

RELEASE OF THE REPORTS OF TWO SERVICE INQUIRIES FOLLOWING THE SHOOTING INCIDENT ONBOARD HMS ASTUTE ON 8 APRIL 2011

STATEMENT BY THE FLEET COMMANDER

Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral Philip Jones, said:

The Royal Navy has today released the reports of the two Service Inquiries convened following the shooting incident onboard HMS ASTUTE on 8 April 2011 in which Lieutenant Commander Ian Molyneux GM was murdered and one of his colleagues wounded.

This was a tragic event for Ian's family and loved ones, and for the Naval Service as a whole. Ian's selfless gallantry that day and his memory will live on through his family and colleagues within the Naval Service.

The incident was investigated by the Hampshire Constabulary, culminating in a criminal trial and the conviction of Able Seaman Donovan. He pleaded guilty to the murder of Lieutenant Commander Molyneux GM and to the attempted murder of Lieutenant Commander Hodge, Chief Petty Officer McCoy and Petty Officer Brown, and was sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment and discharged from the Navy.

This was an appalling and unprecedented incident. There were many examples of courage onboard that day, and the Naval Service is determined to ensure that the sequence of events that led to the shooting is fully understood and that all possible lessons are learned. Two separate Service Inquiries were conducted. The first, convened in the immediate aftermath, considered wider factors including the armed guarding posture for the Naval Service. The second inquiry, convened following the civil criminal trial, was into certain circumstances specific to the shooting itself.

Both inquiries were thorough. The Service Inquiry into armed guarding made 19 recommendations, which were mainly procedural and did not represent significant changes in policy or practice. I am satisfied that the procedures in place at the time of the incident were fit for purpose. With the exception of one recommendation, which was rejected for security reasons, all have been accepted and are being implemented. The Service Inquiry into the circumstances of the shooting itself made 20 recommendations, most of which concerned the management of submarine operational stand off periods and best practice during the transfer of weapons. Although the Inquiry was unable to say with certainty whether the consumption of alcohol was a contributing factor in the murder, we also looked closely at our alcohol policies and alcohol education programmes. All of the recommendations have been accepted and are in the process of being implemented.

The Submarine Service is a tight-knit community of professionals, all supported strongly by their families. Lieutenant Commander Ian Molyneux GM was a much admired and respected member of that community and he is sorely missed. Our thoughts remain with Mrs Molyneux, her family, and those others affected by this tragic event.