How can you tell if a military recruiter is lying to you?  His lips are moving!

Is that what you think of military recruiters?  If so, I hope you will feel differently by the time you've finished reading this report.

If you are reading this, you probably have either been contacted by a recruiter or seen some sort of advertisement that interested you or perhaps someone you know has suggested that you explore a military career.  Notice I've used the term "military career," instead of a "military job."  The reason is simple.  Although the military is a place to get a start and to learn a skill, it is also a way of life, not a job.  And the opportunities (for those who pursue them) are endless.

You are now at the crossroads of a journey that may change your life.  Do you make an appointment to see the recruiter, or do you pass?  Many have come before you and have chosen not to talk to a military recruiter; many others have chosen to give the recruiter a chance to make his pitch.  Many of those who chose to take the chance have joined the military.  The ones who chose not to take that chance will never know what might have been.

Enough with the melodrama?  If you're having doubts about whether or not to meet with a recruiter, I'm sure you have your reasons. Some common reasons why people are reluctant to meet with a recruiter are:

· I'll be pressured into joining - I just can't say no to any salesman.
· I don't think I'll like the military; I don't like rules and regulations.
· My friend's dad was in the Army (I think), and he hated it.
· I don't like getting up early in the morning.
· They wouldn't want me; I've got nothing to offer them.
· They've got nothing to offer me.

When I was younger, I used to get calls constantly from life insurance agents. They were relentless in their pursuit of getting me to make sure I had the peace of mind of knowing my family would be taken care of in the event of my untimely demise.

After the millionth telephone call I'd received, and after the millionth time I repeated, "I'm sorry, I'm not interested," I decided I'd take a different approach.  I started inviting them to my house.

Before I did that, however, I did my homework.  Yes, they were right: I needed supplemental life insurance, for my family's sake, but were they giving me the best deal I could get?  After listening to sales pitch after sales pitch, I finally agreed to buy a life insurance policy.  But it was on my terms, and I believe I got the best deal I could.  More importantly, every time I received a telephone call from a life insurance salesman after that, I was able to say, "I've checked all of my available options, and I am certain that I have made the right decisions."  Pretty soon, most of the phone calls ceased.

Before I decided to explore the possibility of supplemental life insurance, I had my reasons why I didn't need it.  Just like the reasons why some people won't meet with a military recruiter, my reasons were unfounded, based on my lack of knowledge about life insurance and on my mistrust of insurance salesman.  The main reasons were:

· I'm never going to die.
· My wife has my military life insurance policy.  When she's done with that, she can go out and get a job!
· I'll be dead; who cares what happens after that.
· I can take the money I'd spend on insurance and invest it.
Sure, they weren't very good reasons not to see the insurance agent, but they were my reasons; and they were all I had.

The moral of this story? Do your homework, meet with the recruiters and make an informed decision. You, too, will be able to say, "I've checked all of my options, and I am certain I have made the right decision."

So, how do you decide which recruiter you meet with first? That's an easy question to answer: Meet with the one that you've already had some contact with or the one that is listed first in the telephone book. It doesn't really matter, because if you take my advice, you'll eventually speak with recruiters from all of the services.

**WHY THE MILITARY NEEDS RECRUITERS**

Although the military, as a whole, went through a massive drawdown during the 1990s, it still must recruit an approximated 353,000 new people each year just to keep pace with the number of people leaving its ranks. People leave the military for a variety of reasons: Some retire after twenty years of service, some get out to pursue a civilian occupation (most times using the skills they learned in the military) and others leave to pursue higher education. Whatever their reasons for leaving, the fact is they leave and need to be replaced.

The military must be able to attract enough qualified individuals each year to maintain a high level of readiness and be able to perform its mission. This is where the recruiter comes in. It is not enough to advertise an "800-number" on television and wait for the calls to come flooding in (that only works for Ginsu knives and the exercise videos). No, the military must depend on their recruiters to get out into the communities, schools, youth groups and wherever else they can reach America's youth in order to keep their numbers strong.

**WHO IS "THE RECRUITER?"**

At this point, all recruiters may look the same to you. You may not be able to distinguish an Army recruiter from an Air Force recruiter. In fact, unless you've done some research, you probably don't know much about the differences between the missions of the Army and the Air Force.

Although I will refer to all recruiters in the generic sense by calling them "military recruiters," or just "recruiters," make no mistake about it: Each recruiter works for his branch of the service and does not represent any other branch.

Why do I tell you this? Sometimes a recruiter will speak to an applicant about the opportunities that are not available from another branch. Don't let an Army recruiter tell you what an Air Force recruiter can't offer you. Instead, let him tell you what the Army can give you, and then let the Air Force recruiter tell you what he can and cannot offer you.

Each branch of the armed forces uses different criteria in the selection of its recruiters. However, they all have one thing in common: They employ experienced enlisted personnel from within their ranks to sell their product. It is this fact that sets military recruiters apart from the vast majority of "salespeople."

Recruiters know what they are selling; they lived and breathed the military long before they started selling it. The military recruiter is both an expert on, and an advocate of, his product. As such, he is able to provide information, guidance, opinion and an occasional story or two.

Recruiters to not start their military careers as salespeople; they come from all walks of military life. They are mechanics, cooks, administrators, electricians, and just about anything else you can think of.
They come to recruiting, most often, with no sales background at all. So, you may ask, how does a cook become so good at selling? The answer is a simple one: recruiting school.

**WHAT RECRUITERS ARE TRAINED TO DO**

Each branch of the military runs its own unique recruiting school whose primary mission is to turn "cooks" into highly effective salespeople in a matter of weeks. In that short amount of time, they must learn not only how to sell but also how to complete all the paperwork necessary for enlistment. It doesn't end there, though. They must also learn and become familiar with all of the enlistment criteria, such as what makes someone physically unfit to enlist. They must learn how to be public speakers, how to deal with school and community officials, how to be job counselors, and a myriad of other things. This is somewhat amazing considering that most have had little, or no, formal civilian education since high school. What they learn in weeks would take months, or even years, of training elsewhere.

Although recruiters learn a multitude of things in recruiting school, the primary focus is sales: how to contact (prospect for) potential applicants and then convince them to join their particular branch of the military.

**PROSPECTING FOR APPLICANTS**

Unless you took the first step and made the initial contact, your recruiter somehow got your name and contact information. In fact, if the recruiter made the initial contact by telephone, you may have even asked him, "How did you get my phone number?" Military recruiters have many ways to get your name, and here are just a few:

- A list provided by your school
- Referral from a friend, family member, classmate or coworker
- In response to your request for information
- Your high school yearbook and a little investigative work
- You took the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) exam at school
- He got a wrong number, but you were home, so why waste the call?

**SELLING THE INTERVIEW**

Once he has made contact, it is the job of the recruiter to get you to come in for an interview. As with any job, you can't be hired without a formal interview. Depending on your level of interest, you may or may not agree to the interview. If you don't agree, it is up to the recruiter to sell the interview.

Sure, you may use excuses for not meeting with the recruiter. You may say "Can you mail me some information?" Or maybe you'll say "I'd like to think about it some more." Or maybe you'll use my favorite, "I don't have time for an interview." Believe me, if you've got a reason (or an excuse) for not meeting with the recruiter, he has at least one response to overcome that reason. Take my advice, if you're reading this, you already have some level of interest in at least checking out what the military has to offer. Make the appointment, and show up for it! Don't agree to an appointment that you have no intention to keep. Not keeping appointments speaks volumes about your character.

**SELLING "THE MILITARY"**

It is the recruiter's job to find your primary motivator for joining the military. It may be money for education, desire for technical training or having secure employment. This is where the comparison of a recruiter's methods to a car salesman's methods begins. When you walk into that car dealership, the conversation would probably sound something like this:
Salesman: "What are you looking for in a car?"
Customer: "I need a seven-passenger minivan to transport my family."

If the salesperson doesn't sell minivans and only has five-passenger sedans, it is unlikely that he will get you to buy a sedan. It is difficult to sell a product that just can't fit the needs of the customer. The recruiter must not only sell you a product that meets your needs, but he must first determine your needs. This can be extremely difficult, especially if you don't express those needs to him or if you are unsure of those needs. The following conversation rarely, if ever, occurs in a recruiting office:

Recruiter: "What are you looking for from an enlistment in the military?"
Applicant: "I want to complete a degree in biology at XYZ University and have enough leisure time to go bowling with the guys, and can you throw in good pay, too?"

WHAT THE RECUTIER CAN AND CANNOT PROMISE YOU
As a recruiter, one of the lines I heard more often than most when trying to get a prospective applicant in for an interview was, "I'll come in tomorrow for an interview, but I won't sign anything." My response to that was always along the lines of "I wish it were that simple to enlist someone." Just as you wouldn't expect to be hired on the spot after your first job interview with a civilian company, the same is even more true with the military. You must get over many hurdles before you can qualify to wear a military uniform.

When you spoke to the recruiter to make an appointment for an interview, she probably asked you some preliminary questions concerning your health, your education, and any involvement with law officials. If you passed this initial inquiry, you made it over the first hurdle. When you meet the recruiter for the first time, she will probe even deeper into these areas to determine whether or not you initially qualify for enlistment. Assuming that you agree to enlist after listening to the recruiter's sales presentation, here is a list of the hurdles that you must get over in order to eventually enlist:

- Questions regarding your medical history to ensure that you do not have (or have not had) a medically disqualifying condition
- Questions regarding any involvement with law officials, including traffic tickets and arrests as an adult or juvenile
- Questions regarding illegal drug usage
- The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)
- A complete (and I do mean complete) physical examination
- A background check

A more detailed explanation of these hurdles is presented later in this chapter. However, as you can see from this list, you are in no danger of being whisked off to Basic Training after your initial interview.

So what can the recruiter promise you after all is said and done? The answer is simply this: not much! What the recruiter can promise is that you will be treated fairly throughout the enlistment process. He can ensure that you fully understand the steps to enlistment; that he doesn't lie, or misrepresent, anything to you; and that you are fully prepared for enlistment. The recruiter should be your advocate, not your babysitter. Do not expect the recruiter to hold your hand during the process. You are expected to be responsible for your own actions because you will be expected to do so when you are on active duty.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT RECRUITERS
There are some common misconceptions that people have about recruiters and recruiting. Here are a few:

- Recruiters are on quotas and receive a "bonus" for every new recruit they enlist.
  The fact is that recruiters are paid their regular military pay plus a standard "professional pay" every month. They are paid the same whether they enlist one, two or twenty people every month. Of course, if they want to keep their jobs, they'll try to enlist as many people as possible.
Recruiters will lie, cheat and steal to get you to enlist.

As I mentioned earlier, there are some recruiters who would do whatever it takes to get someone to enlist. So be careful, but not cynical. The majority of the recruiters will not misrepresent themselves or their service. Most successful recruiters rely on referrals from satisfied applicants - if you are unhappy with your experience with your recruiter, you won't refer others to him, and he knows that.

They'll trick me into signing a contract, and then it's too late.

Remember that enlisting in the military is a long and involved systematic process that consists of many steps. It is the job of the recruiter to get you ready for each of the steps.

Now that you have a better understanding of who the recruiter is, it is almost time to meet with him, but not before you read the rest of this report. It will better prepare you for this first meeting. Although the recruiter is your advocate and not your opponent, you should do your homework to make sure you are ready for the "battle." Just as you would prepare for a visit to the local car dealership to buy that new car, you should prepare for your first meeting with your recruiter.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE RECRUITING PROCESS

During the recruiting process, you have several responsibilities. They include:

- Keeping all your appointments and arriving on time for them
- Studying for the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)
- Getting enough sleep before the ASVAB and physical examination
- Being open and honest with your recruiter and the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) staff
- Being an active - not selective - listener

PRIORITY ONE: BE HONEST

Of all your responsibilities, being honest with your recruiter is paramount. Telling white lies and half truths will eventually catch up to you - maybe not at first, maybe not while you are at Basic Training, but some day. Not telling the truth about past physical problems or past involvement with law enforcement officials are the fastest ways to find yourself in a heap of trouble. Remember these simple rules:

- Divulge all involvement with law enforcement even if you weren’t convicted or even if the court told you your records would be closed and eventually expunged.
- Tell about all medical conditions that you have been diagnosed with. Do not conceal anything that you didn’t think was important. Conversely, do not make anything up. If you were never diagnosed with asthma, even though your mother told you that you had it, you never had it! I cannot tell you how many people who never had asthma disqualify themselves.
- Do not, under any circumstances, lie because someone has told you to do so. This includes your recruiter, your brother and your mother.

PRIORITY TWO: BE AN ACTIVE - NOT SELECTIVE - LISTENER

Do recruiters lie? There are good and bad people in just about all professions, and military recruiters are not excluded. Aside from those few bad apples that give recruiters a bad name, most misunderstandings attributed to "my recruiter lied to me" come down to a phenomenon called selective listening.
Selective listening occurs when an applicant (or, using the car dealership example, the customer) hears only the parts of the recruiter's (salesperson's) presentation that interests him. For example, a customer leases a car for three years, and at the end of the lease he's ready to trade the car in for a new one. He works out the deal for his new vehicle and notices an additional charge of $1,000. Of course, he questions the charge and is given the following response: "Your three-year lease allowed for a maximum of 30,000 miles (an average of 10,000 miles per year), and your vehicle's odometer reads 40,000 miles. Your contract states that you will be charged ten cents per mile for every mile exceeding 30,000. At ten cents per mile, 10,000 miles equals $1,000." The customer leaves the car dealership $1,000 poorer, totally disgusted and in search of a car salesman that won't "lie" to him. Isn't it ironic that when he first leased the vehicle, he didn't "hear" the part of the sales presentation that talked about exceeding the mileage, yet when he found out it was going to cost him $1,000 he heard loud and clear?

Sometimes salespeople do their best to gloss over these "minor details," helping the customer to be a selective listener. "The maximum mileage allowed is 30,000. I've never seen anyone exceed that mileage after only three years." Is the salesperson in this example lying? Maybe not, but it's only a matter of semantics.

Be an active listener, not a selective one. Make sure you understand everything that is presented to you. Do not be afraid that you will appear stupid if you ask for clarification. Remember that the recruiter is the expert; you are not. If you think you don't understand something, you're probably correct in that assumption. Ask your questions and listen to the answers.

**REMEMBER: IT'S YOUR CAREER!**