

ARE YOU CONSIDERING ENLISTMENT?

You’ve probably heard the ads and the recruiter’s sales pitch. Sounds pretty good, doesn’t it? All advertising does. But if military life doesn’t live up to the advertising, you can’t bring your enlistment agreement back to the recruiter for a refund, and you are obligated to the military for a total of eight years, including possible reserve duty.

You wouldn’t buy a car without looking under the hood. Don’t enlist before you check out the reality of military life that lies behind the glamorous television ads and slick brochures. *Check it out carefully!*

MILITARY DISCIPLINE AND LIVING CONDITIONS

Do you enjoy being bossed around? Do you want someone constantly telling you what to do and how to do it? If your answer is “no,” you may have a hard time adapting to military life. Federal law states that the military places “numerous restrictions on personal behavior that would not be acceptable in civilian society.” Military members are subject to military law 24 hours a day—even if they are off duty and off base—from beginning to end of their term (10 U.S.C. Sec. 654). Disobedience in the military can result in court-martial, prison, or even the lifetime problem of a bad discharge.

Furthermore, the enlistment agreement says that *your status, pay, benefits and responsibilities in the military can change without warning and regardless of any promises in your agreement!*

Not surprisingly, a lot of people express unhappiness after joining the military. For example, in 1999 more enlistees in their first term were dissatisfied (41%) with the military way of life than were satisfied (35%). And only 29% of them said they were likely to stay on active duty in the military (1999 Survey of Active Duty Personnel, Dept. Of Defense).

THE MILITARY JOB TRAINING MYTH

Many people join the military expecting to receive job training. But remember, military training is designed for *military* jobs, not to help you get a civilian job later. Even in the technically-oriented Air Force, most jobs require particular military skills that won’t do you much good in the civilian world.

If you get the training you were promised for a par-

ticular military occupation, you still might not get any experience in the job because the military doesn’t have to use you in the field you requested. In the 1999 military survey, only half of all military members (including officers) said they were satisfied with their training and job assignments, and only 22.7% were satisfied with their basic pay.

As stated by former-Defense Secretary Richard Cheney, “The military is not a social welfare agency; it’s not a jobs program.”

THE EASY MONEY FOR COLLEGE MYTH

Recruiters might promise you tens of thousands of free dollars for college, but it’s not free—you must work for it. And it’s not automatic. Unless you qualify for special jobs or sign up for an extra-long term, you’ll never see the higher amounts of money. To qualify for any aid at all, you have to pay a \$1200 non-refundable deposit to the military. If you receive a less-than-honorable discharge (as about one in four people do), leave the military early (as one in three do), or later decide not to go to college, the military will keep your deposit and give you nothing.

According to the Veterans Administration, less than half of eligible veterans are using their educational benefits, which means the military takes in a lot of money that will not be paid back. In other words, it’s really the military that profits, not veterans.

Colleges can help you find aid if you need it, and it pays to investigate these options before agreeing to give away years of your life to the military. Once you complete school, you can start earning the higher wages of a college graduate right away.



RACISM

In 1991, the head of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights received hundreds of complaints of racism in the military. He issued a report saying discrimination haunts African-Americans, Latinos and women in the military. In 2000, 37.5% of the enlisted personnel were people of color, but only 16.2% of the officers were. Latinos in the Marine Corps, for example, made up 13.5% of the enlisted ranks, but only 5.8% of the officers. When the *Los Angeles Times* investigated the Ft. Leavenworth military prison in 1994, it found that 50% of all the inmates, and 83% of those under a military death sentence, were people of color.

WHAT WOMEN EXPERIENCE

Women often join the military to gain skills and break out of traditional roles. However, while the range of military work open to women has increased over the years, women are still limited in the positions open to them. And within those positions, they are often given traditional tasks: according to one government report, “many women report that they are not allowed to work at the jobs for which they were trained . . . [and] that they are routinely assigned clerical or administrative duties instead of being given the opportunity to work in the full range of their occupations” (GAO/NSIAD-99-27, 11/98).

Sexual harassment and rape are a real threat to women in the military. In 1995, the armed forces surveyed female members and found that 52% reported sexual harassment.

HOMOPHOBIA

Discrimination against gays, lesbians and bisexuals is not only intense within the military, it is official policy. Witch hunts to kick lesbian and gay personnel out of the military continue. Since the so-called “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy was introduced, the pace of forced discharges has actually increased. Violence and threats against those suspected of being gay are routine.

YOU WILL LOSE BASIC RIGHTS

If you leave your work without permission, you can be arrested.

Any disobedience can result in criminal punishment.

You can be punished without the right to see a lawyer or have a trial.

An Army recruiter’s letter to the *Army Times* newspaper, Feb. 12, 2000:

“The *Army Times* isn’t a good sales tool.

“The problem is what the real Army has seemed to become. . . . I tell prospects about the great pay and benefits. Benefits such as free medical and dental care for themselves and Tricare for their families.

“They read in the *Army Times* about soldiers and former soldiers suffering from Gulf War illnesses and being denied treatment, about poor treatment, poor facilities and how Tricare is broken.”

Your right to say what you think when and how you want will be restricted.

Individual expression through the way you dress and wear your hair won’t be tolerated.

You will be subject to routine urine tests for drugs.

WAR—YOU THINK IT WON’T HAPPEN TO YOU?

Many of the U.S. soldiers who fought in Vietnam, Grenada, Panama and the Persian Gulf, never expected they would be the ones to see combat. Many of the Reserve soldiers who fought in the Gulf had been told that this would never happen to them. But the main purpose of the military is to fight wars, and if you enlist you will have no choice if you are ordered to fight for something you don’t believe in—like protecting a foreign dictator or oil profits. After enlisting, if you discover that your religious, moral or ethical beliefs won’t allow you to kill, it will be hard for you to get a discharge as a conscientious objector (hundreds of U.S. soldiers were imprisoned when they objected to the Persian Gulf War).

Before enlisting, it’s important to talk to a veteran or someone who has fled a war-torn country to learn about the horrors of war.

DEP: THE DELAYED ENTRY PROGRAM

If you have signed up for the DEP, many recruiters will tell you that you can’t get out of it. This is not true. There are a variety of reasons for DEP discharges, like enrolling in college, finding a long-term job, family hardship, etc. To quit the DEP, you will need to take steps to get discharged before your date to report for basic training. Your recruiter normally will not help you. For free counseling and help, contact one of the groups listed on this brochure.

THINGS YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELF BEFORE ENLISTING:

Are you prepared to fight in any war, any place, anytime that the government orders you to?

Have you really considered and checked out all the job training and placement possibilities in your community?

Is joining the military something you want to do, or are you being pressured into it by other people?

Is this a spur of the moment decision you may regret later?

Have you talked to any of the many veterans who didn't like the military? Why didn't they make the military a career?

If you become unhappy after you enlist, do you know how hard it will be to get out?

If you get a less-than-honorable discharge, do you know how hard it will be to get it changed?

9 THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU TALK TO A RECRUITER

1) **Recruiters are interested in you in order to make a sale.** If they fail to meet their quota of recruits, they can be forced to work overtime. An award winning recruiter told *The Boston Globe*, "You have to convince these little punks to do something . . . I figure if I can sell this, I can sell anything." Another veteran recruiter told a reporter for the *Albany Times Union*, "I've been recruiting for years and I don't know one recruiter who wasn't dishonest about it. I did it myself."

2) **Take along a parent or friend as a witness if you go see a recruiter.** That way you'll have somebody to back up your side of the story if there is a dispute over whether you got what you were promised.

3) **If you have a police record or medical condition, don't hide it—even if the recruiter tells you it doesn't matter.** You'll be the one in trouble later on, not the recruiter.

4) **DON'T sign any papers until you have taken them home and read them over carefully.** If you ask for a copy of the enlistment agreement, they must give it to you. If they refuse, don't sign the agreement. REMEMBER, you're not in the military yet; they can't order you around.

5) **Talk the enlistment agreement over with your parents and friends, and with a trained civilian**

counselor. Ask about the parts of the agreement that you don't understand.

6) **GET ALL PROMISES IN WRITING and have them signed by the recruitment representative!** Spoken promises are worthless.

7) **Get copies of everything you sign.** Keep the copies in a safe place.

8) **If you want one of the military's enlistment options, be sure to ask the recruiter the following questions:**

For how long do I have to enlist to get this option?

Are there any extra requirements (schooling, physical standards, security clearance, etc.) that I have to meet to qualify for this option? What happens if I don't meet them, but I've already enlisted?

For options that include assignment to a particular base or area: Am I guaranteed this assignment for the entire time I'm in?

9) **REMEMBER: If you don't like your new job, they don't have to let you switch, and you can't quit!** Early discharges that don't also punish you can be hard to get.

FINDING A NON-MILITARY JOB

Looking for a job is hard work, and the better prepared you are, the greater your chance to find, get and keep the job you want. Following are some job-hunting tips:

KNOW YOURSELF. Think about all of the job experience you have. Don't forget to include volunteer work, baby-sitting, home carpentry, or painting. Put together a résumé that outlines your skills, abilities and interests. If you don't know how to put together a résumé, check with the library or career center at your school. Think about what you want to do in your life. Talk to people who have the type of job you are interested in. Ask them how they got their first job.

REFERENCES. Employers want to know who you are and if you are trustworthy and reliable. Before you go for a job interview, get the names, addresses and phone numbers of three people who can tell your employer what kind of person you are. They should have known you for at least a year and not be relatives. Be sure to warn them so they are prepared to answer questions about you, if asked.

INTERVIEWS. Go dressed neatly and appropriately. Go by yourself. Be on time. Before the inter-

view, try to find out something about the company. You can get this information from someone who works there or by researching it at the library or Employment Development Office. Be friendly during the interview. The only way for them to find out about your skills, interests and abilities is for you to tell them.

APPLICATIONS. Be sure to bring a pen. To make a good impression, follow the directions carefully and fill out the application neatly and completely.

For free counseling and more information about what recruiters might not be telling you, contact:

Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors
630 20th St., #302, Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 465-1617; www.objector.org/
and 1515 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 563-8787

Pre-enlistment counseling, military and draft counseling.

AFSC Youth & Militarism Program
1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 241-7176; www.afsc.org/youthmil.htm
Pre-enlistment, military & draft counseling

War Resisters League
339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012
(212) 228-0450; www.warresisters.org
Pre-enlistment, military & draft counseling.

Local contact:

American Friends Service Committee
980 North Fair Oaks Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91103

626.791.1978 pasadena@afsc.org

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What You Should Know Before Joining the Military

The Military's Not Just a Job . . .



. . . It's Eight Years of Your Life!