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# U.S. Marine sues Rep. Murtha for slander

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PITTSBURGH, Sept. 26 (UPI) -- A U.S. Marine has filed a lawsuit against Rep. [John Murtha](#), D-Pa., claiming Murtha slandered him in his comments about the Haditha incident in Iraq.

[Justin Sharratt](#) of Canonsburg, who lives in Murtha's district, was one of seven Marines who have been cleared of any criminal actions at Haditha. He filed a federal lawsuit Thursday in Pittsburgh, claiming that Murtha denied him constitutional rights by making a fair trial more difficult, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported.

Marines killed 24 Iraqis at Haditha in November 2005, at least 15 of the dead subsequently shown to be civilians. After the deaths became public, Murtha, a former Marine and decorated Vietnam veteran who opposed the Iraq War, compared Haditha to the killings at My Lai.

Eight Marines were charged in the case, but seven have been cleared. Prosecutors are trying to reinstate charges against one.

Sharratt's slander claim must clear a high legal hurdle because Murtha can argue that he holds sovereign immunity for remarks made in the course of his official duties. But the claim that Murtha denied Sharratt the right to a fair trial has a lower standard of proof, the newspaper said.



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