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DISTRICT *of* RHODE ISLAND

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U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Rhode Island

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, March 14, 2022

**Rhode Island Woman Charged with Falsifying Military Service; Fraudulently Collecting Hundreds of Thousands of Dollars in Charitable Contributions Earmarked for Wounded and Other Veterans**

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – A Warwick woman who is alleged to have (1) fraudulently claimed to be a wounded United States Marine Corps (USMC) veteran and recipient of a Purple Heart and Bronze Star, and (2) schemed to collect hundreds of thousands of dollars in veteran benefits and charitable contributions, was arrested today by federal agents and made her initial appearance in federal court in Providence, announced United States Attorney Zachary A. Cunha.

Sarah Jane Cavanaugh, 31, is charged by way of a federal criminal complaint with using forged or counterfeited military discharge certificates, wire fraud, fraudulently holding herself out to be a medal recipient with intent to obtain money, property, or other tangible benefit, and aggravated identity theft.

Charging documents allege the following:

- Cavanaugh used the personal identifying information of an actual Marine, and falsely claimed that she served in the USMC from 2009-2016; was honorably discharged; achieved the rank of Corporal; and was wounded in action in Iraq/Afghanistan.
- Cavanaugh used an official Veterans Administration (VA) email account, which was issued to her as a VA employee, to purchase and later display on a Marine uniform a Purple Heart and Bronze Star. She had not been awarded either award. In fact, a search of the Defense Personnel Records Information Retrieval System, a database containing military-service records, provided no records or information pertaining to Cavanaugh.

It is further alleged that Cavanaugh:

- Created and submitted falsified military discharge documents, medical diagnosis, and medical bills to "HunterSeven," an organization that provides monetary aid to veterans in need. Cavanaugh did so to request financial assistance and falsely claim that she was being treated for cancer from exposure to burn pits in Iraq/Afghanistan and inhaling particulate matter in the aftermath of an Improvised Explosive Device.
- Posing as a combat veteran, Cavanaugh contacted "Code of Support," and collected \$18,472 in financial assistance for mortgage payments, repairs to her home furnace, a gym membership, and for other unspecified bills,
- Posing as a combat veteran diagnosed with cancer related to her military service, Cavanaugh collected approximately \$4,700 from an internet-based fundraising website,
- Claiming to be a Purple Heart and Bronze Star recipient, Cavanaugh collected approximately \$16,000 from a charity that provides therapy for veterans through art programs, and
- Posing as a wounded combat veteran, Cavanaugh collected \$207,000 from the Wounded Warrior organization to pay for groceries and physical therapy sessions.

A federal criminal complaint is merely an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Cavanaugh was arrested by federal agents on Monday and appeared before U.S. District Court Magistrate Judge Lincoln D. Almond. She was released on \$50,000 unsecured bond.

The matter is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Ronald R. Gendron and investigated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Police Service, and the FBI, with the assistance of the U.S. Defense Criminal

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**Attachment(s):**

[Download Sarah Jane Cavanaugh Criminal Complaint and Affidavit](#)

**Topic(s):**

Financial Fraud

Identity Theft

**Component(s):**

[Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#)

[USAO - Rhode Island](#)

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