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Feinstein Resigns

Senator exits MILCON following Metro exposé, vet-care scandal

By Peter Byrne



Pencil her out: Sen. Dianne Feinstein resigned after six years on the Military Construction Appropriations subcommittee.

SEN. Dianne Feinstein has resigned from the Military Construction Appropriations subcommittee. As previously and extensively reviewed in these pages, Feinstein was chairperson and ranking member of MILCON for six years, during which time she had a conflict of interest due to her husband Richard C. Blum's ownership of two major defense contractors, who were awarded billions of dollars for military construction projects approved by Feinstein.

As MILCON leader, Feinstein relished the details of military construction, even micromanaging one project at the level of its sewer design. She regularly took junkets to military bases around the world to inspect construction projects, some of which were contracted to her husband's companies, Perini Corp. and URS Corp.

Perhaps she resigned from MILCON because she could not take the heat generated by [Metro's expose of her ethics](#) (which was partially funded by the Investigative Fund of the Nation Institute). Or was her work on the subcommittee finished because Blum divested ownership of his military construction and advanced weapons manufacturing firms in late 2005?

The MILCON subcommittee is not only in charge of supervising military construction, it also oversees "quality of life" issues for veterans, which includes building housing for military families and operating hospitals and clinics for wounded soldiers. Perhaps Feinstein is trying to disassociate herself from MILCON's incredible failure to provide decent medical care for wounded soldiers.

Two years ago, before the Washington Post became belatedly involved, the online magazine Salon.com exposed the horrors of deficient medical care for Iraq war veterans. While leading MILCON, Feinstein had ample warning of the medical-care meltdown. But she was not proactive on veteran's affairs.

Feinstein abandoned MILCON as her ethical problems were surfacing in the media, and as it was becoming clear that her subcommittee left grievously wounded veterans to rot while her family was profiting from the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. It turns out that Blum also holds large investments in companies that were selling medical equipment and supplies and real estate leases—often without the benefit of competitive bidding—to the Department of Veterans Affairs, even as the system of medical care for veterans collapsed on his wife's watch.

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As of December 2006, according to SEC filings and www.fedspending.org, three corporations in which Blum's financial entities own a total of \$1 billion in stock won considerable favor from the budgets of the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs:

- Boston Scientific Corporation: \$17.8 million for medical equipment and supplies; 85 percent of contracts awarded without benefit of competition.
- Kinetic Concepts Inc.: \$12 million, medical equipment and supplies; 28 percent noncompetitively awarded.
- CB Richard Ellis: The Blum-controlled international real estate firm holds congressionally funded contracts to lease office space to the Department of Veterans Affairs. It also is involved in redeveloping military bases turned over to the private sector.

You would think that, considering all the money Feinstein's family has pocketed by waging global warfare while ignoring the plight of wounded American soldiers, she would show a smidgeon of shame and resign from the entire Senate, not just a subcommittee. Conversely, you'd think she might stick around MILCON to try and fix the medical-care disaster she helped to engineer for the vets who were suckered into fighting her and Bush's panoply of unjust wars.

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