

VFW to Toledo Mayor: Support the Troops and Eliminate the Personal Politics

Feb 14, 2008

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The VFW is disappointed with the mayor of Toledo, Ohio, for his recent insensitivities directed toward a Michigan-based U.S. Marine Corps unit.

Last week, Mayor Carty Finkbeiner refused to allow a 200-member Marine unit from Michigan to conduct urban-warfare training in the city. The city council has since apologized to the unit, but the mayor is remaining firm in his refusal to allow military training in the city saying that the Marine's guerilla-style training would frighten city residents.

This is the second incident recently of local political interference with military operations; the previous was the Berkeley (California) City Council voting to boot a Marine Recruiting Station out of town. According to media outlets, residents in both cities are furious with their elected officials for promoting personal beliefs versus the will of the city residents.

"The VFW urges elected officials to be more mindful of allowing personal politics to influence public policy," said George Lisicki, the national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. "In both cases, the actions of elected city officials have caused undue negative publicity for their cities."

Toledo's tourists bureau also is upset with the mayor and is offering the unit's members a free hotel stay, restaurant gift certificates and a visit to the zoo.

"The 2.3 million members of the VFW and its Auxiliaries are glad the Toledo city council issued a public apology, but we are still upset with Mayor Finkbeiner's treatment of the Marine unit," said Lisicki, a Vietnam War veteran from Carteret, N.J. "We hope there won't be anymore incidents like these, and the national publicity resulting from these negative events will serve as a message to other city councils across the nation to respect the members of our armed forces. These past insensitivities directed at our Marines send the wrong message to our troops. More importantly, they are harmful to troop morale."

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