

## Conscientious Objection: The option not advertised.



The photographs inundate us on a daily basis. Horrific photos of disfigured men women and children are displayed on many major media outlets. These are families that have been destroyed by weapons of indiscriminate destruction. More photos display the soldiers and the loved ones, crying as they are about to be separated by yet another deployment. The soldier and their loved ones do not know that they actually have a choice.

The government tells us that we are dropping “smart” bombs, “precision” munitions that are laser guided. **As “smart” as these weapons may be, they do not speak Arabic, Russian, or the Kurdish language. They speak DEATH.** The soldiers loading these weapons do not know that they actually do have options. Our government does not tell them that. Conscientious Objection is not advertised on a unit bulletin board. Regardless, they have a choice of whether or not to deploy to kill. That choice is a conscious choice: whether or not to obey an order to kill.

"Nonviolence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of man."

Mohandas K. Gandhi

### What is Conscientious Objection?

Department of Defense Directive 1300.6 defines Conscientious Objection as “a firm, fixed and sincere objection to participation in war in any form or the bearing of arms, by reason of religious training and belief”. In accordance with DOD Directive 1300.6 Objectors are classified into two categories.



***Class 1-O Conscientious Objector:*** A member who, by reason of conscientious objection, sincerely objects to participation of any kind in war in any form. ***Class 1-A-O Conscientious Objector:*** A member who, by reason of conscientious objection, sincerely objects to participation as a combatant in war in any form, but whose convictions are such as to permit a Military Service in a non-combatant status (1).

### Conscientious Objectors in the Military:

- The myth that exists is that only a substandard soldier would apply for a CO status. That simply is not true.
- Naval Academy graduate Charles Ferguson was discharged from the Navy in 1989 (2).
- West Point graduate David Wingate resisted Gulf War service in 1991(2).
- Naval Commander Leslie Cole maintained high performance ratings before becoming a CO in 1975(2).
- Addis Wiley was a top rated non-commissioned officer before he became a CO in 1991(2).
- Israeli Army Major Rami Kaplan has become the highest ranked Israeli Officer to apply for CO status. He is among 1089 Israeli soldiers that have refused to fight the Palestinians. Out of this group, 212 have been imprisoned.
- WWI: 3,800 US CO's (3)
- WWII: 42,000 US CO's (3)
- Korean War: 4,300 US CO's (3)
- Vietnam: 170,000 US CO's (3)
- Gulf War I: 111 US CO's (3)

### **Organizations that can help:**

Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO): [www.objector.org](http://www.objector.org) The CCCO supports and promotes individual and collective resistance to war and preparations for war.

Quaker House of Fayetteville, NC  
[www.quakerhouse.org](http://www.quakerhouse.org) Quaker House stands in opposition to the violence and prejudice that exist in our society, offering a peaceful, life affirming presence in the midst of several of the largest military bases in the country. Quaker House staff work for change through education, advocacy, caring and counseling.

Center on Conscience and War  
[www.nisbco.org](http://www.nisbco.org) Non-profit organization that defends the Rights of Conscientious Objectors to War and Violence

Veterans for Peace  
[www.veteransforpeace.org](http://www.veteransforpeace.org) Veterans for Peace, Inc. (VFP) is a non-profit educational and humanitarian organization dedicated to the abolishment of war.

Veterans for Common Sense  
[www.veteransforcommonsense.org](http://www.veteransforcommonsense.org) Veterans for Common Sense seeks to inject the element of Common Sense into debates over war and national security.

The GI Rights Hotline  
1-800-FYI-95GI

### **Conscientious Objector Regulations:**

(1)Department of Defense Directive 1300.6, August 1971

Army: AR 600-43, May 1998

Navy: NAVPERS 15560 C, February 1997

Marines: MCO 1306.16 E, November 1986

Air Force: AFI 36-3204, July 1994

Coast Guard: COMDTINST 1900.8, November 1990.

National Guard and Reservists are covered under the regulation for the “parent” organization. Ex. Army National Guard=Army Regulation.

### **Movies:**

“The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It”

-The story of 40,000 CO’s that objected the “Good War” of World War II.

“Winter Soldier”

-The testimony of 105 Vietnam Veterans in 1972 of the atrocities and horrors of war.

### **What can we do?**

Familiarize yourself with CO readings. By educating yourself, you can educate your family and friends.

Inform your Armed Forces friends that they actually do have options. CO is not discussed in the military.

Write your elected officials and ask why our public school must follow the “No Child Left Behind” protocol and give the Pentagon requested information on our high school students.

Work to get films like the “Winter Soldier” and “The Good War and Those Who Refused to Fight It” shown to ROTC students and through public television.

Request that CO materials are distributed in public schools in equal proportions to military recruiting materials.

### **Sources of CO information:**

(2)*Advice for Conscientious Objectors in the Armed Forces*, by Robert A. Seeley. Can be downloaded or ordered at the CCCO website.

(3)“Fighting not to fight” April 1, 2003 The Guardian.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,927138,00.html>

“Marine who said no to killing on his conscience”. April 1, 2003 The Guardian. Follow web link above.

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