

30 June 2005

WAR & CO UPDATE #4

Dear Family & Friends,

Below is all the new information I've seen over the past month that might apply to a future draft and also to current recruiting practices. It seems to me that resisting recruiting has become as important as resisting a possible draft. Perhaps more so. Especially for parents. As some of the examples below illustrate, recruiters are having an intimidating effect of impressionable youth.

Please also note the effect parents can have in protecting their children from predatory recruiting – even those who have passed their 18th birthday. Parents have much more influence and more options regarding recruiting, than they would with a draft, because there is a choice involved. A website that some parents find helpful is <http://www.leavemychildalone.org>

Again, I hope this is helpful.

Love to all of you,

Bob/Dad/Grampa

DRAFT HIGHLIGHTS

Here are a few new events related to selective service and draft legislation.

Poll Shows Draft and Enlisting is not Popular.

On June 20-22, a polling firm called Ipsos canvassed 1,000 adults for Associated Press. The poll has a margin of sampling error of $\pm 3\%$. Results showed that 70% opposed reinstatement of the draft, and more than 50% **strongly** opposed it. Over 50% said they would discourage a son from enlisting and two-thirds would discourage a daughter from joining.

The Charles Rangel Bill.

On 26 May 2005, Representative Charles Rangel (D-NY) re-introduced his draft bill, called the Universal National Service Act of 2005 (H.R. 2723). It is essentially the same as his previous bill. Rangel says “I oppose the war in Iraq, but I support the military and the men and women who serve in it, what is happening now is that the entire volunteer system is in danger of collapse under the weight of the burden being placed on those who are serving.” He then calls attention to the Army failing to meet its recruiting goals (discussed below) and says that officials in the White House and “CEOs in the boardrooms” would be less likely to want war if their own children were in it. He believes the military draft will solve the social problem of poor and minorities serving and will act as a deterrent to war.

The Center on Conscience & War rebuts this thinking: “Contrary to Rangel’s belief the draft never [has] and will not act as a deterrent to war. And it will never make the armed forces a representative force! People of low income and people of color will continue to serve on the front lines, with or without a draft. The wealthy and the powerful have always been able to exploit the system to avoid being drafted.

Rangel’s bill had no co-sponsors at the time it was introduced – he was the only sponsor. It has been referred to the House Armed Services Committee where it is expected to stay.

The Ron Paul Bill.

On 18 May 2005, Representative Ron Paul (R-TX) introduced H.R. 2455 to repeal the current Selective Service Act. It will eliminate the present system of men having to register when they reach their 18th birthday and, if passed, would give more confidence that a draft is not coming back.

The Center on Conscience & War advises: “The majority of Congressional members are saying that they will not support a draft. Now is the time to reaffirm that. Get in touch with your Congressional member and ask them to co-sponsor the Ron Paul bill (H.R. 2455) and tell them that a draft is **never** a viable option and that there is no such thing as a ‘fair draft’.”

The Pentagon’s Student Database.

The Pentagon has hired BeNow Inc, of Wakefield, Massachusetts, to create a database of high school students over age 16 and all college students. It would include birth dates, Social Security numbers, e-mail addresses, grade point averages, ethnicity, and what subjects the students are studying. Information furnished to recruiters, required by the No Child Left Behind Act, will be used. Other sources of information will be commercial data brokers, state drivers’ license records, and other sources including existing military records.

According to the official notice of the program, the purpose “is to provide a single central facility withing the Department of Defense to compile, process and distribute files of individuals who meet the age and minimum school requirements for military service.” Pentagon spokeswoman, Lt. Col. Ellen Krenke, added: “This program is important because it helps bolster the effectiveness of all the services’ recruiting and retention efforts.”

Although this new database is advertised as a recruiting aid, the Federal Register notice said it will be available to “those who require the records in the performance of their official duties” and would be protected by passwords. But, without giving any public or private notice, the Pentagon can share with other agencies outside the military, such as law enforcement, state tax authorities, and Congress.

Individuals can “opt out” of the system by providing **detailed personal information** which will be kept in a separate “suspension file.” People in this file are not supposed to be contacted, supposedly by recruiters. The “suspension file” will still be available for other purposes. This begs the question of why

not just a simple “opt-out” statement, rather than requiring the **detailed information** in order to opt-out, if the list were really only for recruiting. It appears to me that this database is exactly what is required for the **Skills Draft** that has been in the preparation stage for several years.

STUCK IN IRAQ

One of the most visible indicators that a draft will be needed is the necessity for US troops to stay in Iraq for an extended period. The long-term deployments, and re-deployments, amid the carnage of a terrorist insurgency, have hampered recruitment problems to the point that a draft looks almost certain – no matter how much the White House, and Pentagon, and Congress disclaim that inevitability.

The tempo of terrorist attacks has been picking up across that country despite having completed a year of sovereignty. Over all of Iraq, there are now 450-500 attacks a week. Resources for the insurgents are increasing in several areas – money to buy explosives, expertise in explosives, and sources that leak intelligence information. In addition, suicide bombings are becoming more popular. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld recently warned that the insurgency may last as long as 12 years. On June 24th President Bush said “there’s not going to be any timetable” for the return of American troops. He said withdrawal would embolden the enemy. *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman is crying: “Double the American boots on the ground and redouble the diplomatic effort to bring in those Sunnis who want to be part of the process and fight to the death those who don’t.” He adds that “we need ‘a bold mobilization strategy’ right now.”

Meanwhile, another *New York Times* columnist, Paul Krugman, reminds us: “Back in September 2003 a report by the Congressional Budget Office concluded that the size of the US force in Iraq would have to start shrinking rapidly in the spring of 2004 if the Army wanted to ‘maintain training and readiness levels, limit family separation and involuntary mobilization [the draft], and retain high-quality personnel.’” The spring of 2004 has come and gone, and so has the spring of 2005, and reductions have not happened.

Although US military forces have not withdrawn from Iraq, they have withdrawn behind concrete blast walls, concertina wire, and sandbags. (Still there were 77 American deaths in May.) This protection has further caused the terrorists to attack Iraqi security forces, the successful recruiting and mobilization of which are key to US withdrawal. May was the deadliest month for them. 220 Iraqi police officers were killed. In addition, an unknown number of potential recruits, a favorite terrorist target, were killed while waiting in line to sign up. Almost 500 civilians were also killed in May.

Meanwhile at home, the President’s approval ratings have plummeted. Only 41% of Americans support Bush on Iraq, according to an Associated Press-Ipsos poll. A *New York Times*/CBS News poll shows only 42% approval of how Bush is doing his job. Many republican legislators are becoming vocal in opposing the Iraq war. A bipartisan group in Congress has introduced legislation calling for US withdrawal by October 2006.

In his speech on June 28th, the anniversary of turning over sovereignty to Iraq, President Bush said: “I know Americans ask the question: Is the sacrifice worth it? It is worth it, and it is vital to the future security of our country,” I wonder if our President would feel that way if his twin daughters were to be

part of that sacrifice. I wonder if the families of over 1,700 US soldiers who have died in Iraq, and some 12,000 who were injured seriously enough to be counted, feel it is worth it. The White House is facing a dilemma. But the Bush administration is not going to give up the oil in Iraq. For that reason, to the administration and its constituents at least, the sacrifice is worth it.

RECRUITING PROBLEMS & PRACTICES

The volunteer military relies on adequate recruitment to maintain its ranks. That activity has plummeted in the last few months although recruiting efforts have increased. The Army will add an additional 500 recruiters within the next two months, on top of the 1,000 they added earlier this year. Here are the recruiting statistics:

Recruiting Goals Missed.

Regular Army – Missed its original May goal by 37%. (The Army had lowered its goal so they wouldn't look so bad, and they still missed it.) This is the fourth month in a row (February - May) that it has missed. This fiscal year it has sent slightly less than 41,000 enlistees to boot camp. It has only four months (fiscal years start October 1st) to recruit and additional 39,000 to meet its goal of 80,000 for the fiscal year. The Army feigns cautious optimism that the summer months will be better. But Major General Michael D. Rochelle, head of Army recruiting, says: "Next Year promises quite frankly, given the size of our entry pool, to be an even tougher fight." Aggravating this situation is the Army's struggle to increase its numbers by 30,000 troops, to a total of 512,000, in order to create 10 new brigades.

Army National Guard – Missed its May quota by 29% according to *Washington Post*. (Associated Press says 24%)

Army Reserve – Missed its May quota by 18% according to *Washington Post*. (Associated Press says 20%)

Marine Corps Reserve – Missed its May quota by 12 % according to *Washington Post*. Associated Press says it met its goal. *The New York Times* also said the Marines met their goal for the first time this calendar year. It is not clear if there is some confusion here between the Active Duty Marines and the Marine Reserve.

Navy Reserve – Missed its May quota by 4% according to *Washington Post*. (Associated Press says 12%)

Air National Guard – Missed May goal by 20% per Associated Press.

Air Force Reserve – Was 17% over its goal per Associated Press.

Lowered Requirements and New Incentives.

Several new incentives and lowering of requirements have taken place and are being considered. They are:

- High school dropouts and lower-scoring applicants are now being accepted by the Army.
- The Army is retaining personnel who previously were being discharged because of excess obesity, becoming pregnant, alcohol and drug problems, and poor conduct. It has also lowered standards for junior officer ranks, such as accepting those with minor criminal offenses.
- The Army has tried accepting enlistments for as short as 15 months. So far only 44 have been enlisted for that term.
- The Pentagon may ask Congress to double the maximum enlistment bonus, from \$20,000 to \$40,000, for high-demand positions. These key recruits include intelligence, infantry, special operations, civil affairs, and linguists. (Note that Infantry – the grunts on the front line – is considered a high-demand job.)
- The Army may ask Congress to raise the maximum age for active duty service from 35 years of age to 40. It already did this in March for the National Guard and Reserve, but an Active Duty Army age change requires Congressional approval.

Parents: Nemesis of Recruiters.

Mothers and fathers across the country have been described as “boulders of opposition that recruiters cannot move.” That is because they are not near as impressionable as their student children. Many parents across the country are beginning to discuss these things with their children and advising them against enlisting. Staff Sergeant Kenneth Bishop, a recruiter in High Ridge, MO, complained: “The biggest problem today is parents. A lot of young men and women want to enlist, but their parents are afraid for them.” Another recruiter in Ohio said: “Parents are the biggest hurdle we face.” Recruiters say it is even hard to sign up legal adults over 18 years of age if their parents have strong objections.

Parents are becoming aware of recruiting tactics, and it is making parents more active. Some examples parents have learned about that have sparked indignation and resistance are:

- A mother in upstate New York found out recruiters were teaching kids how to throw hand grenades, using baseballs as a surrogate.
- A father in southern California found out from his son that recruiters were promising students jobs as musicians.
- Recruiters constantly beleaguering children and intruding in their lives – in the library, in the lunchroom, on the athletic field.

- Mandatory classes led by the National Guard in which recruiters handed out free trinkets, key chains, and T-shirts.
- A “chin-up” contest in Bellingham, WA, with an Xbox for the prize. Later found it was sponsored by the Marines who kept one 18-year-old “out all night, drilling him to join.”
- Recruiters showing up at homes when parents are gone.
- Recruiters taking a youth from his workplace in Bellingham, WA, and whisking him to Seattle for battery testing. After keeping him overnight, a lawyer had to be hired to have his enlistment papers, signed under pressure, returned.
- Army recruiters in Sonoma Valley Unified School District, CA, handing out “things the parents did not want in their homes, including very violent video games.”
- A student journalist in Colorado posed as a high school dropout and taped recorded his conversation with a recruiter. He was encouraged to create a fake diploma from a non-existent school to meet enlistment requirements. The recruiter also gave him advice on how to disguise a marijuana habit, and how to fake the required drug test.

Parental opposition is having such a severe effect that it prompted Major General Michael D. Rochelle, commander of Army recruiting, to comment that when parents advise against enlisting “it begs the question of what our national staying power might be **for what certainly appears to be a long fight.**” (boldface added) Army PR and advertising is now focusing to include parents of potential recruits. Four new TV commercials have been created by Leo Burnett USA, the Army’s PR agency. They revolve around the theme “Help Them Find Their Strength.” One ad states: “Both the parent and child become the hero.” There is also a website with videos of parents telling why they support their children who want to enlist. It is still too early to tell if these new innovations are making a difference, said General Rochelle.

Parents Influencing School Policy.

Many high schools are balking at the provision in the No Child Left Behind Act that requires them to give student data to recruiters or lose federal funding. This is a fertile area for parents to become involved in.

The PTSA at Garfield High School in Seattle has been fighting this law for four years. They voted in May to ban recruiters from the campus, but the Seattle school district couldn’t approve that without losing \$15 million in federal funding. How much is a child’s life worth? Nevertheless, the Garfield PTSA is doing their very best to make recruiters feel unwelcome. The co-chairwoman recently took time off from work to stand beside a recruiter and display pictures of American soldiers wounded in Iraq.

In Whittier, a city of 85,000 just ten miles southeast of Los Angeles, parents objected to not being properly notified of the opt-out option. They pressed the district to draft a new opt-out form for its

14,000 students, a proposal of which was introduced May 28th. It includes an explanation of the law and boxes for parents to check if they don't want information released to the military, colleges, vocational schools, industry, or other recruiting sources. Military recruiters will also be banned from classrooms and cannot bring military vehicles onto the school grounds. Recruitment will have to be done in a designated place at a designated time. Last November there were only three districts in that area enforcing such rules. Now there are at least a dozen.

Fairport High School (NY) is in the only school district that recruiters have rated as "non-compliant" with the information-sharing requirement of the No Child Left Behind Act. In that school, recruiters can not set up a table and they have to make an appointment to talk to a student. Interviews can be conducted only in the school's guidance office. Furthermore, the school will release a student's information only with the written permission of the parent. Only 80 families gave that approval last year – the other 1,500 asked for information to be withheld or failed to return the form. It is in the way the opt-out form is worded that is crucial. It was stated on the form that failure to return would be considered as non-consent.

“School Recruiting Program Handbook.”

An obscure Army publication called the “School Recruiting Program Handbook” has come to light and is generating controversy. It declares unabashedly: “The goal is school ownership that can only lead to a greater number of Army enlistments.” Suggestions on how to win influence over students are offered, such as:

- “The football team usually starts practicing in August. Contact the coach and volunteer to assist in leading calisthenics or calling cadence during team runs.”
- “Homecoming normally happens in October. Coordinate with the homecoming committee to get involved with the parade.”

This recruiter's bible, as the handbook has been dubbed, gives other hints, such as delivering doughnuts and coffee to the faculty once a month, and: “Don't forget the administrative staff. ... Have something to give them (pen, calendar, cup, doughnuts, etc.) ...” The recruiter is also advised to vigorously cultivate the friendship of popular students: “Some influential students such as the student president or the captain of the football team may not enlist; however, they can and will provide you with referrals who will enlist.” But the handbook warns to move quickly: “If you wait until they're seniors, it's probably too late.”

These quotes have been cited from Bob Herbert's June 16th article in *The New York Times*, but they give you an idea of the guidance and pressure recruiters are experiencing from above.

The Middle School Cadet Corps.

Recruiting doesn't wait until high school. The Pentagon is conditioning students in the 11-14 age bracket. 26 Chicago middle schools have started the Middle School Cadet Corps, in which a total of

850 students have enlisted. At some schools this program has evolved into a full-time military academy. The Junior ROTC program for Chicago schools, the nation's largest, oversees the Middle School Cadet Corps in that county, both of which are funded by the Defense Department.

There are some good aspects to this voluntary, after-school, elementary-grades cadet corps. They learn first aid, civics, something called "citizenship," and character development. Mixed into all of this is military history and field trips to military bases. Discipline is another aspect, such as wearing their uniform to school once a week for inspection and doing a few push-ups if they disobey orders. Yet the director of one school's program chides: "They don't look at it as getting ready for the Army. They're just doing it for entertainment and fun.

But the Pentagon looks at it differently. It isn't forking over a \$3 billion annual budget for these programs just so the students can be entertained and have fun. Parents of this age bracket should not be complacent about whether their sons and daughters are being wooed for the military, because they are.

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