

1 JEREMY D. WARREN
2 State Bar No. 177900
3 Warren & Burstein
4 501 West Broadway, Suite 240
5 (619) 234-4433
6 jw@wabulaw.com

7 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
8 FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

9 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

10 Plaintiff,

11 v.

12 GIOVANNI TILOTTA,

13 Defendant.

Case No.: 19cr4768-GPC

Defendant's sentencing
memorandum

March 3, 2023

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17 **Introduction**

18 Giovanni Tilotta – Gio to all who know him – is a simple man. Raised in a
19 working-class New York home, he was instilled with a sense of discipline,
20 patriotism, and pride in family. Following in his father's footsteps, he joined the
21 Marine Corps as soon as he turned 18. He served two combat tours in Iraq and was
22 honorably discharged as a disabled veteran.
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25 As discussed in trial, he opened a boutique firearms business catering
26 primarily to law enforcement and the military. He worked 24-7 to keep his business
27 afloat, often sleeping in the office to get work done. He unfortunately let his guard
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1 down with Marco Garmo, someone he believed he could trust given his law
2 enforcement status, and was willing to cut corners on the paperwork, leading to his
3 prosecution in this case.

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5 He now stands convicted of a felony – three to be exact – and has lost pretty
6 much everything near and dear to him. As someone whose father was a police
7 officer, whose business was essentially a museum of law enforcement memorabilia,
8 and who put his life on the line for our nation, he has lost his firearms license, has
9 forfeited his right to bear arms, and faces potential imprisonment.
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11 While the former consequences are unavoidable, the latter is unnecessary.
12 This is an unusual case in many aspects, not the least of which it is a firearms case
13 in which no prohibited person – no felon, terrorist, or cartel – was the intended
14 recipient of the improper sales. Beyond that, Mr. Tilotta has more than learned his
15 lesson over the last four years. Locking him in prison will not protect the public,
16 promote respect for the law, or serve any other significant purpose. To the extent
17 one believes in punishing somebody to teach someone else a lesson, Mr. Tilotta's
18 felony conviction and loss of license is more than an adequate deterrent to the
19 firearms community.
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23 For these and other reasons, Mr. Tilotta respectfully urges the Court to impose
24 a non-custodial sentence. Six months of home confinement – nearly double the
25 sentence imposed on powerful jeweler Leo Hamel – is sufficient and appropriate.
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2 **The individual before the Court, and the offense**

3 Mr. Tilotta supplements the PSR with the following.

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5 He was raised in very humble settings in New York. His family was working
6 class – though today we would call them poor. His father was a maintenance man
7 for the city and an auxiliary police officer while his mother was primarily a
8 homemaker.

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10 They say the child is the father of the man, and Mr. Tilotta is no exception.
11 His childhood neighbors, the Lamprechts, write to the Court that, “even as a kid, he
12 was kind, smart, hardworking, and eager to learn.” (Christine Lamprecht). They
13 called him their rent-a-kid, helping them in the garden, playing with their dogs, and
14 even digging a hole and planting a tree the day they came home from the hospital
15 with their first child. (The Lamprechts flew in from New York to attend every day
16 of the trial.)

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19 Mr. Tilotta idolized his father and wanted to emulate him in every way. His
20 father having served in the military, Mr. Tilotta joined ROTC in high school, and
21 excelled. At the same time, Mr. Tilotta was forced to witness his father’s physical
22 decline. His father had uncontrolled diabetes, renal failure, and open-heart surgery.
23 Ultimately, he died right before Mr. Tilotta graduated from high school, a terribly
24 traumatic event for a teenager.
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1 In part to honor his father, Mr. Tilotta joined the military as soon as he turned
2 18. He chose the Marine Corps since it provided the toughest challenge. He was
3 trained as a helicopter mechanic, and later became a crew chief. He was in the
4 Marines when 9/11 occurred, and it was no surprise that he was deployed to Iraq in
5 short order. As discussed in the PSR, below, and in the attached letters, he served
6 with courage and distinction.
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9 After a second tour in the Middle East, Mr. Tilotta returned to San Diego for
10 his final year of service. He stayed here, went to community college then SDSU,
11 and sort of stumbled into his firearms business. It started when he was collecting a
12 few firearms and it was suggested a curio and relic license could help expedite his
13 purchases. Ultimately, as we heard at trial, he applied for a dealer's license and
14 then opened a small business. Honey Badger was open to the public but its focus
15 was law enforcement and military service members, people Mr. Tilotta respected
16 and trusted, knowledgeable about firearms, a class of people he felt good about
17 serving.
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21 Running a small business is no easy matter, particularly one that has very
22 low margins. Firearms dealers understandably face far more rules, regulations, and
23 oversight than other businesses, but like other business-owners Mr. Tilotta had to
24 negotiate with suppliers, manage payroll, handle customer complaints, run his
25 website, and so on. The business survived but never thrived, and Mr. Tilotta spent
26 much of his time learning about government contracting, since his 70% veteran
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1 disability status could give him preference in some situations, but also because he
2 really enjoyed working on projects that would help first responders carry out their
3 life-saving responsibilities more efficiently.
4

5 It was during this time that Mr. Tilotta met Marco Garmo. Garmo was
6 actually his employee J.R. Diaz's customer from Triple-E firearms, but Garmo had
7 that way of ingratiating himself with anyone he met. Garmo became a regular
8 customer, though notwithstanding the narrative at trial, he was never Mr. Tilotta's
9 top customer, confidante, or friend. Nor was Leo Hamel, an irregular customer who
10 would constantly offer to take him to lunch (and Mr. Tilotta almost always declined)
11 but who would pester him from time to time with basic FFL-related questions.
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14 The trial compressed events taking place over several years into a few days of
15 court time. That is the nature of the beast but doesn't necessarily provide a fair
16 narrative of the underlying conduct. It wasn't like Marco Garmo was an
17 instrumental part of Mr. Tilotta's business, nor Leo Hamel, nor anyone else
18 connected to this case. No doubt Mr. Tilotta made poor decisions in helping carry
19 out firearms transactions for people who he correctly believed were not prohibited
20 persons. He made mistakes in how he carried out his business and completed
21 paperwork. While the jury found him guilty, and he does not contest the conduct,
22 he does want the Court to know he never felt like he was part of any cabal run by
23 Marco Garmo. Did he come under Garmo's influence, like a lot of other people in
24 this case, and have his life ruined as a result? Of course. But he has difficulty
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1 accepting the entirety of the government's narrative. As one example, the
2 government considered a smoking gun the email from Hamel to Garmo saying Gio
3 asks that ordered guns be done a certain way, "You email him first that you want"
4 a particular gun, "he will then reply ok." Although Garmo did purchase that gun,
5 there was no email from Garmo to Mr. Tilotta following this supposed set of
6 instructions – no exhibit from the government, no email in the discovery, and no
7 testimony from Hamel that it actually happened. Because it didn't.
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10 Mr. Tilotta cannot change the past nor the jury's interpretation. He must
11 move forward, but he wants the Court to know there was not some tipping point
12 where he decided to throw it all away. He also wants the Court to know how deeply
13 he regrets his errors and will never repeat them.
14

15 Moving on, there was a separate side to Mr. Tilotta the Court has not seen.
16 Other than work, Mr. Tilotta has one hobby. He plays ice hockey, and plays in
17 several leagues. Many of his teammates are law enforcement officers, and he has a
18 solid reputation in that community. As Dr. David Bond – a clinical psychologist and
19 retired La Mesa police captain – articulates it, you really get to know someone when
20 you play travel hockey with them. He writes that Mr. Tilotta is a true team player,
21 and gives an example of the real Gio Tilotta: when there weren't enough bedrooms,
22 "Gio was the first to volunteer to sleep on a couch." He calls Mr. Tilotta a great
23 teammate and a friend. He summarizes, "As a former law enforcement officer and
24 now a licensed clinician I get a good read on people. I know this man and he is a
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1 good man.” As the Court knows, it is hardly common for law enforcement officers to
2 write character letters for felony defendants, and the fact that career officers like
3 David Bond would vouch for Mr. Tilotta speaks volumes.
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5 Some of the letters allude to yet another facet of Mr. Tilotta’s character.
6 Several years ago, he found one of his neighbors despondent. Checking in on her,
7 he learned this single mother and her children were in a bad way. Even though he
8 did not know her, he sprang into action. He made sure she had a place to stay and
9 that the kids got food. And ever since, he has been their guardian angel, making
10 sure the kids are in school, they have food on the table, and they stay out of trouble.
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12 There are other heartfelt letters including from an attorney who served in Iraq
13 with Mr. Tilotta and a former girlfriend who calls him a “simple and peaceful man,”
14 and a “selfless man with an incredibly caring heart.”
15

16 This is now an old case. The ATF first approached Mr. Tilotta in February
17 2019. After his initial encounter with the case agent at his business (and discussed
18 in the government memo), he retained counsel and sat for a lengthy interview with
19 the government. He was told he was not a target, and after the meeting was
20 commended for his honesty. Months later, however, the government turned its focus
21 on him, and included him in the Garmo indictment. When the government declined
22 to allow him to participate in veterans diversion, the case headed toward trial.
23 (After Garmo pled guilty, the government added more charges against Mr. Tilotta,
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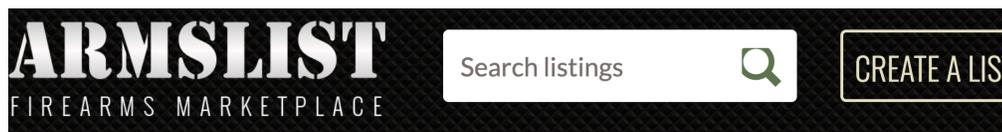
1 including time-barred and multiplicitous counts that were dismissed on defense
2 motion.)

3 As the Court knows, having a criminal charge hanging over one's head is
4 traumatic. Mr. Tilotta has lived with this case in a way that only a defendant can
5 for the last four years, through the entire Covid pandemic. There is not a day that
6 goes by that he does not wish he could change the past. Though no one can, he does
7 want the Court to know he has taken this case very seriously. He also has lost his
8 firearms license. Though his business is still running, it is running on fumes,¹ and
9 he will be forced into a new line of work when his lease expires.
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13 **The Guidelines and § 3553(a) recommendation**

14 The parties agree on the base offense level, the increase for number of
15 firearms, and that a reduction is warranted based on Mr. Tilotta's extraordinary
16 military service. One potential enhancement is in dispute, abuse of trust or special
17 skill.
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21 ¹ The government's memo attaches a report that Honey Badger is still posting
22 firearms for sale. Not so. Those are ancient ads. While Mr. Tilotta does not know
23 why they are being relisted, Armslist's FAQs' indicate there is a "built in bump
24 feature [to] keep your listings new." See below. In any event, Mr. Tilotta did not list
25 those firearms recently.



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28 **Q: Can I re-post my items for sale once per day until they sell?**
No, duplicate listings are not permitted. You can use the built in bump feature keep your listing new.

1 **A. Base offense level and number of firearms.**

2 The three convictions group under § 3D1.2, and the base offense level is 12.

3 Calculating the number of firearms is tricky. Garmo made 41 purchases
4 through Honey Badger over several years, but many of them – Mr. Tilotta would
5 say almost all – were either legitimate purchases or transfers, or in many cases if
6 Garmo was doing a straw purchase for a civilian, Mr. Tilotta was unaware. For
7 example, Garmo straw purchased two Colt 1911 pistols at Honey Badger intended
8 for, and later transferred to, Jason Khoury, but there was no evidence Mr. Tilotta
9 had any knowledge they were straws. There was nothing in the emails, text
10 messages, or Mr. Khoury’s testimony indicating Mr. Tilotta had any knowing
11 involvement in the straw purchases. Likewise, many of Garmo’s purchases had no
12 back-end transfers, and in other cases transfers occurred months or years later,
13 and often at other FFLs. As such, it is impossible to pin criminal responsibility for
14 those transactions on Mr. Tilotta.
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19 Accordingly, the parties met and conferred, and agreed on 24 firearms as the
20 scope of relevant conduct, leading to a four-level increase under the Guidelines.
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22 **B. No increase under § 3B1.2²**

23 The government, in its objections and sentencing memo, pursues an abuse of
24 trust/special skill enhancement. Probation got it right; the enhancement is
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27 ² Mr. Tilotta will not spill ink addressing enhancements the government
28 acknowledges are inapplicable (role in the offense and “trafficking” in firearms).

1 inapplicable. *See* PSR, ¶63-65.

2 **1. FFL is not a “position of public trust.”**

3 As for the first prong, the Eleventh Circuit’s *Luis* case could not have been
4 clearer: “a federal firearms licensee does not occupy a ‘position of public trust’ based
5 on the three factors mentioned in section 3B1.3: professional judgment, discretion,
6 and deference.” *United States v. Louis*, 559 F.3d 1220, 1227 (11th Cir. 2009).

7
8 The Guidelines’ application notes provides examples of conduct that would
9 constitute an abuse of trust: “embezzlement of a client's funds by an attorney
10 serving as a guardian, a bank executive's fraudulent loan scheme, or the criminal
11 sexual abuse of a patient by a physician under the guise of an examination.” USSG
12 § 3B1.3, commentary n. 3. Unlike an attorney, a guardian, or a bank executive,
13 there is no professional judgment, discretion or deference afforded to gun dealers.
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16 In fact, under 18 U.S.C. § 923, there are minimal requirements to becoming
17 a licensed dealer: over 21, no felony, no willful violation of gun rules, and (the hard
18 one) compliance with state and local zoning regulations. Once you meet these basic
19 requirements, your application “shall be approved” once you pay the fee. 18 U.S.C.
20 § 923(d)(1). There is no educational requirement, no testing, no continuing
21 education. *See United States v. Podhorn*, 549 F.3d 552, 563 n.2 (7th Cir. 2008)
22 (Ripple, J., dissenting) (labeling the licensing requirements for an FFL
23 “perfunctory”).
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1 The government’s arguments in its sentencing memo are non-sequiturs to the
2 actual test. The preliminary question is whether the *position* (i.e., an FFL) is
3 marked by professional judgment, discretion, or deference, not on the defendant’s
4 conduct. Only after determining whether the generic position meets the definition
5 does the Court turns to the actual conduct involved. And here, as *Louis* explains,
6 an FFL is not such a position: “The guidelines define ‘positions of public or private
7 trust’ narrowly based on the professional discretion, if any, of the defendant: ‘Public
8 or private trust’ refers to a position of public or private trust characterized by
9 professional or managerial discretion (i.e., substantial discretionary judgment that
10 is ordinarily given considerable deference).” 559 F.3d at 1225.
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14 In line with *Louis*’s discussion, the government’s experts at trial repeatedly
15 testified that the FFL has no real discretion in carrying out their duties. In fact,
16 the experts testified, and the government argued, the FFL has to do the paperwork
17 the same way every time. *See Podhorn*, 549 F.3d at 564 (Ripple, J., dissenting) (“If
18 the FFL itself forms the basis of the position of trust, then the victim, whose
19 perspective we must consider, is the Government. The Government, which is the
20 licensing authority, provides an FFL holder with almost *no* discretion as a result of
21 his license. An FFL holder must comply with all sales and firearms requirements
22 of federal, state and local law.”) (emphasis in original, citation and footnote
23 omitted). That puts the sword through the heart of the government’s abuse of trust
24 argument.
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1 **2. FFLs do not possess “special skills.”**

2 As for “special skill,” there is even less basis for application of the
3 enhancement, and for the same reasons. Under the Guidelines, “Special skill’
4 refers to a skill not possessed by members of the general public and usually
5 requiring substantial education, training or licensing. Examples would include
6 pilots, lawyers, doctors, accountants, chemists, and demolition experts.” USSG §
7 3B1.3, commentary n. 4. One cannot compare the (non-)educational requirement
8 necessary to become an FFL with the rigorous education and training doctors and
9 lawyers receive. Recall the testimony: an FFL applicant is subject to a single
10 meeting with an ATF licensing officer for a few hours and the receipt of a reference
11 book at the end (now just a web link). After that, there are yearly or bi-annual
12 inspections that may or may not occur. Hardly the level of training, education, or
13 licensing qualifying as “substantial,” and far from the examples listed in the
14 Guidelines or cases affirming the enhancement.
15

16 Beyond that, the *Podhorn* case the government cites doesn’t actually advance
17 the government’s argument. There, the jury returned a *special verdict* finding the
18 FFL defendant qualified for an abuse of trust/special skill enhancement. 549 F.3d
19 at 561. On appeal, the only argument was that it was “impossible to tell from the
20 jury's special verdict which of these two possible findings the jury made.” *Id.* The
21 court was loathe to overturn a jury finding. Further, as the dissent explained,
22 “[t]he majority opinion holds, and I concur, that *an FFL does not constitute a special*
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1 *skill* under section 3B1.3.” *Id.* at 563 (Ripple, J., dissenting) (emphasis added).

2 As above, the Court must analyze the position generically in the first
3 instance. If the position is capable of serving as a special skill, then but only then
4 can the Court turn to the conduct to determine if the particular defendant’s actions
5 were sufficient for the enhancement. Here, on either prong, we never reach the
6 conduct.
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9 But even if we were to examine Mr. Tilotta’s conduct, he still would not
10 qualify. (Before we do, however, the Court should note that it appears no appellate
11 decision holds that an FFL is a position of trust or a special skill.) Here, the
12 government’s factual arguments are weak. So Hamel asked the occasional
13 question? That doesn’t mean Mr. Tilotta has a special skill; it means only that
14 Hamel was unaware. The same for the government’s argument that Mr. Tilotta
15 “had discretion whether to report transfers occurring under his supervision to
16 ATF.” Govt. memo at 12. The ATF would actually insist there is no discretion with
17 an improper transaction; it *must* be reported. Same with the government’s
18 argument that Mr. Tilotta owned his business. That proves nothing about the type
19 of discretion or the type of skill the Guidelines calls for.
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23 Because FFLs are not subject to a § 3B1.3 enhancement, and because
24 Mr. Tilotta’s conduct was insufficient even if he could be subject to it, the Court
25 should not impose an abuse of trust or special skill enhancement.
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1 Without this enhancement, Mr. Tilotta is at level 16 and Criminal History
2 Category I. Mr. Tilotta turns to other relevant sentencing matters:

3 **C. Consideration of co-defendant sentences.**
4

5 For sentencing disparity purposes, the Court should consider the sentences
6 imposed on each of the co-defendants:

7 **1. Marco Garmo.** As a high-level law enforcement officer with sights on
8 becoming Sheriff, Garmo was the target of the investigation and its principal
9 perpetrator. Even before committing his firearms offenses, he was betraying the
10 badge by protecting illegal dispensaries by warning their owners of impending
11 raids. And as for guns, he was obsessed with them and was making a substantial
12 profit buying and selling off-roster firearms through multiple FFLs (including the
13 Deputy Sheriffs' Association), often while in uniform or using a Sheriff's vehicle.
14 During the search of his house, agents seized \$30,000 in cash.
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18 The Court imposed a 24-month sentence.

19 **2. Leo Hamel.** Hamel – a fabulously wealthy jeweler – was Garmo's key
20 conspirator. He too was obsessed with firearms. The hundreds of antique and
21 modern firearms he had strewn about his home and every corner of his business
22 were never enough. He wanted more. Even though he could purchase and
23 maintain off roster firearms on his own FFL, that wasn't enough either. He wanted
24 them all for himself, hence his dealings with Garmo.
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1 Off course there was a quid pro quo there, as Hamel wanted access to power,
2 so he styled himself Garmo's campaign manager for Sheriff. It was a match made
3 in heaven, at least for a while; two far-right gun enthusiasts who could exchange
4 racist texts and emails, one getting shiny new off roster guns, the other getting
5 hard cash and backing for his upcoming campaign.
6

7 Hamel and Garmo didn't care who they put in harm's way in the process. The
8 most glaring example is Fred Magaña, who wasn't able to say no to his commanding
9 officer when asked to do a straw purchase. So that Hamel could score a couple of
10 Walthers – and Hamel already owned the same model – they put his career in
11 jeopardy. And they did straw purchases at numerous gun stores, not just Honey
12 Badger, jeopardizing staff and owners in the process.
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15 Hamel pled guilty, but his mea culpa was self-serving. He was on probation
16 for a nasty felony DUI/child endangerment case, and of course essentially admitted
17 a million-dollar PPP loan-fraud scheme against the taxpayers on the stand.
18

19 The Court imposed a 100-day period of home confinement. Given the photo
20 of one of his mansions admitted at trial, serving his sentence was not onerous.
21

22 **3. Vikas Bajaj.** Mr. Bajaj is an attorney. He was also enamored with
23 Garmo. He went along with back-dated paperwork. He acknowledged he was
24 facing the prospect of multiple firearms felonies based on the results of the search
25 executed at his house. He bickered with the government during his grand jury
26 appearance, and was an unusual witness.
27
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1 He was allowed to plead guilty to a misdemeanor (aiding and abetting an FFL
2 in fraudulent paperwork) and was given one year of unsupervised probation.

3 **4. Will Anton.** As a fellow Chaldean, Mr. Anton looked up to and came
4 under the influence of Garmo. He had full access to the Sheriff's substation Garmo
5 ran, had radios and other police equipment in his possession, and was working with
6 Garmo in a kickback arrangement to "help" people accelerate their concealed carry
7 permit applications. A search of his house turned up \$100,000 in cash, and of course
8 while on pretrial release he obstructed justice by attempting to sell discovery under
9 protective-order to targets of a federal narcotics investigation.
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12 The Court imposed a year and a day sentence.
13

14 **5. Fred Magaña.**

15 Lt. Magaña was a trusted sidekick of Garmo's. He agreed to conduct a straw
16 purchase, and then lied about it in no uncertain terms to the ATF. Interestingly,
17 all the other straw purchasers who told the truth about their purchases when asked
18 – Dr. Handwerger, Jason Khoury, and Deputy Llanes, to name three witnesses
19 who testified at trial – were not prosecuted. Had Lt. Magaña been honest with
20 investigators, he too may have been just a witness.
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23 Nevertheless, he had a compelling life story and an otherwise stellar law
24 enforcement career before his prosecution.
25

26 The Court granted him probation, which it deemed satisfied based on his
27 years of pretrial supervision.
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1 **D. Sentencing recommendation.**

2 The above summary helps frame the case. As the main perpetrator and
3 corrupted high level law enforcement officer, Garmo's two-year sentence
4 demarcates the ceiling. The other sentences were all probationary, other than Will
5 Anton, who in all likelihood sacrificed a probationary sentence by his attempt to
6 obstruct justice during the case.
7

8 The government points out that Mr. Tilotta is in a different posture because
9 he went to trial. The government hastens to point out – as it always does – that
10 trial is a sacrosanct Constitutional right, and one cannot be punished for exercising
11 that right. But Mr. Tilotta did not testify falsely, did not obstruct justice, did not
12 suborn perjury, and in fact was polite and respectful throughout the entire case
13 including the two-week trial.
14

15 Throughout the case, the government was willing to resolve the matter for a
16 probationary felony. Other than holding the government to its constitutional
17 burden, nothing changed, nor should an appropriate sanction. The Court knows
18 cases are tried for many reasons, one of which is the risk of collateral consequences
19 such as a state or federal professional license. While it is true Mr. Tilotta may not
20 qualify for an acceptance adjustment, that is not the end of the story, nor should
21 the Court over-emphasize that decision in considering an appropriate punishment.
22

23 Mr. Tilotta will not re-litigate the case in this memo. As the Court recalls,
24 the rules and regulations are complex, confusing, and in constant flux. At trial, Mr.
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1 Tilotta acknowledged a misunderstanding of the paperwork, and before he was ever
2 charged he met with the government and acknowledged a misunderstanding of
3 straw purchases, believing that if the parties were not prohibited it was
4 permissible.
5

6 His understanding was wrong, as was his application of those principles to
7 the paperwork. Still, this is a unique case among all federal firearms prosecutions.
8 In virtually every other case involving FFLs, the firearms were sold to prohibited
9 people, typically felons or drug cartels, via straw purchases. Here, by contrast, the
10 firearms were going primarily to Leo Hamel, a well-known businessman who had
11 his own FFL. The fact that the guns were not destined to dangerous individuals
12 with bad intentions is a singular mitigating factor in this case.
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15 Turning to other mitigating factors, we have Mr. Tilotta's military service.
16 As mentioned, he enlisted out of high school, and served honorably for nearly six
17 years.
18

19 Less than one percent of Americans volunteer to serve. Of those, few are ever
20 put in harm's way. Mr. Tilotta not only saw combat in hostile terrain but re-upped
21 to serve another tour. He served with passion, zeal, and distinction. Even if he had
22 not witnessed first-hand the death of his fellow Marines, even if he had not
23 personally rescued a downed pilot, his service was stellar.
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26 But he did those things. Mr. Tilotta's Navy and Marine Corps Achievement
27 Medal award is attached, but the inscription on it bears highlighting:
28

1 Sergeant Tilotta performed his duties in an exemplary and highly
2 professional manner. He witnessed a catastrophic emergency that
3 resulted in a massive airborne conflagration aboard the lead aircraft,
4 which subsequently impacted the terrain in enemy territory. Assessing
5 the scene, he identified an infrared strobe and guided his aircraft to a
6 low-light level landing 600 meters away from the burning wreckage. He
7 exited his aircraft and ran to the infrared strobe as secondary explosions
8 of hellfire missiles and .50 caliber ammunition detonated around him.
9 He led three survivors back to the waiting aircraft. Enroute from the
10 crash site, he administered first aid to the severely burned
11 crewmembers. Upon arrival at Al Taqaddum, Iraq, he continued
12 applying first aid until relieved. Sergeant Tilotta's managerial ability,
13 personal initiative, and unswerving devotion to duty reflected credit
14 upon him and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the Marine
15 Corps and the United States Naval Service.

16 - John. F. Sattler, Lieutenant General, United States Marine
17 Corps., Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force³

18 One of the three crewmembers Mr. Tilotta rescued, Enrique Gauthier, writes
19 “Your Honor, I would not be here if it wasn’t for Gio.” He describes Mr. Tilotta as
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22 ³ Mr. Tilotta’s military separation document (DD214) identifies numerous awards:
23

24 Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (3*); Air Medal Recruit Training, Male
25 2000 Strike/Flight; Air Medal Individual Action; Marine Corps Good Marine Combat
26 Training 2000 Conduct Medal; Sea Service Deployment Ribbon (2*); Global
27 Helicopter Mechanic Power, 2000 War on Terrorism Service Medal; Global War on
28 Terrorism Expeditionary Medal; National Defense Service Medal; Presidential Unit
Citation- Navy; Iraqi Campaign Medal; Navy Unit Commendation; Letter of
Appreciation; Certificate of Commendation (Individual Awd); Certificate of
Appreciation; Expert Rifle Badge (2nd Awd); Sharpshooter Pistol Badge.

1 “the epitome of selflessness,” with “a heart of gold.”

2 Mr. Tilotta was not wounded in that episode, but he bears the scars. And he
3 will bear those scars – physical and otherwise – for the rest of his life. A
4 servicemember signs a blank check payable to the United States, payable for an
5 amount up to and including their life. The government acknowledges this service,
6 as it must, though it recommends a minimal departure. To undersigned counsel,
7
8 Mr. Tilotta’s experiences, the risks he took and the suffering he endured, merit a
9
10 far bigger dispensation.

11 And it is not just what he did in the military. The letters paint an entirely
12 different, and consistent, picture of Mr. Tilotta, as a selfless and loyal friend. It
13 starts with his childhood neighbors who adopted him as their “rent-a-kid,” and
14 continues through his interaction with neighbors, teammates, and lifelong friends.
15
16

17 There is no doubt regulation of firearms is an important and legitimate
18 concern in society. We have firearms laws for a reason and they must be enforced.
19 But at the same time, in this case, we have an exceptional person who made terrible
20 mistakes under the influence of a charismatic and high-level law enforcement
21 officer whose conduct was so egregious on so many fronts that he was inevitably
22 going to be caught and inevitably was going to bring down a lot of good people
23 around him. That is what is so bad about public corruption.
24
25

26 But Mr. Tilotta was not a public figure. He was a small businessman and
27 one of many FFLs that Garmo did business with. This was a nonviolent offense
28

1 with firearms that were not earmarked for bad people.

2 As Mr. Tilotta's conviction has forever altered his life, it has also sent a
3 message to the FFL community such as it is. A felony conviction is more than
4 sufficient here, and jail time is not necessary. He therefore thanks the Court for
5 its consideration of his position, and respectfully urges the Court to impose a
6 probationary sentence accompanied by six months of home confinement.
7

8
9 Respectfully submitted,

10 Dated: February 26, 2023

s/ Jeremy Warren
Jeremy Warren

Attachment:
Support letters

Enrique Gauthier

422 North Rd.

Hope, RI 02831

619-436-7776

12/4/2022

RE: Giovanni Tilotta

Dear Judge Curiel,

I am writing this reference letter for Gio Tilotta who I have known since he was a young sergeant of Marines almost 20 years ago. Sergeant Tilotta was working for me as my next in charge for a very inexperienced shop of flightline mechanics and crew chiefs going to Iraq with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). At the time, I was the senior enlisted for the CH53 detachment of about 70 Marines.

It was during this time that I was in a helicopter crash and lost two Marines in low light conditions and in enemy territory. This is not easy for me to write about since two Marines died and I sustained serious burns to my head, hands, and arms. To make matters worse, my helicopter was full of ammunition to include hellfire, 50 caliber rounds and other explosives. The helicopter was on fire before we hit the deck and it got worse very quickly. Gio was in the second helicopter and was key in getting us to safety since we are also in the middle of Iraq with no escort. Gio ran thru the middle of desert with rounds going off from our own aircraft and helped us get on the plane. I was not able to see anything, and I could barely breath. I was medevacked and Gio had to take over in the shop. I cannot say enough how much courage and commitment Gio showed that night. It is during times like that you see what people are really made of. I would not say I am surprised that Gio stepped up without hesitation since he was always a "fire and forget" kind of Marine that did things right the first time.

After the crash I recovered from my burns and returned to Iraq. The guys did not miss a beat under Gio's leadership, and it made my transition back to the unit that much easier. Gio continued to show his dedication to quality and safety with every task thrown at him. It was a great loss seeing him get out of the Marine Corps, but Gio was working on the next chapters of his life. We continued our friendship and stayed connected with the HMH462 community in San Diego.

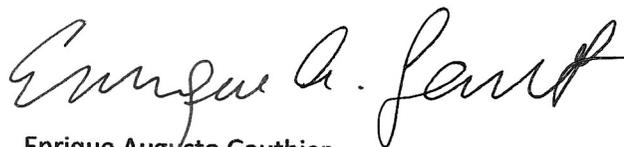
I retired out of the Marine Corps in the summer of 2015 and made many visits to Gio's store in the upcoming years after the corps. Gio was the guy that was only a phone call away if you needed something. He has always shown to want the best for everyone to include strangers that might need a lift, cash or just someone to talk to.

Your Honor, I would not be here if it wasn't for Gio. He is the epitome of selflessness and has a heart of gold. He is the guy you want in your corner and is one that will always have your back. He does not sugar coat and is direct letting you know what he thinks giving you the best advice he can give. There are a ton of stories I could tell you showing how Gio was always a problem solver and one of the sharpest Marines I ever worked with. I wish I could write better and show this. He deserves and that much more.

I really hope my letter is taken into consideration at the time of his sentencing so I can paint the picture of Gio being a courageous, kindhearted, and dedicated friend of mine. I truly believe this is one of those situations that the Swiss cheese holes lined up for the worse.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Enrique A. Gauthier". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'E' and a long, sweeping tail.

Enrique Augusto Gauthier

Aleksandr J. Yarmolinets
10748 Lighthouse Pt.
South Lyon, MI 48178

To:

Hon. Gonzalo P. Curiel
Edward J. Schwartz
United States Courthouse
221 West Broadway, Courtroom 2D
San Diego, California 92101

February 24, 2023

Re: United States v. Giovanni Tilotta et al.; Case No. 19cr4768-GPC-JLB

Dear Judge Curiel:

I respectfully submit this letter in support of Giovanni V. Tilotta. I am a member of this Court and I have appeared before Your Honor in my professional capacity. I've always found you to be evenhanded and pragmatic. I do not seek to persuade you or to change your mind. As a person who almost certainly knows him better than most, I merely offer you a glimpse into my best friend, an honorable man who has been closer than a brother to me for more than 23 years.

From the day I stood next to Gio on the yellow footprints of Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina, throughout hundreds of combat hours flying supplies and troops in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom I and II, and until the day he was the best man at my wedding, Gio was the shield, the moral compass, and the emotional bedrock of my adult life. After nearly twenty years of civilian life, I cannot recall in great detail the gun fights, the catastrophic mechanical failures and helicopter crashes, or the humanitarian missions Gio and I flew and survived together. Yet, in every memory from those days in Southeast Asia, Kuwait, and Iraq, Gio's rational and logical solutions and reactions—to what now seem like impossible situations—stand out as almost certainly *the* reason I, our pilots, passengers, and the men and women fighting on the ground walked away alive.

You will undoubtedly receive other letters from people recounting Gio's many accomplishments during his service in the Marine Corps. But those six years do not define him. You have heard during the trial about him sleeping in his office, on a cot, for the last ten years to build a business. But he views this as neither a sacrifice, nor his greatest accomplishment. You may even learn about Gio helping raise two girls whose troubled mother is not his family, friend, or romantic partner. But Gio will not take credit for being the girls' guide and safety net for nearly a decade, or for his many contributions to their past and future successes.

While nearly everyone in his life sees these uncommon examples of selflessness and dedication as something that must be celebrated and as *the* reasons for a "lighter" sentence, I do not. No, his sacrifices and achievements are merely symptoms of two qualities that Gio possesses, which, I believe, should inform your decision. These are an unparalleled ability to improve every situation he is presented with, and a keen, albeit sometimes naïve, sense of fairness. Yet, the good these attributes have brought Gio in life is sadly far outweighed by the bad and the evil they also brought.

I attended every day of his trial; and we spent hours each day discussing the witness testimony and the evidence presented during that day. Every day, regardless of the testimony or the evidence, his questions and comments to me were not of a man who was confronted with indisputable reasons for his prosecution, but of someone who genuinely could not understand how his actions, intentions, and motivations were so grossly misrepresented and, more importantly, misunderstood. This reaction was not willful ignorance or diminution of his conduct, but a complete inability to comprehend how the people whom he believed to be his friends, colleagues, and purveyors of law and order could so easily concoct an alternate reality and destroy his entire world for purely selfish reasons.

After he was convicted, Gio sat outside the courthouse for more than two hours, crying silently, unable to move. He only spoke to me, and he said only one thing: "How could have I been so blind? What could I have done differently?" If justice strives to teach a lesson, that goal has been achieved.

Gio allowed himself one day of self-pity and sorrow to come to terms with his conviction. After sacrificing nearly ten years of his life to build a business and then fighting a never-ending uphill battle to keep it afloat during the three years this action has been pending, he went back to work knowing full well that the herculean task of saving it will never be completed. If justice seeks to punish, that goal has been achieved.

For the several months since his conviction, Gio has completely reshaped his life to make it work as best as possible for a convict. He fixed what was fixable, sold what he could, and lost the rest. If justice aims to make you stronger, that goal has been achieved.

I now live in Michigan, and I saw Gio for the first time since the September trial two weeks ago. It was hard to hold back tears when I saw him. His once youthful face was replaced by an exhausted, depleted, and wrinkled caricature. Despite his already modest stature, he now looked shriveled and weak. My heart breaks as I type this letter, and the sound of the jury's laughter mere moments before delivering the guilty verdicts plays on a loop in my mind, because I am afraid my best friend was irreparably destroyed by this ordeal.

There is nothing for the United States, the State of California, or the People of San Diego to gain by incarcerating Gio. Prison cannot and will not make Gio into a better person or into a more productive member of our society. He is already all those things and more. If justice purports to rehabilitate, incarcerating Gio is not the way to reach that goal. No, it will destroy whatever remains of his sense of fairness; it will force him into a situation that cannot be improved. This is a man, a friend, a brother, a son, a genuinely good human being who will persevere and work to improve the lives of many, but only if you let him.

Sincerely,



Aleksandr J. Yarmolinets, Esq.

Christine Lamprecht
20 Drew Drive, Eastport, New York 11934
516 971-4274

November 20, 2022

Re: Giovanni Tilotta

To the Honorable Judge Curiel:

I have the great fortune to have known Gio since he was 7 years old. I flew out to San Diego in September expecting attest in court to the long-term impeccable character and integrity of the person that I've known for 34 years, unfortunately I did not have the opportunity to do so I would like to take this time to tell you now.

Newly married my husband and I purchased our first home, a ramshackle house on the block that the Tilotta family lived. Gio & his sister were the first ones to welcome us to the neighborhood. Gio was always coming around running with our dogs and always eager to help on the many landscape projects that we were tackling. We own a small family contracting business, Gio was always tinkering around the equipment at the shop wanting to know how things worked and when he was older would help out there. Even as a kid he was kind, smart, hardworking, and eager to learn; fast forward 34 years and I can say with certainty these are qualities he has kept.

We did not have children of our own at the time and he became our "Rent a Kid" which is still how I refer to him today. A couple of years later we had our first child Jessie. The day we brought her home her my husband purchased a blooming cherry tree for outside her window, so she'd always have flowers on her birthday. Gio was there to welcome her home and seeing the tree to be planted went in the shed, grabbed a shovel bigger than he was at the time and began digging the hole, he has always had the ability to look at what had to be done and tackle a project giving it his all no matter how much work was involved.

As a teenager I saw him take upon himself great responsibilities at home. His dad was very ill for many years with heart failure, diabetes, and a host of other conditions. True to his character Gio stepped up and took on many of the household chores and became the rock of support for his mom during this time, and after his dad passed just weeks before his high school graduation. He is still this pillar for his mother, now in her mid-70's, has always been the one to manage her wellbeing and finances.

He's like a big brother to all our three children, despite the age difference and many miles of physical separation he has been and continues to be a role model to each of them and very supportive in their endeavors. You will hear from them individually as they too have written letters of support.

November 20, 2022: Giovanni Tilotta continued

Gio's sense of responsibility and integrity lead him to enlist in the Marines; this wasn't during peace time for a kid to get some college money. The United States was actively engaged in war at the time and Gio felt the need to serve his country. He was a Helicopter mechanic, a helicopter crew chief in the Middle East in combat, credited with saving the lives and injured during his time of service.

Even in civilian life Gio's always finding ways to support others, especially first responders. I know you are aware the firearm portion of his business, but this is only a small portion of his operations. Much of his time & efforts are put in to devising new and / or better products to support the first responder community. While touring his shop earlier this year he was showing me prototypes for a local agency he was working on to improve communication with rescue personnel rappelling from helicopters – something as a former helicopter chief he is very familiar with. He was also custom designing gear bags to make the teams involved in search and rescue operations safer and more efficient, he even purchased a commercial sewing machine to construct these prototypes himself, sewing the bags himself to get things done the right way, that's the way he is and has always been.

We no longer live in our first house but are not far away. At the end of April each year I drive by the house and see Jessie's tree in bloom and remember my determined "Rent-a-Kid" with that oversized shovel. I could not be prouder of the man he has become, and with this determination Gio has gone on to accomplish so much and positively touched so many lives.



Sincerely yours,

Handwritten signature of Christine Lamprecht in black ink.

Christine Lamprecht

Colleen London
4949 Baltimore Dr.
La Mesa CA 91942
619-740-1359

11/17/2022

RE: Giovanni Tilotta

Dear Judge Curiel,

I am writing this reference letter for Giovanni Tilotta who has been a dear friend of mine for the past 12 years. I met Giovanni while I was working as a financial consultant in 2010 where we instantly became friends while discussing our love for hockey. Our friendship eventually led to a relationship in which we had carried for some time. The relationship we had was like no other. During the duration of our relationship Giovanni never failed to be a gentleman. If I may put it in the best way possible for a young woman to say, I've never felt such comfort and peace in a relationship. Being around Giovanni has always been a pleasure. He is a simple man at heart.

Our relationship remained as good friends after we both discovered Giovanni had to focus on School and a career. At the same time, I was very focused on my career as well. During our 12 years of history, arguments or disagreements were very rear. In fact, I believe we had one small disagreement that was worked through the following day. This is how simple and peaceful of a man Giovanni really is. At that time Giovanni was extremely dedicated to school,(to the point where he would come back so late from studying and fall asleep in the hallway as soon as he made it up the stairs) work and hockey. And still is a very dedicated person. To say it best, Giovanni puts His heart into everything He does. He is one of the most intelligent human beings I've ever met.

Going back to the days of spending so much time with Giovanni, I can only think such positive thoughts. I remember leaving my office and grabbing dinner for us to cook at His house but Giovanni was always running behind to make it to dinner with me because He was busy checking on the neighbors' kids or making sure they had food to eat. These children lived in a sad and unfortunate environment. Your Honor, I truly don't believe anybody helped these kids like Giovanni did and still does. In many instances, He put others before Himself. I'd like to share a few with you Your Honor.

I was driving on the freeway to a hockey game when suddenly a mattress flew in the front of my vehicle.

I brought it over to Giovanni's garage where he looked at it and without even having to ask Him, He took the responsibility of helping to fix my car.

In 2016 I came down with an unfortunate autoimmune illness that left me bed bound for quite some time. The handful of friends that I did have at the time (including my childhood friends of 25 years) basically disappeared once they learned of my illness. But Giovanni stayed. He didn't judge me or look at me as a burden. As I was going through my treatments and surgeries, slowly healing throughout the years, Giovanni was the one there for me when I just needed a simple evening partner to rollerblade with at the beach or go to a local hockey game or a simple lunch or dinner.

Giovanni is the guy who helps an elderly woman cross the street when the traffic is too heavy.

He's the guy who babysits dogs while families go out of town for weeks

Your Honor, Giovanni is a selfless man with an incredibly caring heart towards the world. We need more people in this lifetime like Giovanni. I can say with total confidence that not too many individuals have contributed to our society in the ways that Giovanni has and does.

Your Honor, these are only a few things I have shared with you in regards to my thoughts and witnessed events I can speak on. I believe with all of my heart and being, Giovanni was pulled into this situation on an unknown, unintentional and blinded route.

It is my sincere hope this letter is taken into consideration at the time of sentencing for this honorable individual, a valuable asset to our community and simply a good human being.

Thank you for your time

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "C. London".

Colleen Theresa London

Joseph V. Portereiko, DO, FACS
90 Summit Crest Drive
South Glastonbury, CT 06073
(860) 913-6652

The Honorable Judge Curiel
US Federal Court
Southern District of California

November 15, 2022

Your Honor,

I write this letter to you as a personal attestation to the character of Giovanni Vincenzo Tilotta in support during the proceeding before your court.

I am a double boarded General Surgeon clinically practicing Trauma Surgery in Hartford, Connecticut and have been doing so since 2022. I am the Associate Chief of Surgery and the Surgical Quality Officer at Hartford Hospital in Hartford, Connecticut and have been in that role since 2013. Additionally I am the interim Chairman of Surgery at St. Vincent's Hospital in Bridgeport, Connecticut. I hold academic positions in the Departments of Surgery and Emergency Medicine at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine in Farmington, Connecticut and am the interim Chairman of the Department of Surgery at the Frank Netter School of Medicine at Quinnipiac University in North Haven, Connecticut.

I speak to Giovanni's character as a someone who has known him his entire life. My father and Giovanni's (Vincenzo) grew up together in Brooklyn, New York in the 1950's and remained incredibly close until Vincenzo died in 1999. The friendship that they had was more than one of two individuals, our entire families were very close. Vincenzo (all that knew him, called him "Vinny") was my dad's best-man at my parents wedding in 1965. When I was born in 1967, I'm told there was only one choice as to who would stand with my parents at my Baptism, it was Vinny who not only was a life long friend to my father and had known my mother only a few years less but had the personal character and work ethic that my parents wanted to be a role model to me. My older sister and I always called him "Uncle Vinny" as symbol that he was family even though we were not related by blood. I remember him having a presence in all major milestones of my early life with encouraging counsel.

In 1972 when my Uncle Vinny married Giovanni's mother, my father was his best-man. My mother was a bridesmaid and my sister and I were included in the wedding party because Uncle Vinny considered us part of his closest family. Giovanni's oldest sister was born in 1980 and we all waiting in the hospital that day. My parents are her godparents. A year later, we did the same awaiting the arrival of Giovanni Vincenzo. I was amongst the first to see him after he was born. His name was picked

because it was the inverted version of his father's. I remember that there was discussion about a young American boy having such an ethnic name. My father told me that Giovanni's said that it was the man that makes the name and not the name that makes the man. He wanted Giovanni to feel his ancestry and also be unique from the start. We all called him Gio most of the time. Obvious to all, my dad was chosen to be Gio's godfather at his Baptism. My mother would be Gio's godmother too. The choice here from what I remember was that Gio's parents wanted his sister and him to always be together, to have strong Christian influence and to consider my sister and me as close to family as possible even though there was no blood relation.

I had the pleasure of going through my teenage years and beyond spending all major holidays and many weekends with my "godbrother" (that is how people referred to Gio and me), my godfather and the rest of "our" family. My father and Gio's had a very similar upbringing including both serving in the Army in the early 1960's and I believe that influenced how they wanted us to be raised as well. Discipline, family, a strict work ethic and citizenship were the pillars on which we were raised. Gios' father was an Auxillary Police Officer in the Town of Brookhaven on Long Island, rising through the ranks of Sargent and then Coordinator. Using that as a concrete example, we were shown how good it is to do for others and at the same time respect for laws and those that serve and protect were re-enforced. We also learned that family fun time is important too. Our dad's and we would spend many weekends fishing, hunting and just playing around at his house on Long Island. It didn't really matter much what we were doing as long as we were doing it together.

As I graduated from College and then Medical School, Gio was at every ceremony and celebration. We spoke often about how for me academics and a "profession" in medicine was what I always dreamed of but everyone's dreams are different. I was not surprised when during his High School years he turned more towards work and away from studies. He was incredible with his hands. He picked up some jobs doing mechanical stuff including work at a boat yard. By spending long hours there he learned many facts of marine operations and when my Uncle Vinny's boat needed a bit of work Gio and I would go at it. It was so fulfilling seeing Gio dive into a mechanical or electrical problem and figure it out.

When he joined the ROTC, it was a natural calling. His mentors had told his parents that he was one of the best participants that they had and were very encouraging of him continuing in a military path. These though were very difficult years for Gio and our families. Gio's dad, my "uncle Vinny" had many complications on uncontrolled diabetes. His physical condition deteriorated requiring open heart surgery and many hospital admission for renal failure. I saw Gio struggle with losing his father. When we finally lost him, Gio naturally took it very hard, but I saw something else at the same time. To me, Gio was deciding his future and how to emotionally get past the lost. He enlisted in the Marines! He was not running from anything but was resetting his course. It was not academics in the sense that I had done, but in a more difficult way.

Discipline, work ethic and citizenship, would take priority as he learned a craft while serving his country.

It was difficult for Gio and me to stay in touch during his initial military time, although whenever we know he was coming home, the family would make sure we all got to see him. When the war started, we all were concerned about his physical and mental welfare. Over the years we would hear directly from him or through his mother about how he was doing. It was not until years after he left the service that I learned from others and him about what he went through in the Middle East and how he served honorably and heroically despite seeing so much death and destruction and experiencing loss of friends and fellow Marines.

After he left the Marines, Gio and I reconnected first with text messaging and phone calls. We got caught up quickly and I learned of how he matured into a wonderful man while he was away and was really trying to make a life for himself in the civilian world. He dabbled in day trading as he worked on airplane engines and simultaneously was attending college. His end goal though was something different, something that would challenge him. During one of our phone calls, Gio asked if I still went hunting every November. This was a tradition that I had with my father and godfather. Gio had joined us for a big-game hunt a couple of times and now he wanted to try it again. That year, he joined me and my long-time hunting partner and now it has now become a tradition for him to fly to Connecticut and for us to make the drive together to New York for opening weekend of the big game season. For either of us, I'm not sure it's actually about the hunt, but more so the time we spend together enjoying the outdoors, reminiscing about the past, getting caught up about the present and speaking about the future.

During the drives when it is just he and I, I have learned most about Gio. I have learned how much he has done for those around him in San Diego. I know how much he devotes time to his neighbors who are going through tough times. I know how often he has people staying at his house when they are in need. I know how much of his business he has dedicated to law enforcement and military charities. I know how honest he is and how respectful of the law and law enforcement he is. He trusts those that wear a badge, shield or uniform. He trusts those with authority by age or title. I believe that this goes back to his upbringing and time in the military.

I was with Gio the day before and of his verdict. I personally witnessed how devastated he was the last night because of what the verdict could mean to his business. He enjoys working with the military and law enforcement clients. He loves finding them solutions for gear and equipment that others have not been able to offer. He wants to serve them to help them be better. I've found no selfishness or personal gain in what he does.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of Giovanni. If it would please the court to learn more about the Gio that I know, please feel free to reach out at any time. My cell phone number is above.

With all respect and sincerity,

Joseph V. Portereiko

Jes Lamprecht
20 Drew Drive, Eastport, NY 11941
631 291-1984

November 21, 2022

To the honorable Judge Curiel,

I am writing this letter to tell you more about Gio Tilotta. Though not a blood relative Gio has been a part of our family since before I was born. Growing up down the block Gio was always a fixture in our household. When my parents were having me Gio helped plant a cherry tree in our front yard that blooms every year on my birthday.

Though he was much older he always took the time to make me feel like a valued human instead of a little kid. Though he went off to the military we regularly saw him on his home trips, and he was always supportive of my interests. He was my first ever client as an artist and commissioner of two paintings that hang in his home to this very day. When I was in a band touring San Diego he came out to see the show and gave me a break from tour snacks by buying me dinner. I don't think he was into my type of weird punk music, but he was definitely excited that I was pursuing one of my creative passions.

During the pandemic I was trying to help the local ambulance organization that my father was a part of with digital communication solutions. When I was stressed to my limit I called Gio and he calmly talked me through some of the software he used for his business and we were able to find a solution to help the EMS service through its most difficult time. That's just who Gio is. An extremely loving talented man who is always there for you when you need help and always there to support you through life's hardships and triumphs. When I flew from New York to be there for him during the court case there were many people there that I talked to who Gio has met through many different stages of his life and they all had similar stories. Everyone goes through life differently and not many have such a positive impact on those around them as Gio Tilotta.

Thank you for your time,

Jes Lamprecht



DGB Counseling and Consulting First Responders
444 Camino Del Rio South, Suite #215
San Diego, CA 92108

February 23, 2023

Federal Court House
Honorable Gonzalo P. Curiel
221 W. Broadway, Courtroom 2D
San Diego, California 92101

Dear Honorable Federal Court Judge Curiel:

My name is Dr. David Bond and I work as a licensed psychologist, primarily working with first responders in San Diego County. I am also a former police captain for the City of La Mesa (retired 2015). I write to you on behalf of Gio Tilotta and his upcoming sentencing on March 3rd, 2023. I do not report my current profession or my former law enforcement rank in expectation that it will sway your judgment in this matter; only to state my bona fides as a dedicated public servant who is reaching out on behalf of someone who I call a friend.

I have known Gio for over five years; primarily participating with, and against him in ice hockey. When I play against him, he is tough but does not "cheap shot." I think you can tell a lot about a person when you play against them in a contact sport. More to the point, he was part my team for the last four 911 Cup Las Vegas first responder/military hockey tournaments. I, along with other former law enforcement officers shared a vacation house with him during each trip. We are very particular on who we share a house with on these trips. You get to know a person when you live with them for four days, four years in a row.

I found Gio consistent in paying his fair share at these tournaments. During one trip, we had more hockey players than bedrooms at the rental home. Gio was the first to volunteer to sleep on a couch in the foyer. He then repeatedly refused my offers for him to pay less than his share of the rent. He was a wonderful house mate as far as sharing his snacks, his cleanliness and doing chores (cooking, cleanup, moving equipment etc.). Gio is great team mate to those at, above, and below (me) his skill level on the ice, in the locker room and the drives to and from the rink. He wants to win, just like everybody else. Gio plays hockey hard, clean and fair. He is encouraging whether we lost or won. I want him on my team.



I initially wrote that I've known Gio for five years, but I first met him several years before when I was still at the La Mesa Police Department. I had forgotten his name but remembered the event and the man. La Mesa and El Cajon Police rangemasters were on a shooting range with a gun company representative. Gio was assisting him in presenting various new gun models for rangemasters and staff officer review. Gio and I got to talking about training, weapons, and the U.S. Marine Corps. After we spoke, I got such a good feel for him that I invited him that same day back to our new police armory for a tour. I have never done that with a civilian in my career. Something was special about that man.

As a former law enforcement officer and now a licensed clinician I get a good read on people. I know this man and he is a good man who served his country as a marine. He continues to be a hard-working small businessman. I remember we would talk about his business in the evenings after the tournament games. I thought I had a strong work ethic, but I was amazed how much effort he put into building his business; he'd sometimes sleep at the shop he put in such long hours. As a small business owner now, he is a great example for me of what hard work and dedication looks like.

Your honor, I ask you consider leniency not for the crime but for someone I know has so much more to offer to his community.

Please contact me with any questions at (619) 954-5436.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Bond', written in a cursive style.

David Bond

John Lamprecht

20 Drew Drive, Eastport, New York 11941 (631) 830-2444

November 21, 2022

To the honorable Judge Curiel,

Your Honor, it is my understanding that you will be the one who must determine a sentence for Giovanni Tilotta – Gio. I am writing this letter still with a feeling of disbelief. I cannot imagine how we've come to this place where you will have to sentence Gio. I know that he was found guilty on several counts by a jury – but that is not whom the person Gio is.

When my wife and I moved into Center Moriches back in 1986 we ended up doing a lot of work on the house and landscaping. What you can afford is not what you'd always like to live in. While working outside, Gio and his sister Nichole would come over and watch. Gio ended up pitching in and helping. He was always curious, intelligent, and willing to put in some hard work just to be able to hang around. Gio became the son that we didn't yet have.

Vincent Tilotta – Gio's father worked for the Town of Brookhaven Highway Department. He also volunteered for the Suffolk County Police Auxiliary. Gio's father had been in the Army and had been stationed in Europe. As I recall Vinnie was a very strict father who imparted a strong sense of right and wrong to his Children. Unfortunately, while the children were both teenagers Vinnie was diagnosed with diabetes and subsequently died from it. Cathy Tilotta – Gio's mother was at loose ends for a while. Gio stepped up and helped stabilize her, and the household.

Through the years I've watched Gio grow up and turn into a fine man. He played hockey while he was in high school and then went into the military. This young man volunteered for the Marines and went overseas and served his Country. He made a life for himself in California and has worked very hard to be a success – but not at the expense of his honor.

I was not at the trial – I had to work the business while my wife went out there to be a character witness. Unfortunately, she was not called. I cannot address the quality of his defense or how competent the prosecution was – I can only attest to what I know about Gio Tilotta – and that is that he is a good man, an honorable man, and if he got caught up in something shady, he was a victim who was taken advantage of. If you need to speak to me about Gio, I'd be happy to have a conversation. My phone number is (631) 830-2444.

Sincerely,

John M. Lamprecht

**Travis Lamprecht
109 West 111th St #C, New York, NY 10026
631 553-5911**

Dear Judge Curiel,

I'm writing to you regarding the character of a man you're about to sentence, Giovanni Tilotta. While he may not be a blood relative of mine, Gio is certainly an older brother to me.

In the late 80s, my mother and father got married and bought a house in the small town of Center Moriches, Long Island, on a quiet street named Cozine Road. Down the block lived a woman, Cathy Tilotta, who became a lifelong friend of my parents. Cathy's children Gio and Nicole spent so much time around my parents they became their "rent-a-kids." When my mother and father decided to have children of their own, Cathy became our family's designated babysitter and ultimately my godmother.

While Gio and I are not close in age, this never stopped us from sharing great moments together when I was growing up. Whether it be encouraging me to take off the training wheels when I was learning to ride a bike or showing me how the throttle on his Motor scooter worked, Gio was more than happy to share his knowledge and experiences with me whenever he had a chance. Shortly after I was born Gio's father passed away leaving his mother Cathy widowed. This deeply impacted Gio and made him an incredibly vigilant son always making sure his mother and sister were taken care of even when he listed in the Marine Corps.

When Gio returned from his deployment in the Middle East we both had grown, me about a foot and him from what he had experienced overseas. Even though his time of service was not easy, his character did not once crack. What he saw there never stopped him from telling jokes, lighting up the room and being a pleasant person to be around.

While we now live on opposite coasts, we have thankfully been able to keep in touch online and over the phone. While I was on the Broadway first national tour of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory as a staff carpenter, I was fortunate enough to have a performance in San Diego and got the opportunity to bring Gio up onto the stage afterwards. In this moment, I got to show Gio how the example he set for me of hard work and drive influenced and shaped me as a person. To see the look of pride and happiness on his face knowing that his "little brother " had gone out into the world to make something of himself was a highlight of my 14 months on the road.

Giovanni it is a big part of a lot of people's lives. He is a beloved son, brother, and role model. I hope you take this into consideration while weighing his sentence.

-Travis Lamprecht

Jerome Joaquin
2420 Mammoth Drive
San Diego CA 92123

November 20, 2022

Re: Gio Tilotta

To: The Honorable Judge Gonzalo P. Curiel

I am a retired police officer with 32 years of service with the City of San Diego Police Department (SDPD). I currently serve as the Vice President of Operations for the Intelligence Research Institute, an educational non-profit based in San Diego, California.

I met Gio Tilotta while I was working as a police officer on the tactical team (SWAT) for the San Diego Police Department. We were researching businesses that could support the police department as an outside vendor. Mr. Tilotta's business, Honey Badger Firearms, and later Omni Equipment Solutions, came highly recommended to us by a number of agencies within the local law enforcement community. The San Diego Police Department has used Honey Badger Firearms and Omni Equipment Solutions as a vendor for equipment since approximately 2014.

I am writing this letter to support Mr. Tilotta and to provide some background as to his character which was not represented during the court proceedings. I do understand that he has been found guilty to three felony counts.

I am familiar with his general behavior and character. I have observed Mr. Tilotta demonstrate good behavior and character. He has a good reputation within the local community as a fair and honest citizen. I do not consider him to be a threat to society. He has assisted as a volunteer many times at the Intelligence Research Institute and shown himself to be a diligent and hard worker. As such, I offer this letter in support to speak of his good character.

Mr. Tilotta is a veteran of the United States Marine Corp (USMC). He served honorably during the Gulf War on Terror in Kuwait and Iraq. I have met many of Gio's friends from his time in the USMC. They range from teachers, jet mechanics, and lawyers. All speak highly of his friendship and strength of character.

I hope that you take my character letter into consideration as you move into the sentencing phase. Despite Gio's conviction, I still believe Gio to be an honorable person, a valuable member of our community, and a good human being.

Sincerely,

Jerome Joaquin

Giovanni Tilotta

Sentencing Exhibits:

- Military records
- USA Today article



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY HAS AWARDED THE

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL

(GOLD STAR IN LIEU OF SECOND AWARD)

TO

SERGEANT GIOVANNI V. TILOTTA
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

FOR

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AS CREW CHIEF, MARINE MEDIUM HELICOPTER SQUADRON 166 (REINFORCED), 11TH MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT (SPECIAL OPERATIONS CAPABLE), I MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE ON 11 AUGUST 2004, IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM II. DURING THIS PERIOD, SERGEANT TILOTTA PERFORMED HIS DUTIES IN AN EXEMPLARY AND HIGHLY PROFESSIONAL MANNER. HE WITNESSED A CATASTROPHIC EMERGENCY THAT RESULTED IN A MASSIVE AIRBORNE CONFLAGRATION ABOARD THE LEAD AIRCRAFT, WHICH SUBSEQUENTLY IMPACTED THE TERRAIN IN ENEMY TERRITORY. ASSESSING THE SCENE, HE IDENTIFIED AN INFRA RED STROBE AND GUIDED HIS AIRCRAFT TO A LOW-LIGHT LEVEL LANDING 600 METERS AWAY FROM THE BURNING WRECKAGE. HE EXITED HIS AIRCRAFT AND RAN TO THE INFRA RED STROBE AS SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS OF HELLFIRE MISSILES AND .50 CALIBER AMMUNITION DETONATED AROUND HIM. HE LED THREE SURVIVORS BACK TO THE WAITING AIRCRAFT. ENROUTE FROM THE CRASH SITE, HE ADMINISTERED FIRST AID TO THE SEVERELY BURNED CREWMEMBERS. UPON ARRIVAL AT AL TAQADDUM, IRAQ, HE CONTINUED APPLYING FIRST AID UNTIL RELIEVED. SERGEANT TILOTTA'S MANAGERIAL ABILITY, PERSONAL INITIATIVE, AND UNSWERVING DEVOTION TO DUTY REFLECTED CREDIT UPON HIM AND WERE IN KEEPING WITH THE HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF THE MARINE CORPS AND THE UNITED STATES NAVAL SERVICE.

GIVEN THIS 1ST DAY OF FEBRUARY 2005



FOR THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
JOHN F. SATTLER
LIEUTENANT GENERAL, U.S. MARINE CORPS
COMMANDING GENERAL
I MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

CAUTION: NOT TO BE USED FOR IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT RECORD. SAFEGUARD IT.

ANY ALTERATIONS IN SHADED AREAS RENDER FORM VOID

CERTIFICATE OF RELEASE OR DISCHARGE FROM ACTIVE DUTY

1. NAME (Last, First, Middle) TILOTTA Giovanni Vincenzo		2. DEPARTMENT, COMPONENT AND BRANCH USMC-11		3. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER [REDACTED]		
4a. GRADE, RATE OR RANK Sgt	b. PAY GRADE E-5	5. DATE OF BIRTH (YYYYMMDD) 19810908	6. RESERVE OBLIGATION TERMINATION DATE (YYYYMMDD) 20070209			
7a. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE DUTY Brooklyn, NY 11252		b. HOME OF RECORD AT TIME OF ENTRY (City and state, or complete address if known) Center Moriches, NY 11934				
8a. LAST DUTY ASSIGNMENT AND MAJOR COMMAND HMH-462 MAG-16 3DMAW MCAS MIRAMAR			b. STATION WHERE SEPARATED PSD, MAG-16 (RUC 00016)			
9. COMMAND TO WHICH TRANSFERRED CG, MCRSC, 15303 ANDREWS ROAD, KANSAS CITY, MO 64147 (RUC 36005)				10. SGLI COVERAGE NONE AMOUNT: \$250,000		
11. PRIMARY SPECIALTY (List number, title and years and months in specialty. List additional specialty numbers and titles involving periods of one or more years.) 6113- Helicopter Mechanic, CH-53 5 Years, 9 Month		12. RECORD OF SERVICE				
		a. DATE ENTERED AD THIS PERIOD	1999	10	18	
		b. SEPARATION DATE THIS PERIOD	2005	07	17	
		c. NET ACTIVE SERVICE THIS PERIOD	05	09	00	
		d. TOTAL PRIOR ACTIVE SERVICE	00	00	00	
		e. TOTAL PRIOR INACTIVE SERVICE	00	08	08	
		f. FOREIGN SERVICE	00	00	00	
		g. SEA SERVICE	00	01	02	
		h. EFFECTIVE DATE OF PAY GRADE	2003	01	01	
13. DECORATIONS, MEDALS, BADGES, CITATIONS AND CAMPAIGN RIBBONS AWARDED OR AUTHORIZED (All periods of service) Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal(3*); Air Medal Strike/Flight; Air Medal Individual Action; Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal; Sea Service Deployment Ribbon(2*); Global War on Terrorism Service Medal; Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal; National Defense Service Medal; Presidential Unit Citation-Navy; Cont on BLK 18		14. MILITARY EDUCATION (Course title, number of weeks, and month and year completed) Recruit Training, Male 2000 Marine Combat Training 2000 Helicopter Mechanic Power, 2000				
15a. MEMBER CONTRIBUTED TO POST-VIETNAM ERA VETERANS' EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM				YES	NO	
b. HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE OR EQUIVALENT		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		YES	NO	
16. DAYS ACCRUED LEAVE PAID 12.5 RLB	17. MEMBER WAS PROVIDED COMPLETE DENTAL EXAMINATION AND ALL APPROPRIATE DENTAL SERVICES AND TREATMENT WITHIN 90 DAYS PRIOR TO SEPARATION				YES	NO
18. REMARKS SN#45609-2005-0153 BLK 13 Cont: Iraqi Campaign Medal; Navy Unit Commendation; Letter of Appreciation; Certificate of Commendation(Individual Awd); Certificate of Appreciation; Expert Rifle Badge(2nd Awd); Sharpshooter Pistol Badge. SNM Contributed \$1,800.00 to the MGIB. Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal period commenced 20021018. Subject to active duty recall and/or annual screening. While a member of the Marine Corps Reserve, you will keep the Commanding General, MCRSC (Toll free 1-800-255-5082) informed of any changes of address, marital status, number of dependents, civilian employment, or physical standards. The information contained herein is subject to computer matching within the Department of Defense or with any other affected Federal or non-Federal agency for verification purposes and to determine eligibility for, and/or continued compliance with, the requirements of a Federal benefit program.						
19a. MAILING ADDRESS AFTER SEPARATION (Include ZIP Code) 10 Lavern Drive Middle Island, NY 11934			b. NEAREST RELATIVE (Name and address - include ZIP Code) Catherine Tilotta(Mother)10 Lavern Drive Middle Island, NY 11934			
20. MEMBER REQUESTS COPY 6 BE SENT TO NY		DIRECTOR OF VETERANS AFFAIRS		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	YES	NO
21. SIGNATURE OF MEMBER BEING SEPARATED 		22. OFFICIAL AUTHORIZED TO SIGN (Typed name, grade, title and signature) M. E. CARTER CWO2 PERSO Bydir				

SPECIAL ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (For use by authorized agencies only)					
23. TYPE OF SEPARATION Released from Active Duty		24. CHARACTER OF SERVICE (Include upgrades) HONORABLE			
25. SEPARATION AUTHORITY MARCORSEPMAN PAR 1005		26. SEPARATION CODE MBK1		27. REENTRY CODE RE-1A	
28. NARRATIVE REASON FOR SEPARATION COMPLETION OF REQUIRED ACTIVE SERVICE					
29. DATES OF TIME LOST DURING THIS PERIOD (YYYYMMDD) None				30. MEMBER REQUESTS COPY 4 (Initials) GVT	



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
2008 ELLIOT ROAD
QUANTICO VIRGINIA 22134-5103

IN REPLY REFER TO:
1650
MMMA-3A
24 Oct 19

Mr. Giovanni V. Tilotta
4855 Ruffner Street, Suite D1
San Diego, CA 92111-0000

Dear Mr. Tilotta:

This responds to an inquiry concerning verification of awards for your service in the U.S. Marine Corps.

You are entitled to the following awards, which are listed in order of precedence:

Air Medal (Individual Action) with Combat "V" with Gold Numeral "1" for the (First Award) for heroic achievement while participating in aerial flight on April 1, 2003

Air Medal (Strike/Flight) with Bronze Numeral "8" for the (First through Eighth Awards) for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight during the period March 21 to September 21, 2003

Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with three Gold Stars for professional achievement in the superior performance of duties during the periods March 1 to July 6, 2001; December 7, 2001 to January 10, 2002; January 15 to September 15, 2003 and August 11, 2004

Presidential Unit Citation awarded to I Marine Expeditionary Force for service during the period March 21 to April 24, 2003

Navy Unit Commendation awarded to I Marine Expeditionary Force (REIN) for service during the period August 2, 2004 to February 1, 2005

Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal for service during the period October 18, 1999 to October 17, 2002

National Defense Service Medal

Iraq Campaign Medal with one bronze campaign star for service during the period July 6, 2004 to February 6, 2005

Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal for service in Kuwait during the period February 2 to September 28, 2003

Global War on Terrorism Service Medal

Sea Service Deployment Ribbon with two bronze stars

Rifle Expert Badge (Second Award)

Pistol Sharpshooter Badge

As requested, enclosures (1) through (10) are forwarded. The marksmanship qualification badge is not authorized to be issued. You may

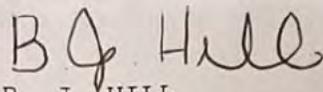
1650
MMMA-3A
24 Oct 19

purchase these awards from any of the memorabilia firms listed on enclosure (11).

The Manpower Management Records Research and Reconstruction Section (MMRP-10), 2008 Elliot Road, Quantico, Virginia 22134, will forward a correction of your DD-214 to you under separate correspondence. Any further correspondence relating to this should be addressed to that Branch. Their telephone number is (800) 268-3710.

A copy of this letter will be filed in your official military records.

Sincerely,



B. J. HILL
Head, Policy and Verification Section
Military Awards Branch, (MMMA-3)
Manpower Management Division
By direction of the
Commandant of the Marine Corps

- Encl: (1) Air Medal w/Combat "V" & Gold Numeral "1" & Bronze Numeral "8"
(2) Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal w/3 Gold Stars
(3) Presidential Unit Citation
(4) Navy Unit Commendation ribbon bar
(5) Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal
(6) National Defense Service Medal
(7) Iraq Campaign Medal w/1 bronze campaign star
(8) Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal
(9) Global War on Terrorism Service Medal
(10) Sea Service Deployment Ribbon w/2 bronze stars
(11) Military Memorabilia Firms

Please accept our most sincere apologies. The enclosure(s) highlighted is/are not in stock. As soon as the stock is replenished we will send you the item(s) via separated correspondence.



Summary of Award Submission

Rank: SGT
Name: TILOTTA, GIOVANNI V
Recommended Award: AH
Action Period: 20030401-20030401
Status: Completed
Last Updated By: Steve E Courtney on 01/28/2004 03:17:32 PM
Last Forwarded To: HQMC Military Awards Branch on 01/27/2004
Final Approved Award: AH
Date Approved: 01/27/2004 04:28:22 PM
Approved By: James T Conway, LtGen, Commanding General, I MEF

Summary Action: Sergeant Giovanni V. Tilotta is enthusiastically recommended for the Air Medal with Combat Distinguishing Device for heroic achievement as Gunner of a CH-53E Superstallion Helicopter while attached to Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462, Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3d Marine Aircraft Wing, I Marine Expeditionary Force in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM on 1 April 2003.

Service member receiving imminent danger pay (IDP).

The tremendous courage and determination of the Dash 2 aircraft of Mud Bug 47 flight on the night of April 2003 worthy of recognition with the award of a Single Mission Air Medal. The chronological events of this dramatic flight are set forth in the following Summary of Action: On 1 April 2003 at 1430 (Z), Mud Bug 47 flight launched from Ali Al Salem Airbase, Kuwait in order to assist insert Force Recon teams into concealed positions and re-supply an established team in the vicinity of Al 'Amara, Iraq. Sergeant Tilotta and his aircrew were the Dash 2 aircraft whose specific task was to re-supply a team already on the ground. The teams and cargo were picked up at Jalibah Forward Operating Base (FOB), Iraq and due to unavailable escorts at the FOB a route was hastily planned to Fenway FOB where escorts were stationed. Along the ingress route to Fenway FOB the flight took sporadic ineffective small arms fire. Upon landing at Fenway, both aircraft shutdown and a thorough brief with the aircrew of Mud Bug 47 flight was conducted ensuring sound execution of the mission. Upon completion of brief, the newly organized flight of four began their startup sequence. The Section Leader's aircraft blew a start hydraulic line during startup, which took it out of functional status. Due to the tactical abilities and skill of the Dash 2 aircrew, the Section Leader made the decision to allow the package to continue the mission. The flight of one CH-53E and two AH-1W aircraft took off from Fenway FOB at approximately 2000 (Z) and completed the mission after making three landings to extremely dusty and featureless zones. This was to be the only one of three reconnaissance inserts during the early stages of the war where the team was not compromised. Due to the professionalism of the aircrew, the re-supply and insert of two teams allowed the MEF to gain critical intelligence on enemy movements and organization leading to the overall success of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

The Combat Distinguishing Device is authorized.

Recommended Citation: For heroic achievement in aerial flight as the Gunner of a CH-53E Super Stallion while attached to Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 462, Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3d Marine Aircraft Wing, I Marine Expeditionary Force on 1 April 2003, in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Sergeant Tilotta was assigned to the wingman aircraft directed to resupply an established Forward Operating Base, and conduct a clandestine insert of two reconnaissance teams in the vicinity of Al 'Amara, Iraq. After the mechanical failure of the Section Leader's aircraft, he provided suppressive fire as the pilot led the mission to a successful end by entering three extremely dusty and featureless zones and successfully inserting two reconnaissance teams while receiving sporadic enemy small arms and technical vehicle fire. The aircrew's confidence and extraordinary ability was a critical part of the mission's success. By his skillful airmanship, steadfast aggressiveness, and exemplary devotion to duty in the face of hazardous flying conditions, Sergeant Tilotta reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.

The Combat Distinguishing Device is authorized.



Teen golfer steals show
13-year-old prodigy Tiger Woods stole the show at the U.S. Open in New York.

US TODAY

NO. 1 IN THE USA

War hangs heavy over celebrations
Iraqis celebrate the end of the war, but the U.S. military is still in the country.

Long, tough 'slog' ahead

Allies cautious as they move to secure Najaf

By Tom Ichniowski
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — Allied forces may have cleared the way for a quick and easy victory, but they are still in a long, tough slog ahead.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, in his news conference on Wednesday, said the coalition forces are still in a long, tough slog ahead.

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He said the coalition forces are still in a long, tough slog ahead.



Preparations, no pause, before attack on Guard
Allies' airstrikes, beefed up supply line set up assault, AA



Arab media portray a very different war
'Invaders' not 'coalition' War 'on Iraq, not in, Iraq'

s, the sole in Final Four

March 31, 2003
Newsline



War hangs heavy over celebrations



In southern Iraq, Marine Lt. Gen. David Hogg leads artillery units on a supply helicopter heading to the front lines.

U.S. supply lines need an army of their own

Troops' quick advance stalls as food, ammunition and security catch up

By Andrea Stone
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — The desert sun is already showing up near the front.

After days of fighting Iraq forces on the road to Baghdad, some of the Army's 1st Infantry Division have reported fighting low on high-explosive ammunition for their Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles.

Low fuel levels of the 10th Airborne Division set back on the AA batteries needed to power their night vision scopes, global positioning system devices, radar and other equipment.

One forward command recently reported another battalion based forward to ex-

change for 500 batteries.

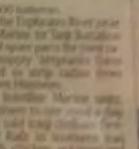
North of the Euphrates River near Al Kut, the Marine 1st Air Brigade is in a state of alert for the front lines that may be needed to stop Iraqi forces from attacking Baghdad.

In other southern Marine units, troops are down to one round of fuel. One report said Iraq forces have used tanks, rockets and hand grenades to attack U.S. forces.

Highly trained and well-equipped U.S. forces are still in a bind, most of a military base at Al Kut, but the problems along the front aren't 200 miles away from the Euphrates River. Iraq has been using its troops to slow the U.S. advance.

See (PAGE 2) (2003) (Page 2) (Page 2)

How supplies get to troops, Graphics 2A



Cover story

U.S. officials concede they 'misjudged' Iraqi defections

By Jack Kelley
USA TODAY

BUMHAY CITY — A three-month U.S. effort to persuade Iraqi generals and high-ranking officers to surrender and join the coalition forces has failed.

The failed effort appears to reflect a miscalculation by the Pentagon and U.S. officials.

Pentagon and U.S. officials had expected a steady stream of defections from Iraq's military leadership to help coalition forces.

Officials say they believed that if they could get high-ranking officers to surrender, they could get the rest of the military to follow.

They also thought a conflict inside Baghdad could be avoided.

But the defections were not as steady as expected.

U.S. intelligence officials said they were surprised by the lack of defections.

They also said they believe the Iraqis are still in a long, tough slog ahead.

They want a coalition with Baghdad. They have captured Baghdad. They have captured Baghdad.

They want a coalition with Baghdad. They have captured Baghdad. They have captured Baghdad.

They want a coalition with Baghdad. They have captured Baghdad. They have captured Baghdad.

U.S. officials say they are still in a long, tough slog ahead.

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U.S. officials say they are still in a long, tough slog ahead.

War hangs heavy over celebrations

helicopter crashed on Sunday, killing three and wounding a fourth. A British soldier was killed in the combined American and British death toll in the 11-day-old war to 64.

In a day lacking dramatic battlefield developments, coalition forces also claimed successes, including destroying a terrorist camp in the north and probing closer to Baghdad along the front line south of the capital.

War commander Gen. Tommy Franks, briefing reporters in Qatar, said the camp in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq had been used to make chemical weapons.

Coalition forces continued their buildup for a major offensive on Baghdad, although there were signs it might

sault might be delayed to allow reinforcements to be sent to Baghdad. Coalition forces and supply lines to be secured. At forward positions 50 miles south of Baghdad, small reconnaissance teams advanced and came in contact with forces believed to be part of Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard.

Myers acknowledged there may be an "operational pause" by front-line forces but said there is no letup in bombing designed to soften Baghdad defenses. "We'll be patient," he said. "We'll just continue to draw the noose tighter and tighter." Huge explosions were heard in Baghdad on Sunday night; officials said 60% of the 800 attack missions flown by coalition a

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By Julie Jacobson, AP

In southern Iraq: Marine Sgt. Giovanni Tilotta loads artillery rounds onto a supply helicopter heading to the front Friday.

U.S. and Troops

By Andre USA TODAY

WASH are already at the front.

After on the more infantry Division ammunition and Brigade

Near borne batteries night vision systems equipment mechanic battalions

U.S. officials concede the

By Jack Kelley USA TODAY

Pentagon and CIA of the willingness or ability of Iraq's political and military leaders to they v dam killed