



The editorial piece was published in the Washington Post, January of 2000.

The article was denouncing the upcoming pay raise(s) for US service members' -- citing that the stated 13% wage increase was more than they deserve. A young airman from Hill AFB responds to her article:

"Ms Williams:

I just had the pleasure of reading your column, "Our GIs earn enough" and I am a bit confused. Frankly, I'm wondering where this vaunted overpayment is going, because as far as I can tell, it disappears every month between DFAS (The Defense Finance and Accounting Service) and my bank account.

Checking my latest earnings statement I see that I make \$1,117.80 before taxes. After taxes, I take home \$874.20. When I run that through the calculator, I come up with an annual salary of \$13,413.60 before taxes, and \$10,490.40, after.

I work in the Air Force Network Control Center where I am part of the team responsible for a 5,000 host computer network I am involved with infrastructure segments, specifically with Cisco Systems equipment. A quick check under jobs for Network Technicians in the Washington , D.C. area reveals a position in my career field, requiring three years experience with my job. Amazingly, this job does NOT pay \$13,413..60 a year. No, this job is being offered at \$70,000 to \$80,000 per annum... I'm sure you can draw the obvious conclusions.

Given the tenor of your column, I would assume that you NEVER had the pleasure of serving your country in her armed forces. Before you take it upon yourself to once more castigate congressional and DOD leadership for attempting to get the families in the military's lowest pay brackets off of WIC and food stamps, I suggest that you join a group of deploying soldiers headed for AFGHANISTAN; I leave the choice of service branch up to you.

Whatever choice you make, though, opt for the SIX month rotation: it will guarantee you the longest possible time away from your family and friends, thus giving you full "deployment experience." As your group prepares to board the plane, make sure to note the spouses and children who are saying good-bye to their loved ones. Also take care to note that several families are still unsure of how they'll be able to make ends meet while the primary breadwinner is gone. Obviously they've been squandering the "vast" piles of cash the government has been giving them.

Try to deploy over a major holiday; Christmas and Thanksgiving are perennial favorites. And when you're actually over there, sitting in a foxhole, shivering against the cold desert night; and the flight sergeant tells you that there aren't enough people on shift to relieve you for chow, remember this: trade whatever MRE (meal-ready- to-eat) you manage to get for the tuna noodle casserole or cheese tortellini, and add Tabasco to everything. This gives some flavor. Talk to your loved ones as often as you are permitted; it won't nearly be long enough or often enough, but take what you can get and be thankful for it.. You may have picked up on the fact that I disagree with most of the points you present in your op-ed piece.

But, tomorrow from KABUL , I will defend to the death your right to say it. You see, I am an American fighting man, a guarantor of your First Amendment rights and every other right you cherish. On a daily basis, my brother and sister soldiers worldwide ensure that you and people like you can thumb your collective nose at us, all on a salary that is nothing short of pitiful and under conditions that would make most people cringe. We hemorrhage our best and brightest into the private sector because we can't offer the stability and pay of civilian companies.

And you, Ms. Williams, have the gall to say that we make more than we deserve? Rubbish!

A1C Michael Bragg, Hill AFB AFNCC

IF YOU AGREE, PLEASE PASS THIS ALONG TO AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE AND SHOW OUR SUPPORT OF THE AMERICAN FIGHTING MEN AND WOMEN. THANK YOU.