Do you enjoy having someone constantly telling you what to do and how to do it? If not, you may have a hard time with military life. The military places numerous restrictions on behavior that would not be acceptable in civilian society. Military members are subject to military law 24 hours a day — even when off duty and off base — until the end of their term. Disobedience in the military can result in court-martial, prison, or the lifetime problem of a bad discharge. If you can't finish your first enlistment term, you could lose all or part of the education and other benefits you were promised and be forced to pay back any "bonus" you received. Historically, about one-third of all new recruits do not finish their first term. 40% of Army recruits don't (Army News Service, 10/23/2014) furthermore, section C.9.b 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 the military has the right to keep you past your discharge date. In the eight years from Sept. 11, 2001, 186,000 people were kept from leaving the military when their terms were up (Armed Forces Press Service, 11/2/2009).

**WILL I LOSE SOME BASIC RIGHTS?**

- If you leave your work without permission or don't show up, you can be put in jail.
- Any disobedience can result in criminal punishment.
- You can be punished without the right to see a lawyer or have a lawyer.
- You may be ordered to commit acts that violate your most basic values, like killing another human being.
- Your ability to spend time with your parents, partner, and other family members will be severely limited.
- You will be subject to routine urine tests for drugs.

**WILL IT HELP ME GET A JOB LATER?**

Many people join the military expecting to receive valuable job training. But 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.

Even if you get the training for a particular military occupation that you were promised, you still might not get experience in that job because the military does not have to use you in the field you were trained for. The enlistment agreement allows the military to assign you to whatever job they choose. During the time some young people spend in the military, others who are the same age are spending those years in a trade school, or getting work experience. As a result, the unemployment rate for young veterans in 2014 was 40% higher than the rate for people the same age who do not enlist (Veteran Economic Opportunity Report, US Dept. of Veterans Affairs, 2015).

As former Vice President Dick Cheney once said, "The military is not a social welfare agency; it's not a jobs program."

**WHAT ABOUT PROMISES OF BONUSES?**

Enlistment “bonuses” are not really bonuses paid just for joining: they are usually paid out over time, and you could have to pay back the money if you don't complete certain requirements. Bonuses are not given to everyone, and when they are offered, the higher amounts are either given to people with special technical skills or who sign up for a longer term, or they are used to push people into very risky hard-to-fill jobs, like “Camp-X bomb disposal” (Rand report MG950, 10/10).

**IS COLLEGE MONEY FREE AND GUARANTEED?**

Recruiters might promise that you'll get to go to college “free,” but it's not free — you must work for it! And the benefits will not be guaranteed.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill offers more money than in the past to those who qualify, and it allows military members to transfer unused financial aid to other family members, but there are conditions and possible problems you should know about. For example:

- People must enlist for a total of 10 years to transfer unused college benefits to family members.
- People who receive a less than fully honorable discharge lose eligibility for GI Bill benefits. This includes "general discharges," which are often given for minor problems with military duties.
- Those who leave the military early, as one in three do, may get reduced or no benefits.
- Veterans who wish to attend college outside the state where they live only may get a small part of their total tuition covered. In 2015 the average extra tuition cost at a public four-year college was $14,480/year for nonresidents (Trends in College Pricing, College Board, 2015).

**IS THERE DISCRIMINATION IN THE MILITARY?**

The military claims it treats everyone the same, regardless of skin color; but in reality, it has serious problems with inequality in the ranks. One study found that even though the number of women, African Americans, Asians and “Hispanics” have increased over time, they are less likely to get promoted than white males and continue to be under represented in the senior officer ranks (Rand report TR1159, 12). In 2014, 16.9% of the enlisted personnel were African American, but they made up only 8.5% of the commissioned officers. “Hispanics” made up 13% of the enlisted ranks, but only 5.9% of the commissioned officers (Dept. of Defense Popula- tion Representation, 2014)."
SERVICE AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Many good people join the military because they want to make a difference, to serve others. This is a great 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.

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 oppressive governments or the profits of oil companies. But they had no choice unless they were willing to refuse orders and go to 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 care that the U.S. military is the worst polluter in the world? Would you be willing to share responsibility for such things in order to get money for college or the job the military is offering you?

If you’re not sure how to answer these questions, take some time to think about them and 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 firefighter, a community organizer, a social worker or an emergency medical technician—all of whom make a huge difference in many people’s lives.

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IF YOU ALREADY JOINED THE DELAYED ENTRY PROGRAM (DEP)

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 get out. If you become unhappy after you enlist, do you know how hard it could be to get out? If you get a less-than-honorable discharge, do you know how it can hurt your future?

9 THINGS TO CONSIDER 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 be punished other ways. One veteran 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) Get a copy of the military enlistment agreement (form DDA) and read it carefully, especially page two, before you sign any papers. Download it here: http://www.projectyano.org/pdf/dda0004.pdf

3) Talk the enlistment agreement over with your parents and friends, or with a counselor from the GI Rights Hotline. Ask about any parts of the agreement that you don’t understand.

4) Take along a parent or friend as a witness if you go see a recruiter. Then you’ll have somebody to back up your side of the story if there is a dispute over what was promised.

5) If you have a police record or medical condition, don’t hide it. Even if the recruiter tells you it doesn’t matter.

6) GET ALL PROMISES IN WRITING and have them signed by the recruiter 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 a special enlistment option, be sure to ask the recruiter questions like the following:
   - For how long do I have to enlist to get this option?
   - 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 care that the U.S. military is the worst polluter in the world? Would you be willing to share responsibility for such things in order to get money for college or the job the military is offering you?

What You Should Know Before Joining the Military

The Military’s Not Just a Job...

Looking for a job can be a challenge. Some helpful advice and job search tools are available from the Web sites below.

Career InfoNet: www.careeronestop.org
Idealist.org: www.idealist.org
Teens4Hire: www.teens4hire.org
CareerBuilder.com: www.careerbuilder.com
AmeriCorps: www.nationalservice.gov

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Watch “Before You Enlist,” a video of military veterans, including a former recruiter, sharing their stories: www.beforeyouenlist.org

Also, contact:
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
168 Canal St., Suite 600, New York, NY 10013
(212) 228-0450; www.warresisters.org
GI Rights Hotline: www.girighthotline.org
(877) 447-4487

Local contact:
To order this brochure in bulk, contact War Resisters League. Produced by Project YANO, with thanks to the Left Tilt Fund. Artwork: Matt Heft. 8/11/2016.

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What You Should Know Before Joining the Military

The Military's Not Just a Job...

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. You are obligated to the military for a total of eight years, including time in the Reserves when you could be recalled.