

Waivers to Army recruits with criminal backgrounds double from 2003 to 2006

By [Global Research](#)

Global Research, February 14, 2007

Raw Story 13 February 2007

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Terrorism](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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The number of waivers granted to Army recruits with criminal backgrounds has doubled in three years, according to press reports on data released by the Defense Department.

"The Army and Marine Corps are letting in more recruits with criminal records, including some with felony convictions, reflecting the increased pressure of five years of war and its mounting casualties," Lolita C. Baldor reports for the Associated Press.

In Wednesday's New York Times, Lizette Alvarez notes that "the number of waivers the military granted to Army recruits with criminal backgrounds has nearly doubled in the past three years, jumping to more than 8,000 in 2006 from about 4,900 in 2003, Department of Defense records show."

"In the past few years, the Army has employed a range of tactics to expand its diminishing pool of recruits," Alvarez adds. "It has offered larger cash bonuses for enlisting, allowed more high school dropouts and applicants with low scores on the Army's aptitude test to join, and loosened weight and age restrictions."

Excerpts from Associated Press article:

According to data compiled by the Defense Department, the number of Army and Marine recruits needing waivers for felonies and serious misdemeanors, including minor drug offenses, has grown since 2003. The Army granted more than double the number of waivers for felonies and misdemeanors in 2006 than it did in 2003. Some recruits may get more than one waiver.

The military routinely grants waivers to admit recruits who have criminal records, medical problems or low aptitude scores that would otherwise disqualify them from service. Overall the majority are moral waivers, which include some felonies, misdemeanors, and traffic and drug offenses.

The number of felony waivers granted by the Army grew from 411 in 2003 to 901 in 2006, according to the Pentagon, or about one in 10 of the moral waivers approved that year. Other misdemeanors, which could be petty theft, writing a bad check or some assaults, jumped from about 2,700 to more than 6,000 in 2006. The minor crimes represented more than three-quarters of the moral waivers granted by the Army in 2006, up from more than half in 2003.

Army and Defense Department officials defended the waiver program as a way to admit young people who may have made a mistake early in life but have overcome past behavior. And they said about two-thirds of the waivers granted by the Marines are for drug use, because they — unlike the other services — require a waiver if someone has been convicted once for marijuana use.

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