

NEWS FROM THE FRONT

If you do decide to sign an enlistment agreement, you might very well find yourself serving in Iraq before very long. So we offer you some snippets of news about the occupation and about the young Americans who are now the instruments of the nation's increasingly controversial Iraq policy.

“He told me: ‘They don’t want us here. They throw rocks at us. They shoot at us. I don’t know what we’re doing here.’”

—*Andrea Brassfield, widow of Specialist Artimus D. Brassfield, 22, of the Fourth Infantry Division, killed in Iraq Oct. 24, 2003. The New York Times, Nov. 2, 2003.*

“I don’t understand why these guys are so hidden, why there are no pictures of them.”
—*Entertainer Cher, complaining about lack of coverage of severely maimed troops at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. After visiting the wounded herself, Cher called in to the C-SPAN program Washington Journal.*

“You can call it news control or information control or flat-out propaganda. Whatever you call it, this is the most extensive effort at spinning a war that the Department of Defense has ever undertaken in this country.”
—*Christopher Simpson, a communications professor at American University in Washington, commenting on Pentagon efforts to prevent coverage of coffins arriving from Iraq at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. Toronto Star, November 2, 2003.*

“We are slowly becoming frantic. I hear people saying they are going to begin hurting themselves or others if they can’t go home. The helplessness our soldiers are feeling is indescribable; it is past the point of ‘suck it up and drive on.’”
—*Sergeant Leanne Duffy, The Capital Times, Madison, Wisconsin. September 23, 2003.*

MORE NEWS FROM THE FRONT

“When you join the Army, they send your picture to your hometown paper because they want everybody to know that you’re leaving for the military. But if you’re wounded, the military doesn’t tell them, because they might be worried about the public getting negative about what’s going on over there.”

—*Sergeant Mike Meinen, who lost his leg in combat in a rocket-propelled grenade attack in Iraq. He is one of the soldiers profiled in a long Time Magazine article, in the November 10 issue, about those wounded in Iraq.*

“About 40,000 of our sons and daughters in harm’s way in Iraq actually have to buy, borrow, beg or go without adequate body armor because a bumbling Pentagon bureaucracy hasn’t been issuing 100 percent of our troops the very best full metal jacket money can buy—even though the money has been long appropriated. Worried moms and pops are sending vests to their kids in care packages that in other conflicts contained cookies and Kool-Aid.”

—*David Hackworth, author and retired U.S. Army officer, in a column distributed by King Features Syndicate.*

“The American people were told Saddam Hussein was building nuclear weapons. He was not. We were told he had stockpiles of other weapons of mass destruction. He did not. We were told he was involved in 9/11. He was not. We were told Iraq was attracting terrorists from Al Qaeda. It was not. We were told our soldiers would be viewed as liberators. They are not. We were told Iraq could pay for its own reconstruction. It cannot. We were told the war would make America safer. It has not.”
—*Senator Edward M. Kennedy, explaining his opposition to President George W. Bush’s request for \$87 billion for the occupation of Iraq. October 16, 2003.*

Before you sign on the dotted line... make sure you read Paragraph 9

Your recruiter can promise you almost anything: training for jobs, money for college, travel and adventure. But before you believe any of it, before you sign the enlistment agreement, read Paragraph 9 (b). The language is dry and boring, but here’s what it means: No matter what the recruiter promises, no matter what else the agreement may say, the needs of the military must always come first. So, before you sign the enlistment agreement, give it some very serious thought and talk it over, with people you can trust.

Pax Christi Long Island
Long Island Alliance for Peaceful
Alternatives
SOA Watch, Long Island
South Country Peace Group

TEN POINTS TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU SIGN A MILITARY ENLISTMENT AGREEMENT

*From the American Friends Service Committee
Youth and Militarism Program*

- 1. Do not make a hasty decision by enlisting the first time you see a recruiter or when you are upset.** A recruiter is a salesperson who will give only a positive, one-sided picture of life in the military. Don't make this important decision when you are depressed, hard up for work, confused or unsure about your future, or pressured by your family. This decision affects your life for years; don't make it lightly.
- 2. Take a witness with you when you speak with a recruiter.** There is a lot of information to take in. A friend can take notes and help you ask questions.
- 3. Talk to veterans.** Veterans can give you their view of military life, good and bad.
- 4. Consider your moral feelings about going to war.** The mission of the military is to prepare for and wage war. If you cannot in good conscience engage in war or in killing, you should not consider enlisting. If you become opposed to war after you join, you have a right to seek a discharge, but it is a long, difficult and uncertain process.
- 5. Get a copy of the enlistment agreement.** Read the fine print carefully, especially the part about what the military can order you to do. You do have a right to take this home, look it over, and ask others about it.
- 6. There is no "period of adjustment" during which you may request and receive immediate discharge.** Once you have left for basic training, you must fulfill the full number of years (usually eight, with

some of these in the reserves) on your enlistment contract. You cannot leave of your own free will. The military, however, may decide you are "unsuitable" and discharge you without your consent.

- 7. Get all your recruiter's promises in writing, but also remember that the military can change the terms (such as pay, job, or benefits) of your work.** Though there are no guarantees, a written statement may offer you (as a service member) some protection if promises are not met. But the contract is more binding on you than on the military. You are ultimately responsible for information on the form, so don't tell lies, even if pressured.
- 8. There are no job guarantees in the military.** The military is not required to keep you in the job you trained for on a full-time or permanent basis. In fact, most recruiters were involuntarily reassigned to their jobs. Placements are mostly dependent on what the military perceives it needs. Most military jobs are in areas that account for only a small percentage of civilian jobs.
- 9. Military personnel cannot exercise all of the civil liberties enjoyed by civilians.** You do not have the same constitutional rights. Your rights to free speech, assembly, petition, and exercise of individual expression (such as clothing or hairstyle) are restricted. You must follow all orders given to you, whether or not you agree with them and consider them right or fair.
- 10. Many opportunities exist for you to serve your community and enhance your skills.** Before you decide to enlist, check out other options that would help you "be all you can be." Travel, education, money for school, job training, and adventure can all be found in other ways. Your local community may even have opportunities that you hadn't considered. Explore them before joining the military.

INFORMATION SOURCES

If you have decided not to enlist right here and now, but to take the enlistment agreement home with you, you have made a wise decision. While you are thinking about whether to enlist, you might want to consult these sources of information:

American Friends Service Committee, Youth and Militarism Program. 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102. 215-241-7176.
www.afsc.org/youthmil/default.htm

The GI Rights Hotline. 630 Twentieth Street, #302, Oakland, CA 94612. 800-394-9544.
<http://girights.objector.org/>

Military Families Speak Out. This is an organization of families who have loved ones now serving in Iraq.
www.mfso.org

September Eleventh Families for Peaceful Tomorrows. This is a group of families who lost loved ones in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Even in their grief, they reject the bombing of Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq.
P.O. Box 1818, Peter Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009.
www.peacefultomorrow.org

Veterans Against the Iraq War. These veterans have served in Vietnam and elsewhere, and they have some sharp views about the current occupation of Iraq.
212-866-1114.
www.vaiw.org/vet/index.php

Veterans for Peace. This organization includes veterans of World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the Persian Gulf War. 438 North Skinker Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63130. 314-725-6005.
www.veteransforpeace.org/Default.htm