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IN THE COURT MARTIAL

held at

MILITARY COURT CENTRE, BULFORD

on the

31st day of October 2025

in the case of

REX

V

Ex Warrant Officer Class One Michael WEBBER

JUDGE ADVOCATE

Judge Large

Judge Advocate General

SENTENCING REMARKS

JUDGE ADVOCATE: In July 2021 WO2 Webber, as you then were, was attending organised adventurous training in Thorney Island. You were 39 years old. Gunner Beck was also on the adventurous training exercise. She was 19 years old. On the first night of the training the two of you stayed up drinking until the early hours of the morning and you were the last two in the bar. At some point in the early hours of 13th July you told Gunner Beck she was beautiful, you put your hand on the back of her head, you leant in to kiss her and you touched her on the thigh. She had the courage and good sense to tell you to stop and told you to go to bed, but you persisted to the extent that she

considered she would not be safe from you even if she went back to her own accommodation. She went to hide first in the toilet, standing on the seat so she could not be found and then she took herself to her car where she slept the remainder of the night, so frightened was she that you might pursue her to her accommodation.

Next morning she reported the incident to her family, her friends and her chain of command. Following the report the unit decided to deal with you by way of minor administrative action. You were interviewed and you admitted that your behaviour had been unacceptable. You wrote a letter of apology to Gunner Beck. Your career continued completely unaffected by what had occurred, and you were in due course promoted to WO1. We were able to hear evidence read from her mother, Leighann McReady, her father, Michael Beck, and her sister Emily who I hope is online still. They told us about the impact that her loss has had on them, how their lives have been so greatly affected. We know that no sentence which we can pass on Mr Webber today will bring their daughter back or begin to fill the gap that she has left behind. I am hopeful, in fact I am confident, that you understand this hearing is part of the process of dealing with, albeit late in the day, those who were responsible for what happened to your daughter, your sister during her short time in the British Army.

In following that process we have to pass a sentence which both reflects the offending, and which takes full account of the impact of the criminal behaviour in this case on Gunner Beck and her family. In doing so we are provided with helpful guidance from the Sentencing Council which we have to follow, supported by guidance which I issue as the Judge Advocate General. I am going to follow the stepped process in my guidance which incorporates the Sentencing Council guide.

At step 1 we need to consider both culpability and harm. In terms of culpability this case sits at culpability level A. We consider that culpability is raised to category A because of the abuse of trust committed by you, Mr Webber, which falls squarely, we consider, within the dropdown guidelines for abuse of trust in the guidance. You were a WO2, you were high in the scale of authority, Gunner Beck at the lowest end of the scale and you chose your rank and position to assault her sexually. In terms of harm this is at level 3. It is at level 3 because the guidance is completely clear that it already accounts for a degree of impact on Gunner Beck and other people who find themselves in the same position. To increase to category 1 the harm she sustained from this offence must be at least as serious as severe psychological harm and we cannot be satisfied that it was for this offence.

At step 2 we consider whether there are any additional Service factors which may affect culpability and harm, and we take into account at this stage the adverse effect that your offending had on morale and on the reputation of His Majesty's Armed Forces. At step 3 we determine the starting point which

we consider is at A3, a start point of six months' imprisonment within a range of a high level community to one year's imprisonment. Taking all the considerations together it seems to us the start point is at 12 months. I repeat the level of trust reposed in a WO2 was completely breached in this case to such an extent that she fled the buildings and slept in her car.

Turning to step 4 and to factors increasing or reducing seriousness in the Sentencing Council guidelines there is one aggravating factor, namely committing the offence whilst under the influence of alcohol. We have no doubt, Mr Webber, that alcohol played a considerable role in your decision to try to kiss Gunner Beck which is why it is regarded as a significant aggravating factor. In terms of mitigating factors there is a lack of relevant previous convictions and remorse and exemplary conduct throughout your Army career. These are long lasting factors which demonstrate that this behaviour was out of character.

Step 5 requires us to consider if there are any other Service factors which may increase or reduce seriousness and there do not appear to us to be any. We note that your marriage has broken down as has your relationship with your daughter but there seem to us to have been many reasons for that, and you brought the final downfall upon yourself. In terms of delay, you have had to wait a very long time for this case to be resolved, over four years, but it has allowed you to continue your career and to leave the Services on your terms.

So, at this stage we have to balance your consumption of alcohol on the one hand and your exemplary record and remorse on the other. We consider overall these matters reduce the sentence by three months to nine months' imprisonment. We then reduce the sentence further by one third to reflect the guilty plea which was entered at the first opportunity, leaving a final sentence of six month's imprisonment. We have to consider whether the sentence can be suspended; we do not consider it can. Having had regard to the imposition guideline we note the factors which weigh in favour of suspension, but we are satisfied that the seriousness of the offence means that appropriate punishment can only be achieved by immediate custody. Neither do we, upon reflection and further consideration of the pre-sentence report, consider that a sentence in the Military Corrective Training Centre would be appropriate in this case. We cannot dismiss you because you have already left the Army however, we consider that had you been dealt with earlier you would have been reduced to the ranks and, if we can properly do so, we order that you are reduced to the ranks today.

Could you stand up please, Mr Webber? Mr President, would you pass the sentence please?

SENTENCE

PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD: You are to be sent to prison for six months and you are to be reduced to the ranks.

JUDGE ADVOCATE: Take a seat please. I am sorry, Mr Webber, there were two matters I did not deal with. The first relates to your release date. You will be released at half the sentence, the remainder of the sentence will be served in the community. Should you not comply with any requirements then you could be breached, brought back to court and re-sentenced. There after you will be subject to a period of licence. You are also going to be placed on the sex offenders register for seven years. You must not leave this building without dealing with the requirements. Do you understand?

DEFENDANT: Yes.