

Naval commander awaits verdict on spanking counts

A court has heard salacious allegations of indecent acts on a navy ship, writes Jessica Wright.

THE court martial investigating allegations a naval officer aboard an Australian warship repeatedly spanked the bare buttocks of a junior female sailor has retired to consider its verdict.

A panel of five senior naval officers received final directions from Judge Advocate Lieutenant-Colonel Jennifer Woodward at a military court in Canberra yesterday and will now consider the case, which heard salacious allegations about the conduct of Lieutenant-Commander John Alan Jones, a former supply officer, and his alleged victim, a young sailor.



Accused ... Lieutenant-Commander John Alan Jones. *Photo: Alex Ellinghausen*

Over nine days, the court heard allegations and testimony that would not be out of place in a Hollywood script, including the revelation the cadet had wanted to leave the navy as she had been offered \$1 million to have a child and deliver "an heir" for a man in Western Australia.

The court martial heard evidence from the sailor she had been offered a job in 2010 to work as an executive assistant to a man named Don Walker, who would also assist her bring her

family to Australia from overseas. The prosecution failed in its bid to have the man's name suppressed.

The sailor said Commander Jones had offered to facilitate her discharge from the navy and allegedly said he believed "going forward with Don" would be a "massive big step".

Commander Jones has pleaded not guilty to 23 charges relating to nine alleged acts of indecency - seven on HMAS Sirius and two alleged acts of indecency at the alleged victim's home in Western Australia, between February 1 and October 20 last year.

The prosecution alleged he repeatedly spanked the sailor and he had admitted the corporal punishment in a conversation with the woman, secretly recorded on an iPhone.

A video interview was played to the court, in which Commander Jones denied to Australian Defence Force investigators that he bent the woman over his lap and spanked her, instructing her to undress, in nine separate incidents during 2010.

But this was challenged when the phone recording was played, in which he is heard apologising for forcing her to undress and for the discomfort she felt.

"I was getting you to be structured and disciplined," he said to the woman.

During the hearing, the sailor denied she used her relationship with her senior officer in order to avoid difficulties with other crew members on the vessel.

Defence counsel Lieutenant-Commander Alister Abadee alleged the woman had used her "special relationship" with him to garner favoured treatment.

"Was it felt you were a protected species at work?" he asked. "If you got into trouble with workmates you could rely on him to get you out of it?"

"No," she said.

It was revealed in the secret recording that Commander Jones had admitted he had spanked other women but defended his actions with the junior sailor. "You're like my third daughter, I took you under my wing, I tried to give you guidance," he said.

On the recording, he is heard to tell the woman to "put it out of your mind and forget about it".

"I feel weird, taking my underwear off, lying there naked," she said.

Commander Jones replied: "I asked you at the time, 'Do you feel you've misbehaved?' Every time you said you had."

"I always felt pressured," the woman said.

The sailor gave evidence via video link to the court martial in Canberra, and broke down several times, yelling, "It happened" during cross-examination.

The sailor said she had been scared of Commander Jones and did not tell anybody about the allegations because she was embarrassed and ashamed. She also had experienced nightmares about his alleged actions.

"These things pounce up in my head ... it's like a picture in my head. I nearly took my life because of these things," she told the court.

The prosecution said while Commander Jones had pleaded not guilty to the 23 charges related to the alleged indecent acts, he had admitted some of the behaviours, but believed they had been consensual. The panel of five will now consider its verdict.

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