

August 24, 2004

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush,

We, the undersigned members of the United States Senate call on you to specifically condemn the recent attack ads and accompanying campaign which dishonor Senator John Kerry's combat record in the Vietnam War. These false charges represent the worst kind of politics, and we agree with both Senator John McCain and Senator Kerry that a firmly established service record in the United States Military is fully above reproach. As Veterans of the armed services, we ask that you recognize this blatant attempt at character assassination, and publicly condemn it.

Our outrage over these advertisements and tactics has nothing to do with the tax code or campaign finance reform efforts of this nation. Our pain from seeing these slanderous attacks stems from something much more fundamental, that if one veteran's record is called into question, the service of all American veterans is questioned. This administration must not tacitly comply with unfounded accusations which have suddenly appeared 35 years after the fact, and serve to denigrate the service of a true American patriot. The veterans serving today should never have to expect this kind of treatment, when the wars of their generation have passed into history. We brothers and sisters in arms expect our Commander-in-Chief to stand up and reject this assault upon John Kerry's honor, the honor of American veterans and that of the United States Navy.

As you yourself have said, there is nothing complicated about supporting our troops. The leaders of this nation should make it clear that the members of our military will not only be supported when they wear the uniform, but also when they return home to the land they fought to defend. Their valor and their wounds, both physical and psychological, make them heroes for as long as they live, a status which

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should not and must not change simply because they seek to enter public service. We who wore the uniform, served in different branches of the military join together today to defend a fellow veteran from attacks we know to be false, and politically-motivated slander. Such attacks have no place in our democratic process.

Mr. President, as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, we believe you owe a special duty to America's combat veterans when they are under false and scurrilous attacks. We hope you will recognize this duty, and speak out against this group and their efforts to smear the reputation of a man who has served this country nobly.

Call on this group to cease and desist. We can return this campaign season to a discussion of the issues on either side, and restore faith in the political system. As Americans, we should expect nothing less.

Sincerely,

Alamy

Jim Collins

Tom Hark

Frank R. Lautenberg

Tom Carper

John McCain

Daniel K. Akaka

John Reed

Bill Nelson