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US military plans to extradite stop-lossed Iraq war vet to Iraq for court martial over protest rap song

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Fort Stewart, Ga. – The US military plans to extradite a stop-lossed Iraq war veteran to Iraq “within a few days” to face a court martial for allegedly threatening military officers in a protest rap song he made.

Spc. Marc Hall has been jailed in the Liberty County Jail near Fort Stewart, Ga., since Dec. 11 because he wrote a song called “Stop Loss” about the practice of involuntarily extending military members’ contracts.

"It is our belief that the Army would violate its own regulations by deploying Marc and it would certainly violate his right to due process by making it far more difficult to get witnesses. It appears the Army doesn't believe it can get a conviction in a fair and public trial. We will do whatever we can to insure he remain in the United States," said Hall's civilian attorney, David Gespass.

Gespass claims the Army's attempts to deploy Hall violate Army Regulations 600-8-105 and the Army's conscientious objector regulations. Hall applied for a conscientious objector discharge Monday. The military's move would also separate Hall from both his civilian legal team and military defender.

"The Army seeks to disappear Marc and the politically charged issues involved here, including: the unfair stop-loss policy, the boundary of free speech and art by soldiers, and the continuing Iraq occupation. The actual charges are overblown if not frivolous, so I'm not surprised the Army wants to avoid having a public trial," explained Jeff Paterson, executive director of Courage to Resist.

An Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) member, Hall served 14 months in Iraq. He was scheduled to end his military contract on Feb. 27 but received a stop loss order that he would have to stay on active-duty to re-deploy to Iraq with his unit.

"Marc served his tour of duty to Iraq honorably," said Brenda McElveen, Hall's mother. "To his dismay, he was told that he would be deployed again. When Marc voiced his concerns over this matter, his concerns fell on deaf ears. To let his frustration be known, Marc wrote and released the song. Marc is not now nor has he ever been violent."

Using stop loss orders, the US military has stopped about 185,000 soldiers from leaving the military since 2001. An additional 13,000 troops are now serving under stop-loss orders. President Obama said he thinks the practice should be stopped.

Hall, 34, was charged Dec. 17 with five specifications in violation of Article 134 of the Uniform Code of Military Conduct, including "wrongfully threatening acts of violence against members of his unit." His arrest came about a month after 13 people were killed in a shooting incident at Fort Hood, Texas. Hall, whose hip-hop name is Marc Watercus, mailed a copy of his "Stop Loss" song to the Pentagon.

Based at Fort Stewart, Hall said the song was a "free expression of how people feel about the Army and its stop-loss policy" not a threat. "My first sergeant said he actually liked the song and that he did not take it as a threat," Hall added.

A South Carolina native, Hall wanted to leave the military to spend more time with his wife and child.

Hall's song: <http://marcwatercus.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/stoploss.mp3>

A copy of the US Army's press release about transferring Hall to Iraq is available on request.

IVAW is a national organization of veterans and active-duty service members who have served since September 11, 2001 – including those who took part in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. IVAW also is dedicated to fighting for adequate physical and mental healthcare, full benefits, and other support for returning veterans.

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