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News > Breaking News

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## Breaking News

Posted on Wed, Nov. 14, 2007 10:12 AM

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### Marine vet sentenced for false Purple Heart claim

The Associated Press

TOPEKA | A Marine veteran from Kansas has been sentenced to probation for falsely claiming he received the Purple Heart so that he could get a special license plate.

During his sentencing hearing Tuesday, Timothy Allen DeBusk, 27, was blasted by combat-wounded veterans for staining the honor reserved for those wounded or killed in action. DeBusk pleaded guilty in September to fraudulently trying to obtain a Purple Heart license plate for his car.

DeBusk was a sergeant when he was an active-duty Marine.

To receive a Purple Heart, a member of the military must be wounded or killed in combat. DeBusk served in Iraq but wasn't wounded.

District Court Chief Judge Nancy Parrish sentenced DeBusk to two consecutive eight-month jail terms but suspended the time behind bars. She placed DeBusk on 18 months of probation and ordered him to undergo a mental evaluation and serve 200 hours of community service.

"You very much violated the honor that (these combat-wounded veterans) have received and the honor that others wounded in combat have received," Parrish said.

In court, DeBusk apologized for his actions, saying he lacked the moral guidance to make the right decision at the time.

"I am very sorry for what I did," DeBusk said. "I didn't have the Lord at the time."

Veterans who spoke Tuesday noted that the sentencing came on the 25th anniversary of the dedication of the Vietnam Memorial Wall, two days after Veterans Day and three after the Marine Corps' 232nd birthday.

"You are a despicable person," said George McKnight, a Vietnam veteran who retired in 1985 after 21 years in the Army.

McKnight was a master sergeant and suffered burns and shrapnel wounds when two rocket-propelled grenades struck his tank during the 1968 Tet Offensive.

Other veterans said DeBusk cheapened the award for those who served and earned the medal for being seriously wounded or killed in service to the country.

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