

= 2011 Helmand Province incident =

The 2011 Helmand Province incident was the killing , on 15 September 2011 , of an injured Taliban insurgent by Royal Marines . Three Royal Marines , known during their trial as Marines A , B , and C , were anonymously tried by court @-@ martial . On 8 November 2013 , Marines B and C were acquitted , but Marine A was found guilty of the murder of the Afghan combatant , in contravention of section 42 of the Armed Forces Act 2006 . This made him the first British soldier to be convicted of a battlefield murder whilst serving abroad since the Second World War .

On 5 December , Lord Chief Justice Lord Thomas and two other High Court judges lifted the existing anonymity order on Marine A , allowing him to be named as Sergeant Alexander Wayne Blackman . On 6 December , Blackman was sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum term of 10 years , and dismissed with disgrace from the British Armed Forces . On 22 May 2014 , the Court of Appeal reduced his minimum term to 8 years .

On 19 December 2013 , the anonymity order on Marines B and C was also lifted by the Court , and they were named as Corporal Christopher Glyn Watson and Marine Jack Alexander Hammond .

On 28 October 2015 , the Ministry of Defence banned a large number of serving soldiers from attending a rally in support of Sergeant Blackman , saying that the event was a ' political protest ' . However , lawyers representing the rally organisers stated that was not the case , rather , the event was ' a show of support to one of our fellow Royal Marines and not a ' political protest . ' A related online government petition raised over 100 @, @ 000 signatures calling for Sergeant Blackman 's immediate release stating that the soldier had been condemned for defending his country . Within hours of the MOD 's decision Michael Fallon , Minister for Defence , put out a government statement saying that the UK would maintain military operations in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future .

= = Murder = =

The incident took place in Helmand Province during Operation Herrick 14 , part of the British effort in the War in Afghanistan . Blackman , of 42 Commando , Royal Marines , was part of a Marine patrol that came across an Afghan fighter in a field wounded by Apache Helicopter gunfire . Blackman ordered the Afghan to be moved out of sight of the British Persistent Ground Surveillance System , a camera on a balloon above British Forward Operating Base Shazad , Helmand , covering the area Blackman 's patrol had been sent to . Video evidence played at the Marines ' subsequent trial shows some of the patrol dragging the man across the field and then kicking him . Blackman ordered Marine B and C to stop administering first aid to the insurgent and eventually shot the man in the chest with a 9 mm pistol , saying : " Shuffle off this mortal coil , you cunt . It 's nothing you wouldn't do to us . " He then added : " I just broke the Geneva Convention . "

= = Criminal trial and sentencing = =

After the 15 September incident , Blackman continued with his tour of duty , leaving Helmand Province in late October 2011 . On 13 October 2012 , at the decision of the Service Prosecution Authority , Marines A ? E were charged with the murder of the unnamed Afghan insurgent . The lead came after British civilian police discovered suspicious video footage on a serviceman 's laptop . Marines D and E had charges against them dropped on 5 February 2013 . Marines A , B and C first appeared in court in August 2013 , where they entered a not @-@ guilty plea . The military trial of Marines A , B and C , protected from view in court behind a screen because of an anonymity order , began on 23 October 2013 and lasted two weeks . Their court @-@ martial board ( equivalent to a jury in the civilian justice system ) was seven members strong , instead of the five used for less serious cases .

The verdict ( 8 November 2013 ) and sentence ( 6 December 2013 ) were both delivered at the Military Court Centre in Bulford , Wiltshire . The judge advocate ( the civilian judge heading up the panel at a court @-@ martial ) was Judge Advocate General Jeff Blackett . The verdict carried with it a mandatory life sentence , so it was only in the judge advocate 's and court @-@ martial board 's

power to decide on the minimum sentence once the board had found Blackman guilty . He was sentenced to a minimum of 10 years in prison . On 22 May 2014 , at the Courts Martial Appeal Court , its most senior judge , Lord Chief Justice Lord Thomas , upheld the life sentence , but reduced Blackman 's minimum term to 8 years .

= = Anonymity orders = =

Running in parallel to the Marines ' criminal trial were legal proceedings relating to the anonymity of the defendants . In the autumn of 2012 , Judges Advocate Elsom and Blackett issued anonymity orders for the Marine defendants due to the risk that , once named , the defendants would become targets for terrorists . The move had been opposed by elements of the UK media . A lawyer for the Press Association argued that anonymity orders should not be issued in this case because , firstly , British military award recipients named in the media had not been previously targeted ; and , secondly , that the names of those British service personnel investigated following the death of Baha Mousa had not been similarly protected . The 2012 anonymity orders were upheld at the beginning of the trial in October 2013 . The order was lifted for Blackman ( hitherto Marine A ) on 5 December 2013 by the High Court . The most senior figure involved in that verdict was Lord Chief Justice Lord Thomas . The same ruling had it that the identities of Marines B and C also be revealed unless they submit an appeal to the Supreme Court . No such appeal was lodged within the set deadline , and so , on 19 December 2013 , Marine B was named as Corporal Christopher Glyn Watson and Marine C was named as Marine Jack Alexander Hammond . The anonymity of Marines D and E was upheld on 19 December " pending any further order by the Judge Advocate General " .

Jeff Blackett also restricted public access to the evidence used at the trial , releasing on 8 November stills , audio clips and transcripts from the serviceman 's video that was played to the court @-@ martial board , but ruling that the full video itself not be released , since doing so " would increase the threat of harm to British service personnel . " On 5 December 2013 , the Court Martial Appeal Court upheld the earlier decisions prohibiting the release of the video footage of the attack and some of the stills from it . The Court stated , however , that the prohibition was to prevent the material being used for radicalisation , rather than it posing a risk to the life of the defendants .

= = Reactions = =

The legal proceedings relating to the Marines garnered widespread British public and media attention .

Reacting to Marine A 's guilty verdict , Royal Marines Brigadier Bill Dunham called the murder a " shocking and appalling aberration " that was " not consistent with the ethos , values and standards of the Royal Marines " , but was nevertheless an " isolated incident " . General Sir Mike Jackson said he was " saddened " by the case .

Marine A 's guilty verdict led to a showing of public support for the Marine , with people creating social media groups and online petitions alternately asking that he be given a lenient sentence and calling for his release. The Daily Telegraph supported one Change.org petition for leniency .

When Blackman was sentenced to 10 years , General Sir Nick Houghton called his actions a " heinous crime " and commented that " murder is murder " . By contrast , Blackman 's commanding officer , Lieutenant Colonel Simon Chapman , 42 Commando , said in a letter read to the court that Blackman had had a " momentary ... lapse of judgment " and was " not a bad man " , and added that Blackman had his " full support " . Blackman himself said in a statement that he was " devastated " and " very sorry for any damage caused to the Royal Marines " .

In September 2015 Colonel Oliver Lee , commanding officer of 45 Commando , resigned in protest of Blackman 's treatment .