SERVICE AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Many good people join the military because they want to make a difference, to serve others. This is a very positive goal, but after joining, you may find out that it’s not the kind of service you expected, and then it would be too late to change your mind.

Over the last 50 years, several different presidents have ordered our military to attack and occupy countries that never threatened us, like Vietnam, Grenada, Panama and Iraq. Instead of defending their country, some military members have felt they were used to defend a foreign dictator or the profits of oil companies. But they had no choice unless they were willing to refuse orders and risk jail.

If service is your goal, it’s important to ask yourself some hard questions. Regardless of the rank or military job you are given, would you be willing to support missions you might not believe in and actions that could cause great destruction and the loss of many innocent lives? Would you be willing to share responsibility for such things in order to get money for college or a job the military is promising?

If you’re not sure how to answer these questions, take some time to think about them. You should also consider the fact that there are many different ways to serve your community, your country and the world. For example, you could become a teacher, a fire fighter, a community organizer, a social worker or an emergency medical technician—all of whom make a big difference in many people’s lives.

DEP: THE DELAYED ENTRY PROGRAM

If you signed up for the DEP (or the Army’s “Future Soldiers Training Program”) and then changed your mind, watch out for recruiters who say you can’t get out of it, or that you must report to boot camp to be released. Neither is true. To quit the DEP, there are simple steps you should take before your date to report for basic training. Don’t expect your recruiter to help you, and you should NOT go to a military base if you are told to report there to get released. For free help getting out of the DEP, contact one of the groups listed in this brochure, or contact the GI Rights Hotline, 877-447-4487, www.girightshotline.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 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?
- Besides talking to a military recruiter, have you spoken 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 it can affect your future?
- 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?
- What if there is no space in the training program or job that I signed up for?
- For options that include assignment to a particular base or area: Am I guaranteed this assignment for the entire time I’m in?

9 THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN YOU TALK TO A RECRUITER

1) Recruiters are not guidance counselors. They are interested in you because if they don’t meet their quota of recruits, they can be forced to work overtime or even punished. 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 what was 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.

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 should give it to you. If they refuse, don’t sign the agreement.

5) Talk the enlistment agreement over with your parents and friends, or with a counselor from the GI Rights Hotline. 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, but also remember that even written ones can be changed under the contract.

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

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

FINDING A NON-Military JOB

Looking for a job can be a challenge. Some helpful advice and resources are available from Web sites below. If you don’t have your own Internet access, use a computer at your local library or school.

Career InfoNet: www.acinet.org
Idealist.org: www.idealist.org
Teen4Hire: www.teens4hire.org
CareerBuilder.com: www.careerbuilder.com
Career Voyages: www.careervoyages.gov
AmerCorps: www.americorps.gov

For more information, contact:

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

Project on Youth and Non-Military Opportunities
(Project YANO)
P.O. Box 230157, Encinitas, CA 92023
(760) 634-3604; www.projectyano.org

War Resisters League
339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012
(212) 228-0450; www.warresisters.org

GI Rights Hotline: www.girightshotline.org
877-447-4487

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!
The benefits will not be guaranteed, even under the new GI bill that goes into effect in August 2009. Your ability to spend time with your parents, wife or husband, and other family members will be severely limited. How some recruiters bend the rules: “You'll be making more money than under the old GI bill, more school options, and a chance for military members to transfer unused financial aid to other family members,” vets counselors warn that there could be many problems. For example:

- **THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MILITARY JOBS**

  - **THE EASY MONEY FOR COLLEGE MYTH**
    - Enlistment “bonuses” are not really bonuses paid just for joining: they are usually paid out over time, and you may have to return the money if you don’t complete your term. Disobedience in the military can result in court-martial, prison, or the lifetime problem of a bad discharge.
    - If you leave your work without permission or don’t complete your term, you will be punished. Any disobedience can result in criminal punishment. The military claims that everyone in the military is under the threat of bad discharge, and the parent doesn’t exist. If you can’t complete your enlistment term, you could lose all of your benefits and be forced to pay back the enlistment bonuses that you received. You must finish your term or you will lose your GI bill benefits.

  - **WHAT ABOUT PROMISES OF BONUSES?**
    - **The Myth of Equality**
      - Some people who join have been led to believe they will only be second-class citizens in the military. This is not true. The military is a volunteer force and does not discriminate against anyone who wishes to serve.
      - **THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MILITARY JOBS**
        - **The Military Job Training Myth**
          - Many people join the military because they believe they will receive extensive training that will help them in the civilian workforce. This is not always the case. The military does not always train people for the skills needed in the civilian workforce.

- **THE MYTH OF THE EQUALITY**

  - The military claims to be for everyone, but in reality, it has serious problems with inequality. As of February 2007, 27.2% of the enlisted personnel in the ranks are women. The military has tried to integrate women into all areas of the military, but they have not been successful. The military has been praised for integrating women into the workforce, but this has not always been the case. Women have been denied many of the same opportunities as men in the military.

- **THE MILITARY JOB TRAINING MYTH**

  - The military claims that everyone in the military is under the threat of bad discharge, and the parent doesn’t exist. If you can’t complete your enlistment term, you could lose all of your benefits and be forced to pay back the enlistment bonuses that you received. You must finish your term or you will lose your GI bill benefits.