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### **MFSO RESPONDS TO ARMY'S REPORT ON SUICIDE**

*Boston, MA, August 16, 2007* - Today **Military Families Speak Out (MFSO)** responded to a U.S. Army report revealing that troops committed suicide last year at the highest rate in 26 years. The report attributes failed personal relationships, legal and financial problems, and the stress of the job while also acknowledging a significant relationship between suicide attempts and longer and multiple deployments. **MFSO co-founder Nancy Lessin** said that the group has been aware of suicides and suicide attempts among active duty service members and returned Iraq Veterans since 2003 and believes the situation will only get worse. *"It's no coincidence that troops who are repeatedly deployed to a combat zone in a war that cannot be won and never should have started, are traumatized by the experience,"* she said. *"This report only shows the tip of the iceberg, as it does not cover those who took their own lives after leaving active duty service. Until the war in Iraq is brought to an end, we think this tragic reality will only become worse."* Lessin also charged the military with failing to effectively treat returning soldiers. MFSO members with loved ones who served in Iraq and committed suicide include **April Somdahl of Trenton, North Carolina** and **Kevin and Joyce Lucey of Belchertown, Massachusetts**.

MFSO member April Somdahl's brother Brian Jason Rand, who served with the U.S. Army, underwent a psychological exam after returning home from his second deployment to Iraq. The exam determined he was unfit for deployment, yet Brian was redeployed for a third time to Iraq just three days later. When he returned home, Brian desperately sought out help before taking his own life on February 20, 2007. When the family asked the Army to look into Brian's death, they were informed that the Army does not investigate suicides.

MFSO members Kevin and Joyce Lucey, parents of Marine Reservist Lance Cpl. Jeffrey Lucey, filed a lawsuit in July, 2007 charging the U.S. Government and the Department of Veterans Affairs, with negligence in the death of their son. Lance Cpl Lucey underwent medical and psychological evaluations in July of 2003 that cleared him for demobilization, but offered no referrals for treatment. By May of 2004, Jeffrey Lucey was suffering from severe PTSD and was involuntarily admitted to the Veterans Administration Medical Center (VAMC) in Leeds, Massachusetts, however, he was sent home less than four days later after VAMC personnel said that no assessment could be made of him until he was alcohol free. After the failure of VAMC to admit Jeffrey for observation, evaluation and treatment and/or at a minimum to have him properly evaluated, the family was forced to return home to Belchertown, Massachusetts, where they repeatedly sought other help. On June 22, 2004 Jeffrey Lucey was found by his father hanging by a garden hose around his neck in the basement of their home.

Members of Military Families Speak Out including those whose loved ones committed suicide are available for interview.

**Military Families Speak Out (MFSO)** is a national organization of 3,600 families who are opposed to the war in Iraq and have loved ones in the military.

For more information about Military Families Speak Out, please visit: <http://www.mfso.org>