

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 22/09 (AMR 20/007/2009, 23 January 2009) Conscientious Objector

CANADA

Dean Walcott (m)

Dean Walcott has been allowed to stay in Canada until the country's Federal Court decides whether or not to review his case. It is not yet known when this will be decided. He had been due to be deported to the USA on 30 January. If deported to the USA, he risks being court-martialled and imprisoned for between one and five years and would therefore be a prisoner of conscience.

Dean Walcott joined the US marines in 2000. He fled to Canada in December 2006 because of his conscientious objection to the war in Iraq, and applied for protection as a refugee. His application was rejected and subsequent applications to remain in Canada were also denied. He was then ordered to leave the country.

Walcott began to question the reasons given for the US military mission in Iraq during a posting in the US in July 2003. At that time he learnt that members of the coalition forces in Iraq had committed acts of torture and other violations and the media began reporting that there were no weapons of mass destruction there. Dean Walcott had previously witnessed US and British soldiers beating Iraqi children in March 2003 when he was posted to Kuwait and his duties included patrolling the Iraqi town of Safwan, close to the border with Kuwait. During his posting in 2004 to an army hospital in Stuttgart, Germany, Dean Walcott's interactions with injured soldiers, their parents, and Iraqi children who were patients at the hospital made him feel distressed with his personal involvement in the war.

While undergoing field training in the US in January 2005, Dean Walcott's objections and distress at being personally involved in the conflict further developed when he concluded that there were no justifiable reasons for the war. When his unit was deployed to Iraq in August 2005, he began to experience emotional difficulties which he tried to discuss with doctors. His attempts to do so were thwarted by his chain of command. In March 2006 Walcott was posted to the US where he was able to seek professional advice and was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress (PTSD) by two civilian psychologists. His duties posting at this point involved the training of army reservists who were to be deployed to Iraq. He found this role morally reprehensible and so he began to investigate ways of relieving himself of his army obligations, including applying for conscientious objector status.

Dean Walcott is seeking refugee status on a number of grounds, including that if returned to his unit in the USA, he would risk being subjected to hazing (bullying) and other non-judicial punishment, and that some other outspoken conscientious objectors had been returned to their units and subjected to ill-treatment, including hard labour and physical abuse.

Whilst in Canada, Dean Walcott has spoken out about his objection to the armed conflict in Iraq, and has become a member of a Canadian organisation, the War Resisters Support Campaign, which works to lobby the Canadian government to offer sanctuary to US military personnel who go to Canada because of their opposition to the armed conflict in Iraq.

No further action is required at present. Many thanks to all those who sent appeals.