weapons to the rebels). Three men had been killed. The mules' owner was on the winning side. But he'd be late.



When he did arrive, we set off up a steep hill, the rocky ground luminous white under the full moon. Some of the mules were loaded with rocket-propelled grenades and a heavy machine gun for a village on the way. The others, we rode. The smugglers were “the scum of the earth,” said one of those in our group. It was Ramadan, but they weren’t fasting. They swore. When we parted ways 12 hours later, one got very aggressive as we checked the mules’ panniers for anything left behind. “Back off or I shoot,” he snarled from atop a black horse. “F— you and f— your sister.” He had stolen a flak jacket, we discovered later.

We were using this criminal gang because rebel fighters were unable to take us back the way we had come, through the town of Zabadani. There was too much shelling. We could hear it in the distance as the sun came up, volleys of far off thunder from the tanks and artillery pieces we had seen ringing the town two weeks earlier. That crossing, into Syria, hadn’t been easy, either. It was too steep for mules so we walked for three nights, legs aching, lungs burning, stopping to rest before we edged around Syrian army posts as quietly as we could in the dark.

That journey was in August 2012, one of a half-dozen covert trips across the border that we made for the BBC over the past year. The crew consisted of a cameraman, Fred Scott; a medic, Kevin Sweeney; our translator, Ghassan (who was not using his real name); and me. We did this to be able to cover the insurgency from the inside. But, mostly, we had to sneak in because the regime was not granting visas. Despite the government’s promise to the United Nations that foreign reporters would be given access, visas were often impossible to obtain. A hard slog with low-life smugglers was a small price for avoiding the Syrian security forces. “Seven years for crossing the border illegally. Another 10 for having a sat phone,” an activist warned when we were setting up our first trip, in November 2011. “Do you really want to do this?”

The regime’s grip was still strong everywhere on those first covert trips in 2011. We’d spend days or even weeks hiding out in safe houses. Activists and Free Syrian Army fighters risked their lives to look after us. Getting caught was a real risk (<http://www.cpj.org/2012/08/in-syria-wave-of-deadly-attacks-against-journalist.php>). There was always a government checkpoint nearby.

Informers, we were warned, were everywhere. An activist told me that a Lebanese reporter for an international news agency had been arrested and tortured for a month with electric shocks. A Western journalist was detained and badly beaten, her captors urinating on her as she lay on the cell floor, he said. As anyone reporting from Syria will tell you, the activists sometimes exaggerate, but such stories seemed alarmingly plausible. They were in line with what we'd heard about others who had run into trouble in Syria. The uprising was still quite new and it seemed the authorities were trying to scoop up activists' networks by arresting (<http://www.cpj.org/2012/05/syria-detains-journalists-releases-others.php>) journalists. The reporters who were detained for meeting with opponents of the regime were in the country legally. At the very least, we thought, we would be jailed as spies if caught. Our interpreter expected he would be killed (<http://www.cpj.org/security/2012/05/dont-get-your-sources-in-syria-killed.php>) .

The official media blamed Syria's troubles on "foreign infiltrators" and "agents of Israel." In Homs last February, my host came in to say he had seen me on Dounia, a private channel known for putting out pro-regime propaganda even more virulent than that of state television. He told me that Dounia showed one of my pieces on camera while the anchor accused me of using certain words and gestures to send coded messages to the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad. I found this too ridiculous to believe, even for Dounia. Why wouldn't I just phone Mossad? But other Syrians told me later that they had seen the broadcast, too.

Later, as Syria became more a civil war and less an uprising, there was an identifiable front line and rebel-held territory. Still, we got the same warning from activists as at the beginning: It's more dangerous to go out with a camera, they said, than with a Kalashnikov. Mika Yamamoto (<http://www.cpj.org/killed/2012/mika-yamamoto.php>) , an experienced Japanese correspondent, was shot dead (<http://www.cpj.org/2012/08/japanese-reporter-killed-two-missing-in-syria.php>) in Aleppo in August. The commander of the Free Syrian Army unit with which Yamamoto was traveling told me he had no doubt she was killed deliberately. The FSA said a captured government sniper admitted carrying out orders to target foreign reporters. It is hard to know if that is true, but Syria's citizen journalists believe the regime is out to get them—and foreign journalists, too.

The highest-profile media casualty was Marie Colvin (<http://www.cpj.org/killed/2012/marie-colvin.php>) , one of the best and bravest correspondents of her generation. An American working for the U.K.'s *Sunday Times*, she went to the Baba Amr district in Homs when it came under bombardment in February. She died (<http://www.cpj.org/2012/02/cpj-condemns-killings-of-3-journalists-in-besieged.php>) , along with the French photographer Rémi Ochlik (<http://www.cpj.org/killed/2012/remi-ochlik.php>) , as shells or rockets hit a makeshift media center in Baba Amr. We had stayed there only the week before. It was really just an activist's apartment with a generator, hot water, and Internet. Between the members of the BBC team, we had been to two dozen wars, but the shelling there was the worst we had ever seen. Government tanks were already at the edges of Baba Amr. After only four days, we decided to leave.

Marie came to see me before she went in. She thought the regime might do anything to prevent stories and pictures from getting out that could make foreign intervention more likely. Although citizen journalists sent out shaky pictures of the shelling day after day, the presence of international correspondents did focus attention on Baba Amr. Marie was all over the BBC, CNN, and Sky with a gut-wrenching account of a baby that had been hit by shrapnel dying in an ill-equipped field clinic. "The doctor said 'I can't do anything,'" she told the BBC. "His little tummy just

kept heaving until he died." She was killed less than 24 hours later. If the regime was trying to suppress coverage of Baba Amr before its ground offensive, it failed. An editor in London stated a fact when he said of Marie's death: "This has put rocket boosters under the story."

Did the regime deliberately attack the media center? After Baba Amr's fall, I visited Marie's photographer, Paul Conroy (<http://www.cpj.org/2012/02/british-journalist-evacuated-from-syria.php>), who was recovering in a London hospital with a fist-sized hole in his thigh. He had been a soldier in the British Royal Artillery before he became a journalist and thought that Katyusha rockets were carefully aimed at them. "There were two [impacts] happening and they appeared to be bracketed in on our location," he said. "They got a fix and then four [more] hit. As an artilleryman, I think that was a good day's work for a well-trained team. Nothing smacked of randomness." He told me how, using an Ethernet cable as a makeshift tourniquet for his leg, he stumbled out through thick black smoke and tripped over a body half buried in the rubble. It was Marie.

There were five days of agonizing uncertainty over whether he would be able to leave, along with other foreign journalists caught in the attack. One of the leaders of the Farouq Brigade, the main FSA group in Homs, was accused of keeping the journalists there so the world would not ignore Baba Amr's fate. The commander, Abu Jasim, denied it when I met him later, saying his men had died trying to get the journalists out of Homs. Still, such was the mistrust and recrimination amid Baba Amr's fall that another group of FSA fighters we were staying with nearby insisted on escorting us in case we were kidnapped by the Farouq Brigade.

Paul Conroy did not believe the regime's promises of safe passage and so, despite his grave wounds, he chose to leave using the tunnel that was Baba Amr's only, tenuous link to the outside world. He was being taken through by an FSA fighter when they found a man carrying a 10-year-old boy whose legs had been stripped of their flesh by an explosion. A shell had collapsed the tunnel at one point. There was just a small crawl space at the top of a pile of rubble. Paul helped the boy pull himself through the hole, bare bone scraping across jagged concrete. Paul got out, but those following had to turn back when the tunnel was attacked. They included the Spanish correspondent Javier Espinosa (<http://www.cpj.org/tags/javier-espinosa>), the French photographer William Daniels (<http://www.cpj.org/tags/william-daniels>), and the French writer Edith Bouvier (<http://www.cpj.org/tags/edith-bouvier>), who, with a shattered femur, was taped to a stretcher. All of the foreign journalists did eventually escape (<http://www.cpj.org/2012/02/cpj-calls-on-syrian-authorities-to-halt-ongoing-vi.php>) Baba Amr. Remaining behind were the local reporters who had been there throughout 25 days of shelling.

Among them was "Jeddi" ("grandfather" in Arabic, though he was only 34). Jeddi had been a vegetable seller before taking up a camera in the revolution. Often brave to the point of recklessness, he stayed as the FSA pulled out—to spare Baba Amr further bombardment, the rebels said. Most of the activist-reporters in Baba Amr I spoke to thought the fighters had made a mistake. One told me by phone: "The FSA are sitting in Qusayr, drinking tea and chit-chatting while Baba Amr is destroyed. They are cowards." Jeddi told me he had dug a hole in the garden behind his house. He would hide in it when the army arrived.

We heard nothing more of Jeddi, whose real name was Ali Othman, until a few weeks later when he was arrested in Aleppo. Other activists said he was tortured, giving up dozens of names. The following month, he appeared in a bizarre and disturbing special program on Dounia, giving a two-hour interview, or "confession" as the show's anchor described it. In the lurid title sequence, the camera moves down a darkened corridor as dramatic music blares out. A cell door swings open to reveal Jeddi sitting in the corner, head bowed, in a pool of blue blue light.

"Were gunmen among the demonstrators?" asked the interviewer.

"I didn't see any, only the security forces," Jeddi replied. "We heard shots and ran. A guy next to me got a bullet in the back of the head."

"Who do you think shot him?"

"The bullet was from behind. That's where the security were."

"Does that necessarily mean, in your opinion, that the security targeted him?"

"Maybe. Maybe not."

"So, nothing proving that?"

"No, no."

"Would the security shoot this guy when they want the citizens' welfare?"

"Of course not."

The pendulum swung back and forth. Jeddi did not denounce the revolution. Nor did he throw the questions back in the interviewer's face. It was a skilled performance and courageous, given the enormous pressure to say what was expected of him. The FSA was still furious. One commander called him a traitor. The reaction was unfair but explained by the fact that the FSA would previously have seen Jeddi as "their" journalist and the Baba Amr media center's function to put out propaganda for the armed uprising.

Some citizen journalists (<http://www.cpj.org/blog/2012/03/in-syria-killing-the-messenger-isnt-working.php>) saw themselves this way, too. Most had taken to reporting to help the revolution. Some were, literally, spokesmen for the FSA, and a few were armed themselves. People, including those in the FSA ranks, expected their media to be on their side. Many, probably most, of the Arabic TV stations or newspapers seen by the average Syrian were highly partisan. People reacted to them as such.

One afternoon in November 2011 in Baba Amr, we heard shouting outside in the street. A small crowd surrounded a car. A reporter and cameraman had just driven in. They were recognized as being from Lebanese Al-Manar TV. Al Manar is a Shia channel affiliated with Hezbollah, and therefore the Syrian regime; Baba Amr, stronghold of the uprising, was mostly Sunni, like the revolution itself. The reporter had been given the blessing of a Sunni religious sheik to come into Baba Amr. He had miscalculated.

The reporter—a Lebanese Shia, we learned later—took off at a sprint and reached the government checkpoint a couple of hundred yards away. His cameraman, a Syrian Sunni, was grabbed and hustled away. There was a debate over what to do with him. Our host, Abu Sufian, a leading figure in Baba Amr, had lost three members of his family in the uprising and was enraged. "I lost my brother. My brother. They killed my brother," he screamed.

Another man tried to calm him. "We can't harm him," he said. "That is not our religion."

The cameraman was taken to see the body of a 6-year-old boy shot dead as he played on his doorstep. Male relatives, tears running down their faces, were standing silently over the boy, laid out in the nearby mosque. Our hosts informed us that the cameraman was shocked and said he'd been wrong to support the regime. They asked if we would film his statement to show he hadn't been harmed. We refused. They tried to use the cameraman in a prisoner swap. That failed, but he was released that night in exchange for the return of two bodies, we were told. The next day we laughed as state television announced that two kidnapped journalists from Al-Manar had been freed in a "special forces raid" on Baba Amr.

I wondered if he would have been killed if we hadn't been there. The unspoken attitude of the fighters toward reporters was: You're either with us or against us. FSA officers would nod and agree when we told them we were not there to put out propaganda. But there was little real understanding of objective journalism. At the beginning, the rebels thought foreign reporters would bring Western planes to bomb the regime, as in Libya. By late 2012, they told us there's no point in helping journalists—they know they are on their own. But, though they are bitter about the outside world's failure to help, fighters and activists have continued to welcome us to their homes, feeding us, moving us around the checkpoints.

Syrian state TV accused the rebels of killing Gilles Jacquier (<http://www.cpj.org/killed/2012/gilles-jacquier.php>), the first Western correspondent (<http://www.cpj.org/2012/01/french-reporter-first-foreign-journalist-killed-in.php>) to die in Syria's civil war. He was hit by a mortar shell or rocket-propelled grenade in January 2012 while on a government-sponsored trip to Homs. He was in a neighborhood of Alawites and affluent Sunnis loyal to the regime. But two Swiss journalists with him thought it was a setup, a government attack made to look like the work of rebels. Jacquier's wife, Caroline Poiron, was also there, on assignment for *Paris Match*. "Everything was orchestrated—it was like theater," she told me. "Gilles and the 12 other journalists were targeted by the regime to show the world that there are terrorists in Syria." A French judge is now investigating.

Alex Thompson of Britain's Channel 4 made another accusation against the rebels. He believes that FSA fighters pointed his crew down a road where they knew the regime's forces would fire on any approaching vehicle. "The rebels deliberately set us up to be shot by the Syrian Army," he wrote on his blog. "Dead journos are bad for Damascus." Thompson said that the rebels he met didn't trust anyone coming from Damascus on an official visa. We traveled with activists or fighters from start to finish. But I never felt, as he did, that the rebels might get you killed just so they could blame it on the government. We still had problems: hostile questions about stories that, it turned out, the rebels had not actually seen, or about the actions of "BBC journalists" when we knew there had been no one from the BBC present.

An FSA spokesman in northern Lebanon, for example, began telling armed groups inside Syria that I was a spy. How did he know? A source inside the regime, he said. Had he spoken to this informer? No, others had. What had been said exactly? He wasn't sure. This might have been a lie by the regime to discredit us, we said. Had he thought of that? We began to suspect that this was fallout from emails written by Nir Rosen, the controversial American journalist and commentator. Among the thousands of emails uncovered when activists hacked into President Bashar al-Assad's private account in February 2012 were forwarded messages from Rosen. He had written to officials to inform them that reporters were sneaking into Homs. He did this to help his own visa

application. He named me. This was not helpful. We assumed the regime knew we had been in Homs—we had broadcast from there—but Assad was apparently not aware himself. We worried that if he were to take a personal interest, the security services would really start looking for us.

Rosen mounted a vigorous defense, writing articles and enlisting activists to deny that he was a regime stooge or a spy. I suspected that upon seeing my name and the word “spy” in the same article, the FSA spokesman and others had simply gotten things backward. Other journalists faced similar, flimsy accusations, often just the result of muddle on the part of the FSA. “What made you think he was a spy?” one reporter asked when a colleague came under suspicion. “He asked what weapons we were using,” a fighter replied. A French reporter found herself the subject of a tense discussion in Homs. “They thought you were a spy and were debating whether to execute you,” an activist told her when she got back to Lebanon.

All of this might be the product of 40 years of state-sponsored paranoia about outsiders, especially Westerners, and the fact that the Free Syrian Army is not one organization but a brand name for hundreds of local militias. The chaos has also allowed jihadist groups to join the fight, a dangerous development for Western journalists in Syria. The British photographer John Cantlie and a Dutch colleague, Jeroen Oerlemans, stumbled into a foreign jihadists’ camp in the north in July. There were 40 fighters, from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Chechnya, and Turkey and 10 to 15 speaking with southern English accents. The journalists were blindfolded, handcuffed, kicked around, and put in stress positions. Some of the worst treatment was from the Britons, Cantlie said. They were young, on their first jihad and “very excited” to have Western hostages. They were calling us “Christian filth,” and saying “die, kafir” (infidel), he recalls. A knife was sharpened, to behead them, they were told. They ran for their lives across the plain leading away from the camp. The jihadists sprayed automatic fire in their direction. Both were wounded and dragged back.

They were patched up and prepared for transfer to a “more serious” Al-Qaeda-affiliated group. Cantlie said they would have been killed if the FSA had not arrived to rescue them. “The implications are that the longer this goes on, the more complicated it will become,” he said. “And the longer this goes on, the nastier it will get, for all of us.” They were both lucky not to join the list of those who have died covering Syria’s civil war, some foreign correspondents, many more local reporters. Whether it is the presence of jihadist groups or the regime’s use of aerial bombing, new risks (<http://www.cpj.org/internet/2012/08/weak-cyber-protections-lead-to-institutional-perso.php>) are being added to those that journalists faced at the beginning. As Syria endures its second winter of war, the dangers (<http://www.cpj.org/internet/2012/08/weak-cyber-protections-lead-to-institutional-perso.php>) for journalists are multiplying.

Paul Wood is a BBC Middle East correspondent covering Syria. He has reported on more than a dozen conflicts, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Darfur, the Balkans, and Chechnya.

Other Languages



Bilaga - Skäligen misstänkt

Enhet
Nationella Operativa Avdelningen, Krigsbrott 1 UtrS NOA

Diariernr
5000-K622888-18

Skäligen misstänkt person
Hamo, Mohammed

Personnr
19581020-0559

Identifierad Kontrollsätt
Ja ID-kort bank

Kommentar
9752272696701164645



Personalia och dagsbotsuppgift

Utskriftsdatum
2023-11-20

Namn Hamo, Mohammed		Personnummer 19581020-0559	
Tilltalsnamn	Kallas för	Öknamn	Kön Man
Födelseförsamling	Födelselän	Födelseort utland Latakia	
Medborgarskap Syrien	Hemvistland Sverige	Telefonnr	
Postadress Hagalundsvägen 15 LGH 1103 681 34 Kristinehamn			
Folkbokföringsort Kristinehamn			
Föräldrars/Vårdnadshavares namn och adress (beträffande den som inte fyllt 20 år)			
Utbildning			
Yrke / Titel			
Arbetsgivare		Telefonnr	
Anställning (nuvarande och tidigare)			
Arbetsförhet och hälsotillstånd			
Kompletterande uppgifter			
Uppgiven inkomst	Bidrag	Hemmavarande barn under 18 år	
Försörjningsplikt		Skulder	
Förmögenhet			
Kontroll utförd			
Taxerad inkomst		Taxeringsår	
Taxeringskontroll utförd av		Datum - -	



Polisen

Underrättelse/Delgivning jml RB 23:18a

Enhet

Nationella Operativa Avdelningen, Krigsbrott 1 UtrS NOA

Ärende

Diariernr

5000-K622888-18

Underrättad av

Hector, Cecilia

Gärning

Folkrättsbrott (grovt) Fullbordat, OKÄND PLATS I SYRIEN null, mellan 2012-01-01 och 2012-07-20

Berörd person

Personnr

19581020-0559

Efternamn

Hamo

Förnamn

Mohammed

Underrättelsesätt

Muntlig underrättelse

Datum för muntlig underrättelse

2023-08-04

Yttrande senast (rådrum)

2023-11-15

Notering

Tagit del av ett exemplar via advokaten.

Resultat av slutunderrättelse

Ingen erinran

Information gällande erinran

Försvare

Namn

Kilman, Mari

Underrättelsesätt

Muntlig underrättelse

Datum för muntlig underrättelse

2023-08-04

Yttrande senast (rådrum)

2023-11-15

Notering

Tagit del av ett exemplar.

Resultat av slutunderrättelse

Ingen erinran

Information gällande erinran