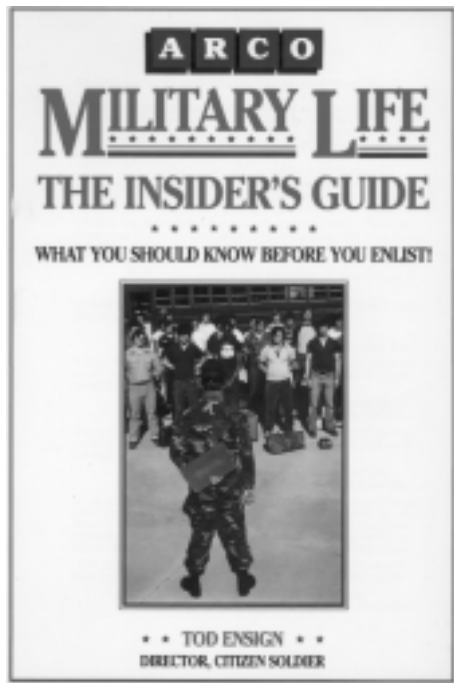


For more details
on recruitment
see

Military Life: The Insider's Guide

by Tod Ensign

ARCO Press (1990)
Available in larger public libraries



Resources:

Citizen Soldier

www.citizen-soldier.org

Committee Opposed to Militarism and the Draft

www.comdsd.org

Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO)

www.objector.org

AFSC National Youth and Militarism Program

www.afsc.org/youthmil.htm

Signing Up: It's Your Choice

An educational video about military recruiting



Written and produced by Stuart Sender.

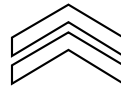
Camera: Ed Fabry, Gary Griffin

Audio/technical consultant: Brian Peter Falk

Special thanks: Brooklyn MEPS, J. Philip Dixon,
Julie Bergman

Post production: Magnetic Image Video
(12:52 minutes)

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The Military Enlistment Contract and You: The Facts Your Rights



Eight Questions about Enlistment Contracts

1. What is the Delayed Entry Program (DEP) that recruiters talk about?

Today, nearly all military recruits sign a delayed-entry contract. By signing this, you promise to report on a specific date (up to a year) in the future. Your term of active-service begins at that time.

2. Why does the military use the “delayed entry” contract?

For two reasons. First, it helps the armed forces plan their training activities and efficiently distribute new trainees to available “slots.” Second, recruiters believe if a young person doesn’t have to enter the military immediately after enlisting, this will reduce “sales resistance.” Ever hear of the “buy now, pay later” deal? It’s easier to sign on the dotted line if you’re not going to feel it in your wallet right away. Well, it’s the same with “selling” enlistment contracts. The big difference is that if you discover that something you’ve bought is defective, you can take it back to the store and cancel the “pay later” obligation. You can’t do that with a military contract!

3. Does the military have to keep its promises of job training, assignment, etc.?

Maybe. If your enlistment contract contains a written promise to train you in a specific school or field, you may be eligible for discharge if the military breaks its promise. However, there are a lot of “if’s.” For one thing, each enlistment contract contains the following language: “Laws and regulations that govern military personnel may change without notice... REGARDLESS of the provisions of this enlistment document.” For example, if a military school decides to admit no more students (or to raise its minimum scores for graduation) this may negatively affect your chances.

If you do not receive the training assignment you were promised, it’s often difficult to do anything about it. Some soldiers have gone to federal court, seeking to have their enlistment voided but most judges have refused to become involved.

4. If I passed the qualifying test for entrance, can I expect to be able to pass other tests required in the course of training?

Not necessarily. It’s up to you to score passing grades, and successfully complete all coursework. The military can raise (or lower) eligibility standards at any time. One Navy official admitted a few years ago that as many as half of the sailors in its Nuclear Field Program failed and were transferred to other (often less desirable) schools and jobs.

5. After I signed the DEP enlistment contract, my recruiter told me that I must attend meetings or participate in other activities at the recruiting station. Must I do this?

No. Legally, as a DEP enrollee, you are a member of the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). IRR members do not belong to a specific military unit, have no military rank or uniform and are not required to attend training or drills.

Recruiters encourage DEP members to come to informal meetings because they want to make you, the recruit, feel part of the military. They cannot force you to cooperate but your refusal to participate may give you a reputation as a “troublemaker.”

6. Since I signed, I’ve been having second-thoughts about going in. Do I have to report for active duty?

No. Spokespeople for each service branch have told us that it’s against official policy to force recruits onto active duty against their will. Down in the trenches, where the recruiters operate, however, it’s often a different story.

It’s common for people, who ask to be released from their contracts, to be told by recruiters that it cannot be done. Sometimes recruits have been told that they can only apply for discharge during Basic training (!). In some cases, enlistees have been told that the military police will come to their home and drag them away on reporting day.

There have even been instances where recruits have been threatened with physical violence. One example is Cresta Crump, an African American from Queens, New York, who received a phone call from a military policeman after he requested release from his contract. “Do you plan to give us trouble when we come to get you?” the called asked. “I’m 6 foot-6, 270 pounds, and have 18 percent body fat. But I’m not trying to intimidate you,” he added.

Despite the threats (which the Army denies making), Cresta stood his ground. Today he remains a civilian.

7. If I decide I don’t want to report, what exactly should I do?

You should find out the name and address of the commander of recruiting in your area. Write him or her a letter stating that you have decided that you don’t want to go on active duty. You should state that your mind is made up and that nothing will change it. If you wish, you can add other reasons (such as a desire to attend college or trade school), which played a part in your final decision. Send this letter “certified mail, return receipt requested.” Also, send a copy to your local Congressperson, attention “military caseworker.”

8. What if my recruiter persists in telling me that he or she will come to my house on reporting day?

Tell him or her that your decision is final. If you feel the need for more counseling, contact us or a local organization. Remember: you are not on active-duty unless you return to the MEPS center and take the second oath of duty on your reporting day!

Despite their bluster and threats, eventually the recruiting command will send you a letter which states that you have been given an “entry-level separation” because you “refused to enlist.” This will end your association with the US military.