

RELEASE OF THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS INTO THE NAVAL SERVICE INTERNAL REVIEW – OP TELEMETER

STATEMENT BY THE FLEET COMMANDER

Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral Sir Philip Jones, said:

The Naval Service has today released an extract from our Internal Review into a range of issues ancillary to the incident on 15 September 2011 in Afghanistan which led to the shooting of a wounded insurgent, and which resulted in the conviction for murder in November 2013 of Sergeant (Sgt) Alexander Blackman Royal Marines. On Appeal Sgt Blackman was sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum term of eight years. He was also dismissed from the Service.

I directed the Review to investigate the wider issues arising from this incident, such that they may provide lessons for the future training, preparation and conduct of the Royal Marines and the wider Naval Service on operations. It addressed the ethos, cultural literacy and Rules of Engagement for Royal Marine personnel and made 17 recommendations for change to ensure the continued operational effectiveness of the Naval Service in future operations.

I have accepted the Review and its recommendations in full. Of these, some remedial actions were captured earlier in the Review process and their progress to date is reflected in the accompanying extract. The remaining recommendations are now being implemented.

The Review, which was commissioned as an internal reference document, contains information considered sensitive from an Operational, Security and Personal perspective. The Review conducted analysis into the counter insurgency environment in which the incident happened, the high tempo of operations and the significant leadership challenges that all this presents. It also concluded that these are likely to be circumstances that our Armed Forces will face in the future.

For these reasons, it is not appropriate to release the Internal Review in full. However, in recognition of the heightened sensitivity and public interest in this matter, a suitably redacted version of the Review's executive summary and recommendations has been made available to the public. As part of this release I am also including my Review instruction.

What happened on 15 September 2011 was not consistent with the ethos, values and standards of the Royal Marines. As a key part of its support to, and command of, the Royal Marines, 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.

The Royal Marines deservedly have a worldwide reputation as one of the elite fighting forces. Our Commandos go through one of the toughest training programmes in order to deploy to some of the harshest environments in the world. I am proud of its reputation and achievements.