

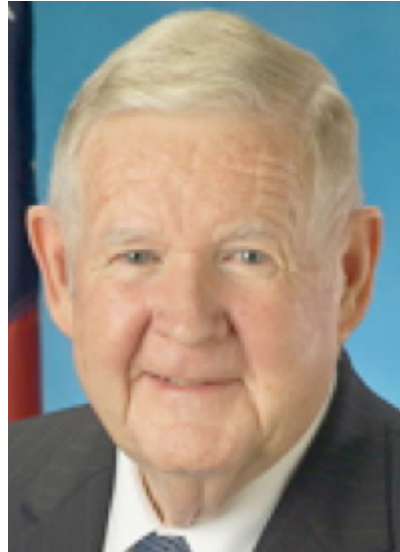


Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on March 2, 2011

Despite Protests, Navy to Name Ship After Murtha

[According to the Associated Press](#), the Navy is unmoved by those who say Murtha, a former Marine who served in Vietnam and was the first Vietnam combat vet elected to Congress, besmirched the reputation of American forces fighting in Iraq. In 2006, Murtha accused Marines in Iraq of murder.

The [USS Murtha](#) is an amphibious assault vehicle the Navy expects to last about 30 years.



Accusations

In 2006, [Murtha held](#) a press conference during which he accused a group of Marines of cold-blooded murder after they killed civilians during a raid in the town of Haditha. The so-called "Haditha Massacre" occurred in November 2005.

"They killed innocent civilians in cold blood," he said. When Chris Matthews of MSNBC's *Hardball* program [asked him](#) about it and whether the incident was it was another My Lai, [Murtha said](#), "That's exactly it."

My Lai refers to [the notorious massacre](#) of Vietnamese civilians by American troops during the Vietnam War.

Yet the [military dismissed](#) charges against all the Marines, except one, while another was acquitted at trial. The remaining defendant is Sgt. Frank Wuterich, who maintains his innocence and awaits trial. Wuterich sued Murtha for defamation, but a federal court dismissed the lawsuit because congressmen are immune from such lawsuits when performing their official duties.

The decision to name a ship after Murtha has enraged former Marines and other veterans. AP reports, with three Facebook pages dedicated to opposing the selection.

"[People Against Naming A Navy Ship USS Murtha](#)" has nearly 10,000 members. Wrote a former shipbuilder, "I would quit building ships before i would step foot on the keel to help build a us navy ship named after this money grubbing self loathing A hole." [Said another](#), "As a former Marine and someone who loves her country this is a slap in the face of every honorable service man and woman."

Another Facebook site is "[Vets against naming a warship after John P. Murtha](#)."

"A better name would be the USS Stab Us in the Back," [a commenter wrote](#) on its wall.

"The Secretary believes that the naming ... honors Congressman Murtha's lifetime of service to the Marine Corps, in Congress and to our nation," Capt. Beci Brenton told the AP in an e-mail. "That the Congressman's unwavering support of our Sailors and Marines, and in particular our wounded warriors, was well known and deeply appreciated. That he was a champion of the men and women of the naval services. The Secretary does not intend to change the name."



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Murtha [was famous](#) for bringing home the bacon to his [12th congressional district](#). In the lead paragraph of its obituary, the *Washington Post* [described him](#) as the "master of pork-barrel politics."

Much of the money he sent home was for defense projects, the *Post* reported.

Critics dubbed Murtha, the chairman of the powerful subcommittee that controls Pentagon spending, the "King of Pork" for the volume of taxpayer money he could direct to the area around his home town of Johnstown. Most of the largess came in defense and military research contracts he steered to companies based in his district or with small offices there.

But Murtha, [the *Post* reported](#), didn't much care about what critics said.

Murtha was firmly unapologetic, saying it was his duty to help his district create jobs and U.S. troops gain new research and tools to help them in battle. To a television crew following him in a House office building with questions about potential conflicts, he held up his miniature red, page-worn copy of the Constitution.

"What it says is the Congress of the United States appropriates the money," [he said](#). "Got that?"

In 2008, Murtha was ensnared in an FBI investigation of a close friend who owned a "powerhouse" lobbying firm, [the *Post* reported](#). "If I'm corrupt," he told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, "it's because I take care of my district."

[Murtha died](#) on Feb. 8 last year after gall-bladder surgery.

Photo: Rep. John Murtha



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