

Marine recruiters accused of rape: California high school students file suit

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Two students from Mendocino High School in Northern California are suing the Marine Corps in San Francisco federal court, alleging that they were raped by recruiters. The lawsuit is the latest in a growing series of accusations of sexual impropriety on the part of military recruiters against minors.

Each of the young women is seeking \$1 million in damages against two recruiters in connection with the alleged rapes, which they said occurred early last year in a recruiting office in Ukiah, California. The recruiters named in the suit, Sgts. Joseph Dunzweiler and Brian Fukushima, were both convicted and demoted in rank last year following courts martial with allegations of sexual misconduct with recruits.

According to one of the accusers, “Jane Doe,” she was raped three times and told by the recruiter that she had to submit if she wanted to be accepted in the Marines. She accused the Marine Corps of covering up the incident, an accusation that was denied by Marine Corps Major Michael Samarov.

This case, like many others brought against recruiters from various branches of the military between 2003 and the present, has received scant media coverage. According to *The Objector*, a web site devoted to conscientious objectors, and the antiwar website *Not In Our Name*, some of the other major cases are as follows:

July 2003: an Army recruiter based in Moreno Valley, California, was sentenced to 16 months in prison for statutory rape of a 17-year-old female recruit.

January 2004: a Marine recruiter based in Baltimore, Maryland, was convicted of fondling a teenage recruit and was sentenced to probation.

May 2004: a Marine recruiter based in Blooming Grove, New York, was charged with six counts of rape; the recruit was only 16 years old.

June 2004: a Marine recruiter based in Riverside, California, was sentenced to five years in prison for raping a 17-year-old high school student.

November 2004: an Army recruiter, also based in Riverside, was charged with four felony counts of providing alcohol to and then having sex with two 17-year-old girls.

March 2005: a National Guard recruiter based in Castleton, Indiana, Sgt. Eric P. Vetesy, was charged with 31 counts stemming from alleged sexual assaults on seven potential female recruits. Vetesy was jailed on February 27, accused of sexually assaulting six female recruits—most of them high school students he had met during the course of 18 months as a full-time recruiter.

The recruiters victimize young women driven by economic necessity to the armed forces as a means—sometimes the only one—of obtaining an education and a well-paying job. Typically, the reasons the victims gave for going along with the abuse was that they did not wish to alienate the recruiters and therefore jeopardize their chances for a career in the military, and many of the alleged assaults took place either in recruiting offices or in military vehicles.

Also significant in fostering a situation of easy access to young potential recruits is the effect of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, which requires high schools—on pain of losing federal funding—to give military recruits access to junior and senior students, including names, addresses and telephone numbers, unless parents make objections in writing. As a result, military recruiters have almost unlimited access to high schools and students—access that no doubt attracts and encourages the sexual predators among the recruiters.

The reports of sexual assaults by military recruiters is of a piece with recent allegations that female soldiers in Iraq have died of dehydration rather than risk sexual

assault by male soldiers. There appears to be a pattern of intimidation and unaccountability among not only the rank and file, but their superior officers as well, who attempt to bury these cases. For instance, in the case of the women soldiers in Iraq the cause of death was frequently suppressed to avoid exposure not only of the assaults themselves, but of the lack of disciplinary action taken with regard to them.

Likewise, in the assaults by recruiters against female minors, the military maintains its usual silence on the matter, aided by a compliant media well aware that any honest portrayal of this abuse would call into question the methods used by the military in its desperation to find fresh fodder for the Bush administration's endless "war on terror."



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