

Testimony for: Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy, Intergovernmental Relations and Procurement Reform – SDVOSB Inclusion in Government Contracting

07 FEB 2012

Presented By: William J. Puopolo, MAJ USANG, SDVOSB Owner and Advocate

Contact: 727-856-1942 or billp@verissimoglobal.com

I want to thank the committee for taking the time to address the Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) program; we as a community are encouraged that we are having the discussion to improve opportunities for Service Disabled Veterans in federal contracting. I want to thank all veterans for their service and sacrifice and especially our Vietnam Veterans, who have toiled for veteran benefits. Each and every day Global War On Terrorism veterans (GWOT) can acknowledge that the efforts of our Vietnam Veterans have provided us with the proper tools to conduct full spectrum operations across the globe and have improved health care and benefits over the last several decades.

The SDV community is made up of men and women from all races, religions and creeds. We view ourselves as we did in uniform; one is judged by rank, but more importantly character. A service member or veteran is evaluated on their dedication, service, commitment and honesty, not their background.

Our GWOT Veterans are returning home with a sense of empowerment, brought on by the many successful missions they have accomplished in some of the harshest environments in the world. They are fully prepared and eager to become a part of business and civic functions. We want to deliver the message that SDVOSBs are capable, ethical, faster and cheaper; that we want to hire our fellow brothers and sisters in arms who have sacrificed so much from Vietnam to the Global War on Terrorism. We have banded together to say this program was not designed for 20 SDVOSBs to succeed and thousands fail.

Our GWOT Veterans are facing many similar concerns of past veterans. They are also facing many different challenges. Advances in medicine have allowed some of the most severely wounded warriors to lead productive lives and continue to contribute in the workplace. Posttraumatic stress has been brought into the public arena and has produced both positive and negative perceptions and attitudes. The tactics of our enemy using IEDs, combated by our protective equipment, has led to less fatal injuries and an increase in Traumatic Brain Injury; the Army alone has treated over 126,000 known cases since the beginning of the war. Our returning heroes are now facing one of the worst recessions we have seen and a volatile world

economy that is breeding uncertainty and anxiety for those who served. The unemployment rate for veterans age 18 to 24 is 31 percent and projections estimate that the rate for the National Guard and Reserve members could reach 50 percent in the next two years.

The approximate .45 to 1 percent of our population that has taken on the burden of the Global War on Terrorism over the last decade are by no means victims. Most GWOT veterans have expressed that they were and continue to be prepared to face our enemies, endure hardship and face fear in combat zones. The two events that become overwhelming to even the most hardened service member are leaving their family behind and losing a fellow comrade in combat, peacetime or to suicide.

I believe that any numbers presented must be scrutinized to seek the truth and identify discrepancies. There are currently 18,346 SDVOSB profiles in the SBA small business database. In 2007 the SBA reported that there were over 400,000 businesses owned by Service Disabled Veterans, a number I believe has decreased due to lack of opportunities, a harsh economy and an unfriendly small business climate. Yet we still see many returning Service Disabled Veterans maintaining the entrepreneurial spirit and starting up companies. They want to identify themselves as Soldier and Vetrepeneur.

The Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) program is facing immense hurdles. Our disabled veterans have returned home with a drive to improve the economic and moral situation of the country they love and defend. They also have a dynamic commitment to network with and hire other comrades in arms. Many disabled veterans must overcome their disability first and then overcome the challenges of entrepreneurship. They have the fortitude to enter an unfamiliar business world, learn quickly and embrace the vision that they will be successful.

I served with the best and brightest America has to offer in our Armed Forces. On April 2nd, 2005, while deployed at Abu Ghraib Prison, our joint team was engaged in a two hour battle with highly trained Al Qaeda and Syrian operatives. Every Soldier, Sailor, Airman and Marine served with honor and contributed to a crushing defeat of our enemies. At the end of the day there were fifty less bad guys in the world.

Although Al Qaeda gave us a blow, we beat them decisively. Gen. Peter Pace called the coordinated attack on Abu Ghraib "The largest battle since the end of major combat operations in Iraq." Other sources called it the "Largest attack on a US Base since the end of the Vietnam War."

At that time I thought that the Battle for Abu Ghraib would be the hardest thing I ever did in my life. I had no idea that becoming a “*Vetrepeneur*” would be an even tougher fight.

Unfortunately, I believe that the current SDVOSB program, designed to help disabled veterans, is hurting them due to hurdles, lack of accountability, and unnecessary *bureaucracy* within the Federal Government contracting system.

There has been a disconnect between the program’s intentions and execution. Our SDVs have heard thousands of reasons why they can’t do business with the government or corporate America and simply want to hear one way they can. A few of the major hurdles we are facing are:

- Contract bundling reduces access - GSA, Enterprise Contracts, GWACs, IDIQs and BPAs
- No level playing field between SDVOSBs, 8A and HUBzone companies
- No enforcement of Large Business Sub-Contracting Plans
- Double counting of contract awards – credit for SDVOB awards that were actually granted through 8A or HUBzone vehicles
- Reliance on Incumbent Contractors reduces access
- False Reporting of SDVOSB numbers – large pass through used to achieve goals
- Government Bureaucracies (such as the SBA) that are ill equipped to help SDVOBs
- Past Performance difficult to achieve without opportunities for work
- Broken Mentor Protégé programs do not develop SDVOBs or provide meaningful work
- Bonding issues
- CVE certification process that has set the bar too high or too low and is not certifying legitimate SDVOSBs

The SDVOSB program is complex and no one action will overcome the hurdles and issues we face. Many people I now talk to, outside the community, respond with disbelief when I discuss the lack of opportunities and the barriers in place. There is an art and science that has come to drive the SDVOSB program that make it elusive and exclusive. The SDVOSB community is prepared not only to identify the problems, but provide solutions.

The two over arching measures that need to be taken are:

- Legislative loopholes have to be closed and the SDVOSB program needs to be on a level playing field with other small businesses; oversight and accountability must be a cornerstone of the process.

- We must gain the will of Federal Departments and Agencies, in word and deed, to take down the hurdles, work with SDVOSBs to find innovative and concrete solutions and make their SDVOSB program inclusive not exclusive.

Today I have addressed a fraction of the hurdles that face the SDVOSB community. I am always available to discuss issues in detail or advocate for our SDVOSBs. I have met so many great people in the movement that I feel honored just to stand shoulder to shoulder with them and be counted among the SDVOSB ranks.

The SDVOSB community has convinced many that the hard work and ethics of our SDVOSBs will build the country as a whole and improve our government, economic and moral institutions. We have a great opportunity to tap into the motivation, skills and knowledge that our veterans can give back to our country. This opportunity may perish if we don't make an effort to exploit it. I am optimistic that 2012 will be the tipping point for the SDVOSB program and we will meet and exceed our goals in the near future. The SDVOSB community will work to ensure that those service disabled veterans who have the will to continue to contribute to our national defense and infrastructure will have ample assistance and opportunity. We hope federal departments, agencies and large prime contractors will do the same.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

As of 30 March 2011

PUOPOLO, William Joseph,

Captain, Field Artillery, USANG

Date and Place of Birth: 24 December 1976, Haverhill, MA

Mandatory Removal Date: 01 Jul 2024

Home Address: 7904 Oregold Dr.
New Port Richey, FL 34654

Present Assignment: IO FA-30 Instructor (In Training), 3-124th IO BN, Northfield, VT

Civilian Occupation: President, Verissimo Global Inc.

Enlisted Service:

None

Source and Date of Commission:

ROTC, 01 June 1996 (2 year Army ROTC Scholarship)

Total Years of Commissioned Service:

Over 14 years

Total Years of Service (Enlisted and Commissioned):

Over 14 years

Military Education:

Year Completed

Field Artillery, Officers' Basic Course (resident)

1999

Field Artillery School, Captains' Career Course, Honor Graduate (non-res.)

2004

Educational Degrees:

Year Received

University of Massachusetts, Lowell, MA, MBA

2004

Norwich University, Northfield, VT, BA (Criminal Justice)

1998

Marion Military Institute, Marion, AL, AA (Liberal Arts)

1996

William J. Puopolo

MAJ, FA

PUOPOLO, William Joseph,

As of 30 March 2011

Decorations, Service Medals and Badges:

Bronze Star Medal (2010)
Joint Service Commendation Medal (2005)
Army Commendation Medal (2002)
Army Achievement Medal w/ 2 Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters (3rd Award) (2000, 2004, 2005)
Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal w/ one Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster (3rd Award)
National Defense Service Medal (2002)
Afghanistan Campaign Medal (2010)
Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal (Iraq 2005)
Global War on Terrorism Service Medal (2001)
Korean Defense Service Medal (2000)
Armed Forces Reserve Medal w/ "M" Device (2005)
NATO Article Five Medal – ISAF (2010)
Army Service Ribbon (1999)
Overseas Service Ribbon w/ Numeral "3" (3rd Award) (2000, 2005, 2010)
Joint Meritorious Unit Award (2005)
Republic Of Korea Presidential Unit Citation (2000)
Combat Action Badge (2005)

Chronological List of Appointments:

2LT	USAR	01 Jun 96
1LT	USAR	31 May 98
CPT	USAR	01 May 00
MAJ	USAR	12 NOV 09

Chronological Record of Duty Assignments:

NATIONAL GUARD / USAR – Not on Active Duty

	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
Fire Direction Officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1 st Battalion, 102 nd Field Artillery Regiment – Quincy, Massachusetts	Feb 02	Sep 04
Fire Direction Officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1 st Battalion, 102 nd Field Artillery Regiment – Quincy, Massachusetts	Jan 06	Mar 06
Effects Cell Coordinator, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1 st Battalion, 181 st Field Infantry Regiment – Worcester, Massachusetts	Mar 06	Oct 06
S4, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 377 th Military Intelligence Battalion, USAR, Orlando, Florida	Dec 06	Oct 07
Assistant Operations Officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1 st Battalion, 86 th Field Artillery, Williston, VT	Sep 07	Apr 08
IO FA-30 Instructor (In Training), 3-124th IO BN, Northfield, VT	Apr 08	PRES

ACTIVE DUTY

Platoon Leader, Charlie Battery, 6 th Battalion, 37 th Field Artillery Regiment, Camp Stanley, Republic of Korea	Jun 99	Jul 00
Aviation Battalion Fire Support Officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 10 th Mountain Division Artillery (Light) – Ft. Drum, New York	Aug 00	Jan 02
Assistant Operations Officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery Forward 2 (RAOC)), 1 st Battalion, 102 nd Field Artillery Regiment – Forward Operating Base Abu Ghraib, Abu Ghraib, Iraq	Sep 04	Jan 06
Moral Welfare Recreation / Joint Visitors Bureau Chief, 86 th BSTB, Base Operations, Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan	Nov 09	Feb 11

William J. Puopolo

7904 Oregold Dr.
New Port Richey, FL 34654
William.Puopolo@gmail.com
(727) 856-1942

EDUCATION

2002 – 2004	UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS	LOWELL, MA
	Masters of Business Administration, GPA 3.62	
1996 - 1998	NORWICH UNIVERSITY, THE MILITARY COLLEGE OF VERMONT	NORTHFIELD, VT
	Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice, GPA 3.65	

SECURITY CLEARANCE: TS/SCI

EXPERIENCE

2006 - Pres. **PRESIDENT, VERISSIMO TECHNOLOGIES, SERVICE DISABLED VETERAN OWNED BUSINESS**
PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER, ELITE SDVOB NETWORK – FLORIDA CHAPTER
MEMBER FLORIDA DISABLED VETERAN BUSINESS INITIATIVE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TRDA)

CAPTAIN(P) UNITED STATES ARMY

2004 – 2006	OPERATIONS OFFICER	FOB ABU GHRAIB, IRAQ
	Operations Officer for Forward Operating Base Abu Ghraib in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Responsible for Anti-terrorism / Force protection, Life Support and Base Defense.	

- Managed subordinate organizations totaling 1,300 military personnel, 800 Department of Defense contractors, 5,000 detainees and foreign nationals.
- Served as a central member of multi-service team that defeated Al Qaeda insurgent force during largest battle since end of major combat operations – April 2, 2005.
- Served as Public Affairs Officer for Forward Operating Base Abu Ghraib working closely with media corporations including Fox News, NBC and The LA Times.
- Worked with civilian contractor Kellogg, Brown and Root defining contractual obligations, timetables and projected facility improvements.
- Supervised logistical operations and intelligence reporting for area of operation.
- Mastered General Dynamic's new information technology platform; Command Post of the Future.

2002 – 2004	BATTALION FIRE DIRECTION OFFICER	QUINCY, MA
	Senior advisor to commander on fire plans and automated fire direction. Established procedures and training to accomplish tactical and technical fire direction in an automated environment.	

- Mentored team of 30 subordinates on proper safety computations and fire direction procedures.
- Led 3 Battalion Live Fire Exercises, safely and accurately firing over 2,500 155mm Artillery rounds.
- Provided basic and advanced Support and Stability Operations (SASO) training to group of diverse soldiers in preparation for deployment to Iraqi theater.
- Served as Battalion Safety Officer with no reported safety violations during tenure.

2000 – 2002	AVIATION BATTALION FIRE SUPPORT OFFICER	FT. DRUM, NY
	Senior Fire Support Officer for Light Cavalry Squadron. Actively participated in Military Decision Making Process to ensure commander's intent for fires support scheme of maneuver.	

- Led execution of fire support coordination measures; rated "Best" by Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) observer / controllers.
- Developed highly effective procedures for integrating fire support into urban combat environment.
- Operated closely with Army Aviators to improve and perfect Joint Air Attack Team (JAAT) and Suppression of Enemy Air Defense (SEAD) missions.
- Developed and executed Digital Sustainment training in order to gain better integration of Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System (AFATADS) and Airborne Target Handover System (ATHS).

1999 – 2000	MLRS PLATOON LEADER	CAMP STANLEY, REPUBLIC OF KOREA
	Firing Platoon Leader for a forward deployed MLRS (IPDS) / ATACMS Battery with a general support mission to the 2 nd Infantry Division. Responsible for 17 soldiers and equipment valued in excess of 10 million dollars.	

- Ranked as "Top" Platoon Leader out of 5 in battery by commander.
- Guided design of improved training; resulted in team finishing first out of 20 during BN External Evaluation.
- Implemented system to maintain a high state of readiness and saved an estimated \$10,000 in maintenance and replacement costs.
- Trained Korean Army soldiers in the technical and tactical use of the Multiple Launch Rocket System.
- Assisted Lockheed Martin representative to improve Fire Control Panel and maintenance of overall system.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Witness Disclosure Requirement – "Truth in Testimony"
Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)(5)

Name:

WILLIAM J. PUOPOLO

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2009. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

NONE

2. Please list any entity you are testifying on behalf of and briefly describe your relationship with these entities.

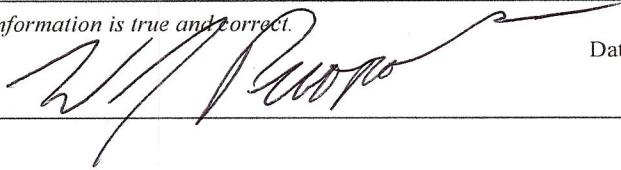
I AM TESTIFYING ON BEHALF OF THE SDUOSB
COMMUNITY AT LARGE. I DO NOT REPRESENT
ANY PARTICULAR ADVOCACY GROUP.

3. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) received since October 1, 2008, by the entity(ies) you listed above. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

NONE

I certify that the above information is true and correct.

Signature:



Date:

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