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LETTERS FROM A BROAD: It's Not Just a Job... It's a Dead End

[30 August 2006]



by Kimberly Gadette
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An appeal to those who feel drawn to military service out of economic necessity.

To: All Military-Aged Boys and Girls
From: Some Soldier's Mother
Re: It's Never Too Late to Learn
Dear Kids Who May Have More Smarts Than My Son:

Though school may be behind you, here's a little something for you to read. No worries, though, there won't be a quiz:

Army Spc. Robert L. Jones of Milwaukie, Oregon, age 22, died June 17, 2006 in Ramadi, Iraq. Having to help support the family, especially his disabled father, he joined the military because he needed help paying for college.

Army Spc. Jeremy Loveless of Estacada, Oregon, age 25, died May 29, 2006 in Mosul, Iraq. Eager about having a career as a firefighter/paramedic, he decided that the Army was his best option to gain the money he needed to complete his paramedic degree.

Army Spc. Justin W. Hebert of Silvana, Washington, age 20, died August 1, 2003 in Kirkuk, Iraq. He and a childhood friend signed up together at the age of 17 because they were each promised \$50,000 for college.

When I read about fallen soldiers, I often see statements about how the young man was directionless, needed discipline, perhaps had flirted with drugs or alcohol. Maybe someone like you?

But hey, there's hope. . .you're going to get lots of money once you sign up at the recruitment office, right? Maybe \$50,000? \$75,000? Those military dudes sure paint a pretty picture, those glorified car salesmen, their doubletalk overblown and overflowing — recruiters trading their lip service for your service. They promise that the military will not only provide training for fantastic jobs, but that Uncle Sam will hand over fistfuls of cash to pay for a college education. They say things like, "Strap on a cool gun." "Jump out of a plane." "Finally earn your parents' respect." Promises so full of wonder, one simply wonders, "why not?"

Well, here's something that someone even higher up in the government said. Per Vice President Dick Cheney: "The reason to have a military is to be prepared to fight and win wars... it's not a jobs program."

So I appeal to you and your friends, before you take that fateful walk downtown to see how much money you think you're going to get from the military: Don't go. Don't even think about going.

Look at it from my point of view: If you were a parent, you wouldn't dream of allowing your eight-month-old to crawl across a freeway with oncoming cars whizzing toward his head. How is that any different than allowing your 18-year-old to crawl across a hostile desert with incoming enemy fire whizzing toward his head?

A man in Northern California had a son who barely graduated high school, who loved golf far more than school. Determined to keep him away from the war, the man scoured the country for a college that would interest his son and, at the same time, save him from dying in a desert somewhere. In Moscow, Idaho, he found a college that specialized in the golfing industry. The boy's doing great and thanks to his father, will probably live to see tomorrow, and the next day, and the next . . .

With the economic crunch worsening, I understand there's only so many wealthy relations and college scholarships around. But what about vocational schools? Trade technical colleges? A summer job with your Uncle Harry on his farm in Missoula? Instead of giving up, it seems to me that saving your own life, whether you're eight months old or 18-years-old, is the most important thing you can do. Whether or not your parents get involved, whether or not you even have parents — it's time you learned how to parent yourself.

The more disillusioned that Americans grow toward war, the more desperate the recruiters. The more desperate the recruiters, the more lies. According to Objector.org on the promised limitation of two years of service, those two years can easily turn into eight. On college funding, two-thirds of all recruits never see any college donations from the military. That's right, kids: NEVER. On the promise that skills taught in the armed services will help with future careers, the fact is that military training is for military jobs only. In case your mind just wandered, let me say that again: military training is for military jobs ONLY. When you get back to the States, if you get back, here's an eye opening statistic (and don't tell me you failed statistics, I don't want to hear any excuses!): Army Times reports that over 50,000 unemployed veterans are on the waiting list for the military's "retraining" program. The Veterans' Administration estimates that 1/3 of homeless people are vets.

Tough love just got tougher. On you. There are no free rides, especially in a jeep. Correction: There's one free ride back home, but it's hot and bumpy and there's no cushion in a pine box.

The dead soldiers mentioned at the start of this article didn't have to die. But I can't reach them. But maybe, just maybe I might be able to reach you.

For your homework (and don't give me any backtalk), take a look at these sites:

- Mothers Against the Draft
Military Families Speak Out
Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors

The latest figures report that the casualties are actually growing, due to even more instability in the Middle East. According to the New York Times, on August 15, 2006: "July was the deadliest month in Iraq." Do the math, no really, don't complain, just do it: With more people dying over there, there's going to be a great need for replacements. You, with your wanderlust and poor grades ... you're the perfect target. Literally.

A final question: Would you rather be armed with knowledge or armed for death? Even if you were the dumbest kid in school: This one's a no-brainer.

Please... use yours.

Sending you wishes for a much longer, happier life than the current total of 2,600 American men and women who've died in Iraq, Some Soldier's Mother



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