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Posted on Tue, Feb. 3, 2009

Doctor who checks credentials faces questions over his own resume

By Josh Goldstein
 Inquirer Staff Writer

As chief medical officer of Main Line Health, Donald C. Arthur helps vet the credentials of 1,200 physicians working for the prosperous hospital network in Philadelphia's western suburbs.

But the Navy's former surgeon general has long faced questions about the accuracy of his own resume.

At least four official biographies have credited Arthur with a nonexistent master's degree - one that he agrees he never received.

Over the years, his resumé also has listed a Ph.D. and a law degree from two unaccredited schools, including one that closed after its leader pleaded guilty to fraud.

To the dismay of some veterans, Arthur has told Congress and others that he served in combat during the first Gulf War, though records show that his unit was never in battle.

"Arthur jumped over a bunch of qualified officers who told the truth, and he appears to have done it based on false information," said B.G. Burkett, an award-winning author who investigates military frauds.

The Navy's chief spokesman, Rear Adm. Frank Thorp, said a "preliminary inquiry" found no wrongdoing by Arthur before his 2007 retirement. Arthur wouldn't authorize release of the report.

The tall, silver-haired Arthur, 59, said the questionable degrees were innocent errors that had no bearing on his promotions.

During a 75-minute interview at the original Bryn Mawr Hospital building, accompanied by Main Line Health's chief spokeswoman, Arthur said he never claimed to have a master's, only that he took master's-level courses, and that he did real work to earn the law degree and Ph.D.

He declined to describe his combat role. He said he would rather focus on efforts to improve care at Main Line.

"I'm an honorable person who has led an honorable life," he said.

The controversy about Arthur's three questionable degrees was first documented by the Chicago Tribune in October. A former FBI agent specializing in academic fraud plans to cite Arthur's case in a scholarly article. Last year, Main Line Health changed his biography to show that he did not serve in combat in the 1991 Gulf War.

"In 44 years in the Navy, I have never seen anyone at any rank have such bogus credentials be in such a position of power, prestige and leadership," said Benjamin Newman, a Maine doctor who retired from the Navy in May.

"Isn't it paradoxical that someone with such problems would be now in a position to make judgments about others' credentials?"

Arthur's long list of degrees was noted even at his retirement ceremony in 2007.

"B.A., M.A., J.D., Ph.D and of course M.D. - he's got more degrees than a thermometer," said Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and then-chief of naval operations.

Anthony V. Coletta, Bryn Mawr's medical-staff president, said he was surprised to learn of the questions about Arthur's degrees. Coletta said Arthur has had a positive impact on patient care and had addressed "sometimes difficult situations with doctors" over his 14-month tenure.



CHAD J. McNEELEY / U.S. Navy
 Applauding Vice Adm. Donald C. Arthur at his 2007 retirement ceremony in Bethesda, Md., were (from left) Vice Adm. Adam Robinson; Adm. Mike Mullen; and Rear Adm. Richard Jefferies.

Main Line's top executive said he, too, supports Arthur, and noted that the questionable degrees were not in the resumé sent to the network.

"I don't believe there is a credentialing problem here," said Main Line CEO Jack Lynch, calling Arthur "a perfect fit" with the system.

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Posted by **Philly Guy** 06:51 AM, 02/03/2009 [Sign in to report abuse](#)
He is a disgrace to anyone who ever served our country. Main Line Health should be ashamed of themselves for not being able to find an honorable person to fill this important job. Corporate corruption lives on in the healthcare field.

Posted by **Philly Guy** 07:00 AM, 02/03/2009 [Sign in to report abuse](#)
A disgrace to anyone who has ever worn a uniform. The fact that Main Line CEO Jack Lynch thinks that Arthur is "a perfect fit" with the system says a lot for the integrity and values of Main Line. They should both be fired.

Comment removed.

Posted by **tonyS** 08:33 AM, 02/03/2009 [Sign in to report abuse](#)
Sounds like he's just another liar who needs to be fired and stripped of his benefits.

Posted by **Fascinated** 09:25 AM, 02/03/2009 [Sign in to report abuse](#)
There are guys with degrees from LaSalle University in New Orleans (mentioned in the article) who are out selling themselves as professional expert witnesses testifying in court.

Posted by **janann** 09:35 AM, 02/03/2009 [Sign in to report abuse](#)
It's called "Character Flaw" - and questions anything he does or says. I agree with TonyS --- It's a disgrace that he even is still wearing the uniform.

Posted by **housework** 09:41 AM, 02/03/2009 [Sign in to report abuse](#)
If he can be sued for at least some of the money that he acquired by FRAUD, then so be it!!! He's so full of disgrace, but yet he's not even ashamed of his actions...GLUTTEN!!!

Posted by **wendymae1** 09:42 AM, 02/03/2009 [Sign in to report abuse](#)
fire the liar. he needs to be stripped of that pension too.

Posted by **Amy37** 09:49 AM, 02/03/2009 [Sign in to report abuse](#)
I wonder why you all feel Josh Goldstein is 100% accurate and credible. He is a story spinner who makes his living making medical professionals and the profession look bad. Everyone wants to hang this guy because of a NEWSPAPER STORY. How about 2 sides to every story? I am a patriot too. Too bad everyone & everything is not perfect. How about all of you, no skeletons in the closet? No wonder we can't have peace- no one gives anyone the benefit of the doubt. Believe Half of what you see and None of what you hear and 10% of what you read in the paper. I am a Main Line Health employee.

Posted by **bobcitydoc** 09:55 AM, 02/03/2009 [Sign in to report abuse](#)
This is a huge problem among military, school administrators, clergy and, frankly, police officials around the US. (The police chief of VCU in Richmond was just found to have a phony bachelors degree, right after he was arrested for soliciting a minor via the web). They have time consuming jobs, but for some reason think they need such credentials and more absurdly, that they can pass them off as legitimate. Well, anyone with a real PhD knows these things stink to the high heaven. But, they are not trying to fool those folks, only the 99% of the population who does not have a PhD. Anyway, as a Main Line Health patient, it is now time to reconsider that constrained choice.

Posted by **tonyS** 10:13 AM, 02/03/2009 [Sign in to report abuse](#)
"Fire the Liar!" Thanks, wendymae1.

Posted by **Justin Cohen** 10:28 AM, 02/03/2009 [Sign in to report abuse](#)
One should be carefull before using terms such as "bogus" and "unaccredited". Is anyone aware of the history of academic accreditation? Who accredits the accreditor? Prior to 1976, there was no one to accredit the accreditors. Does that mean that all education obtained prior to 1976 is now "bogus"?

A fraud and an embarrassment to anyone who ever worked hard to get an actual degree or who really served in combat. He should be in a cell somewhere not wining and dining on the Main Line and getting over half a mil a year!!!!

Posted by **trinitee79** 11:07 AM, 02/03/2009

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..so if I add some degrees to my resume fraudulently, can I make over \$400,000 a year too. there are some bills I'd like to pay that my two jobs aren't covering??

Posted by **fedupphilly** 11:12 AM, 02/03/2009

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My question is who at Main Line health checked his credentials.

Posted by **hotdigitty** 12:09 PM, 02/03/2009

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Hey Amy37.. we aint talking bout our collective skelatons.. We are talking about your colleague, "Adm. Bold-Face Liar". Are you serious? How can you defend this fraud?!? Didn't the reporter list enuf reasons for you genius?!? If he slandered your dear colleague, then SUE HIM! You know how to sue, right? You are a disgrace, defending this dirtbag.. Main Line Health eh? Divest from this company people!

Posted by **MHJMD** 12:11 PM, 02/03/2009

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My question is what kind of collateral damage had this fraud with fake credentials left in his wake? If he's fired and we all forget about it, what happens to the people he passed judgement on - perhaps unfairly? <http://drjshousecalls.blogspot.com/2009/02/when-navy-surgeon-generals-lie.html> Bad-faith medical peer review (i.e. retaliating against physicians for blowing the whistle on bad care) is a under-appreciated/under-reported problem in this country . . . especially in the military and public service. No one is doing anything about it. This situation is no different. Reading between the lines of this story, it looks like the Navy - and Main Line - are going to blow this off.

Posted by **Doc4Change** 12:22 PM, 02/03/2009

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Come on America stop with the lynch mob mentality. Must we always throw heroes under the bus when something like this gets written up in the newspaper? Who else should we de-throne this week? Michael Phelps, Senator Daschle, Secretary Geitner. These people have a legitimate body of YEARS of unbelievable accomplishment and because some salivating, rabid reporter wants to sound like a real investigative journalist, we get this type of bashing. Give us the whole story. I'm so tired of this type of yellow journalism by the likes of Josh Goldstein. go work for the national Inquirer instead of the Philly Ink. Where are these investigators when it comes to real bad guys with YEARS of wrong doing like Fuomo and Madoff.

Posted by **tonyS** 12:32 PM, 02/03/2009

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Maybe these cheats and liars WOULD'NT have been able to have ANY YEARS of accomplishment without cheating and lying? What makes any of these people HEROES? The "hero" title is grossly overused and regularly misapplied to people doing their basic job that they were trained - and expected - to do, rather than someone who truly performeda genuinely heroic feat.

Posted by **holmesburgexpat** 12:54 PM, 02/03/2009

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If Main Line Health thinks fabricating a resume is acceptable for an employee, how can they continue in their business? This is not a DUI or other impulsive behavior. This is an ongoing 35-year fraud. He might be qualified to coach Notre Dame football, though.

Posted by **Aroonie** 01:02 PM, 02/03/2009

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I don't believe ANYTHING that Josh Goldstein writes.

Posted by **Captain J** 01:20 PM, 02/03/2009

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I served on active duty with this guy before and while he was Surgeon General. Without a doubt he used these bogus credentials to make rank, stepping over better qualified officers with his well know ego and bluster. I personally heard him reference his "Law Degree" in a meeting. Truly a disgrace to the honorable men and women of the Naval Service.

Posted by **hotdigitty** 01:47 PM, 02/03/2009

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Aroonie: ignoramous. Can to espouse on your brilliant comment a bit?!? TonyS: "HERO" WHAT?!? You are joking, right? How exactly is he a hero?

Posted by **Philly Guy** 01:49 PM, 02/03/2009

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For anyone who actually served in combat, they can quickly tell you that is an unforgettable experience and not something that you don't forget. You either did or you didn't. This guy is a disgrace to all service people who served honorably. Amy37 you are out in left field; try reading the story ... the words aren't all that big. Shame on this fraud and shame on Main Line Health

Posted by **HL** 04:14 PM, 02/03/2009

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Having worked with many fine professionals associated with The Main Line System for many years and even though some might consider me to be a competitor, I am discouraged that it only takes an incident such as this to reflect poorly on the many good and honest physicians and nurses who have dedicated their career to giving excellent care within this system. No one can excuse the facts as presented, but let's not spread the blame so broadly that we damage many other honorable people

Posted by **Lefty Crusher** 05:16 PM, 02/03/2009

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"In March, when Arthur endorsed Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton's bid for the Democratic presidential nomination, her campaign stated that he had been in combat." The DEMOCRATS always pull out fake combat vererans, like Patrick Murphy, and parade them around. This guy sounds like a sure fraud.

Posted by **J H** 05:35 PM, 02/03/2009

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Someone please tell the editor that the word "resume" has accent marks over both E's, not only the second one (either that, or don't use any accents at all).

Posted by **freedomrider** 06:59 PM, 02/03/2009

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integrity and guts. Why don't they send him to Afghanistan to treat wounded US Service men, so he can earn that Combat Action Ribbon!

Posted by **CountryRose** 07:29 PM, 02/03/2009

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I wonder who is investigating diploma mills nowadays? They are still out there, you know.

Posted by **DocN** 10:11 PM, 02/03/2009

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I know one individual who was "screwed over" by Dr. Arthur. Arthur is typical of top brass medical military who do whatever they need to do in order to 'pin that star on'. I was stepped on personally by the guy they threw out because of Walter Reed. My satisfaction last night was that they did a take-off on him on Law and Order. At least I'm not ridiculed for being a monster on one of those shows. Some military medical leaders are good people; many are ruthless, power-hungry insecure people who squash others for pleasure or gain. Doc

Posted by **Holcombe** 06:07 PM, 02/04/2009

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"There are two modes of establishing our reputation: to be praised by honest men, and to be abused by rogues. It is best, however, to secure the former, because it will invariably be accompanied by the latter.".....Charles Colton 1832

Posted by **gfather** 10:27 AM, 02/05/2009

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His \$420,000 a year salary from Main Line Health pretty much says it all. The average worker might make about 7 or 8% of that annual salary if they are lucky. Looking at the latest victim of the MLHS corporate ego run-amock (Riddle Memorial Hospital in Media) - there are many good people out of work wondering what tomorrow will bring. If those same people had falsified their resume or job app, they would be excoriated off the hospital campus by security. This guy should be "gone" and the person who made the decision to hire him in the first place should be right behind him!

Posted by **concerned citizen 123** 07:10 AM, 02/06/2009

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ADM Arthur states, 'I'm an honorable person who has led an honorable life.' Navy Officers' Core Values are Honor, Courage, and Commitment. Navy Officers swear to uphold the Constitution and abide by an honor code to 'not lie, cheat, and / or steal nor tolerate others who do'. So is ADM Arthur being honorable when he refuses to speak with military colleagues and reporters about where and how he earned his decoration for combat experience? If ADM Arthur is certified in Preventive Medicine why does he encourage a risky life style? 'I've had some closer-than-close calls--I've had a couple of accidents. My first one happened while I was working for Harley-Davidson as a mechanic--on April Fool's Day, 1973. I was riding a brand new bike to the shop when a car turned left directly in front of me. I had no reaction time at all. I spent the next four years on crutches and had a total of 10 operations and two knee replacements before they could put my left leg back together well enough to walk again' http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0QVD/is_4_7/ai_n15685735/pg_1 So how was ADM Arthur later cleared for added operational qualifications to become a Navy-Marine Corps Parachutist and Jumpmaster with a medical history of two total knee replacements? <http://www.navy.mil/navydata/bios/bio.asp?bioID=20> Why are copies of ADM Arthur's MA and PhD theses not available? The American Century University's dean of instruction informed the Chicago Tribune ADM Arthur's doctoral thesis was destroyed as part of a routine records purge and now ADM Arthur denies earning a Masters degree? http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/content/education/chi-surgeon_generaloct01,0,6089647.story Did ADM Arthur complete a full residency in emergency medicine and maintain board certification to justify specialty pay received while on active duty? Why the silence on these matters? Honorable men when asked legitimate questions do not respond with 'Quite frankly, I'm done.'

Posted by **talia4** 02:57 PM, 02/06/2009

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For those of you who are so infuriated by this article, take a look in the mirror. Can you honestly say that you live up to your own standards? If not, then get to work on setting a better example.

Posted by **concerned citizen 123** 03:48 PM, 02/06/2009

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Just got back from staring at myself in the mirror and reviewing some current federal laws. I can honestly state that I have not committed credentials fraud for the purpose of advancing my professional career and permanent increases in my retirement pension. US CODE: Title 18,287. False, fictitious or fraudulent claims http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode18/usc_sec_18_00000287---000-.html US CODE: Title 18,289. False claims for pensions http://www4.law.cornell.edu/uscode/usc_sec_18_00000289---000-.html

Posted by **stoneman** 08:52 AM, 02/07/2009

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It smells, it looks, it sounds like fraud....If all his credentials are legit then show the work load and papers/dissertation written, etc. Be proud to show your hard work. After all, that's what he does to other med staff candidates. Too much mish mash to be believed. Jack Lynch should do his own investigation because there's probably a few liability attorneys lurking around this story.

Posted by **zozimus** 09:58 AM, 02/07/2009

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Reply to Amy 37: I wonder why you all feel Josh Goldstein is 100% accurate and credible. The Philadelphia Inquirer is a first-line newspaper that would not publish a story unless it had verified the facts. Jeff Goldstein is not a free agent. His editor would surely have checked his work. He is a story spinner who makes his living making medical professionals and the profession look bad. Who makes medical professionals look worse, a reporter who's only doing his job, reporting matters of grave public concern, for public benefit, or an MD who is a shameless self-promoter, even unto fraud? The choice is yours. Everyone wants to hang this guy because of a NEWSPAPER STORY. Not everyone. You apparently do not. How about 2 sides to every story? I am a patriot too. Too bad everyone & everything is not perfect. Nobody suggests that everything is perfect but validity has a sliding scale from very valid to invalid. Promoting oneself by lying about one's non-existent degrees seems to fall near the invalid end of the scale. How about all of you, no skeletons in the closet? Skeletons in the closet is not the issue. Deliberate misrepresentation, for self-promotion is. No wonder we can't have peace- no one gives anyone the benefit of the doubt. Arthur can raise doubts by presenting the documentation that he has chosen to conceal. Believe Half of what you see and None of what you hear and 10% of what you read in the paper. All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing and to ignore the public hue and cry, responsive to possibly justifiable suspicions. I am a Main Line Health employee. Are you also VAdm Arthur's press-agent?

Posted by **JustKeepingItReal** 10:05 AM, 02/07/2009

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Shame on Main Line Health Svstem for trvina to excuse. iustifv. minimize and

people who are providing your healthcare service are really qualified. The "doctor" who is performing your delicate brain surgery may have become a "doctor" by paying \$29.95 for an online degree.

Posted by **JustKeepingItReal** 10:14 AM, 02/07/2009

I'm out of work and need a job. Maybe I'll get one of those fancy white suits, buy a few online degrees (I think I want to be a doctor, a lawyer, chef and a astronaut!). Then I will show up at Main Line Health System with my "credentials" in hand, demanding a half mil. salary. Hell, if we can't beat them, we may as well join them!

Posted by **zozimus** 10:27 AM, 02/07/2009

Reply to Holcomb: "There are two modes of establishing our reputation: to be praised by honest men, and to be abused by rogues. It is best, however, to secure the former, because it will invariably be accompanied by the latter.".....Charles Colton 1832 There are at least two modes of destruction of one's reputation: to be exposed for the fraud one is by honest men and to be abused by rogues. Regrettably, the latter is far more effective than the former. VAdm Arthur is an remarkable example of both. He is a rogue who has unjustly abused others, even unto their total ruination, with malice aforethought. Unhappily for him, he now stands exposed by honest men for the fraud that he is and his reputation therefore richly deserves destruction, yet the vapid prestige of his former offices, fraudulently obtained, have somehow served as a bulwark of relative immunity against just and proper charges against him. The current public hue and cry against him, consisting of two articles, in two first-line newspapers, the Chicago Tribune and the Philadelphia Inquirer, both associated with blog-comments supportive of the stories, in their majority, is so far ineffective, more's the pity. This is a sad commentary on the efficacy of public opinion to cleanse the commonweal.

Posted by **JustKeepingItReal** 01:06 PM, 02/07/2009

Maybe we should check out "Adm.Bold-Face Liar" supervisor's credentials. Last count, I was told that he had about 30 abbreviations behind his name including MD, MA, MS, BA, BS,AS,Ph.D, JD, DO, RD and C3PO.

Posted by **zozimus** 09:22 PM, 02/07/2009

Reply to Justin Cohen (continued): VAdm Arthur illegally retaliated against a Navy surgeon who reported substandard conditions at his hospital. Enforcement of laws against illegal retaliation is slack. The "audit society" focuses on easy, penny-ante marks, e.g., minor fraud in use of expense-accounts, but disregards such egregious abuses. In that case, anesthesiologists administered general anesthesia to patients before the surgeon entered the hospital. The longer a patient is under general anesthesia, the more likely he is to die from it. Under Arthur's orders, the surgeon was subjected to retaliatory bad-faith peer-review, yet not even his detractors could find anything wrong with his clinical care, so they exonerated him of all charges. Then-Captain Arthur arbitrarily blocked his reinstatement to his duties. That hapless surgeon has tried many avenues but has not succeeded in returning to surgical practice. No hospital will associate with him and he is ruined. Arthur's act was evil. Now, we find that VAdm Arthur, himself, is vulnerable to criticism, on the basis of his credentials. A federal prosecutor is the only agent with authority to prosecute Arthur's violations of the many federal criminal statutes that forbid such unjust retaliation. US Attorneys' workloads are excessive and they have the discretion to choose which cases to prosecute. They have bigger fish to fry, so they pay little to no attention to the retaliatory ruination of a mere individual and VAdm Arthur skates free. All that is necessary for evil to flourish is for good men to do nothing. If the public outcry is sufficient, a US Attorney may prosecute him for credentials -fraud, if not for illegal retaliation, much as US attorneys prosecuted Al Capone, not for his many violent crimes, but for tax-evasion. I would say that not all education obtained prior to 1976 is necessarily "bogus," but that is beside the point.

Posted by **zozimus** 09:23 PM, 02/07/2009

Reply to Justin Cohen (This should have gone first but the system didn't accept it, yet it accepted the second comment, above): "One should be carefull before using terms such as "bogus" and "unaccredited". Is anyone aware of the history of academic accreditation? Who accredits the accreditor? Prior to 1976, there was no one to accredit the accreditors. Does that mean that all education obtained prior to 1976 is now 'bogus'?" Juvenal asked a similar question millennia ago: quis custodiet ipsos custodes. Who shall guard the guards themselves? Nobody has answered that question. Instead, we've developed "The Audit Society." That's the title of a book by Michael Power of the UK and its subtitle is "rituals of verification." It's true that auditing probably goes too far. When auditing does not reduce costs, as its champions hoped it would, the proposed solution is usually more auditing, including auditing of the auditors, yet, the same question remains: who shall audit the auditors themselves? What qualifies the auditors to audit anyone else? We have no answer and more and more auditing leads to auditing of the more qualified, such as physicians, by the unqualified, such as high-school-drop-out clerks at insurance-companies.

Posted by **bgnewman** 01:35 PM, 02/08/2009

Bureau Medicine and Surgery , Secretary of the Navy : Please do the right thing in the name of those who has served honorably in combat and many that have made the ultimate sacrifice and remove the full life portrait hanging in the Flag Ship hospital of the Navy in our Nation's Capital the phony picture of VADM Arthur dressed in a combat uniform. For a man that never saw combat this is an affront to all of us that have been in harms way. IT's THE RIGHT THING TO DO!! CAPTAIN MC USN

Posted by **action now** 02:23 PM, 02/08/2009

This is disgraceful! How can we get this on the radar and take care of another government disaster?

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