# Man sentenced for faking Parachute Regiment service to evade firearm penalty



Paul Berryman, a 62-year-old from Diss, has been sentenced to six years in prison after facing serious legal repercussions due to a series of false claims about his military service. Berryman, who previously worked as a refuse collector, attempted to convince a jury at Norwich Crown Court that he had an illustrious career with the Parachute Regiment spanning from 1979 to 2007. This deception was an attempt to mitigate the penalty for a prior conviction related to the possession of a prohibited firearm—a shotgun found in his home during a police search in 2018.

At his trial, Berryman argued that his supposed military background constituted exceptional circumstances that should spare him from the mandatory minimum five-year prison sentence. The presiding Judge Anthony Bate, however, quickly dismissed his claims as "utterly bogus." Berryman’s fabrications included boasts of serving in conflicts such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Falkland Islands, yet the evidence presented in court revealed that his military service was far less illustrious. In fact, he had enlisted in the British Army but was discharged less than two weeks later, never completing basic training.

The prosecution emphasised the lengths to which Berryman went to perpetuate his lies. Documents submitted to support his claims were riddled with spelling errors—simple words like "parachute" and "military" were misspelled. These discrepancies raised suspicions that led to an investigation into his military record. As a result, very little in Berryman’s account checked out. This case reflects broader concerns over the repercussions of false representation in the context of military service and justice.

During the sentencing, Berryman attempted to draw upon personal tragedies to elicit sympathy, claiming to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to the loss of his daughters and the breakdown of a long-term relationship. He expressed feelings of depression and anxiety, stating that he merely "needed help" and a second chance. However, Judge Bate was firm in his response, stating that such personal circumstances did not mitigate the severity of his offences.

The possession of firearms without the appropriate permits is treated severely within the UK legal framework, particularly after the legislative changes in the late 1990s that introduced strict guidelines for sentencing regarding firearms offences. A significant number of convictions in this realm relate to pleas of not having a proper certificate or possession of prohibited weapons, with various judicial outcomes highlighting the seriousness with which the courts regard such violations.

Berryman's case serves as a potent reminder of the consequences of misleading the legal system, particularly in matters that intersect with military service. As Judge Bate noted, Berryman’s falsehoods regarding his time in the armed forces were not only an attempt to evade punishment but undermined the integrity of those who serve their country honourably.

Following the sentencing, Judge Bate also expressed concern for Berryman's pets, requesting a welfare check on his cat and dog, which he described as his "lifeline." This moment underscored an often-overlooked aspect of criminal cases: the impact of legal troubles on personal lives, particularly concerning vulnerable animals dependent on their owners.

Ultimately, Berryman's case encapsulates the complexities of the judicial system's approach to false representations and the lengths individuals may go to avoid accountability for their actions, a topic of growing interest within legal circles and public discourse alike.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1-3
2. Paragraph 4
3. Paragraphs 5-7

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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3. <https://assets-origin.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64885a92b32b9e0012a966cc/2020230612-Court_Martial_Results_Jan2010-Apr2015_v2_MCSPA-O.csv/preview> - This document provides a comprehensive list of court martial results from military court centres between January 2010 and April 2015. It includes details such as the rank, service branch, location, date, charges, verdicts, sentences, and other relevant information for each case. The data offers insights into the disciplinary actions and legal proceedings within the British Armed Forces during this period. ([assets-origin.publishing.service.gov.uk](https://assets-origin.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64885a92b32b9e0012a966cc/2020230612-Court_Martial_Results_Jan2010-Apr2015_v2_MCSPA-O.csv/preview?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1997-01-15/debates/95e2cdec-3f8d-48ad-a9d8-a4c6d35087bc/Crime%28Sentences%29Bill> - This Hansard record from January 15, 1997, details the debates and proceedings related to the Crime (Sentences) Bill in the UK Parliament. The document includes discussions on various aspects of the bill, including sentencing guidelines, mandatory sentences, and the implications for different types of crimes. It provides a comprehensive overview of the legislative process and the considerations taken into account by lawmakers during the debate. ([hansard.parliament.uk](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1997-01-15/debates/95e2cdec-3f8d-48ad-a9d8-a4c6d35087bc/Crime%28Sentences%29Bill?utm_source=openai))
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7. <https://www.academia.edu/34684695/Disciplining_an_Army_An_observation_of_the_rate_of_death_sentences_and_executions_passed_by_the_British_Military_in_the_Great_War_1914_1918> - This academic paper by Rosalind Palframan examines the rate of death sentences and executions passed by the British Military during the Great War (1914-1918). It provides a detailed analysis of the circumstances, frequency, and outcomes of such sentences, offering insights into military discipline and justice during World War I. ([academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu/34684695/Disciplining_an_Army_An_observation_of_the_rate_of_death_sentences_and_executions_passed_by_the_British_Military_in_the_Great_War_1914_1918?utm_source=openai))