

## 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 reserve duty when you could be called back.

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 or having someone constantly telling you what to do and how to do it? If not, you may have a hard time with military life. Federal law says 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, Section C.9. of the enlistment agreement says *your status, pay, benefits and responsibilities in the military can change without warning and regardless of any promises in your agreement!* And your duty can be extended for years, as the Iraq war has shown.

Not surprisingly, a lot of people express unhappiness after joining the military. For example, in 2002, only 46% of enlistees in their first term were satisfied with the military way of life; and only 41% said they were likely to stay on active duty in the military. Among all military members, 48% reported having financial difficulty. (2002 *Status of Forces Survey of Active-Duty Members*, 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, many 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 particular 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 2002 SOF Survey, only 54% of all military members (including officers) said they were satisfied with their training and professional development, and only 39% were satisfied with the total compensation they received for their work.

As stated by Vice President Richard Cheney back when he was Secretary of Defense, "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), or later decide not to go to college, the military will keep your deposit and give you nothing.

According to the Veterans Affairs Dept., only about 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, in many cases it's 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

The military claims it treats everyone the same, regardless of skin color—but in reality, it has serious problems with inequality. In the 1996 Armed Forces Equal Opportunity Survey, 65% of active-duty personnel reported having experienced racially offensive behavior; 10% had experienced threatening incidents or career-related racial discrimination. In 2002, 38% of the enlisted personnel were people of color, but only 17.5% of the officers were. Latinos in the Marine Corps, for example, made up 14.2% of the enlisted ranks, but only 5.5% of the officers. (DoD, *Population Representation in the Military Services*, 2002)

## 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. A recent survey found that 30% of women reported being victims of rape or attempted rape while in the military; 75% had experienced sexual harassment (Reuters Health, 3/14/03).

## 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

"We soldiers have faced death in Iraq without reason or justification. How many more must die? How many more tears must be shed before Americans awake and demand the return of the men and women whose job it is to protect them rather than their leader's interest?" Tim Predmore, 101st Airborne Div., Iraq, *The Guardian*, 9/19/03

"We're dealing with absolute financial devastation. We're on the verge of losing everything. We're civilians who signed up expecting to do duty in the state. We did not expect him to be deployed for years at a time." Korina Self, wife of National Guard soldier in Iraq, *Sacramento Bee*, 12/6/03

lawyer or have a trial.

- 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 Iraq never expected they would be the ones to see combat. Many of the Reserve and National Guard soldiers who were sent to fight in Iraq for well over a year were led to believe they would stay in the U.S. and only have to fight in emergencies. 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 industry profits.

As many have already learned in Iraq, signing up for the National Guard, Reserves or a "non-combat" job does not mean you won't be in combat. And if after you enter the military you discover that your religious, political or moral beliefs won't allow you to go to war, it can be very hard for you to get out.

*Before* enlisting, it's important to talk to a veteran or someone who has lived in 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, or that you must report to boot camp to be released. This is not

true. To quit the DEP, there are some simple steps you should take *before* your date to report for basic training. Your recruiter normally will not help you, and you should *NOT* go if you are told you must report to a military base to get released. For free help with this, contact one of the groups listed on this brochure, or contact the **GI Rights Hotline**, 800-394-9544, [www.girights.org](http://www.girights.org)

### THINGS YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELF BEFORE ENLISTING:

- Are you prepared to fight in any war, in any place, at anytime that the government orders you to?
- Have you really considered and checked out all the college financial aid and 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. One 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 interview, 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**  
405 14th St., #205, Oakland, CA 94612  
(510) 465-1617; [www.objector.org/](http://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](http://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](http://www.warresisters.org)  
*Pre-enlistment, military & draft counseling.*

**Project on Youth and Non-Military Opportunities**  
(Project YANO)

P.O. Box 230157, Encinitas, CA 92023  
(760) 634-3604; [www.projectyano.org](http://www.projectyano.org)  
*Information on military recruitment, the draft, non-military career choices and college financing.*

Local contact:

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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!