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**US GOVERNMENT AGREES TO PAY \$350,000
TO PARENTS OF US MARINE IN SUICIDE CASE**

CASE WAS THE FIRST TO BE FILED SINCE THE IRAQ WAR BEGAN

**Government Admits that Cpl. Jeffrey Lucey's Suicide Was A "Tragedy"
for Veterans Administration**

SPRINGFIELD, MA – The United States Government has agreed to pay \$350,000 to the parents of a United States Marine who committed suicide in 2004 after returning home from combat duty in the Iraq war.

Within months after returning home from Iraq in June 2003, Cpl. Jeffrey Lucey began to show signs of post-traumatic stress disorder caused by his experience in the war. On June 22, 2004, Jeffrey hung himself in the basement of his parents' home, two weeks after the Northampton Veterans Medical Center in Leeds, Massachusetts, turned him away. Jeffrey, who had received an honorable discharge from the US Marine Corps, was 23 years old at the time of his death. In July 2007, his parents, Kevin and Joyce Lucey filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the United States in federal court in Springfield, Massachusetts -- the first such suit to be filed since the beginning of the war in Iraq.

On January 6, 2009, the US Justice Department issued a letter to the Luceys' attorney, Cristobal Bonifaz, which admitted "*that Jeffrey's suicide while under VA [Veterans Administration] care was a tragedy for the VA and the individual care providers.*" The letter formally offered \$350,000 to settle the case. Bonifaz today notified the federal court that his clients have accepted this offer.

“The US Government killed my son,” said Kevin Lucey. “It sent him into an illegal and reckless war and then, when he returned home, it denied him the basic health care he needed. We hope that this case serves as a wake-up call to the nation that our government must be held accountable for the suffering it has caused thousands of US military families.”

Joyce Lucey added “When Jeffrey went to Iraq, we didn't realize that the bullets and bombs there didn't present the only threat to our son's safety. Our own government's apathy and indifference are just as great a threat to our troops and veterans. Until the Veterans Administration takes the psychological wounds of war seriously, the epidemic of military suicides will continue to grow.”

“Jeffrey Lucey carried to his death the American flag he found in the hands of a dead Iraqi child,” said Bonifaz. “Jeffrey never recovered from the horrors he witnessed in Iraq. When his post-traumatic stress disorder signs became critical, he was turned away at the door of the US Veterans Administration. Jeffrey Lucey would have lived but for the illegal war in Iraq and the callous and irresponsible treatment handed to him by the US agency charged with providing him health care when he had returned home.”

After their son's death in 2004, Kevin and Joyce Lucey joined Military Families Speak Out, a national organization of military families opposed to the war in Iraq. *“Jeffrey’s story is a story of too many military families in this country,”* said Joyce Lucey. *“We will continue to speak out to demand that our government immediately end this war, bring our troops home now, and provide all the necessary medical care they deserve when they return.”*

“And to those military families who have similarly suffered because of the negligence of the US Veterans Administration,” added Kevin Lucey, *“we hope this case serves as an example that the government can and must be held accountable in a court of law.”*

Kevin and Joyce Lucey and Cristobal Bonifaz are available for interview.

Copies of the letter from the U.S. Justice Department outlining the settlement in this case are available by request from Military Families Speak Out.

Military Families Speak Out is an organization of 4,000 military families opposed to the war in Iraq, with loved ones who are serving or have served in the U.S. military since fall, 2002.