



Department of Justice

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**FORMER DICKENSON COUNTY COMMISSIONER OF REVENUE SENTENCED ON
DEFRAUDING DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND LYING ABOUT
MILITARY SERVICE**

ABINGDON, VIRGINIA -- The former Commissioner of Revenue of Dickenson County, Virginia was sentenced this afternoon in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Virginia in Abingdon.

Ronnie L. Robbins, 59, was indicted in November 2010 on a variety of charges. Following a three-day trial earlier this year, Robbins was found guilty of two counts of forging military documents, one count of violating the Stolen Valor Act, and one count of mail fraud.

This afternoon in District Court Robbins was sentenced to 24 months of federal incarceration. The defendant was also ordered to pay \$ 70,749 in restitution.

“The men and women who serve in our armed forces deserve the utmost respect from all American citizens,” United States Attorney Timothy J. Heaphy said today. “When men like Mr. Robbins lie about military service and falsely claim combat-related disability, they demean the service of real veterans and tarnish the proud legacy of military service. We are grateful that the jury in this case held Mr. Robbins accountable for his deceptive conduct. This sentence shows that we will vigorously pursue all individuals who lie about their military service in order to achieve personal, professional or monetary gains.”

According to evidence presented at trial by Assistant United States Attorneys Zach Lee and Ashley Neese, Ronnie L. Robbins, a resident of Dickenson County, Virginia and the Dickenson County Commissioner of Revenue from 1996 to 2010, served in the United States Army on active duty from July 28, 1972, to July 25, 1975. During that time period, as demonstrated by his official military records, Robbins did not serve in Vietnam or in any location overseas.

Video evidence played for the jury showed Robbins at an elementary school Veterans' Day program falsely stating that he had served in Vietnam. Additionally, during his re-election campaign in 2003, Robbins produced and distributed campaign materials that falsely stated he was a recipient of the Vietnam Service Medal and the Vietnam Campaign Medal. Evidence at trial demonstrated that Robbins was not awarded the Vietnam Campaign Medal or the Vietnam Service

Medal, nor was he entitled to either award.

Evidence was also presented that in September 2006 Robbins provided altered military discharge certificates to the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization indicating he had served overseas and been awarded the Vietnam Service Medal and the Vietnam Campaign Medal. Witness testimony during the trial also demonstrated that during his re-election campaign in September 2007 Robbins provided altered military discharge certificates to a reporter from the Dickenson Star newspaper in an attempt to prove he had served in Vietnam.

Additional evidence presented during the trial showed that on March 17, 2009, Robbins made false statements in an application to the Department of Veterans' Affairs for non-combat post-traumatic stress disorder disability benefits. Robbins claimed that he was disabled due to an event in October 1973 when a fellow military policeman had been killed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. In his application, Robbins falsely stated that in his capacity as a military policeman he had responded to a bank robbery attempt and that his best friend had been killed during the bank robbery.

Based upon these false statements, on November 9, 2010, the Department of Veterans Affairs made a determination to award disability benefits to Robbins for non-combat related post-traumatic stress disorder. Evidence at trial proved that Robbins' description of the events in October 1973 were materially different from the actual events that occurred. It was further demonstrated that there was no evidence that Robbins was present during the death of the military policeman or that he was even friends with him. It was also demonstrated through Robbins' disability benefits application records that to substantiate his claim Robbins stated he was unable to socialize, had quit participating in activities and hobbies, was unable to leave the house, and that his problems were exacerbated whenever he encountered the sound of gunfire. However, evidence presented at trial indicated that after making his application, and up until the day of the trial, Robbins continued to participate in civil war battle re-enactments, military funerals, and that he maintained his position as Commander of the American Legion Post in Clintwood, Virginia.

The investigation of the case was conducted by the Department of Defense Criminal Investigative Service, Department of Veterans' Affairs Office of the Inspector General, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant United States Attorneys Zachary Lee and Ashley Neese prosecuted the case for the United States.

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