The human family consists, for the most part, of wonderfully ordinary people who work hard to care for themselves and their children. However, there are a few people who aspire to positions of power, and then work to use their authority to manipulate and control all the others.

This nation’s teenage children are currently being tracked, targeted, and sometimes captured by a global dominance military-industrial media complex under orders of an exceptionally callous neo-conservative group now in control of the US government. The people in power today systematically use armed services recruiters—motivated by rank and bonus—as the agents of control and manipulation of US youth.

Parents of teens and preteens are seldom aware of how their children are at increasing risk of being systematically targeted, manipulated into recruiter offices, and psychological remodeled for use within the war machine. Military planners, hungry for new recruits, commission psychological research, and carefully read neuro-psychiatric literature as it pertains to adolescent behavior. They then apply that research information to their recruitment efforts that focus on the vulnerability of the teenage mind.

As the 9/11 wars continue and as the numbers of dead and disabled young men and women climb, civilian doubts over the purpose and direction of the conflict has evolved and grown. As a result, convincing new potential recruits to enlist has become an increasingly difficult task. The Pentagon addresses this recruitment problem by spending thousands of millions of our tax dollars on programs designed to deceive, seduce, and to capture our youth. Military recruiters have been granted full access to our children at home, at school, and wherever else they can be tracked. The Pentagon has invaded our movies, our televisions, and our minds, and has invited our children to play violent, and damaging video games while feeding them emotionally charged materials designed to manipulate and reformat them into replacement soldiers.
Ending the Draft

The Vietnam War was fought by a generation of young men whose teen experiences were distorted by a persistent and disruptive force—conscription. That constant threat helped fire the tremendous social unrest that attended those war years. As the war came to its painful end, Pentagon planners moved to eliminate future reliance on draftees. The recommendation was tendered and Congress agreed to end the draft, replacing it with an all-volunteer armed services system.

Building and maintaining an all-volunteer military during peace-time worked reasonably well. The process during war however, has proven to be problematic. After years of war and violent occupation in Afghanistan and Iraq, public perception of military life has gradually soured. And, as civilian jobs—albeit low paying for many—continue to be available, the recruiting process has become increasingly difficult. The Pentagon has responded by offering, or giving the appearance of offering, a set of incentives to potential enlistees. Bait has since included cash and promises (frequently unfulfilled) of job training, educational funding, and future medical care.

Teenagers Increasingly Targeted

After recent Pentagon research revealed that the desire and intention to enlist is highest among younger recruits (six in ten current US soldiers entered the military as teenagers), a level of subtlety, or rather subterfuge has been employed to guide teens toward recruiter offices. As one example of the many available: the US Army sponsors a website labeled “eCybermission.” It offers “web-based science, math, and technology competition” for eleven, twelve, and thirteen-year-olds, and the services of on-line uniformed Army personnel “CyberGuides.”

Since 2002 the Pentagon has developed a massive teen database gleaned from sources, including records obtained via the “No Child Left Behind Act.” That information is filed in the “Joint Advertising and Marketing Research & Studies” system (JAMRS)—a giant Pentagon run, privately subcontracted (Equifax) database containing contact and identification data on over 30 million sixteen to twenty-five year-olds.
Plummeting Numbers/Plummeting Standards

Despite recent reports of an increasing rate of suicides among US troops, news reports of “stop-loss” troop recycling, and declining troop moral, the Pentagon’s recent recruiting and retention report for 2007 implies success. The facts underlying the statistics offered, however, tell a different story: “The number of waivers granted to Army recruits with criminal backgrounds [125,000] has grown about 65 percent in the past three years,” and the percentage of minimally qualified recruits has quadrupled since 2002.

Representative Martin T. Meechen, Chairman of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight: “The data is crystal clear; our armed forces are under incredible strain, and the only way that they can fill their recent quotas is by lowering their standards.”

Recruitment Funding

Pentagon spending on recruitment has increased dramatically over the past few years, approaching $4 billion by 2003. As of 2006, there were over 22,000 recruiters nationwide, charged with signing up between 180,000 and 200,000 new active duty recruits, and approximately 120,000 new reservists per year. In 2000, the US House of Representatives determined that $6,400 was being spent to sign up each marine, and by 2005, the military spent approximately $16,000 in total promotional costs to enlist each new recruit.

Despite the enormous sums spent attempting to maintain an all-volunteer military during these times of growing anti-war sentiment, the armed forces have been unable to meet new recruit sign-up quotas. There is always a way, however, and here the balance sheets have been righted by dropping ballast, also known as “standards,” and by implementing military contract fine-print: Executive Order #12728, dated 8/22/90 referring US Code, Title 10, section 12305 and Title 3, section 301, better known as “Stop Loss,” which allows troops to be returned to battlefields again by delaying their removal from active duty indefinitely. In this way, military statisticians have forced the claim that recruitment quotas are being fulfilled.
Targeting the Adolescent Brain

Adolescence has long been recognized as a time when impulsive and risk-taking behaviors increase. As adolescence gives way to adulthood, learning to gauge risk with greater precision gradually proceeds. Modern neuroscience tools, including Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scanning techniques have now shown that adolescent stereotypic behavior is based on a phase of structural brain development. 15

In a recent study, 16 multiple high-tech scans were collated over time, and were combined with serial assessments of neuro-developmental function. It was discovered that the adolescent brain exists as a structurally and functionally distinct entity from that found earlier in childhood, or later in adulthood. The adolescent brain develops structurally enlarged, but functionally immature prefrontal and limbic grey matter areas. Those structural features appear to result in a change in balance between limbic reward and prefrontal higher executive assessment functions, and helps to explain typical adolescent behaviors of increased novelty and sensation, or thrill-seeking on the one hand, and limited consequence analysis on the other. By the early twenties, as the structurally enlarged areas decrease to typically adult volumes, brain function settles into adult patterns. These changes are accompanied by recognized adult thought processes and behaviors.

It is during adolescence, when changes in brain structure and function result in the characteristic behaviors of that age, that teens are actively recruited toward and into the military. The techniques employed by military recruiters directly targets the unique functional brain development characteristics of the adolescent; that targeting is undoubtedly purposeful. 17

HIGH SCHOOLS AS “MARKETS”

“No Child Left Behind”—Section 9528

The Bush Administration wrote and signed into law the “No Child Left Behind Act,” January 8, 2002, 18 with subsequent reauthorization in 2007. 19 As is now widely known, included in the 670 pages of that voluminous act—within section 9528—is a provision enabling military recruiters to access high school students’ records, and to
access the students themselves as they attend high-school campuses throughout the country. Students and/or their parents are offered the choice to “opt-out” of this demand, but they must actively do so, requiring of course, that they are first informed of this option. As will later be documented, this is often not the case. If school districts otherwise fail to provide military recruiters with the required information and access, millions of dollars in federal funding for that district can be cut.

Military recruiter manuals then provide guidance on how to maximize the effect of the law on targeted adolescents. Here are a few examples of advice given to recruiters from the School Recruiting Program [SRP] Handbook:

Section 1-4 c: “The objective of the SRP is to assist recruiters with programs and services so they can effectively penetrate the school market. The goal is school ownership that can only lead to a greater number of Army enlistments. Recruiters must first establish rapport in the schools. This is a basic step in the sales process and a prerequisite to an effective school program. Maintaining this rapport and establishing a good working relationship is next. Once educators are convinced recruiters have their students’ best interests in mind the SRP can be effectively implemented.”

Section 2-4: “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.”

Section 5-1-f-4: “Don’t forget the administrative staff. . . . Have something to give them (pen, calendar, cup, donuts, etc.) and always remember secretary’s week, with a card or flowers.”

Using computers fed with socioeconomic census data, past recruiting numbers, and other demographic information, recruiters target specific schools where students are less likely to go on to college and are more likely to sign up with the military. Then, school yearbooks, newspapers, and any other pertinent local informational sources are scrutinized, allowing recruiters to simulate familiarity and interest in a few of the more popular kids on campus. As those kids are approached
and befriended, others are attracted to the social bait and, seeking approval, gather around.

Once a student swims anywhere near the hook, recruiter anglers use every trick available. Students are phoned and written to without end, and are offered visions of a virtual cornucopia of money, education, training, and adventure. All responses are, of course, tracked.

**ASVAB: “REALIZE YOUR STRENGTHS. REALIZE YOUR DREAMS.”**

The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) is a three hour test, offered to, and taken by nearly 1 million high school students every year. It is placed before them ostensibly as a helping hand—as a way to explore their career potentials, and to guide them toward appropriate life choices. The offer and the test are scams.

Here is what the military tells the parents of teenage students in this confidence game:

The ASVAB Career Exploration Program includes eight individual tests covering verbal and math skills, mechanical knowledge, electronics, and several other areas. It also produces three Career Exploration Scores for Verbal Skills, Math Skills, and Science and Technical Skills. These three scores serve as one of several pieces of information about your child that can aid in the exploration of a wide variety of career options.

Recruiters, on the other hand, understand the ASVAB recruitment tool quite well. An excerpt from the Commander, Navy Recruiting Command, Policy and Programs Division, 2002—Recruiting Manual reads, “The ASVAB is used by the Armed Forces for recruiting purposes. . . . The ASVAB’s ability for determining civilian job skills has not yet been proven.”

Because the ASVAB is exempt from the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, students are given the test and information acquired is released to the military without parental consent. Furthermore, military recruiters are free, at the option of school administrators, to contact test takers—even if the student, or their parents opted-out of Section 9528 of the “No Child Left Behind
Exam information is then forwarded to the DoD JAMRS database for further analysis.

**THE JAMRS DATABASE**

In 2002, the Pentagon joined forces with the corporate database industry and began gathering, organizing and analyzing personal information on the military’s “market” of teens and their families. The JAMRS database now includes the records of over 30 million US sixteen to twenty-five-year-olds.

As families soon discovered they were unable to control the records collected on them, an ACLU lawsuit was brought against Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Under-Secretary of Defense David Chu, and JAMRS Program Manager Matt Boehmer in April 2006. It was settled a few months later, and became effective January 2007, specifying that families have the power to opt-out of the database. To date, as both the database and the option to opt-out of it is known to only a handful of families, opt-in remains the rule.

A Department of Defense survey taken November 2004, found that “only 25 percent of parents would recommend military service to their children, down from 42 percent in August 2003.” The Pentagon responded with a media campaign featuring faux-parents and their faux-children discussing enlistment in a positive light. In addition, the Pentagon tasked JAMRS with studying “influencers,”—parents, teachers, clergy, and the like—in the hope of minimizing and/or neutralizing their interference.

**JROTC**

The “Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps” system was created through the National Defense Act of 1916. It offers high schools federal subsidies in the form of funding, equipment, and supplies, which appear to be a good deal for cash-strapped school districts. In fact, this too good to be true deal turns out to be—just that. After a short time, schools discover they have ended up on the red side of the balance sheet—paying out more than they receive. Hidden costs include additional insurance coverage, new facilities construction and
maintenance, a portion of JROTC instructors’ salaries, benefits, taxes, etc. In short, school districts and the children they support are ripped-off by the program.37

In exchange for the faux-benefits offered, school districts must allow retired military personnel to act as instructors, and they must allow instructors to offer students a course of training that is authorized by the military, as opposed to local school boards. Classes can be taught by either accredited or non-accredited instructors, and reading and study materials have been found to include racist versions of history, and which stress a military approach to social and political change.38

JROTC courses are now offered in over 3,000 high schools as of June 2003,39 and bend the minds of over 500,000 teenage children toward the military.40 Former United States Secretary of Defense William Cohen described the JROTC program as: “one of the best recruitment programs we could have.”41 And, true enough, 40 percent of those entering the program go on to enlist.42

**THINGS RECRUITS AND RECRUITERS PROMISE**

**Recruits and the Military Contract**

A promise is a promise, unless it is offered by a military recruiter. After a recruit is promised the moon, they are asked to sign on the dotted line, most often missing the fine print:

“Laws and regulations that govern military personnel may change without notice to me. Such changes may affect my status, pay, allowances, benefits, and responsibilities as a member of the Armed Forces REGARDLESS of the provisions of this enlistment/reenlistment document.”43

In other words, recruits may be promised specific training and assignments, lofty jobs, or anything at all. The only contract made—despite any oral or written promise—is that the recruit will serve under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)44 rather than under civilian Constitutional law until full and final discharge is allowed (sans “Stop-Loss”). Any other statements, assurances, or promises—written or otherwise, do not apply.
Congress and the Department of Defense have long understood that as civilian jobs and educational opportunities decline, the military option becomes more attractive to potential recruits. Military Recruiters—and a vast expanse of advertisement copy—hammer the idea home that joining the military and serving it for a few years will open to an oasis of educational and job opportunities. The oasis is a mirage.

A typical recruitment advertisement reads: “Join the Army and earn up to $70,000 for college.” The truth is, nearly all enlistees join the Montgomery GI Bill on entering the military, but only one in twenty qualify for the higher Army College Fund or Navy College Fund benefits. In fact 30 percent of those joining the program receive nothing from it, and the rest, nearly always receive only a fraction of the benefits promised.

There are conditions:
- In order to be allowed entry into any of the college fund programs, recruits must first pay $100 per month for the first twelve months of service. That $1,200 is fully non-refundable.
- A full honorable discharge from the military is required. One in four fail to achieve that condition.
- For those who do achieve full honorable discharges, the payout is tricky: it is made over a total of no more than thirty-six months of educational expenditure (nine month academic year x four years = thirty-six months). If, as is typical, a veteran is unable to take full course loads over each of those thirty-six months, the payout is less, and will still be terminated after a total of thirty-six months in any case. So, for example, if a war-traumatized veteran is able to maintain only a one-half coursework load, the total payout would be—at a maximum—only one-half of that originally promised. Most veterans (56 percent) using the Montgomery GI Bill begin by attending community colleges or vocational schools spread out over time, and therefore receive only a fraction of the maximum promised for full time, full coursework study.
- The cost of education has continually increased while educational benefits have increased less rapidly. As benefits lag further and further behind the inflation curve, the value of the original promise is equally degraded with time.
In summary, recruits rarely collect on the military’s “big print” promise to provide significant educational funding.

**RECRUITMENT TOOLBOX: MOVIES, TOYS, TV, AND COMPUTER GAMES**

Blackhawk Helicopters on High School Campuses

As US families pushed back against the slogans “Be All You Can Be,” and “An Army of One,” and as potential new recruits increasingly said “no” to joining up, military planners moved new people into command chairs, ramped up their efforts, crafted new slogans, and basically pulled out the stops. Fully camo’ed military recruiters now land Blackhawk helicopter warships on elementary, middle and high school campuses around the country, and issue promises of fun, excitement, and glory to the overwhelmed kids.

The US Army, in a well-funded effort to recruit children, has decked out seven “Cinema Vans” with multiple slide projectors, viewing screens, and rock-climbing walls. Another eighteen-wheeler, the “Army Adventure Van,” features a helicopter simulator, an M-1 Tank simulator, and an M16 Machine-gun simulator, allowing high school kids to practice and to visualize cutting enemies to pieces. Other vehicles include a “Nuclear Power Van,” an “America’s Sea Power Van,” etc. Together, these propaganda shows on eighteen wheels visit nearly 400,000 of America’s children each year.

“The vans zero in on our target market, and that’s in high schools,” explained Fred Zinchiak, Public Affairs Specialist in the Sacramento Army Recruiting Battalion.

The targeted markets—this nation’s teenagers—are offered a vision of military life as being sexy and exciting. The reality of post-traumatic stress disorder, major depression, and traumatic brain injury suffered by over 1/3 of a million troops returning from the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is ignored.

**Recruitment via Television**

As of March 2008, over 11,000 schools have contracted with Channel One, an organization which promises to provide schools with free tele-
vision equipment and wiring in exchange for a mandatory daily viewing of the programs produced, edited, and broadcast by them.

The twelve minute programs, aired daily, are interspersed with two minutes of “corporate sponsorship” messages, half of which are paid for by US taxpayers c/o the Department of Defense, and in the form of military recruitment pitches to the captive children who are required to watch.59

From the Channel One Network website: “Nearly 30 percent of all American teens are in classrooms that show Channel One News.” In other words, over 6 million middle and high school students are presently forced to receive daily military recruiter pitches during classroom time.60

Recruitment via Hollywood Movies

“We may think that the content of American movies is free from government interference, but in fact, the Pentagon has been telling filmmakers what to say—and what not to say—for decades. It’s Hollywood’s dirtiest little secret.”61

The Pentagon has had a cozy relationship with the entertainment industry for many years, providing open door base access, material, and consultation to movie studios . . . for a price.62

It is now widely known that the Pentagon has influenced film producers and studios for years—trading access to military resources for censorship rights. Under authority of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, the Pentagon’s film liaison office trades script changes—acceptable to the brass—with access to otherwise impossibly expensive military material, locations, and expertise. In the end, we the taxpayers pay for our own propagandizing. Recent movies that were given a “hand” by the Pentagon include Stripes, Black Hawk Down, Pearl Harbor, Top Gun, The Great Santini, The Right Stuff, Apollo 13, and many others.63 From David Robb’s book Operation Hollywood: “The Pentagon is quite candid about why it provides this assistance to Hollywood. According to the army’s own handbook, A Producer’s guide to U.S. Army Cooperation with the Entertainment Industry, this collaboration must ‘aid in the recruiting and retention of personnel.’”64
Recruitment via Video Gaming

The Pentagon has vigorously supported development of PC war game software after discovering their use as both recruitment and as military training vehicles. Take, for example, the Microsoft X-Box game *Close Combat: First to Fight*—created by and for the military, but soon ported directly to “T” for Teens.\(^\text{65}\)

Another “success” story, in terms of the number of teens and young adults participating, is the US Army’s video game project *America’s Army*, accessed by several million “players” as of 2007.\(^\text{66}\) *America’s Army* is a highly graphic, fast paced and graphically violent battle simulation for youthful players. The army states that the game is for growing adults, but it is freely available on the Internet without age restriction and is widely distributed to children.\(^\text{67}\)

It has been argued that *America’s Army* is blatant government propaganda pitched to those who are least able to understand the effects of exposure to its various subtle and not-so-subtle messages.\(^\text{68}\)

**VIOLENT VIDEO/VIDEO GAMING IS HARMFUL TO CHILDREN**

Despite the overwhelming raft of data documenting ill effects in children and adolescents exposed to violent video and video games, the military services continue to support delivery of those images and experiences to children, seen only as potential future recruits.\(^\text{69}\)

From the Committee on Public Education of the American Academy of Pediatrics:

The American Academy of Pediatrics recognizes exposure to violence in media, including television, movies, music, and video games as a significant risk to the health of children and adolescents. Extensive research evidence indicates that media violence can contribute to aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, nightmares, and fear of being harmed. Pediatricians should assess their patients’ level of media exposure and intervene on media-related health risks. Pediatricians and other child health care providers can advocate for a safer media environment for children by encouraging media literacy, more
thoughtful and proactive use of media by children and their parents, more responsible portrayal of violence by media producers, and more useful and effective media ratings.\textsuperscript{70}

From the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry:

Studies of children exposed to violence have shown that they can become: “immune” or numb to the horror of violence, imitate the violence they see, and show more aggressive behavior with greater exposure to violence. Some children accept violence as a way to handle problems. Studies have also shown that the more realistic and repeated the exposure to violence, the greater the impact on children. In addition, children with emotional, behavioral and learning problems may be more influenced by violent images.

Youth who exposed themselves to greater amounts of video game violence saw the world as a more hostile place, were more hostile themselves, got into arguments with teachers more frequently, were more likely to be involved in physical fights, and performed more poorly in school. Video game violence exposure was a significant predictor of physical fights even when respondent sex, hostility level, and weekly amount of game play were statistically controlled.”\textsuperscript{71}

**Summary of the Evidence**

Exposure to violent video, whether in the form of video games, television, or theater movies is linked to, and causal of, increases in aggressive cognition, affect and behavior.\textsuperscript{72}

**Students, Parents, Schools, and Communities Respond**

Here is a small sampling of student, parent, school, and community responses to predatory military recruiters and the tactics they employ:

Vallejo, California (2008): The Vallejo School Board voted to end the practice of providing military recruiters with complete and unrestricted access to student information. District spokesman Jason Hodge: “This action brings the school district into compliance with the ‘No Child Left Behind Act’ which requires parents and students be given the option
to ‘opt-out’ of having military recruiters gain access to their personal information.”73

Berkeley, California (2008): The Berkeley City Council passed a resolution that initially stated Marine recruiters were “uninvited and unwelcome intruders.” The council later issued a clarification, stating that the recruiting center retains the legal right to exist, but telegraphed to citizens that vigorous protesting of the center’s existence is also a protected right.74

Seattle, Washington (2005): The Garfield High School PTA voted to adopt a resolution stating in part: “public schools are not a place for military recruiters.”75

National PTA (2005): The National PTA issued a petition stating, “National PTA seeks to increase awareness and community sensitivity about the collection and dissemination of information regarding students and believes that such records should respect the rights to privacy and be relevant to a child’s education.

National PTA will continue to support legislation and policies [that] would change current law by providing for an ‘opt-in’ policy where interested students and families can instead choose to request contact from military recruiters. Parents and students deserve to know who has their information, and parents should be involved in the important decision to enlist in military service.”76

Lindale, Georgia (2006): Two seventeen year-old Pepperell High School students confronted recruiters, the school board, and the school’s administration, who had insisted students were compelled under law to take the ASVAB military (recruiting tool) test. As the result of their ad-hoc plan to distribute anti-ASVAB flyers to their fellow students and despite the argumentative efforts of local recruiters, an estimated two-thirds of the eligible students present refused to be “tested.”77

CONCLUSION

Military recruiters have been given legal authority to openly recruit adolescents on high school campuses, and tacit authority to recruit both adolescents and younger children through more subtle means. Tech-
niques employed include those that are known to be harmful to children, including repeated exposure to violent games and images. Recruiters rely on the immature status of their prey to capture them with false promises, and subterfuge. Military recruitment of children must be understood for what it is: predatory.

The highest calling of any society is to protect its young from harm. Our society is failing to heed this call.

*With many thanks to Rick Jahnkow, Project on Youth and Non-Military Opportunities.*

GARY EVANS, M.D, is a practicing pediatrician and activist in Sonoma County California. He maintains a website, www.ringnebula.com, dedicated to peaceful activism.

**For More Information**
American Friends Service Committee: Youth & Militarism, [http://www.afsc.org/youthmil/default.htm](http://www.afsc.org/youthmil/default.htm)


Project on Youth and Non-Military Opportunities, [http://www.projectyano.org/](http://www.projectyano.org/)

**Opt-Out Forms**
No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB):
Spanish: [http://themmob.org//lmca/lmca_forms/lmca-e.pdf](http://themmob.org//lmca/lmca_forms/lmca-e.pdf)

**The Joint Advertising and Marketing Research & Studies (JAMRS) Database**
*Note: Opt-Out requests will be honored for ten years. However, because opt-out screening is based, in part, on the current address of the individual, any change in address will require the submission of a new opt-out request with the new address.*

English: [http://themmob.org//lmca/lmca_forms/JAMRS_OPT_OUT.pdf](http://themmob.org//lmca/lmca_forms/JAMRS_OPT_OUT.pdf)

**Notes**

2. See the US Army’s e-Cybermission Website, http://www.ecybermission.com/base_public.cfm?url=f850c5f4053oE011C27501AiD4A564C.


11. Ibid.


22. “Army Offers $40K Recruiting Bonus to H.S. Grads,” NPR, February 5, 2008,
28. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Goodman, “Recruiting the Class of 2005.”
45. Solnit and Allison, Army of None.
50. Ibid.
51. Solnit and Allison, Army of None.
53. Ibid.
54. Solnit and Allison, Army of None.
57. Ibid.
59. Solnit and Allison, Army of None.
64. Robb, “Operation Hollywood.”
67. See the US Army’s “Official Army Game” website: http://www.americasarmy.com/.