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**FAMILY OF MARINE WHO COMMITTED SUICIDE SUES VETERANS ADMINISTRATION  
FOR WRONGFUL DEATH**

*Suffering from PTSD, Jeffrey Lucey Killed Himself Shortly After Being Turned Away For Treatment by  
V.A. Hospital*

*V.A. Secretary Nicholson Named as Defendant in Damage Action*

*July 26, 2007, Springfield, Massachusetts* – Today, the parents of Lance Corporal Jeffrey Lucey, a Marine and Iraq War veteran, filed a federal lawsuit here charging the United States Government and James Nicholson, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, with responsibility for the death of their son.

On June 22, 2004, almost a year after he had returned from Iraq and just days after he had been turned away from the Veteran's Administration Medical Center (VAMC) in Leeds, Massachusetts, where he sought treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Jeffrey Lucey killed himself.

According to the complaint, Jeffrey was deployed to Iraq with the 6<sup>th</sup> Motor Transport Battalion in support of the Marine Corps' in January, 2003 and served there until May 27<sup>th</sup> of that year. While in Iraq, he was often in the middle of hostilities, which had a profound effect on him.

He returned home in July 2003 and underwent post deployment medical evaluations. On July 8<sup>th</sup> he was medically and psychologically cleared for demobilization by a physician's assistant and a psychiatrist, both in the employ of the U.S. Government, with no referrals by them for treatment.

Jeffrey began to show abnormal behavior in the fall of 2003, such as vomiting in the mornings; relating to his sister upsetting episodes about his service in Iraq; calling himself a murderer for acts allegedly committed by him during his Iraq service; keeping dog tags of Iraqi soldiers he alleged to have killed around his neck while tossing the same to the floor; and experiencing severe nightmares. By May of 2004, his condition took a turn for the worse and he mentioned to his sister that he had a rope and tree picked out near a brook that runs behind his family's home.

Finally, at the suggestion of his therapist and with his family's insistence he agreed to go to VAMC where he was involuntarily admitted. But 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, which could take some time.

By June 5<sup>th</sup> Jeffrey's behavior deteriorated dramatically; he showed signs of total desperation and crisis and once again his father called the VAMC for help, returning with Jeffrey to the hospital that same day. However, VAMC personnel refused to have Jeffrey evaluated for possible admission to see the physician

of the day at the VAMC. At that time, Jeffrey's sister, Debra Lucey, expressed her concern to the VAMC personnel that unless something was done, she feared her brother would not be alive by July of 2004.

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. After a nightmarish sixteen days, during which the family sought desperately for other help, Kevin Lucey found his son Jeffrey hanging dead from a beam in their cellar. Jeffrey's nightmares and hallucinations came to a tragic, predicted and feared death on June 22, 2004.

In an affidavit filed in support of the suit, Dr. William B. Land, a renowned psychiatrist who has done extensive research on issues related to suicide for almost two decades, and has served as faculty at Harvard Medical School and the U.S. Psychiatric and Mental Health Congress, stated "...*failure to consult the physician of the day was a dereliction of duty and directly resulted in Mr. Lucey's failure to receive appropriate evaluation and treatment. This failure to render appropriate evaluation and treatment... within a reasonable degree of medical certainty resulted in the premature death of Mr. Lucey.*"

*"What happened here is a case of blatant negligence on the part of the VAMC in Leeds, and that negligence extends to the U.S. government. Under federal law the United States assumes all the responsibility for their negligence, that is why this lawsuit is against the United States,"* explained the Lucey's lawyer Cristobal Bonifaz. *"The record is clear in this case and unfortunately in many other instances that Veterans Administration's employees, for whatever reason, have not been providing adequate medical treatment to Veterans and in many cases are guilty of negligence. This negligence resulted in the early death of Jeffrey, thus the United States has to be held accountable for Jeffrey's death and perhaps the deaths of many others."*

Speaking on behalf of his family, Kevin Lucey, Jeffrey's father said: *"Jeffrey served his government yet his government failed him. As a Iraq War veteran he experienced first hand the brutality of war and it scarred him as it has many, many others but when he came home suffering the consequences of serving in an intense combat zone, the services he was entitled to were denied to him. We bring this suit not only for the damages to which we are entitled but also to hold this administration accountable for its treatment of our veterans."*

Since Jeffrey's death, Kevin Lucey and his wife Joyce have become active participants in Military Families Speak Out, the national organization of military families who oppose the war in Iraq and have loved ones who serve or have served in the military during the period of the Iraq War. Says Joyce Lucey, *"While this case is about the negligence of one part of the government which failed our son, make no mistake that we believe that the Government is failing all of our troops by its insistence on pursuing this futile war which is creating more Jeffreys who remain untreated."*