VFW Calls Bonus Payback Requirement Insulting

California Guardsmen ordered to return reenlistment bonuses

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WASHINGTON — The Los Angeles Times reported this weekend that nearly 10,000 California Army National Guard soldiers are being forced to repay decade-old reenlistment bonuses of $15,000 or more because the National Guard failed to properly screen reenlistments for bonus eligibility.

“It is unthinkable to me that the Department of Defense’s first reaction is to punish service members who fulfilled their end of the deal” said Brian Duffy, the national commander of the 1.7 million-member Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its Auxiliary. “This is how you destroy all faith in a Pentagon that is supposed to have your back.”

The bonuses were paid as an incentive to retain California National Guard soldiers, who were heavily used in both Afghanistan and Iraq. This was occurring at the same time the Army was forced to lower recruiting standards in order to fill its own active-duty ranks.

“These soldiers are being punished for something that is not their doing, which is why the VFW calls for the Pentagon to waive these debts without requiring these soldiers to first admit fault,” said Duffy. “They extended their enlistment contracts and did their duty as ordered. Many paid the ultimate price, and far more returned home wounded, ill and injured. Instead of seeking repayment, the Pentagon owes them a debt of thanks and an apology for insulting their honorable service to our nation.”

Read the LA Times article here.

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