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PROSECUTING FRAUD CASES: Military impostors targeted**State equivalent of Stolen Valor Act proposed**

By KEITH ROGERS

LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

Bill Anton
Seeks state stolen valor law

The Nevada Veterans Services Commission wants a state stolen valor law to crack down on military impostors.

On Wednesday, the commission asked its staff to craft legislation that empowers law enforcement to arrest and prosecute those who violate the federal Stolen Valor Act of 2005.

If approved Nevada would join the states with laws to prosecute cases not taken up by federal authorities. Connecticut, Illinois, Missouri, California and Kentucky have approved stolen valor measures, and Tennessee and Georgia are considering a similar law.

The Nevada measure would be aimed at protecting the integrity of the state's 339,000 veterans who served the country honorably, said retired Army Maj. Gen. Scott Smith, a commission member who invited fellow soldier and veterans advocate Bill Anton of North Las Vegas to make a presentation about stolen valor legislation.

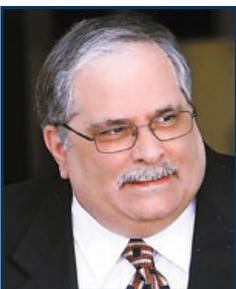
"I believe everybody who has served his or her country has a vested interest in honesty and integrity whether you were a cook, a driver, a logistician, an infantryman or a cannon cocker," Smith said Thursday. "What you did was in service to our country, and anybody who misrepresents themselves takes a little bit of honor away from our country."

The commission, chaired by Assemblywoman Kathy McClain, D-Las Vegas, voted unanimously in favor of the recommendation in the absence of members Sean Fellows, Bill Baumann and state Sen. Terry Care, D-Las Vegas.

Anton, who was inducted into the Army Ranger Hall of Fame last year, said the FBI has time to work on only the most egregious military fraud cases because agents have been consumed investigating terrorism cases since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorism attacks.

"The problem is fast reaching epidemic proportions," Anton said. "The impostors ... put their tales of heroism to a wide variety of uses. For some it is a matter of bolstering sagging ego. For others it is a means of gaining respect among their peers. Some invent tales of bravery in seeking public office."

"Others claim military honors to acquire employment, and still others tell stories of hardship and sacrifice on the battlefield while seeking personal or financial gain," he said. "Among their victims are banks, charities, businesses, veterans' organizations and wealthy, lonely women. At one time or another, each has fallen prey to the military con man."

Jacob Cruze
Cited for traffic violationsDavid M. Perelman
Faces August trial

Anton's plea came as the U.S. Attorney's office is two months away from prosecuting its first case in Nevada under the federal Stolen Valor Act of 2005.

Air Force veteran David M. Perelman, a former Department of Veterans Affairs employee, is accused of unauthorized wearing of a military medal, the Purple Heart, and stealing about \$180,000 in monthly disability benefits from the VA. His trial is scheduled for Aug. 30 in U.S. District Court in Las Vegas. The felony theft charge for stealing VA benefits carries up to 10 years in prison and a conviction on the misdemeanor of "unauthorized wearing of a military medal" could carry a fine and an additional year in prison.

Perelman, 57, of Las Vegas is accused of wearing a Purple Heart in 2008 during a national convention of recipients of the medal. He was the Nevada commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart that year and had worked as a clerk at a local VA office. He claimed he was wounded in combat in Vietnam when in fact he was wounded by a self-inflicted gunshot in 1991, an indictment says.

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U.S. v. Anton, No. 08-5047, archived on September 2, 2010

Perelman also once claimed to have earned a Medal of Honor, the highest U.S. military valor award, and distributed a phony citation that was the subject of a 1997 federal court case in California. The case was dismissed because prosecutors waited too long to bring him to trial.

In 2006, Anton alerted the FBI to a military impostor, Jacob Cruze, who claimed to be a retired Army colonel and managed to obtain special Purple Heart license plates illegally. The FBI took no immediate action against Cruze, but a Las Vegas police detective for an FBI task force confiscated the Purple Heart tags. Instead of facing stolen valor charges, Cruze was cited for three traffic violations that carried combined fines of \$1,620. A justice of the peace reduced the fines collectively to \$399.

If Nevada would have had its own stolen valor law at the time, Anton said, prosecution for the more serious violations for impersonating a military officer and illegally wearing valor medals "absolutely wouldn't have fallen through the cracks."

"The federal law is being selective enforced, and we want the veterans who are quite incensed over the magnitude of stole valor to have state and local law enforcement officers apprehend and prosecute these impostors," Anton said.

Contact reporter Keith Rogers at krogers@reviewjournal.com or 702-383-0308.

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Doug.Lilly wrote on *June 26, 2010 08:18 AM*:

"Jack.Webb wrote on June 25, 2010 06:39 PM: As a recipient of the Medal of Honor, the Army Distinguished Service Cross, the Gold Lifesaving Medal, the Army and Air Force Presidential Citation, the Purple Heart as well as others I am completely appalled at these impostors. Lieutenant Colonel Jack Webb, US Army, Ret" There is NO one named LT.Colonel Jack Webb who is a MOH recipient. There aren't even any recipients currently living in Nevada. Clowns like you are the reason this law is needed. Do you think this is a joke pal? You WILL be caught and prosecuted.

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Doug.Lilly wrote on *June 26, 2010 08:01 AM*:

I hope this law passes. Seems I cannot go to a bar anymore without some drunk wanting to tell me he was a green beret who won the medal of honor. I am going to start making citizens arrests. (These clowns need to be dragged by their necks to Walter Reed or Arlington.)

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jayster9999 wrote on *June 26, 2010 05:30 AM*:

Maybe David would like to meet several of those veterans, you know the ones with no integrity, obviously he has a very limited experience in the real world and I think that they could enlighten him, OH wait a coward only espouses trash when they know that they are anonymous. It must truly suck to be you David, only able to vent as a coward. As for Mr. Anton Thank you and all veterans for your service. "Rangers Lead The way" HHC 1/75 INF. (RGR)

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BrianfromMI wrote on *June 25, 2010 08:07 PM*:

Let me be understood on a few things: I have an enormous amount of respect for the men and women who have earned these medals, and an equal amount of respect for the men and women who served and were not recognized. Veterans gave a blank check to the people of this country, in case of emergency that check was payable in any amount, up to and including our lives. Anyone who doesn't respect that is a fool, an ass or an enemy of this country. Some fool, pretending to be something he or she is not, is simply not worth my time. I don't think they are stealing anything from anybody. Laws against perjury protect us from fraud; VA, do your job and investigate applicants for benefits. I don't want to spend dwindling public dollars prosecuting these liars and

pretenders. Let our legal heavy hitters go after the real enemies of our country. We don't need another law chipping away at our rights. We need less government, not more. If this "Stolen Valor" issue is so important, let one of our service organizations set up a comprehensive database of all the VERIFIED recipients of decorations for valor, bravery and wounds. (Names and information to be added only after awards, citations, orders and DD214's are VERIFIED.)When somebody makes a claim, it could then be quickly and easily verified or refuted. There's no need for a law, the truth hurts a liar more than any law. I am a LTC, UASR, Ret., disabled by wounds suffered in combat. I have decorations for valor, for being wounded in combat and a few other things that are between me, my conscience and the general who signed the orders. I am a fairly typical American soldier; active duty and then reserve. When I was recalled to active duty, I reported as ordered. I am proud of my service, but it is my pride, not for public consumption and it cannot be stolen from me.

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Jack.Webb wrote on June 25, 2010 06:39 PM:

As a recipient of the Medal of Honor, the Army Distinguished Service Cross, the Gold Lifesaving Medal, the Army and Air Force Presidential Citation, the Purple Heart as well as others I am completely appalled at these impostors.
Lieutenant Colonel Jack Webb, US Army, Ret.

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derek.marlowe wrote on June 25, 2010 05:16 PM:

David, you are a very stupid, sick and deranged creep. Other than that, you are probably a great guy.

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David wrote on June 25, 2010 02:05 PM:

Yes, many mentally deranged people reference posse comitatus. It is about as common as the claims of being Napoleon. I think what you were going for is "David is probably not a willfully ignorant nationalistic military worshipping boot licker who understands fully the danger of a standing army is to freedom".

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rmolnar wrote on June 25, 2010 01:46 PM:

David is probably mentally deranged.

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David wrote on June 25, 2010 11:55 AM:

I'll be happy to take my chances on the scenerio you came up with involving al-Queda, eagleii. That has about as much chance of happening as hitting the lottery and getting hit by lightning twice all within the same hour. Although, if a platoon is operating close enough to come to my rescue don't you think they might be dishonoring thier oath by breaking posse comitatus? And don't fall back on the UnPatriot Act. We all know how un-American that is. Oh yeah, that oath is just for show. Few actually take it seriously. Thus, the laughter from me about military members having integrity.

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Moe.Badderman wrote on June 25, 2010 11:35 AM:

The issue at hand is not about honor, valor, or integrity -- the issue is fraud. Fraudsters of every stripe should be prosecuted for their deception, including those who use false claims of military duty or awards.

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