

JIM WEBB  
VIRGINIA

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES  
COMMITTEE ON  
FOREIGN RELATIONS  
COMMITTEE ON  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

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## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4605

May 19, 2009

Honorable Carl Levin  
Chairman  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510-6050

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to inform you of allegations that have been raised by Mrs. Siobhan Esposito, a resident of Alexandria, Virginia, regarding Major General Joseph Taluto and his recent nomination to serve as director of the Army National Guard.

In her enclosed letter of May 17, Mrs. Esposito alleges General Taluto is "utterly unsuited to hold this position of great trust" based on his performance while in command of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division in 2005 and his actions following the murder of her husband while assigned to his division.

Mrs. Esposito's husband, Captain Phillip Esposito, and 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Louis Allen were assigned to an Army National Guard unit in the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division at the time of their deaths in Tikrit, Iraq, in June 2005. The military investigation into their deaths determined that they resulted from the detonation of an explosive device placed in the window of Captain Esposito's office. In response to an inquiry I made this March on Mrs. Esposito's behalf, the Army confirmed that Staff Sergeant Alberto Martinez, the soldier charged with the two deaths, was tried at a General Court-Martial and found not guilty by an enlisted panel. The Army forwarded Mrs. Esposito's concerns to the Staff Judge Advocate, U.S. Army Forces Command, so that she could be informed, within the law, what can be said regarding the Army's processing of this case. To my knowledge, the Army has not publicly identified or charged any other suspects in the killings.

Mrs. Esposito has raised serious allegations regarding General Taluto's command of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division and the investigation into the death of her husband. Owing to the gravity of her allegations, I believe that the full Committee should not act on Major Taluto's nomination until it ascertains the facts surrounding this matter. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Jim Webb  
United States Senator

May 17, 2009

The Honorable James H. Webb, Jr.  
United States Senate  
248 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-4604

**Re: Nomination of Major General Joseph Taluto to serve as Director of the Army National Guard**

Dear Senator Webb:

I wish to communicate to you and your colleagues serving on the Senate Armed Services committee my steadfast opposition to the appointment of Major General Joseph Taluto to serve as Director of the Army National Guard. Based upon his actions surrounding the murder of my husband, Captain Phillip Esposito in Iraq in 2005, I hold that General Taluto is utterly unsuited to hold this position of great trust and that the Senate should reject his appointment. My reasoning is as follows:

In 2005, General Taluto commanded the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division, a division defined by its lack of military discipline and disrespect for the rules, regulations and laws that govern the armed forces. Specifically, he oversaw a division in which a staff non-commissioned officer issued repeated threats of murder against his superior officer without any consequence or punishment. Additionally, court records reveal that he oversaw a division that lost nearly a million dollars of battle necessary gear—again with no consequence for those responsible.

When two officers under his command were murdered (to include my late husband), General Taluto oversaw an investigation that was so compromised that it subsequently resulted in the full acquittal of the accused perpetrator. These egregious errors denied justice to those who deserved it, ranging from the perpetrator (who deserved the full weight of the law borne upon him) to the families of the victims of this crime (who deserved the opportunity to live the rest of their lives knowing that proper justice had been served and the deaths of their loved ones had been avenged under the law). When I approached General Taluto after the death of my husband, while initially supportive, he ultimately became evasive and defensive as it became clear that the larger negative culture of the division that he commanded led to the needless deaths of those in his charge. General Taluto refused to answer even basic questions concerning his responsibilities and the nature of his command over his men. General Taluto displayed a chronic lack of interest for the actions of his men--again, actions which led to the murder of two officers serving under his command. I maintain that even if General Taluto's duties prevented him from having direct knowledge of the actions of those under his

command, he is still accountable for the overarching tone that animated his division and the professional actions of his subordinates.

Thus the horror of my life is that my husband's death was avoidable, if only a man like General Taluto had performed his job properly. General Taluto might not have set off the claymore mine that eviscerated my husband, left me a widow and left my daughter a half-orphan,

but his inaction and bungling was an unforgivable catalyst for my husband's death and the acquittal of his killer. For this, Major General Joseph Taluto bears ultimate responsibility: the 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division was his division and his division alone. At root, I hold that General Taluto's actions reveal that he has nothing less than a callous disregard for the lives and fate of his own men. To somehow maintain that this general has displayed the integrity, trustworthiness and competence necessary to direct the affairs of the entire National Guard is to ignore his repeated and substantive failures. As such, I urge you and your colleagues in the Senate to reject General Taluto's nomination to serve as Director of the Army National Guard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Siobhan Esposito". The signature is written in black ink on a white background and is enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Mrs. Siobhan Esposito