

## Army Recruiters Face Investigation

GOLDEN, Colo., May 2, 2005

**(CBS)** In an attempt to boost slumping recruitment numbers, the U.S. Army has started offering stronger incentives, including increased enlistment bonuses.

But two recruiters from Colorado have been suspended as the Army investigates accusations that they encouraged a teenager to lie and cheat so he could join up.

Reporter Rick Sallinger of Denver TV station KCNC reports that 17-year-old high school journalist and honor student David McSwane is just the kind of guy the military would like.

But McSwane tells Sallinger, "I wanted to see how far the Army would go during a war to get one more soldier."

So, says Sallinger, McSwane contacted his local Army recruiting office, in Golden, with a scenario he created.

For one thing, he told his recruiter, he was a dropout and didn't have a high school diploma.

No problem, McSwane says the recruiter explained. He suggested that McSwane create a fake diploma from a nonexistent school.

McSwane recorded the recruiter saying on the phone: "It can be like Faith Hill Baptist School. Whatever you choose."

So, as instructed, McSwane went to a Web site and, for \$200, arranged to have a phony diploma created. It certified McSwane as a graduate of Faith Hill Baptist High School, the very name the recruiter had suggested, and came complete with a fake grade transcript.

What was McSwane's reaction to them encouraging him to get a phony diploma? "I was shocked. I'm sitting there looking at a poster that says, 'Integrity, honor, respect,' and he is telling me to lie."

And, says Sallinger, there was more.

The Army doesn't accept enlistees with a drug problem, but that's what McSwane pretended to have when he spoke with the recruiter.

"I have a problem with drugs. I can't kick the habit. Just marijuana," McSwane recalls telling the recruiter. "And he says, 'Not a problem. Just take this detox.' He said he would pay for half of it, and told me where to go (to get it)."

Drug testers Sallinger contacted insist it doesn't work, but the recruiter claimed in another recorded phone conversation that taking the detoxification capsules and liquid would help McSwane pass the required test.

"The two times that I had the guys use it," the recruiter says on the tape, "it's worked both times. We didn't have to worry about anything."

The original recruiter left Golden in a routine transfer, but another recruiter, Sgt. Tim Pickel, picked up the ball.

A friend of McSwane's shot video as the sergeant drove McSwane to a store where he could purchase the so-called detox kit.

Sallinger then went to the Army recruiting office and confronted Sgt. Pickel. Sallinger played him a conversation McSwane said he had with Pickel on the phone in which Pickel reassures McSwane there are ways around McSwane's supposed problem with marijuana.

Pickel quickly referred Sallinger to his superiors.

So Sallinger played the tapes and showed the video to Lt. Colonel Jeffrey Brodeur, who heads Army recruiting in the Denver region.

"Let me sum up all of this with one word: unacceptable. Completely unacceptable," Brodeur said.

"Let me tell you something, sir," he said to Sallinger. "I'm a soldier and have been a soldier for 20 years. This violates trust, it violates integrity, it violates honor, and it violates duty."

Brodeur has ordered a full investigation to determine what happened, and if it's part of a broader problem involving military recruiters breaking the rules in order to meet their quotas. In Fort Knox, Ky., Lt. Col. Michael Shepherd, the assistant chief of staff, U.S. Army Recruiting Command, agreed wholeheartedly with Brodeur, telling *The Early Show* co-anchor Harry Smith Monday, "Our initial response is just like the battalion commander's. This type of behavior is totally unacceptable.

"This is under investigation and once that's complete, we'll be able to tell what we need to do next. We just need to get back to the business of recruiting. These problems are just ones that we can't stand (for)."

Admitting it's "tough out there" signing up recruits these days, Shepherd added, "But none of that pressure would ever warrant any of the behavior we've seen here.

"We live by a code of Army values. We have to understand integrity, honor, duty, again, lot of pressure but, what's the penalty for not making mission of the individual recruiter? A matter of maybe he needs additional training, maybe he needs additional resources. And we're here to help provide that here at this headquarters."

Shepherd says penalties for the two recruiters could range from letters of reprimand to court martials.

Could this sort of thing be happening elsewhere? "We have systems and procedures in place to do inspections throughout the command to ensure these types of things do not happen," Shepherd responded. "We have data-mining capabilities, quality assurance capabilities, that look into the records of these recruiters to reveal if there is some sort of pattern of misbehavior. So when that happens, we get into it early. For some reason...this one came through and didn't catch it ahead of time."

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