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Contents

Rescuing 17 Year Olds from Military Enlistment Contracts..... 3

NNOMY Counter-Recruitment Summit Report 4

Selective Service Commission Holds Chicago Hearing 5

Personnel Provisions of the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act 7

Thinking About MLTF’s Future 10

Members' Thoughts on MLTF Future Priorities..... 12

PRESIDIO 27: PANEL DISCUSSION - "MUTINY" AT THE STOCKADE

Hosted by Courage To Resist and Presidio of San Francisco

Saturday, October 13 at 7 PM - 9 PM PDT

Presidio Officer's Club, 50 Moraga Avenue, San Francisco, CA

[Registration required](#)

On October 14, 1968, 27 prisoners in the Presidio Stockade staged a peaceful sit-down protest to call attention to the treatment of fellow prisoners and the conditions inside. Just days before, a guard had shot and killed a prisoner, and GIs had taken to the streets of San Francisco in massive demonstrations against the war in Vietnam. For staging this peaceful protest, the Army tried the 27 for mutiny, the most serious military offense. Join us for events this 50th anniversary weekend that explore this history that shocked the Army and the nation - all in the place where it happened, with the people who took part. Presented in association with Veterans for Peace San Francisco, Chapter 69.

The following day, Sunday, Oct. 14, join us at the Presidio Stockade (1213 Ralston Ave., SF) for the 50th anniversary commemoration from 1-3pm.

PLEASE SUPPORT MLTF PUBLICATIONS AND SERVICES BY MAKING A DONATION.

Join MLTF at the 2018 NLG Convention!

Oct. 31 to Nov. 4

Portland, Oregon

Benson Hotel



SCHEDULED EVENTS

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Be part of discussing MLTF plans for the coming year(s). Lunch provided.

Saturday, November 3, 12:15 p.m.

Location TBA

REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE COCKTAIL HOUR

Sponsored by the Self-Induced Abortion (SIA) Legal Team; co-sponsored by MLTF and other NLG committees.

Friday, November 2, 8 p.m.

Location TBA

BLOOD MONEY: PROFITEERING OFF DEATH AND VIOLENCE IN A MILITARIZED AMERICA

Sponsored by NLG International Committee and MLTF.

Saturday, November 3, 9 a.m.

Location TBA

Visit our Literature table to chat and check out new memos and material.

More information on the convention web page at nlg.org/convention/.

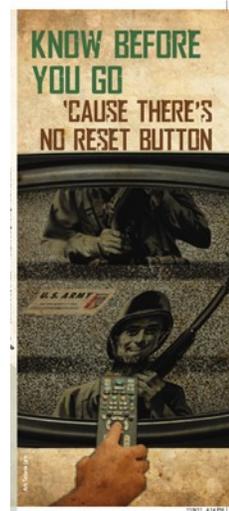
RESCUING 17-YEAR-OLDS FROM MILITARY ENLISTMENT CONTRACTS

BY MATTHEW RINALDI

It is currently settled law that an unemancipated child, age 17, may enlist in the U.S. military with the consent of that child's parents or guardians. 10 U.S.C. Section 505. There are a few very limited regulations which provide for the discharge or entry level separation of a 17-year-old recruit, such as the objection within 90 days of enlistment by a qualified parent or guardian who did not consent. Those rules are well covered on our website.

The goal of the MLTF has not been limited to understanding and implementing those limited regulations. Our objective for over a decade has been to change the law to allow any 17-year-old recruit to disaffirm his or her enlistment.

The legal argument would be that an unemancipated child lacks the capacity to enter into a binding military recruitment contract. The argument tracks the analysis of the immaturity and impulsiveness of those under the age of 18 set forth in *Roper v. Simmons* 543 U.S. 551 (2005), which prohibits the execution of anyone for a crime committed while under the age of 18.



Cover of counter-recruitment brochure.

We have never been able to present our argument in court for the simple reason that every client we have served who has been under the age of 18 has achieved a discharge or separation without a court fight.

We first obtain a signed "disaffirmation of enlistment" from the recruit, along with a withdrawal of consent from the relevant parent or guardian. We present this document to command, and the dialog usually proceeds as follows:

Command: *You can't do this. There's no way this recruit can simply withdraw from enlistment."

MLTF Lawyer: "I agree. We want to get to court to challenge the right of the military to hold on to child soldiers."

Command: "That's BS. You're making me call JAG."

MLTF Lawyer: "That's fine. We'd love to discuss this with a JAG attorney."

What happens next typically follows a similar script:

JAG Lawyer: "You can't have your client withdraw from enlistment. There's no procedure for any withdrawal from a proper enlistment. Your client is old enough to enlist and had parental consent."

MLTF Lawyer: "I know. We want to change the law. We want file a habeas petition to challenge the right of the U.S. military to refuse to separate child soldiers."

JAG Lawyer: "Let me get back to you."

This has always been followed by a return call stating that the recruit is being discharged, usually with an Entry Level Separation.

This has now become routine. First, the reasonable decision by any JAG lawyer is, better to lose one kid then allow this MLTF lawyer the opportunity to change the law for everyone. The thinking is, if every 17-year-old recruit could change his or her mind, half of them would leave tomorrow. Second, most JAG lawyers will also ponder the question, do I want to be the JAG attorney who let these folks get to court? And third, most JAG lawyers realize that, even if the military wins in court, a publicized court case clarifying that 17-year-old recruits cannot change their minds will not help recruiters who currently freely roam the high schools of the United States.

Many members of the MLTF have said that we will never get to court on this issue. So far, they have been correct. But during that time we at least have saved dozens of kids who decided they made a terrible mistake by enlisting in the military.

Matthew Rinaldi worked at the anti-war coffeehouse at Fort Lewis from 1969 to 1971 and was on the staff of the United States Servicemen's Fund from 1971 to 1973. He became an attorney in 1983, and is currently on the MLTF steering committee.

NNOMY COUNTER-RECRUITMENT SUMMIT REPORT

BY LIBBY FRANK



The National Network Opposing the Militarization of Youth (NNOMY) hosted a counter recruitment summit the weekend of June 23-24 in Chicago. The purpose was to draw together counter recruitment activists from around the country to plan and strategize for what we all feel is an impending storm. This was not a conference in the traditional sense; there were no workshops, no speeches, no gala dinners. The summit took place at a retreat which provided housing and meals so people didn't have to leave. This saved time and helped eliminate distractions. There were about 30 people in attendance with the largest number from the Midwest and the West Coast.

After a few opening remarks and introductions on Saturday there was a presentation on the history of the counter recruitment movement in the U.S. followed by an overview of current and future recruiting trends. We broke into small groups to identify goals and strategies. The groups re-emerged into one group to consolidate what we came up with. The following day we repeated the process but dug deeper and developed tactics. We identified five broad goals out of the day and a half: establish a network of sympathetic teachers and counselors; empower youth; remove JROTC; restigmatize militarism; build and sustain our groups with research, analysis, funding and networking; grow counter recruitment activism through a focus on intersectionality, economic justice and impacted youth.

Feedback from attendees was mixed. People were pleased by the accommodations. Most people were less pleased with the process. Some thought the process too restrictive, cumbersome, and long; that breaking into groups was a mistake; that we jumped into defining goals without having stated the problem. I believe those are all fair criticisms. In our zeal to come away with goals we probably pushed too hard.

But overall I think it was good. People from around the country got a chance to meet and share ideas. We did walk away with goals and strategies which was the objective. People were energized while at the same time disappointed in how small our numbers are. Finding out how effectively the military is using social media was sobering. There was some interest in regional gatherings. One has since taken place in Chicago for the Midwest.

As a final note, it's important to point out that we have much to do. The economy is booming right now and that is the single most determining factor in recruitment. The Army has already had to lower their recruitment goal. They've also lowered standards going so far as to waive restrictions on certain mental disorders (mood disorders or self-mutilation) provided they were "resolved". The military has made impressive and effective use of social media in attracting recruits. So we clearly have our work cut out for us.

For more information about NNOMY check out their website at <https://nnomy.org/en/>

Libby Frank is a counter recruitment activist in Chicago working with Veterans for Peace and other peace groups to demilitarize the public schools. She is the treasurer of MLTF and also on the steering committee of the National Network Opposing Militarization of Youth.

REPORT ON SELECTIVE SERVICE COMMISSION HEARINGS: CHICAGO

BY LIBBY FRANK AND AARON FRISHBERG

The Military Law Task Force is monitoring the National Commission on Military, National and Public Service as it conducts public hearings around the country. Originally set up to evaluate the continued utility of Selective Service, the Commission has developed a broad approach to military and national service. MLTF plans to submit comments on the Commission and the draft in September.

Two years ago there was an amendment to the NDAA to include women in Selective Service. There were also members of Congress that thought the Selective Service System should be eliminated.

What emerged was an amendment to establish a National Commission on Military, National and Public Service. There was also concern of a constitutional challenge to the requirement that only men were required to register. So Congress did what they usually do, they punted and appointed a commission.

The National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service has been going around the country holding “town halls” to get people’s input on the fate of Selective Service. Should it be extended to women, eliminated altogether or should we go to a system of mandatory service like some countries? They are supposed to finish up by March 2020 and submit their final report September 2020.

We can only comment on the hearing in Chicago which took place June 28. The emphasis and focus of the panel that spoke was clearly on some type of mandatory service. In fact, the moderator was one of the founders of “City Year.” The panel all extolled the virtues of service.

At the end there was some time allotted for comments from the audience. Several people spoke out against any form of mandatory service and several people proposed eliminating Selective Service altogether, including one man who was imprisoned for refusing to register. The fact that only 30 minutes was allotted gives you an indication of how interested they were in getting input from the citizens. And the fact that the exact date, time and location of the hearing was only announced two days before.

Several things to note. The 11-member commission is composed entirely of Caucasians. That a group commissioned to develop a report on the draft and enhancing public service has no minority members is a sad guarantee of its inability to address issues of concern to people of color.

The commission also appears to have a median age much older than the young men and women who are likely recipients of its intentions. In addition, such a commission will be unlikely to view public service as a path to higher education. It is thus likely doomed to fail to recognize the existence of the “poverty draft,” which compels enlistment in disproportionate numbers of poor youth of all colors.

Finally, the Selective Service System just doesn’t work. If there were to be a call-up right now, the government wouldn’t be able to find even a fraction of eligible draftees due to non-compliance, failure to report a new address, etc.

We urge readers to go online and submit your comments. You have until the end of September. The link: <http://www.inspire2serve.gov/content/share-your-thoughts>

Libby Frank is a counter recruitment activist in Chicago working with Veterans for Peace and other peace groups to demilitarize the public schools. She is the treasurer of MLTF and also on the steering committee of the National Network Opposing Militarization of Youth.

Aaron Frishberg joined the Military Law Task Force over 35 years ago, while at New York Law School, where he participated in organizing a seminar to support resistance to the Jimmy Carter draft registration initiative, a bellicose response to the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. He has relied on the support of the network of MLTF advocates and attorneys in his case work, never being fully immersed personally in any aspect of military law. He helped organize a training on military counseling in New York which became the foundation for a New York City chapter NLG Military Law Committee.

PERSONNEL PROVISIONS OF THE 2019 NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

BY KATHLEEN GILBERD

The 2019 National Defense Authorization Act, formally titled the John S. McCain NDAA, was signed into law on August 13, 2018. While it has less emphasis on personnel policy and specifically on military sexual assault and sexual harassment than the last several NDAAs, it nevertheless contains important provisions affecting military personnel and veterans. The key provisions of interest are as follows:

Military Justice and Related Legal Provisions

Sec. 531 adds to Article 128 of the UCMJ assault by strangulation or suffocation as conduct constituting aggravated assault.

Sec. 532 adds a new Article 128b covering domestic violence. It criminalizes any violent offense against a spouse, intimate partner or immediate family member of the spouse or partner where there is intent to threaten or intimidate that person. While the language is not clear, this article also covers such actions done in violation of a protective order. Domestic violence was previously charged under more general provisions such as assault. The new article will go into effect January 1 of 2019.

Sec. 533 expands the authority of the Defense Advisory Committee on Investigation, Prosecution and Defense of Sexual Assault in the Armed Forces, allowing it to hold hearings, to take testimony and receive evidence, and to request information it deems necessary to its purposes from other federal agencies. The Section notes that, in doing so, the Committee is to make efforts to prevent unauthorized disclosure of personally identifiable information.

Under Sec. 534, DoD is required to submit a report to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees on the feasibility and advisability of expanding the Special Victims Counsel programs to include domestic violence cases. Under current law, only victims of sexual assault may use these special JAG services. The report is due by February 1, 2019.

Sec. 536 requires standardization of service policies on expedited transfer of military personnel who are victims of sexual assault or domestic violence. It also mandates establishment of a policy for transfer of members whose dependent is the victim of sexual assault by an unrelated member of the armed forces. Currently, expedited transfers are covered in regulations only for sexual assault victims; the inclusion of domestic violence is significant.

Under Sec. 542, any flag or general officer or employee of DoD in the Senior Executive Service who is convicted (by any court of competent jurisdiction) of sexual assault, sexual harassment, fraud against the US or another violation that the service Secretary decides "renders that individual susceptible to blackmail or raises serious concern regarding the ability of that individual to hold a security clearance" will be subject to reinvestigation or readjudication of his or her security clearance. The same holds true if a commanding officer merely determines that the person has committed one of the offenses described above. This provision applies whether or not the person has retired, been discharged or otherwise separated from the military.

Sec. 543 requires creation of an “oversight plan” for DoD harassment prevention and response policy, to implement DoD Instruction 1020.03, “Harassment Prevention and Response in the Armed Forces,” which covers all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, hazing and bullying. Under the plan, DoD and the services must set concrete deadlines to submit implementing policies to the Director of Force Resiliency; incorporate means to measure effectiveness of the programs; adopt compliance standards; track and report information on sexual harassment incidents; and create anonymous complaint mechanisms. DoD must report back to the Armed Services Committees on the development of this oversight plan by July 1, 2019. As noted in the June, 2018, issue of On Watch, DoD 1020.03 is vague in its language and left specific complaint and investigative plans to the services, which to date have not created implementing regulations. The NDAA provision will be important in ensuring that this new policy on harassment, bullying and hazing is truly carried out.

Sec. 544 covers oversight of the registered sex offender management program, requiring that DoD designate an individual or an existing entity to compile data on sex offense convictions and registration, monitor compliance with DoD 5525.20, “Registered Sex Offender (RSO) Management in DoD,” and maintain statistics on the numbers of active-duty personnel required to register. DoD must report back to the House Armed Services Committee on this oversight policy by June 1, 2019.

Under Sec. 545, the Superintendents of military academies must create resource guides for students regarding sexual assault within 30 days of the enactment of the NDAA. The guides are to include explanations of prohibited conduct, victims’ rights, complaint procedures, emergency services, and related matters. Copies must be provided to all current and incoming students, and specifically to any students who reports sexual assault.

Sec. 546 requires that DoD submit a report to Congress by September 30, 2019, and at least every two years thereafter, showing the number of cases in which a servicemember was accused of collateral misconduct after reporting a sexual assault; the number of such individuals who received adverse action as a result; and the percentage of investigations involving such adverse action.

Medical Provisions

Sec. 701 changes 10 USC 1074m by eliminating the requirement for post-contingency-operation-deployment mental health assessments for members upon discharge.

Section 702 states that DoD “may” carry out a pilot program to assess the feasibility and advisability of intensive outpatient programs to treat servicemembers with post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from military sexual trauma. The program would be carried out in cooperation with civilian public and private health care agencies and institutions. Participating institutions will set up short-term but extensive outpatient programs to treat PTSD, including treatment for substance abuse, depression and other related issues; share best practices with other participating institutions; and participate in annual assessments. The Secretary of Defense “shall” submit a descriptive report on the pilot program to the Senate and House Armed Services Committees within 180 days of enactment of the NDAA. The program is to continue for no more than three years after enactment; 180 days after the program ends, DoD is to submit a final report with an assessment of the program’s effectiveness and recommendations for legislative or administrative action, including possible recommendations for continuation of the program.

Sec. 717 calls for review of the Wounded Warrior program. Within 180 days of enactment of the Act,

DoD is to review and update all policies and procedures for the care of recovering servicemembers, considering best practices for care, administrative management of such care, carrying out of applicable federal law provisions, and best practices recommended by the Comptroller General of the US in its report, "Army Needs to Improve Oversight of Warrior Transition Units." This effort will update policies ranging from case management of rehabilitative services, outpatient recuperation, contract care, etc.; policies on transition from DoD to VA healthcare upon medical retirement; and policies on facility standards for recovering servicemembers, family members, and non-medical attendants of recovering servicemembers. No later than one year after enactment of the NDAA, the DoD and service Secretaries must jointly submit a report to the Armed Services Committees on their review and policy changes.

Separation and veterans

Sec. 522 adds 10 USC 1155, requiring that servicemembers facing discharge, retirement or other separation be given a statement of the benefits to which they will be entitled through DoD or the VA not later than 30 days prior to separation. In the case of unanticipated separations, the statement shall be given as soon as practicable. Reserve component members will receive such a statement prior to release from active duty.

Sec. 552 makes improvements to the Transition Assistance Program designed to assist servicemembers in transitioning to civilian life. It calls for specialized counseling and training based on a number of factors which may affect servicemembers, such as disability, a pending Other than Honorable discharge, gender, intentions or plans for after discharge, etc. The Section specifies types of training and issues to be covered. It requires DoD to report back within 120 days of enactment with an implementation plan and to have the program in place within one year of enactment.

Sec. 558 allows veterans and their families to use the services of Military One Source for up to a year after separation. DoD is instructed to provide information to military families and recent veteran families about the services available through One Source. (Military One Source offers referrals, non-psychiatric counseling, deployment counseling and other benefits. While some remain free to any veteran or civilian, this Section will allow vets and families to retain non-medical counseling, financial counseling, spouse employment and education services, language translation services, health and wellness coaching, child/youth behavioral counseling and family life counseling, income tax help, and other benefits.)

Other Provisions

Sec. 355, "Study on Phasing out Open Burn Pits," requires DoD to submit a report to Congress within 180 days of enactment on the current use of open burn pits and the feasibility of phasing them out by using technology incinerators.

The NDAA contains several provisions relating to the problems of child abuse and problems in schools for military dependents. Sec. 563 requires DoD to establish one comprehensive database for juvenile misconduct, including sexual misconduct, at DoD Educational Activity schools. Sec. 564 mandates an assessment of strategies for security threats which may arise from "active shooter incidents" in elementary and secondary schools on military bases, and requires a report back to Congress within 180 days of the NDAA's enactment. Sec. 577 calls on each service to establish interdisciplinary teams on child abuse and domestic violence at each military base (or two closely-located bases). The teams

are to share information on and collaborate about incidents of abuse, enhance social services available for military families on these issues, etc. Each service secretary is to submit a report to Congress on the implementation of this program annually between 2020 and 2022. Sec. 578 calls on DoD to carry out a pilot program on prevention of child abuse and training on safe childcare practices.

Sec. 521, "Enlistments Vital to the National Interest," amends 10 USC 504 to make provisions for the MAVNI (Military Accessions Vital to National Interest) program, under which limited numbers of non-citizen non-permanent-resident immigrants have been permitted to enlist and work towards citizenship. The Section requires that these recruits possess a critical skill or expertise vital to the national interest, and that they use that skill or expertise in their primary daily military duties. Security clearance checks (which have held up such enlistments) would need to be completed before recruits could begin active duty. The program would be limited to 1,000 recruits per service per year until DoD informs Congress of its intent to increase these numbers, and Congress takes no action.

Conclusion

The 2019 NDAA contains fewer controversial provisions than in the last few years, and generally has fewer sections relating to discharge review (some such provisions were eliminated by the Congressional Conference Committee) and sexual assault and harassment. Nonetheless, it contains a number of provisions which will be helpful to military personnel if implemented. Readers who would like to follow up on any of the studies and policy changes mandated by the Act and share their findings in future issues of On Watch are encouraged to do so.

Kathleen Gilbert is a legal worker in San Diego, California, and serves as the executive director of MLTF.

THINKING ABOUT MLTF'S FUTURE

BY JEFF LAKE

Recently the MLTF Steering Committee has been polling our members for input regarding the organization's direction going forward. The following are my thoughts on this topic.

The United States military budget for 2019 is 719 billion dollars (\$719,000,000,000.00). For one year. It has over 1,300,000 active duty personnel and over 800,000 reserves. It admits to around 600 military bases overseas. The military is in the process of completing the largest base-building effort ever undertaken by troops in the history of the U.S. Air Force with the construction of an air field in Niger from which to launch armed MQ-9 Reaper drones.

Since September, 2001, the prestige of the military among the U.S. population has been greatly enhanced. 17 years of "Support our Troops" propaganda has made the military politically popular and has led to massive budget increases.

The changes in technology which have occurred have resulted in a dramatic rise in drone warfare and computer assisted war fighting. As a result, a class of servicemembers has been created whose job it is to kill by remote control. Many are suffering from “moral injury” as a result of these new weapons.

So, we are faced with a situation where the military is being given an obscene budget and being tasked with operating in over 100 countries and to carry out U.S. foreign policy – by negotiation, by “special operations,” by drone warfare or, in extreme cases, by actual occupation. The media is ignoring most of this and instead churns out platitudes. Politicians pander to the military and refuse to engage in any meaningful oversight. Only a few members of Congress are concerned about the way the military is being used to carry out U.S. policy.

The MLTF was created 50 years ago to aid servicemembers resisting the war in Vietnam. Since the end of that war, the military has relied on an all “volunteer” force and has scrupulously avoided overt forced conscription. As a result, servicemembers today for the most part wish to fulfill the contract they feel they have with the military and do not question its methods. Thus, modern resisters are very few. Clearly the MLTF should help any of these military resisters should they request assistance, however this will not be a major focus of the work barring a return to the draft. We should also assist CO’s with their claims, assist those who are requesting discharges and defend those who go AWOL. We have done this from the start and will continue to do so both on our own and with partners such as CCW and the GI Rights Hotline.

What we do have at this time is a huge organization dedicated to projecting U.S. power, usually by force, and creating lots of victims in its wake. While the media and the politicians fall over themselves to hail the military, very few focus on the human costs. These, it seems to me, fall into two major categories.

The first set of victims are those who have gone through Military Sexual Trauma. This has been a huge scandal for the military and one that it cannot seem to properly deal with. The MLTF has made this a priority and has developed materials designed to assist servicemembers affected by MST. Obviously this work needs to continue and the information needs to be circulated as broadly as possible – online, on bases and through webinars and other speaking engagements where the message can be heard.

Another set of victims are wounded veterans, physically and psychologically, who have been discarded by the military and the V.A. The V.A. system has proven to be woefully inadequate in treating its patients. The treatment that these servicemembers have experienced exposes the fallacy that the military supports its troops. Rather, servicemembers are used for cynical purposes to advance corporate interests while under contract and then ignored when they are no longer useful. As David Gesspass has pointed out, “work with vets is important because the way they are treated (or, more accurately, fail to be treated) exposes clearly just how little the country’s rulers care about them after they have been discharged.”

Another area of work for the MLTF, as many have stated, is the area of counter-recruitment. The military is clearly struggling to meet its recruiting goals. However, given the uniformly positive coverage the military receives from the media and politicians, it is difficult to convey an alternative viewpoint. We must continue to do so and to reach as many as we can with our message. We need to be creative and we need to participate in coalitions with local groups around the country that do this work.

Finally, the most serious issue facing the MLTF is generational change. Since its inception, a core of founders and others have kept the task force going in some form for 50 years. Now, however, there does not appear to be an obvious group of younger NLG members who can keep the Task Force going. Without an influx of new leadership, the MLTF will not be able to survive. Thus, it would seem the most urgent task would be to convince a new generation that these issues are important and that the work needs to continue. One would think that NLG members would be interested in addressing the U.S. military. This institution consumes over 700 billion dollars a year, depriving needed domestic programs of adequate funding. It wreaks havoc around the world in service to imperialism. It is hostile to its female servicemembers and protects their abusers. It creates thousands of wounded each year and then ignores their injuries. Finally, it fosters a domestic culture of militarism and domination. Our task then is to articulate the importance of the Task Force to the overall work of the NLG. I hope that we are able to do so and that another generation can carry on.

Jeff Lake is Chair of the Military Law Task Force.

WHAT SHOULD MLTF BE DOING? MEMBERS RESPOND

At this year's Guild convention, the Task Force is planning a membership meeting to discuss our direction and strategy for the current period. Given Trump's military policy, the state of the military, and the state of the GI and veterans' movement, what work is most important for us to do? How can we build MLTF and contribute to military resistance/dissent? Should veterans work remain a high priority? Should we increase counter-recruitment work? Should there be more emphasis on preparing for legal support of resisters during warfare? How can we best recruit new members? And so on.

To start off this discussion, we asked Task Force members to share their thoughts in this issue of On Watch, with articles or snippets on their ideas for what MLTF should be doing. The following email comments and articles are an important beginning. We invite readers to follow up with additional comments on the MLTF listserv, and to come to our convention meeting to discuss our goals and priorities.

Reber Boulton wrote:

"Should veterans work remain a high priority?"

No. That's too far from our mission of opposing war and empire.

"Should we increase counter-recruitment work?"

Absolutely. That's where we belong.

"... contribute to military resistance/dissent?"

That too.

"Should we increase counter-recruitment work?"

Same.

"Should there be more emphasis on preparing for legal support of resisters during warfare?"

That too.

"Should there be more emphasis on preparing for legal support of resisters during warfare?"

Always. That's how I got here. So I'm biased.

"And so on."

Again, as always.

Dan Mayfield wrote:

I think that these other kinds of work ...

- VA work
- Discharge Upgrade
- LGBTQ work
- Work with SWAN
- Anti-rape work

... can be, and should be, tied to a general anti-militarism position ... and I think the best example of that position is counter-recruitment.

Kate Richardson wrote:

I'm not active in MLTF these days, but I agree with Dan, and would also add that by focusing on the legal issues specific to veterans of all wars, including the provision of legal services to access and obtain the VA benefits they have earned and so desperately need (through VA character of discharge applications, discharge upgrades, service-connection disability benefits claims based on combat-related traumas, MST, etc.), helps to hold our government to account and expose the true cost of war.

Thomas Barton wrote:

1. Members of the armed forces have the right and duty to defend civilians from dictatorships and to aid civilian movements against dictatorships.
2. The armed forces are not for use in wars of Empire.
3. Efforts to increase democratic rights in every society, organization, movement, and within the armed forces itself will be encouraged and supported.
4. We do not advocate individual disobedience to orders or desertion from the armed forces because members of the armed forces working together is most effective.

That said, we will assist in the defense of troops who see individual desertion or refusal of orders as the only course of action open to them for reasons of conscience.

5. We practice organizational democracy.
6. It is unnecessary to be in complete political agreement with other organizations to work together toward a common objective.
7. Our mission is to bring together in one organization members of the armed forces and civilians who are dedicated to these objectives.
8. Civilian members participate in organized action to reach out to and work with active duty armed forces.
9. This organization or individual members may choose to support candidates for elective office who are for immediate withdrawal from Imperial wars and occupations, but do not support candidates opposed to immediate, unconditional withdrawal.
10. Members may not be active duty or drilling reserve commissioned officers, or employed in any capacity by any police or intelligence agency, local, state, or national.
11. I understand and am in agreement with this mission.

I oppose bigotry against people because of their race, religion, national origin, gender, or sexual orientation.

I pledge to defend my brothers and sisters, and the democratic rights of the citizens of the United States, against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

David Gespass wrote:

The MLTF emerged from the Vietnam War and the widespread resistance among US troops that contributed mightily to its end. The war exposed to many, both inside and outside the military, the viciousness of US imperialism. There were countless GI resisters and antiwar activists worked hard to provide them support. It was in that context that the MLTF was born.

Over the years, the MLTF has taken on other issues relating to the military, which are often, for obvious reasons, less clearly related to the US military as an agent of US imperialism, but our basic outlook has remained constant. The MLTF, unlike many other antiwar and GI-

support organizations, has emphasized our political opposition to the role US armed forces play on the world stage.

Times have changed since 1968. The members of US forces today are, by and large, not motivated by resistance. From my admittedly narrow experience of only occasional referrals over the years, it seems as if people call us these days as much to get help staying in the armed forces rather than getting out. This is, of course, not universal. Iraq Veterans Against the War has been a powerful voice against US imperialism, but its last apparent public statement was more than a year ago.

So, what do we do in these times? I absolutely reject the idea that we should be a mere service organization, providing information about the regs and, if needed, lawyers to handle routine matters. There are others who can fill that role. We must be a force that combines such services with continued exposure of the military. For that reason, I think we should give far more emphasis to two things, veterans' support and counter-recruitment.

I maintain that work with vets is important because the way they are treated (or, more accurately, fail to be treated) exposes clearly just how little the country's rulers care about them after they have been discharged. While they are in the "service" and lauded by government officials, they may believe their sacrifices (however minor they may be compared to those of the targets of US foreign policy) are appreciated. Only when they get out do they learn otherwise.

Case in point, from *American Military News* (americanmilitarynews.com):

(Video) Veteran Commits Suicide On VA Property Hours After Being Forced Out Of Treatment

November 29, 2016 [Editorial Staff](#)

Sergeant John Toombs recorded a video last Tuesday after being forced out of the Alvin C. York Medical Center in Murfreesboro, TN for what he calls "trivial reasons." Toombs committed suicide on VA property just hours after recording the heart-wrenching video. The video has garnered nationwide attention and has gone viral. His last recorded moments can be seen below:

At the other end of the enlistment process, counter-recruitment work gives us the opportunity to educate those contemplating a military career and to dispel the myths that both major parties perpetuate. Assisting those trying to get access to the poor youth who are targeted by military recruiters ought to be a priority in these days when they are so often lonely voices, and it wouldn't hurt to give that work an anti-imperialist, and not just a pacifist, perspective.

THE MILITARY LAW TASK FORCE of THE NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD

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We welcome comments, criticism, assistance from Guild members, subscribers and others interested in military, draft or veterans law.

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The National Lawyers Guild's Military Law Task Force includes attorneys, legal workers, law students and "barracks lawyers" interested in draft, military and veterans issues. The Task Force publishes On Watch as well as a range of legal memoranda and other educational material; maintains a listserv for discussion among its members and a website for members, others in the legal community and the public; sponsors seminars and workshops on military law; and provides support for members on individual cases and projects.

The MLTF defends the rights of servicemembers in the United States and overseas. It supports dissent, anti-war efforts and resistance within the military, offering legal and political assistance to those who challenge oppressive military policies. Like its parent organization, the NLG, it is committed to the precept that human rights are more sacred than property interests.

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