

Date : 18 December 2019
Location : Alice Springs Police Station
Conversation Between : Detective Senior Constable Rinaldo COULSON & Mark SYKES
Also Present : Detective Sergeant Paul MORRISSEY
Conversation Commenced : 12:05pm
Conversation Concluded : 12:45pm

Transcript accuracy disclaimer:

I, Senior Constable Tanya HOLLIDAY, of the Northern Territory Police, have checked the accuracy of this transcript and it appears to be a true and correct copy of a recorded statutory declaration made by Mark SYKES in the presence of Rinaldo COULSON and Paul MORRISSEY.

COULSON: Ah, my name is Detective Senior Constable Rinaldo Coulson, registration number 3361. I'm attached to the Major Crime Squad, ah, Unit, Northern Territory Police, Ah, today's date is the 18th of December 2019 and the current time is 12:05pm by my watch. Um, this is a recorded statutory declaration of a witness who I know as, ah, Constable Mark Sykes. Um, the spelling of Sykes is S-Y-K-E-S and Mark is normal spelling. Um, Mark just for the purpose of the recording can you please state your full name?

SYKES: Mark SYKES.

COULSON: And your date of birth?

SYKES: [REDACTED].

COULSON: And your current rank?

SYKES: Ah, Probationary Constable.

COULSON: And your registration number?

SYKES: 30076.

COULSON: And what, ah, unit are you attached to?

SYKES: PG5.

COULSON: Okay. I also have a Detective Sergeant present, ah, please state your full details?

MORRISSEY: Yeah Detective Sergeant Paul Morrissey 3075, ah, currently attached to Operation Charwell.

COULSON: So Mark as we discussed earlier, myself and the Detective Sergeant, um, we're here to talk to you about an incident that I'm sure you're aware of, the incident that occurred on the 9th of November 2019.

SYKES: Yes.

COULSON: Involving the Police shooting at Yuendumu Community. Um, so that's what we're here to talk to you about and we're obtaining a statutory declaration in relation to that, ah, involvement of your versions of events relating to that date.

SYKES: Yep.

COULSON: Um, this isn't a directed interview. This is your choice to be here, um, if you don't understand any questions that I ask or Detective Sergeant asks you, just ask us to ask you again in a different way or say you don't understand okay?

SYKES: Yep no worries.

COULSON: Alright. So now you know what I wish to talk to you about I'm just gonna go through another part. So repeat after me, I Mark Sykes.

SYKES: I Mark Sykes.

COULSON: Solemnly and sincerely.

SYKES: Solemnly and sincerely.

COULSON: Declare the following to be true.

SYKES: Declare the following to be true.

COULSON: So think back to the 9th of November 2019 and all the involvement that you've had in relation to the incident.

SYKES: Yep.

COULSON: And even the lead up to it, and whatever you think is relevant and that you want to discuss, tell me everything about your involvement in relation to, ah, the Yuendumu shooting?

SYKES: Rightio. Um, so that afternoon I was – that day I was rostered on – on a PALI shift and they ended up putting me in the Watchhouse for the day. At the end of that Watchhouse shift, um, there was a rollover, a vehicle rollover down south of, um, Alice Springs. I attended that. Um, and on the way back in from that rollover when I got reception on my phone an overtime text came out and I think it was for maybe eight members to go to Yuendumu ah straight away on a plane. So I got that text message and I rang up, and I think was, yeah it was, um, Senior Sergeant Gall answered, I said, “Do you still need people to go to Yuendumu?” Yep. I said, “I’m happy to go, I’ll jump on a plane,” and he said, “No worries when you’re done at the hospital”, cause’ I had the driver of the rollover with me, I was escorting him back in an ambulance. He said “Come straight back to the station”. Um, so then I did a quick handover takeover at the hospital with that driver, um, and came back to the station, and then yeah found out that I was going to Yuendumu. Um, from there I think it was myself, um, Zac – Zac HUGHES, he’s an ACPO, Brad LYNCH and Terry ZHANG, we jumped in a vehicle, went out to the airport, um, and some other guys met us out there. I think it must have been KUMAR, Sun KIMG. I was gonna say there was another one but I can’t quite remember. Ah, we – we got out there and we were trying to obviously get onto the tarmac, um, we were talking with the RFDS guys out there, they were originally gonna send a plane up as well. And we were talking to, I think his name Gary - might be Gary, the pilot anyway, the the police pilot.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: There was some conversations sent some back and fro between RFDS and I guess management, you know, whether RFDS was going to attend.

COULSON: Mm-hm.

SYKES: We ended up, in the RFDS area, um, they obviously had concerns about safety and whether that, um, airstrip was going to be a secure location for them to land, do business and take off again. At some point it must have been decided that they weren't coming and we were only gonna take one plane, and that was our Police Airwing plane.

COULSON: Yep. Mhmm.

SYKES: Um, with the eight of us on there. Eight I'm pretty sure yeah. Ah, yep they gave us – us some more weapons on the, um, airstrip, two M4s. I carried one of those, Brad LYNCH would have carried the other one I'm pretty sure. Um, there wasn't a lot of information coming in about what we were about to, um, fly into I guess. You know, at that stage they were unsure whether we were gonna be able to land, how we were gonna get to the police station, those type of things. Um, ah I rang Jimmy KIRSTENFELDT on the ground there and said, "Hey – hey mate, we're about to take off, what's it like on the ground?" Ah, he's also an ex-military bloke. He started talking about, um, he started saying the situation, I said I don't want to know about the situation, I want to know what we're about to see when - when we land on the ground, cause' at that stage it didn't feel like we were getting a lot of information, and um, in my past I've been someone who seeks information when you need it in these sorts of situations. He basically said there's probably two hundred people out the front of the air – of the police station and that they're okay, they're angry but they're okay, they're not rioting.

Um, it was then – that was about the only conversation, I put that on speaker.

MORRISSEY: Okay.

SYKES: Yeah so – so there was two, there was twice, I rang and he gave me the exact information twice and the second time was in front of, ah, the group so that they could hear him say that there were these people out the front and I think it was coming over the fence, at this stage he wasn't that concerned that they were gonna come through the front door, he said that it might be a possibility and he believed that he'd be able to come and pick us up from the airport or someone would. So I know that's jumping the queue a little bit there but we weren't getting any information and I - I would like to know what would of happened when we landed. Ah, the next thing that happened was we flew in, landed, um, saw Zac on the airstrip, ah, I said to him, "Are you okay?" He said, "Yep, no worries." He jumped on the – he went one way we went the other to the vehicles, ah, order of march was, dunno who was in the front vehicle, we were in the second vehicle and there was an ambulance behind us and as we came through town ah, I remember the first rock came through my – I was sitting in the rear, um, driver side. First rock came through the window, I covered up. Second rock came through the window and hit me in the arm, and at that stage I, I, became concerned for the ambulance driver behind us knowing there was two female ambulance drivers, and I was trying to – trying to look in the in the side mirror and I couldn't see them. And I said to, I can't remember who was driving, I said, "You need to you need to slow down and wait for that third vehicle," they sort of didn't and I said "Oi pull it up, I said "We've got one vehicle left behind," ah, and at that moment I think I said, "Turn around, we'll go back and get them," and then they came flying around the corner at a rate of knots. That was like the last corner before going into the Yuendumu Police Station. When we got in there I realised that all

the cars had been rocked and in fact that, um, the ambo driver had taken a fairly good rock to the head at that time. She was good – they were real good birds. I think from – from there the first thing I – I did was, ah, I walked the perimeter of the police station and just, um, yeah looked for any weak points. There wasn't really that many people left out the front of the police station by the time we got there.

MORRISSEY: What time was that?

SYKES: Oh to be honest I wouldn't know. Um, but I know that we left here must have been 9ish, yeah it might have been 10. Yeah I couldn't tell you to be honest. Um, but it was whatever time it took to fly from here, getting vehicles and drive a kilometre and a half to there. Um, most of the people were up in the town and you know, we had to drive through them. That's when we got rocked. Did a walk, went inside, um, there was sort of a fair bit of kerfuffle going on in there. There must of still been a few people out the front because at one stage, you know, the window got banged and I saw, um, Julie is her name, maybe something Frost, Julie FROST, the Sergeant kind of went to look out, out of there and I just said, "Oi don't look out the window." I was just thinking that a rock had – it's a good plan to put a rock straight through the window. Ah, and then I – I ended up spending most of the night then out – back outside, um, we did duties like open the roller gate when TRG came in off the plane, and then I think they left and came back a few times. Um, that was probably it for that night. We worked through to the morning, ah, nothing really happened then until when I was at the crime scene about 10:45, I'd have to look in my notebook. It was probably about 10:45. Stood at the crime scene for a fair while, there was a big mob of people, um, I was told were conducting sorry business, which was on the other side of the – the oval there, um, and then at some – at one point they started walking from there in a big group towards where the basketball court was, um, I radioed up

that there was a big group of people on the move, they ended up in the basketball court and it must have been know, I don't know, um, is it Commander WURST or something like that, who whoever the Commander was out there at the time and I think, um, FROST were to have a public sort of yarn to them. And at some stage they gave us direction, hey we need two more members to come around here to help with TRG, and it was if they needed people to be ushered quickly from that venue back to the cars, we were to help with that. Me and HAIGY got in a vehicle, just went around to the basketball courts, um, nothing unfolded there. FROST, um, was basically marched, you know, to to leave town. TRG gave us, I think it was TRG, someone gave us a tasking to escort her 20km out of town. Ah, we went back to the police compound, by then she was in her civilian car with another police officer, I don't know who that was. We had a quick yarn, we drove them 20km out of town. That was all that happened for that day. I think we knocked off at six o'clock that night. Yeah that's first, first got stood down at six o'clock that night.

MORRISSEY: Yep.

SYKES: Back up and working I think by six or seven the next morning. Nothing really happened until, ah, that's right I think the Commissioner and GUNNER came in that day. I really had no involvement with that, we were more of a ready reaction force in case something was going to happen. We never left the compound but we were also stood to on, you know, on Comms and in gear ready to go. Nothing happened. They came back, had a bit of a talk, a coffee in the police station. That was sort of the rest of that day done and dusted and not, nothing else happened that day. Ah, and then the next day it was similar, uneventful until the smoking ceremony. Um, we all stood to. That went off without hitch, spent the rest of the afternoon cleaning the red handprints off the front of the police station with fire – fire

hose, portable firefighting unit. Ah, the next day at seven o'clock in the morning I got up and me and Brad LYNCH just drove home. Yeah that was I suppose, my time in Yuendumu.

COULSON: So in total how many days did you spend out at Yuendumu?

SYKES: Left here on Saturday night.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: So if we call Saturday a day.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday. Four days. I was there on the Wednesday but drove home.

COULSON: Drove home Wednesday morning?

SYKES: Correct.

COULSON: The?

SYKES: Was it 9th, ah, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th.

COULSON: Okay, so thanks for all that information Mark. So I'm going to go back –

SYKES: Yep.

COULSON: - now. Um, so when you were first alerted to going out to Yuendumu by text you said?

SYKES: Yes.

COULSON: And I know that there was limited information. Did any management or anyone else provide you a brief of what was going to occur out at Yuendumu?

SYKES: Ah, where abouts sorry?

COULSON: So when you first came in were you provided – when you first came in to work, so you got ready, came into work?

SYKES: Nah so I was already at work. I get what you, I know what you're saying though.

COULSON: Yes.

SYKES: So I was at the – did the handover takeover at the hospital cause' I was escorting a guy there.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Came into work. Ah, the brief was limited because they didn't know whether they had a clear airstrip to land on at the time.

COULSON: So what was the brief, tell me about the brief that was given to you?

SYKES: Ah, from all I can remember was we were going in there to assist, ah, and there was possibly two hundred people out the front of the police station and they were worried that they were gonna get overrun.

COULSON: Yep. Did they tell you what actually happened?

SYKES: Yes. Yes I was aware that –

COULSON: So tell me what they said?

SYKES: Ah –

COULSON: And who said it to you?

COULSON: I – I was aware that there had been a shooting. Ah, Shane KING had said to me at the hospital that, he was the one who was taking over that driver that I was escorting I would say, at the hospital. He said there's been a shooting. Um, Zac ROLFE'S shot someone.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Ah, that was my first idea that something had – first – it was the first time I knew something had happened. Then when we came back here, look I can't really remember to be honest, but yes, ah, you know there'd been a shooting, um, obviously there was a big riot out the front. We were going in to assist. I don't remember much more of a briefing than that.

COULSON: Okay. You – did you take any other resources or equipment?

SYKES: No.

COULSON: Before or when you went to board the flight?

SYKES: Nothing more than – nothing more than I'd take to a day's work.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: So I had my bag with me, which, ah, contained a plate for the vest that I was wearing.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: And ah, we were handed two – two long arms on the airstrip.

COULSON: Yep. So then you said you landed at Yuendumu?

SYKES: Yep.

COULSON: And you saw Zac?

SYKES: Yep.

COULSON: So tell me about conversations that you had with Zac?

SYKES: Ah, I walked over, pat him on the back, I said, "Are you alright?" And he said, "Yeah I'm fine." And that was about the extent of it. He walked towards the plane and I walked towards the vehicles.

COULSON: Okay. And then you went from the airport in convoy, three vehicles?

SYKES: Yep.

COULSON: The two nurses?

SYKES: Correct.

COULSON: Where – where did the two nurses come from?

SYKES: Well they were there in their own ambulance.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: And they were last in order of march in the convoy back to the compound.

COULSON: Sorry were they on the plane or were they –

SYKES: No.

COULSON: - already on the ground?

SYKES: No so they must of come from the police station, it was the first I'd seen them.

COULSON: Okay at the airstrip?

SYKES: Correct.

COULSON: Alright. So then you went to the, um, police station, Yuendumu Police Station?

SYKES: Yes.

COULSON: So tell me everything that you saw and did when you went to the Yuendumu Police Station and who you spoke to, and was a brief provided to you?

SYKES: Um, I saw – I saw the other IRT guys that were still there.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: So there was Jimmy, um, Tony HAWKINGS, E – EBERL – EBERL. I dunno how to pronounce his last name, but EBERL whoever it is.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Ah, the Dog Handler. I think his, um, they call him Donno.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Um, saw those guys and then people that I didn't know because they were obviously from Yuendumu Police Station that I've never had anything to do with, but there was a fair - fair few people there. Um, the first time we got a – an official briefing, you know, like this is what's going to happen, here's your tasks, was from the TRG guy, nah sorry that's that's not quite true. Terry ZHANG whipped things into shape and basically said, um, you guys are going to stay outside with the buzzer watching the front gate, opening it, closing it, those type of duties. But the first official everyone get in here, this is what's going on was from the TRG Sergeant. Um, he came up with a plan, we're gonna break you into two sections, Alpha, Bravo. I got out the note book and started taking notes but realised that, um, I don't know, that – well there was no need to sort of take too much notes, we never got broken into two – two teams about Alpha, Bravo and we weren't really designated tasking if that makes sense. We just kept doing the taskings we were already doing, which was a presence outside or within the compound, opening and shutting that gate.

COULSON: Yep okay. So um, did you talk to the other IRT members?

SYKES: Yep.

COULSON: And what were the conversations?

SYKES: I talked to, not so much to Tony and, um, E – EBERL or whatever, but I don't really know the that well or Donno, didn't

really talk to them but apart from, "Hey mate, is everything alright," that type of thing –

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: - I talked to Jimmy. Um, and the conversations were basically Jimmy said, "Everything's okay," you know, but at that stage I didn't – I didn't know what had happened.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Um, he said that everything was okay, ah, that they located old mate, and I guess you know, he had attacked them.

COULSON: Old mate is who sorry?

SYKES: Sorry, ████████ WALKER.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: ████████ WALKER. That they'd located him, um, Jimmy wasn't there I don't think. Jimmy wasn't – he was somewhere else. I did – he said that everything seemed to be okay.

COULSON: Okay.

SYKES: That was the conversation, which put me at ease obviously, cause' um, you know, you don't know I suppose until you know. But he said that nah, everything was okay. Um, he said that they had done CPR on the guy for quite some time.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: And at some stage, ah, he passed away.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Yeah. Um, I talked to Jimmy about the security of the place.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: And he said, you know, he was of the same opinion as me. Um, it was probably the back gate that was the weak point. Um, I went to the back gate and it was unlocked.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: I think they'd left it dummy locked for some reason, thinking that they were going to have to escape.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: That that could have been a choke point if they didn't have it unlocked.

COULSON: Okay. Did you see, um, ah, Mr WALKER?

SYKES: Yeah so yeah. Yep.

COULSON: So tell me about that?

SYKES: Okay so when I initially walked into the police station, first time going there. Ah, WALKER was dead in front of the very first, ah, cell.

COULSON: Mm-hm.

SYKES: In what you could call the walkway.

COULSON: Mm-hm.

SYKES: Yeah.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Ah, I think he might have had a pair of shorts on from memory and that was about it.

COULSON: Okay. Anything else you remember about that?

SYKES: Oh nothing significant, um, oh there was there was blood.

COULSON: Mm-hm.

SYKES: Um, I think there – there was some tape up.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: You know, a bit of ‘a don’t walk in here’ type thing. However that was pretty obvious that you wouldn’t go in there, but I think yeah there – there was some tape up.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Um –

COULSON: Were you aware of a crime scene being established?

SYKES: Yes I was yep, um, that was being established further, so that that was established inside and it was further being established whilst we were there.

COULSON: Okay.

SYKES: So at some stage someone came out and we taped off, or helped tape off, there’s a big antenna there, um, and there’s an area sort of if you were to look at where you drive the cars in undercover and now we’re looking at the Yuendumu Police Station in front of us, there’s an area area just here to the left. That area and around to the first bay of that carpark was taped off.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Um, and also the vehicle – there was a vehicle parked up next to the the rear door of the police station. Um, yeah which I could see blood in, that got taped off as well.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Yep, so I’m tipping that’s probably transport vehicle for – for WALKER, is that one there.

COULSON: Okay.

SYKES: Um.

COULSON: So what do you know about the body being conveyed back to Alice Springs?

SYKES: Not much but I think, um, I thought Sarah LUCHT and her partner who I forget the name of, were tasked to take him back at some stage in the early hours of that morning.

COULSON: Okay. And Sarah LUCHT and her partner?

SYKES: He's – he's a police officer yeah.

COULSON: And where are they from sorry?

SYKES: I – well I met them here but I think they're in one of the police stations out there.

COULSON: Yep. Do you know the name of the police station?

SYKES: I think they're from Papunya.

COULSON: Okay. And, um, were – did you have any involvement in moving the body or getting the body conveyed?

SYKES: Nah.

COULSON: Okay. So then you said the next day, um, 10:45 or around 10:45 you went to the crime scene?

SYKES: Correct.

COULSON: So tell me about that, that part?

SYKES: Ah, there was myself, Brad LYNCH and Zac HUGHES. We went to the crime scene.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Um, and I think HAIG, HAIG and King SUN were already there.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: We asked if there was a crime scene log.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Ah, they said there, at that stage there wasn't one. They – what was supposed to have been done had already been done, that we're just holding it. We went and stood on the basketball stadium end for – for probably oh, must have been an hour or more. Um, I gave some updates on things that I saw. Nothing of great significance.

COULSON: So – so what I'm getting at, did you do crime scene guard?

SYKES: Sure.

COULSON: How long for?

SYKES: It would have been a couple of hours until we got that call to, we need two more blokes around here now.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: We jumped in a vehicle and left, Me and HAIGY.

COULSON: Okay.

SYKES: I didn't write in my notepad what time I left, but I had written what time I got there.

COULSON: Okay. Um, did you know, um, ██████████ WALKER prior to attending -

SYKES: No.

COULSON: - Yuendumu? Had you had any involvements with ██████████ WALKER?

SYKES: No.

COULSON: Um, how do you know Zac?

SYKES: Ah, I met him in the Army.

COULSON: Yep. So tell me about that?

SYKES: Ah, we met probably back in maybe – maybe 2012. 2012 I think. Ah, we were in the same company initially um, up at 1RAR. Just prior to a deployment to Afghanistan in 2014 they merged, um, some soldiers from three platoon into two platoon, um, and he came over in from three platoon and into two platoon and into my section. Um, we then deployed overseas together in the same section, ah -

MORRISSEY: That was 2017 it was?

SYKES: Nah 2014.

MORRISSEY: 2014.

SYKES: So we were over there from mid-2014 back into January 2015.

MORRISSEY: Yep.

SYKES: Um, ah worked together and then yeah, kept in contact since. Yeah.

COULSON: Okay. Um, so the type of training that you guys do, um, in the Army -

SYKES: Mm-hm.

COULSON: - tell me about that, before deployment?

SYKES: Oh we do a – you do a series of lead up training.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: We were going over there to do a, um, I mean the the war had changed by the time we got there, it was a much more of a men – mentoring, um, type role. So you know, we were leading and assisting and training. The area we went to is a replica of what we have here in Australia Duntroon, where they, um, they have three different years of cadets, um, first year, second year, third year and after that they pop out as a Lieutenant in whatever core they

go to. Ours was modelled off, um, Sandhurst in England and the one now in Kabul Afghanistan is modelled off the Australian Duntroon, and the Sandhurst one over there. The reason I'm telling you that is because the reason we went was they sent over mentors, anything from Warrant Officers up to Colonels, um, to mentor Officers from the Afghan National Army to train their Officers. At – at that time blue on green, or you know, insider attack was the most, um, was the highest threat. They sent us over, we were the second, um, mob to go over as a part of what was protection element two. They were calling us guardian angels, essentially we were, um, a protection unit for those mentors that would go down into the officer training facility every day, and we would watch – we would we would be protection for those guys.

COULSON: So what type of training would you have to have done to be deployable to Afghanistan?

SYKES: Oh you could have done any sorts of training. I mean we had truck drivers, clerks, infantrymen, um, yeah basically had to be a soldier and you could go. The – the specific training leading up to that, um, was more crowd orientated.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Um, there was a bit of dialect training in there and there was more mobility of, I suppose you could say high value people.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: How did we get them in out of cars, what do we do if we get hit by an IRD. Um, you know, how do we, when you're a group of four, get out of a group of five hundred.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: It was that type of thing. Um, you know, we weren't trained, we were already trained soldiers. There wasn't something that

needed, you know you do specific training for the field that you're about to walk into. But that's just a continuation of what you know, your career or, I – I I couldn't answer it any better, I mean we didn't do anything, we're not specialists.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: We're not Special Forces. We're not those type of things, we're a regular infantry unit.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Um, you know, we didn't do anything outside of what our normal tactics would have already been.

COULSON: Yep okay. So besides having that conversation with Zac at the airstrip in Yuendumu.

SYKES: Mm-hm.

COULSON: Have you had any other conversations with Zac?

SYKES: Yes.

COULSON: So tell me about –

SYKES: Look I'm – yes so um, ah I had sent him – I sent him a message I think, which was probably either that – that night or the next day. Probably words to the effect of, you're the most important person at the moment mate, make sure you look after yourself. Um, I can't really remember when – I think I got something back like, I'm okay, you know, everything's all good. Um, I'd rang him, we'd had a conversation and I said you know, is – is everything okay back at work? You know, and he said the reports were I'm getting treated really well, in fact surprisingly well. Um, he was under the assumption, he said everything's going to be okay, I've talked to the Psych, they've cleared me to go back to work. I should be back at work I think – I can't remember the date but it seemed -

MORRISSEY: So what date was that conversation had?

SYKES: Oh I can't really remember, I mean I could have a look through my phone and see, but I reckon it was probably maybe on – maybe on the Sunday or the Monday. Probably more likely the Monday I'm I'm thinking.

MORRISSEY: Yep.

SYKES: But it – it was while I was still at Yuendumu.

MORRISSEY: Sorry?

SYKES: It was while I was still at Yuendumu. He'd been advised that everything was going okay and that he seemed to be under the impression that he'd been, um, cleared on justifi – justification and excuse. And that they were waiting on authorisation to be cleared.

MORRISSEY: Okay.

SYKES: He said he'd been cleared by the Psych to go back to work. Ah, you know, and he – he sounded fine, which fully set me at ease. Um, yeah no problems.

COULSON: Any other conversations?

SYKES: Well I mean regarding, I dunno, I've known this bloke for a long time.

COULSON: Regarding the Yuendumu incident, that's what –

SYKES: No. I mean not - not really. Um, I asked him was everything okay, insinuating is he okay and he said everything is fine. Um, he said the bloke attacked him, ah, had stabbed him in the shoulder, he said he had to go to the hospital for the injury. And I said how bad is it? and he said well it's not that, it's not that bad, but it's had to be treated – treated or whatever. I think he said that there was a piece of, maybe his clothing that was stuck in it or something. He said but - but because it hit him on the bone, ah, you know, it wasn't deep. Ah, and – and that was probably about it.

COULSON: So what day was that conversation, that what you just said, what day was that?

SYKES: I have to look back through my phone, which I'm happy to do.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: But it would have been either the Sunday or the Monday.

COULSON: Okay. So it was on those two days, Sunday or Monday?

SYKES: Yeah.

COULSON: Okay.

SYKES: Well the honest truth is I wouldn't be surprised if it was Tuesday. I can't really remember, but I know I had the conversation with him and I know that I was in Yuendumu whilst I had it.

COULSON: Yep. No that's okay.

SYKES: Yeah.

COULSON: Um, Detective Sergeant do you have any questions?

MORRISSEY: So you've known sorry, known Zac for – since 2012?

SYKES: It would have been about 2012.

MORRISSEY: Yep.

SYKES: I mean he would have been there, we both got up to battalion about – in 2010, start of 2011.

MORRISSEY: Yep.

SYKES: So he would have been there but I, you know, whether –I, I don't really remember having anything to do with him before 2012 when he came across to our Battalion.

MORRISSEY: Yep. Um, how close have you become since 2014?

SYKES: Yeah we're – we're close mates.

MORRISSEY: Yep.

SYKES: Yep.

MORRISSEY: No you've just joined the Police?

SYKES: Correct.

MORRISSEY: Is he in any way responsible for that or?

SYKES: Oh yeah like I made him send through a few, um, what do you call them? You're tax things at the end of the year, to see how much he was earning. I was gonna make sure it was a viable move for us to come up here. Um, and he – he had good things to say about the NT Police. He said that the work's good, um, he was happy here, whilst he might not have loved living in Alice Springs, he was a happy, happy, Police Officer here. So yeah, I'd say that the, ah, the good things that he told me about the job was an influence on me wanting to join for sure.

MORRISSEY: Are there any other friends, ah, that have come up as well?

SYKES: Not before me, um, but there is Jack CARTER, he's up in the Police College at the moment.

MORRISSEY: Yep. Um, do you know Jack?

SYKES: Yeah, yeah I know Jack very well as well, so he was also in the same Platoon that we served in overseas.

MORRISSEY: Um, how often do you speak to Zac?

SYKES: Like at the moment?

MORRISSEY: Oh probably leading up to this?

SYKES: Leading up to this he's my partner for the last few months.

MORRISSEY: At work?

SYKES: Yeah here.

MORRISSEY: Yep.

SYKES: Yeah.

MORRISSEY: And since the incident's happened how often are you speaking to him?

SYKES: Oh every other day. You know, some days we may talk most days, some days a few days will go – go by, but I'm in regular contact.

MORRISSEY: Okay. Um, (inaudible) discuss the IRT but that was that something you were gonna raise?

COULSON: Yeah, um, so are you in, um, IRT, or tell me what you know about IRT?

SYKES: Ah, I just know that they're an incident response group team, or whatever you call them yeah, yeah. I know what they do.

COULSON: Yep. So what do they do?

SYKES: Ah, they would generally go to a – I think a high risk, maybe high risk arrests or violent offender arrests, Yeah.

COULSON: Yep. And I know you mentioned the IRT in Yuendumu?

SYKES: Yes.

COULSON: Had you heard any information about IRT being deployed to Yuendumu -

SYKES: Ah

COULSON: - prior to you going?

SYKES: No but I – I thought that they were gonna go because when I – yeah no, but when I got that phone call to go down to the roll over

COULSON: Mm-hm.

SYKES: - um, I knew that some other blokes were getting deployed somewhere, or I thought that they were. Um, because they said that there's some O – O – some other OT on, but I'm going down there.

COULSON: To the roll over?

SYKES: Yeah.

COULSON: Okay. Um, are you a member of IRT?

SYKES: I'll say yes, but I haven't done their, I've I've done some call-outs with IRT.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Yep.

COULSON: Have you been – do they have a training -

SYKES: Yep.

COULSON: - regime that they have to do?

SYKES: Yep, yep, they have to train I think it's once a month.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: Or once, once a roster, which is once every five weeks.

COULSON: Have you completed any of the IRT training?

SYKES: Yeah I've been to two training days with them.

COULSON: Yep. So what I'm getting at, would that deem you a qualified IRT member?

SYKES: I don't think there's an official qualification for it that I'm I'm aware of. Um, but I believe there is a, maybe a two week course that is an upskilling course that they have completed. Which I have not.

COULSON: Okay. And, um, okay yep. Um, is there anything else that you thought I would have asked you in regards to this conversation that we've had today?

SYKES: No. I thought you might have asked, um, not really, I mean that was – that was about it from me. I thought you might have mentioned Jack CARTER, cause' I know that he also made a statement regards some um text messages -

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: - out of concern for ROLFHEY.

COULSON: So tell me about that?

SYKES: Well he – he'd sent me a message.

COULSON: Mm-hm.

SYKES: Asking if I was okay.

COULSON: Asking if you were okay?

SYKES: Yeah, Jack.

COULSON: Yep.

SYKES: And I knew that that meant something was wrong with him so I rang him and said what's wrong? And he said, well he told me what happened, he said that he was having a conversation, I think with what's her name? They call her VB or whatever, up there somewhere he'd heard it, he ended up going in and making a statement, and um, he was quite rattled by that, he thought that he may have done, I don't know, something wrong or whatever.

COULSON: Against himself or –

SYKES: Yeah he was very worried that he might have caused some sort of issue or trouble, and I said, tell me what happened, and he told me, and I said I don't think there's any issue there mate, you've asked your mate if he's okay, and that's okay.

COULSON: Okay.

SYKES: So I just thought you might have mentioned that.

COULSON: Okay. Do you have any questions Detective Sergeant?

MORRISSEY: Just a couple more about the IRT.

SYKES: Yep.

MORRISSEY: Who is the head of the IRT?

SYKES: Burner.

MORRISSEY: Oh.

SYKES: Lee BAUWENS.

MORRISSEY: Are you on the call-out list for it?

SYKES: Don't know if I'm on the call-out list, but I've been called out.

MORRISSEY: How did that happen?

SYKES: So I – when I first came down here, I, um, I went out and did the training day with them, and um, which was a shooting day. Um, and completed their shoots I suppose, without any incident. Um, they were looking for members originally to go up to Borroloola when Borroloola, the young fella hit his mum in the head with a machete, to go up there. Um, and I went up there, ah, in – in uniform, not in, um, like as I don't know if that was an IRT call-out is what I'm getting at, we were in - in blues. Myself, Jimmy and ah, Mitch went up there for three days, um, those police officers that were up there needed a rest and they went to bed for a few days. We came back here I think for three or four days, and got called straight back up. Ah, the second time was, ah, another – another – I was sitting downstairs one day, um, doing, like doing a PALI shift or whatever and they were looking for someone, they needed somebody to get on the road straight away and go up and

catch a bloke that had attempted, or he actually had stabbed a lady in the stomach, but then went through a close up in Barrow Creek, and myself and ROLFEY went up there and caught him. And then that's – that's been my - my involvement with them.

MORRISSEY: So your only training for the IRT was at the shoot?

SYKES: I – I've gone to two of their training days, yes.

MORRISSEY: What sort of training day?

SYKES: Both of them were range days, on the range.

MORRISSEY: And that's with which firearm?

SYKES: Ah, both glock and – and long arm, M4.

MORRISSEY: Alright. Have you done any NT Police training specific to higher duties like in a tactical area?

SYKES: No.

COULSON: So the – sorry to ah sorry. So the two week course that you're referring to, is that the two week course that all IRT members have to go to, or is that, what – how does that work?

SYKES: Well I honestly don't know, I'm probably talking out of school but I do know that when the IRT guys got raised, like IRT got raised here or whatever, there was a two week course that they got put through.

COULSON: And what was it called?

SYKES: I don't – I don't know. It was a fair - fair bit before my time.

COULSON: Okay. And who – who ran that training?

SYKES: I don't know.

COULSON: So you've done two day trainings and that's allowed you to be on the call-out list for IRT?

SYKES: Well I don't even – So I don't know that I was on the call-out list.

MORRISSEY: You did say that.

SYKES: I - I've been called out or I've been asked –

COULSON: So you been called out yes?

SYKES: I know that I'm – I'm picking hairs there, but I don't know if I'm on the call-out list. I know that I definitely don't get the first call, but there's been times when they've struggled to get blokes and I've said yeah I'll go.

COULSON: Okay. And it's to wear uniform, you wear this uniform? You wear this uniform the whole time?

SYKES: Yeah I – yes this.

COULSON: Yep okay.

MORRISSEY: Have you been provided any SOP's or anything like that for the IRT?

SYKES: As in – we done ah – on the back, no, I don't know. On the back end of one of those range days we did some, um, some house clearances with some empty houses around town.

MORRISSEY: Yeah but have you been given a – any documents, ah, guidelines for what the IRT are, what they do?

SYKES: No.

MORRISSEY: Things like that, have you been given any gear, um, any camouflage –

SYKES: No.

MORRISSEY: - gear or anything like that?

SYKES: No.

MORRISSEY: So no extra equipment?

SYKES: No.

MORRISSEY: No I've got nothing else.

COULSON: Um, is there anything else, um, that you want to add to your statement before we conclude?

SYKES: No I, I don't think so.

COULSON: Okay. So is all what you've told me today the truth?

SYKES: Yes.

COULSON: Ah, do you understand that it's an offence to make a statutory declaration that is false in material particular?

SYKES: I do.

COULSON: Ah, tell me where we're making this recording today?

SYKES: Alice Springs Police Station.

COULSON: And what's today's date?

SYKES: The 18th of the twelfth 2019.

COULSON: My usual business address is, um, Major Crime Squad Northern Territory Police. My contact number is 89 2 [REDACTED] and my name is Detective Senior Constable Rinaldo Coulson. I have been present during the entirety of this recording today. It is now 12:45pm by my watch on today's date the 18th of December 2019. This concludes this recording.