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**HUNTINGTON MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO THEFT OF GOVERNMENT BENEFITS**

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. – Darryl J. Hodgkinson, 60, of Huntington pleaded guilty yesterday in federal court before U.S. District Judge Robert C. Chambers to theft of public money. On or about July 1, 1998, Hodgkinson applied for Veterans Affairs Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) benefits. Hodgkinson admitted that he knowingly and intentionally submitted false and fictitious documents to the VA in order to qualify for military benefits that he was not entitled to receive. Hodgkinson further admitted to presenting numerous combat awards, citations and experiences that he did not earn, was not awarded and did not experience.

In or about September 7, 2001, Hodgkinson was granted PTSD benefits. On or about December 7, 2001, Hodgkinson was granted Employment benefits in conjunction with and related to the PTSD benefits. Because of the defendant's false claims regarding his service record in Vietnam, he received benefits that he would not have otherwise been entitled to receive in the amount of \$324,800 from September 7, 2001 to April 1, 2010.

Hodgkinson faces up to 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine when he is sentenced on August 15, 2011.

The investigation was conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General. Assistant United States Attorney Erik Goes is handling the prosecution.

This case was prosecuted as part of the U.S. Attorney's Initiative to Combat Theft of Government Benefits launched in June 2008. The Initiative is designed to protect public funds and to prosecute those who steal benefits from public programs or agencies such as the Railroad Retirement Board, US Veterans Administration, Social Security Administration, and the Department of Labor.

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