

## **Army Reserve Reprimands Soldier who Backed Paul**

Greg Rinckey's military law analysis used in this Associated Press Article was picked up by 350+ local and national news sites across the world including the Washington Post, Washington Examiner, Boston Globe, MSNBC, Taiwan News, Stars and Stripes and world news.com.

A soldier who went on national television in his military fatigues to endorse Ron Paul's presidential campaign after the Iowa caucuses has been reprimanded but not dismissed from the Army Reserve, a spokeswoman said Friday.

The Army determined that Jesse D. Thorsen violated policies that bar soldiers from participating in political events in their official capacities or while in uniform. Experts say a reprimand may become a problem if Thorsen seeks a promotion or could be used to justify more serious punishment if he gets in trouble again.

U.S. Army Reserve spokeswoman Angel Wallace said a letter of reprimand was placed in Thorsen's official personnel file. Thorsen, who learned of the punishment following a two-month investigation, declined comment when reached by email. His supporters praised the news on a Facebook page dedicated to him, noting it could have been worse.

Thorsen, 28, showed up in his uniform Jan. 3 to Paul campaign's caucus night celebration at a suburban Des Moines hotel ballroom. There, he gave a live interview with CNN saying he supported Paul's plans "when it comes to bringing the soldiers home" because he'd served for a decade in the military during wartime.

CNN cut off the interview after technical difficulties and some Paul supporters accused the network of silencing Thorsen. Paul then called him to the stage so he could finish his thoughts before giving remarks after finishing a close third in Iowa's first-in-the-nation Republican presidential nominating contest.

"It's an incredible moment for me. I can't believe it. It's like meeting a rock star," Thorsen said while on stage. "But you know what, we're going to go to New Hampshire. We're all going to get involved. We're going to keep getting online. We're going to keep talking to people. And we are going to make sure this man is the next president of the United States."

The reaction from the military was swift. The Army Reserve said Thorsen "stands alone in his opinions reading his political affiliation and beliefs" and launched an investigation. The Army also learned from news reports that Thorsen was convicted in connection with breaking into a home in December 2004 in Fort Myers, Fla., to steal a shotgun and other items.

The statement released Friday by the military did not address Thorsen's criminal history, and it listed his rank as specialist. Thorsen had identified himself as a corporal, as did the military.

Investigators could not find documentation that Thorsen had been promoted to corporal, but the Army Reserve statement said calling him a specialist is not a demotion.

"If you're an officer, a letter of reprimand is a career-ender. In the lower ranks, you can sometimes overcome it," said Greg Rinckey, a former Army attorney whose Albany, N.Y., law firm often represents soldiers and veterans. "The bigger issue is, you don't go to political rallies in your uniform. It has to be addressed because it's not appropriate."

Thorsen joined the Army National Guard in Florida in 2001, then transferred to Guard units in Illinois and Colorado before joining the Army Reserve. He was deployed to Afghanistan in 2009 and is a member of an engineer company based in Des Moines. His unit falls under the 416th Theater Engineer Command out of Darien, Ill.

Paul's campaign had no immediate comment Friday. Rinckey said the candidate and his aides should have known better than to put Thorsen in the spotlight.

But Paul's Iowa campaign chairman, Drew Ivers, said in January that campaign officials figured Thorsen knew the military regulations before they put him on stage.

"I think it's an impromptu happening by an enthusiastic supporter who wanted to express his support for Ron Paul's candidacy," he said. "I don't think it's worth anything more than a footnote in the annals of Iowa politics and the national Republican Party primary process."