


Chicago Indymedia : <http://chicago.indymedia.org>

News :: Miscellaneous

## Top Military Recruitment Lies

Editor's Note: The following is excerpted from Army of None: Strategies to Counter Military Recruitment, End War and Build a Better World published by Seven Stories Press, August 2007. Reprinted here by permission of publisher. Copyright © 2007 Aimee Allison and David Solnit

Top military recruitment facts

<b>Author</b>
- Aimee Allison, David Solnit, Army of One
<b>Date Created</b>
- 20 Sep 2007
<b>Date Edited</b>
- 20 Sep 2007 11:33:27 PM
<b>Rating</b>
• Current rating: 5
<b>License</b>
 This work is in the public domain.

1. Recruiters lie. According the New York Times, nearly one of five United States Army recruiters was under investigation in 2004 for offenses varying from "threats and coercion to false promises that applicants would not be sent to Iraq." 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. The military contract guarantees nothing. The Department of Defense's own enlistment/re-enlistment document states, "Laws and regulations that govern military personnel may change without notice to me. Such changes may affect my status, pay allowances, benefits and responsibilities as a member of the Armed Forces REGARDLESS of the provisions of this enlistment/re-enlistment document" (DD Form4/1, 1998, Sec.9.5b).

3. Advertised signing bonuses are bogus. Bonuses are often thought of as gifts, but they're not. They're like loans: If an enlistee leaves the military before his or her agreed term of service, he or she will be forced to repay the bonus. Besides, Army data shows that the top bonus of \$20,000 was given to only 6 percent of the 47,7272 enlistees who signed up for active duty.

4. The military won't make you financially secure. Military members are no strangers to financial strain: 48 percent report having financial difficulty, approximately 33 percent of homeless men in the United States are veterans, and nearly 200,000 veterans are homeless on any given night.

5. Money for college (\$71,424 in the bank?). If you expect the military to pay for college, better read the fine print. Among recruits who sign up for the Montgomery GI Bill, 65 percent receive no money for college, and only 15 percent ever receive a college degree. The maximum Montgomery GI Bill benefit is \$37,224, and even this 37K is hard to get: To join, you must first put in a nonrefundable \$1,200 deposit that has to be paid to the military during the first year of service. To receive the \$37K, you must also be an active-duty member who has completed at least a three-year service agreement and is attending a four-year college full time. Benefits are significantly lower if you are going to school part-time or attending a two-year college. If you receive a less than honorable discharge (as one in four 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. Note: The \$71,424 advertised by the Army and \$86,000 by the Navy includes benefits from the Army or Navy College Fund, respectively. Fewer than 10 percent of all recruits earn money from the Army College Fund, which is specifically designed to lure recruits into hard-to-fill positions.

6. Job training. Vice President Dick Cheney once said, "The military is not a social welfare agency; it's not a jobs program." If you enlist, the military does not have to place you in your chosen career field or give you the specific training requested. Even if enlistees do receive training, it is often to develop skills that will not transfer to the civilian job market. (There aren't many jobs for M240 machine-gunners stateside.)

7. War, combat, and your contract. First off, if it's your first time enlisting, you're signing up for eight years. On top of that, the military can, without your consent, extend active-duty obligations during times of conflict, "national emergency," or when directed by the president. This means that even if an enlistee has two weeks left

on his/ her contract (yes, even Guard/Reserve) or has already served in combat, she/he can still be sent to war. More than a dozen U.S. soldiers have challenged "stop-loss" measures like these in court so far, but people continue to be shipped off involuntarily. The military has called thousands up from Inactive Ready Reserve -- soldiers who have served, some for as long as a decade, and been discharged. The numbers: twice as many troops are fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan per year as during the Vietnam War. One-third of the troops who have gone to Iraq have gone more than once. The highest rate of first-time deployments belongs to the Marine Corps Reserve: almost 90 percent have fought.

#### Counterrecruitment for a better world

Ready to create a truly grassroots, people powered movement? Anti-war activism is changing. The familiar sights and sounds of large protests are giving way to quieter, but far more resonating, one-on-one work in classrooms, career centers, and communities. Whenever you hear people decry the lack of large-scale protest in the United States, even as the latest polls show more than 60 percent of people are opposed to the current war in Iraq, remember that the model for effectively challenging war is taking a different shape.

People from all walks of life are finding inspiration and success in working locally to educate students and mobilize against military recruitment where it happens. We can see counterrecruitment asserting itself as a viable movement as independently organized actions in Seattle, Austin and Los Angeles contribute to a national context in which public schools around the country limit military recruiter access, a huge success by any measure. Schools and communities are now considering deeper questions about the increasing militarization of our culture and recognizing the need for schools to teach and weave peace into the minds and aspirations of our children. We believe that 100,000 marching one day every six months is not as effective as 1,000 people talking to students every day.

In January 2006 the National Security Advisory Group, which includes former Secretary of Defense William Perry and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, issued a report entitled "The U.S. Military: Under Strain and at Risk." The report predicted a major recruiting crisis, pointing out that fewer than needed recruits, as well as first-time enlistees, could result in a "hollowing" and imbalance in the Army.

The fact is, at the end of 2005, the active Army fell 6,627 recruits short of its annual goal of 80,000. In addition, the Army Reserve fell 16 percent behind its recruiting target for the year, and the National Guard 20 percent short of its annual goal. Today approximately 9,000 soldiers are not permitted to leave the service because of "stop-loss" orders, which retain soldiers on active duty involuntarily after their period of enlistment is complete. Another 2,000 soldiers have been involuntarily recalled after leaving active Army service.

Despite this compulsory service, the Army Reserve has trouble achieving its target numbers. After the 2005 recruiting disaster, the military pulled out all stops in an effort to "make quota" in 2006. Army brass replaced the Army Recruiting Command's top officer in October 2005 with Stanford-educated Maj. Gen. Thomas Bostick. "A lot of concerns, I think, that the parents and applicants have are about Iraq and Afghanistan," Bostick told the Tampa Tribune in October 2006. They also replaced Leo Burnett, their lead public relations agency, who created the "Army of One" campaign, with McCann-Erickson, who after a \$200 million contract and year of research came up with "Army Strong" as the new recruiting slogan.

In their comprehensive new strategy, the military added 1,200 new recruiters and spent millions on a public relations blitz that included TV ads, video games, websites, cell phone text messages, helicopter simulators in the back of 18-wheelers, internet chat rooms, sports and public event sponsorships, and even ads on the ticket envelopes for Greyhound Bus lines ("This ticket will take you to where you are going, but the National Guard will take you to where you want to be").

The Army also increased its relationship with NASCAR, the National Hot Rod Association and the Professional Bull Riders Association. The plan calls for recruiters to visit schools and malls a few days before an event, offering free tickets and the chance to meet famous drivers or bull riders.

In addition, the military dramatically lowered its educational and test standards and other qualifications. The U.S. Army recruited more than 2,600 soldiers under new, lower-aptitude test standards in 2006. They allowed neck and hand tattoos, increased the allowable age to 42, increased the enlistment bonus up to \$40,000 and offered \$1,000 to soldiers who persuaded friends to sign up. They have granted an unprecedented number of "moral character" waivers; around 17 percent of the first-time recruits, or about 13,600, were accepted under

waivers for various medical, moral or criminal problems, including minor misdemeanor arrests and drunk driving. But even that was not enough to "meet quota."

So, they also lied. From 2004 to 2005 the Government Accounting Office found 6,600 allegations of recruiter crimes. Incidents included concealing medical information that would disqualify a recruit; making false promises and helping recruits get around test requirements. In 2006 the pressure was even greater, and seen in an ABC television investigation from Nov. 2, 2006, that sent undercover students into ten recruiters' offices in New York and New Jersey.

The program reported that more than half of the recruiters were "stretching the truth or even worse, lying." They found "nearly half of the recruiters who talked to our under-cover students compared everyday risks here at home to being in Iraq." A Patchogue recruiter was caught saying, "You have a 10 times greater chance of dying out here on the roads than you do dying in Iraq."

It also reported that "some recruiters told our students if they enlisted, there was little chance they'd go to war. One recruiter told a student his chances of going to war were "slim to none."

After all this, the military claims to have met its 2005-2006 goals of recruiting 80,000 people to fill its ranks. It has provided no independent verification of its alleged statistics, but it has launched a major public relations effort to counter the bleak news from the year before.

The Armed Forces Journal reported in March 2006 that recruiters "face an increasingly reluctant pool of potential recruits, opposition from anti-war protesters and perennial bureaucratic inefficiency in the recruitment system." Scrambling in all of these ways to meet their numbers, the Army, more than ever before, needs fresh blood -- recruits straight out of high school.

Is counterrecruitment just a way to end the war in Iraq and Afghanistan?

Counterrecruitment is not simply a tactic to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is a broad-based, strategic approach to challenging the roots of unending war and militarization. The full potential of a progressive peace and justice movement will only be realized when there is an observable link between efforts to stop war and efforts to address inequality in class, race, ethnicity, immigration status and other socioeconomic factors that determine who ends up being sacrificed in our government's wars.

As recent statistics demonstrate, there are limits to how far Bush and the neocons can go with their plan for global hegemony when the resources for it are running dangerously low. Fortunately, the peace movement is in a position to further diminish those resources. If we apply ourselves to countering military recruitment, it is in our power to both limit the government's capacity to wage new wars and build a stronger base to challenge the nation's spending priorities. Simply put, counterrecruitment is a strategic and effective way to challenge the pro-war, anti-education priorities of our government.

War and empire

As U.S. Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Smedley Butler put it in 1933, "There are only two things we should fight for. One is the defense of our homes and the other is the Bill of Rights. War for any other reason is simply a racket."

Racket is one term, empire is another to describe why the U.S. government spends \$441 billion a year on a military of over two and a half million soldiers (2,685,713 with reserves), and why it has more than 700 military bases spread across 130 countries with another 6,000 bases in the United States and its "territories."

Understanding what military recruits are used for in the world, understanding war, and creating viable alternatives to both are essential if we want to break out of the deadlock of militarism. Since the collapse of the "other superpower," the Soviet Union, "empire" has become a common term among both critics and advocates referring to the unparalleled U.S. system of economic, political, cultural, and military domination of the world. The New York Times Magazine ran a 2003 cover story titled "The American Empire (Get Used to It.)" describing the United States as a reluctant but benevolent global empire. While Bush claimed in his 2004 State of the Union speech, "We have no ambitions of empire," months later Karl Rove snapped at a New York Times reporter: "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality."

Some see the start of American empire in the wake of Second World War or after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. Others trace it back to the invasion and conquest of numerous indigenous nations in North America from the 17th century onward, the development of a slave economy with tentacles reaching into Africa, and the 1848 seizure of Mexico's northern half, which is now the Southwest. Another wave of aggression abroad began in the 20th century.

Smedley Butler describes the U.S. military's role in this emerging empire: "I served in all commissioned ranks from second lieutenant to major general. And during that period, I spent most of my time being a high-class muscleman for Big Business, for Wall Street, and for the Bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism."

The modern-day version of "war as a racket" and gangsterism for capitalism can be seen in the occupation of Iraq. Critics call the U.S. war in Iraq a failure, but behind the scenes, it has established several permanent U.S. military bases, allowed corporations like Halliburton to make billions from unfulfilled contracts to reconstruct war-destroyed schools, hospitals, power systems and infrastructure, and is in the final process of turning control of Iraq's vast oil resources over to war profiteers such as Chevron.

The U.S. occupation's "Provisional Authority" under Paul Bremer also laid the legal groundwork for much of the Iraqi economy to be privatized and then taken over by U.S.-based corporations. Thus Butler's racket and its toll abroad. What does it cost us at home?

The price of two and a half million soldiers, aircraft carriers and military bases across the planet, and a massive array of weapons of mass destruction is high. It saps resources for healthcare, education and housing. It also requires keeping the domestic population in check through propaganda and the corrosion of civil liberties and human rights. Stifling domestic dissent, criminalizing immigrants, and torturing and illegally imprisoning citizens of other nations have all been stepped up under the guise of the so-called War on Terror.

In his book *The Empire Has No Clothes: U.S. Foreign Policy Exposed*, Ivan Eland writes, "Intervention overseas is not needed for security against other nation-states and only leads to blowback from the one threat that is difficult to deter -- terrorism.

In short, the U.S. empire lessens American prosperity, power, security and moral standing. It also erodes the founding principles of the American Constitution." As we write this book (late 2006) nearly 3,000 U.S. soldiers and over 200 soldiers from other occupying countries have been killed in Iraq, at least 20,895 U.S. troops have been wounded, and a new Johns Hopkins report puts the number of violent Iraqi civilian deaths since the 2003 invasion at more than 600,000.

War's side effects are bleak for the environment and human society; its direct and intended effect is mass death. Down the current road of imperial dominance and warfare at will, the use of weapons of mass destruction is nearly inevitable, with apocalyptic consequences.

But there are alternatives to the expense of maintaining a military and the atrocity that is war. One that has been developed over the last 50 years is called social defense. Brian Martin, Australian scholar and author of *Social Defense: Social Change*, describes social defense as unarmed "community resistance to aggression as an alternative to military defense. It is based on widespread protest, persuasion, noncooperation and intervention in order to oppose military aggression or political repression. There have been numerous nonviolent actions, to be sure, some of them quite spectacular, such as the Czechoslovak resistance to the 1968 Soviet invasion, the toppling of the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines in 1986, the Palestinian Intifada from 1987 to 1993 and the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe in 1989."

Imagine if even a fraction of the resources put into military defense were available for the general population to organize social defense.

Replacing global empire with domestic democracy and well-being requires redefining democracy -- pursuing ways to shift decision making and power from corporations and government to "we the people." It's not enough just to oppose something.

We need to envision, educate about, and then actually organize alternatives to the system of empire and war, to

corporations, and to the lack of democratic participation in decisions that shape our lives and communities. What begin as pragmatic actions, like keeping youth from joining the military, are most effective when they have as their end the transformation of the root causes of war, undemocratic governance, and injustice. Every immediate action, when understood and explained as part of a bigger picture, can be another step toward this longer-term goal of getting to the roots of our problems and building a better world.

Today's movement

Arlene Inouye, who began her activism during Vietnam, continues her work today in the Los Angeles Unified School District, where she founded the Coalition Against Militarism in our Schools (CAMS). Her support of a bright, young student named Sal illustrates how counterrecruitment works simultaneously to resist war and build alternatives.

Arlene says, "Sal is a bright JROTC student who lacked support for success in school and beyond. His father was deported to Mexico about two years ago, and he was told by the military recruiter that if Sal enlisted, his father could come back to the United States. His father begged him to enlist after high school. Sal later learned that the military was lying and that he couldn't help his father come home."

During the spring of 2006 there were student walkouts and marches supporting immigrant rights throughout Los Angeles. Arlene explains, "The activism around immigrant rights helped Sal to see the hypocrisy of fighting in a military that is being sent to the border and has been reported to shoot down undocumented people who try to cross.

"During a rally, Sal took off his JROTC uniform in front of the press, encouraging other students to resist war and drop out of JROTC. Unfortunately, most won't because of concerns about their grades. This student who is articulate and smart is failing school and lacks the support he needs. I have mobilized help for him at the school and call him regularly. He just got back from a peace camp given by our partner organization, and that was a powerful experience for him."

Creating a supportive community to enable Sal's dissent, and help him forge an alternative path, is at the heart of counterrecruitment. As demonstrated by Sal's example, the best movement is as much about envisioning and building a new world as it is about resisting the injustices of this one.

For more information on Army of None, visit the website. [ [www.myspace.com/armyofnonebook](http://www.myspace.com/armyofnonebook) ]

## Comments

---

### Re: Top Military Recruitment Lies

by **Black Block**

[Reply to this comment](#)

Current rating: 0

24 Sep 2007

What the hell is this article about??? Why are you so adamant that people are not allowed a free choice in this free nation? You not liking the military is your Choice, but please remember others make their own Choice. Have you ever signed a contract? If you don't live up to the contract, you lose your rights under said contract. Any monies you receive are forfeit. So what is wrong with that? Nothing, at all. It is arrogant and so typical of the progressive mindset when you think you must interfere in the lives of Americans who have a right to choose their own path in life.