

"Writing the truth  
as I see it;  
trying not to  
offend  
those who will  
disagree."

# The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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## Is military desertion courageous?

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Jeremy Hinzman is the most recent military deserter losing his legal battle to stay in Canada. I read his story while visiting our son and daughter-in-law at Ft. Bragg in Fayetteville, NC; home of the Army Special Forces, the Green Beret. There I met men and women who have a clarity of thought, a code of honor, and a love of country; values so clear I immensely admire and genuinely envy them. If you want to meet a real hero, just visit a military base. Their moral fiber is unwavering, giving me little tolerance for those who abandon their oath. With this admitted bias, I would like to discuss those who desert our country.

Most end up in Canada, where roughly 200 American deserters are hiding. Jeremy Hinzman, who deserted in 2004, served a tour in Afghanistan; but refused orders to deploy to Iraq because he decided it was an "illegal order." Did he stay in the United States, challenging this "illegal" order, willing to face possible consequences for his actions? Or did he decide the best way to honor his "moral conscience" was to hide in Canada?

Another deserter, Corey Glass, who joined the Indiana National Guard in 2002, claims the recruiter promised him the only way he would be in combat was if there were "foreign troops on American soil." He was "tricked" into joining the National Guard and therefore has a right to refuse an order to deploy. He also claims he "had a duty to refuse to take part in a war that is illegal and morally wrong." He makes this claim, even though at the time of his orders for deployment the United Nations had sanctioned the United States presence in Iraq, negating his claim we were there illegally. All the deserters put forth some variation of the same assertion. They claim they have the right to refuse to take part in this war, to refuse a lawful order.

Fortunately, the Canadian government does not support American deserters for the common sense reason that these men and women voluntarily joined the military. No one forced them to sign the papers. No one forced them to take the oath they are dishonoring. Despite the government's position, the Canadian House of Commons is urging their government to allow American deserters and their families to stay in Canada as permanent residents, erroneously referring to them as Iraqi War Resisters, a blatant misnomer. They are not resisters. They are deserters. They violated their oath to their fellow soldiers and to their country. The House of Commons refuses to acknowledge that these deserters do not meet the criteria for refugee status which is reserved for those who have a "well-founded fear of persecution and if removed (from Canada), a real danger of torture or death." These deserters are criminals in need of prosecution, not refugees in need of sanctuary.

Jim Stolz, a resident of Fayetteville, made the egregious statement that "just because they sign a paper doesn't mean they should give up their right to choose." Sir, that is precisely what it means. Voluntarily enlisting in the military does not include the option of leaving whenever you choose. Voluntarily enlisting in the military does not include the option to pick and choose which orders you will follow. Equally absurd, Chuck Fager, another Fayetteville resident, refers to Hinzman as a "soldier of conscience." How can he be? He voluntarily joined the military, he refused a lawful order, and he fled his country. He is a criminal and most assuredly not a soldier.

What is the "persecution" they claim will occur if they are returned to the United States? How harshly does the military treat deserters? A lawyer for the Canadian government says the

deserters are treated leniently, often serving a year or less in a military prison and getting a maximum of a dishonorable discharge from the military. Is that unfair considering the crime they committed? Is that harsh compared to the sacrifice of the soldiers who had to replace them in Iraq, accepting the risk to life the deserters abandoned?

Perhaps the United States should be even more lenient with these criminals, removing any threat of serving time in prison. Instead, the military should support their decision to leave the United States. They should give the deserters a dishonorable discharge along with revoking their United States citizenship; the citizenship they have already voluntarily renounced by their actions.

Jonathan Kay, managing editor at Canada's National Post newspaper, summed it up well: "America's fair-weather soldiers shouldn't be permitted to make a mockery of the Canadian refugee system." These criminals deserted their comrades, their military, and their country. They dishonored themselves, their military, and their country. The "real" soldiers did their duty, honored their commitment to their country, and paid the price of that commitment. It's time deserters are held accountable for their decisions.

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