

A Growing Concern

In recent years, the JROTC program's connection with weapons has come under criticism from educators and students alike. As a result, some changes have been made at both local and national levels to the program.

Anti-violence policies must be applied consistently.

We cannot afford to send mixed messages to young people about guns and violence.

If our goal is peaceful schools, then JROTC programs must go.

A growing number of local school districts, recognizing the dangers of having school-sponsored riflery programs and their inconsistencies with school policies, are adopting policies banning this training. For example, in November 1999 the Chicago public school system decided to drop marksmanship (which included training and competitions) from its JROTC programs. At the time, riflery was taught in 33 of the city's 41 high schools with JROTC programs. In other places, shooting ranges have been taken off campus.

At the national level, revisions to some texts have removed certain sections dealing with weapons. For instance, the text for the first-year Army JROTC course, which is far and away the most heavily enrolled of all JROTC classes, removed its section on drilling with guns and its 45-page section on marksmanship. The latter included drawings of various rifles and subheadings like "Correct Aiming," "Proper Breath Control and Trigger Squeeze," and "It's Time to Shoot." In another case, an Air Force text which presented a biased view of gun control is no longer used. The text read, "Modern advocates of gun control, registration, and the banning of gun ownership should at least be aware that their efforts, well intentioned as they may be, are probably unconstitutional." (Air Force JROTC, *Careers in Aerospace*: 76). This removal of pages does not mean that marksmanship training has been eliminated from all JROTC programs or that JROTC does not present an imbalanced view of the gun control issue.

Policies at the national level also reflect some of these concerns. An explicit reference to collaboration with the NRA has been removed from Army regulations: in the past, training materials for JROTC teachers instructed them to encourage cadets to join the National Rifle Association (Army regulation 145-2, Appendix P). For some time, the Air Force has recognized problems inherent with weapons training in JROTC programs and has no marksmanship programs: "The possibility of accidents, theft, or seizure of firearms overrides any potential gain from their use by AFJROTC cadets." (AFROTICR 53-1).

But these changes are not enough: JROTC still sends the wrong messages about the use of violence and weapons.

A different approach is needed for preventing school violence.

Schools need effective violence prevention and conflict resolution programs. This is not the business of the military.

- Schools could be educating about the consequences of gun violence, instead of teaching students "weapons safety."
- Schools could be helping kids learn to be peacemakers, teaching mediation skills like empathy and how to de-escalate conflicts, instead of glamorizing violent responses to conflict.
- Schools could be developing student leadership by teaching problem-solving and critical thinking skills, instead of drilling students in a command-style, follow-the-leader mentality.

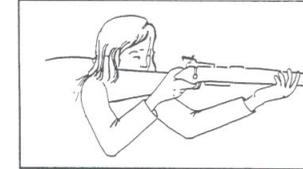
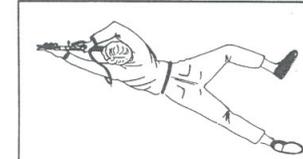
For a list of resources on effective school anti-violence programs, a copy of the historical report *Making Soldiers in the Public Schools* or the report *Trading Books for Soldiers: the True Cost of JROTC*, or information on the costs and consequences of JROTC and the military presence in our schools, contact:

**American Friends Service Committee
National Youth and Militarism Program**
1501 Cherry Street; Philadelphia, PA 19102
phone: 215.241.7176; fax: 215.241.7177
e-mail: youthmil@afsc.org; web: <http://www.afsc.org/youthmil.htm>

ARMED FORCES IN OUR HIGH SCHOOLS

JROTC: Sending the Wrong Message About Weapons and Violence

the forward part of the stock is constant and carries the weight of the head. Eye relief is a minimum of two inches.



THE KNEELING POSITION

Although there is less support in the kneeling position, the shooter can get a good hold if proper position techniques are used. While kneeling, slide your right knee so that it is

... Although there is less support in the kneeling position, the shooter can get a good hold if proper position techniques are used. . .

degrees to the right of the right instep on top of the toes of the right foot (under the foot). Sit back on right foot; the heel should go to the spine. No padding or other material should be placed between these two points. The weight of the body should be supported by the heel just as though it were a left elbow is placed on top of the flat spot at the back of the knee. The flat portion of the knee should be directly under the cap. Your left elbow is not directly under the rifle but a few inches to the left.

The rifle rests across the heel of your left hand. Your head is in an upright position and faces toward the target. It may be tilted slightly downward to avoid putting strain on the neck muscles. The butt plate is placed into your right shoulder while your right hand rests on the trigger guard. Your right hand and arm are allowed to relax completely. The distance between the pistol grip and the trigger should be 2 to 6 inches. The pistol grip in such a manner that allows pressure against the trigger. Your left foot and right foot should be parallel to each other. The rifle should be perpendicular to the ground. Remember, let your back and shoulder muscles relax. Experienced, two-handed shooters should rest the rifle on the ground.

... Your right hand grips the pistol grip in such a manner that allows pressure against the trigger

If using the sling in the kneeling position, you must ensure that it is adjusted to help support the weight of rifle and hold it over your left knee. Remember, if you need to adjust your body position once you are in the kneeling position, you must pick up the kneeling roll and move your entire body.



JROTC text: *Army Leadership Education and Training (LET 2)*, p. 280

Students cannot bring weapons to school, but they can read about them in JROTC textbooks.

JROTC sends the wrong messages

about weapons and violence.

On average, 13 US children are killed each day by firearms. Many school districts have developed anti-violence and anti-weapons policies and programs in recent years to try to counter the epidemic of violence affecting young people.

"Zero-tolerance" policies are perhaps the most prevalent examples of school anti-violence policies. Many of them stem from the federal **Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994**. Under this act, in order to receive federal funding for education, states must have laws that expel for at least one year any student who brings a firearm to school (although local educational bodies can modify this on a case-to-case basis). The act also requires that schools refer these students to the criminal or juvenile justice system.

Schools' no-weapons policies are meant to convey an unambiguous message that violence and weapons have no place in schools and will not be tolerated.

Many legislatures, schools, or districts have added other types of weapons or *replicas of weapons* to their policies. They have imposed harsh consequences – such as suspension or expulsion – for even one instance of weapon possession. The no-weapons policies – found in 92% of US public high schools – are meant to convey an unambiguous message that violence and weapons have no place in schools and will not be tolerated.

At the same time, schools and communities are implementing preventive programs which strive to involve the whole school community in identifying solutions to school violence, to teach social skills to help resolve conflicts nonviolently, and to educate young people about the tremendous cost of gun and other violence.

But thousands of schools have a different program. Across the country, some schools have turned to the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program because it claims to improve the school climate and strengthen discipline. This claim has never been substantiated. Furthermore, JROTC runs directly counter to the intent of anti-weapons and anti-violence initiatives and laws. It undermines efforts to demonstrate that violence and weapons have no place in schools.

1. JROTC teaches marksmanship:

Many JROTC programs have a marksmanship component as part of their for-credit classes. Students who sign up are taught how to use guns in firing ranges. Schools provide facilities that support these programs, such as rifle ranges and storage cabinets for the JROTC unit's arsenal of guns. The military argues that no "weapons" are used in the JROTC program because the rifles (air rifles and older military rifles that have been retired from normal use) – at least some of them – don't use "live ammunition." But rifles are rifles. With gun-related violence so prevalent today, this training with guns in schools or sponsored by schools can potentially desensitize people to the consequences of the use of firearms. When JROTC students are allowed or even encouraged to have weapons in schools, "It creates a double standard," said Ronald D. Stephens, the Executive Director of the National School Safety Center. "What are school administrators to do when students are carrying weapons on campus in connection with JROTC. . . ?" (*New York Times*, June 7, 1999).

2. Students carry weapons or facsimiles in JROTC drills:

Both real and dummy firearms, as well as sabers, are used in JROTC drill and Color Guard activities. In the case of sabers, JROTC commanders have acknowledged that they are potentially dangerous, but argue that there are strict training requirements and that instructors closely supervise their use. Yet if non-JROTC students were caught with a saber, a rifle, or even a toy gun, they would be subject to expulsion and arrest in many of these same schools. The use of these weapons – even dummy weapons – sends mixed messages, especially when linked with symbols like the US flag.

3. JROTC textbooks show weapons and how to use them:

Even where there is no marksmanship training program, many students receive JROTC textbooks containing sections instructing them on weapons or how to shoot. For example:

- The second-year Army text has 32 pages on marksmanship and states that participation in competitive shooting will result in "the building of self-discipline and self-confidence, contribution of individual skills to a team effort, and the development of skills that can be used for a lifetime."
- The Navy JROTC's second-year text devotes 45 pages to introducing the reader through text, diagrams, and pictures to naval weapons, such as guns, mines, missiles, and biological and nuclear weapons.

4. Students are taught that conflicts can be resolved by the use of force:

JROTC texts consistently emphasize that violence is an effective means of settling conflicts on a world scale. A study by two researchers from the University of North Carolina (*Making Soldiers in the Public Schools*) found that in contrast to standard high school textbooks, the JROTC curriculum "celebrates or uncritically accepts the military's role in all circumstances." Although the JROTC texts contain sections on US history, including the history of US wars, they trivialize the human costs and other consequences of war.

5. JROTC has collaborated with the pro-gun National Rifle Association (NRA) and the Civilian Marksmanship Program (CMP):

For instance, JROTC has a partnership with the NRA and the CMP to sponsor marksmanship matches; the CMP offers college scholarships to JROTC cadets who excel in marksmanship training and who ultimately enroll in ROTC when they enter college. . NRA "Cooperative Youth Program Organizations" materials encourage JROTC units to utilize and participate in NRA resources, programs, and training and to join the NRA Youth Club network.

If non-JROTC students were caught with a saber, a rifle, or even a toy gun, they would be subject to expulsion and arrest in many of these same schools.

