

**THE BLOG****BeNow All You Can Be**

By Marty Kaplan

06/23/2005 08:59 pm ET | Updated May 25, 2011

This week the Pentagon began working with a private company called BeNow to create a marketing database of Americans 16- to 18- years old. According to the Washington Post, the product being marketed to these kids, you will not be shocked to learn, is enlistment in the military.

It's bad enough that the data that the No Child Left Behind Act requires high schools to compile are being provided to military recruiters, so that they can call kids at home and pitch them a swell career in the armed forces.

But this new database will contain even more information: birth dates, Social Security numbers, e-mail addresses, grade-point averages, even what subjects the kids are taking.

So just as Amazon.com can send you an email saying that you might want to buy the new Anne Coulter book because you bought Mussolini's memoirs in the past, now the Pentagon can pick off kids whose grades aren't scholarship material and whose zip codes aren't high-income, and paint a rosy picture of their future in uniform.

And that's not to mention the identity theft issues. Imagine what a treasure-trove the BeNow database will be to hackers in Uzbekistan. The Pentagon, of course, assures us that all this information will be secure. But coming within days of our learning that 16 million American credit-card holders can kiss their privacy goodbye, the Defense Department's promises aren't very comforting.

Serving our country in the armed forces is a courageous and patriotic choice. But that's not what this new Big Brother offensive is about. It's about military recruiters failing to make their quotas, because kids don't want to serve in a war they don't believe in. It's about none of the children of the chickenhawks and of the right-wing pundits in Washington enlisting, because war's fine as long as someone else's kids fight it for them.

At the height of the Vietnam War, a raging issue was whether to permit military recruiters and reserve programs on campus. Today, the battle has moved to the high schools, and in a virtual world, no one can be kept out of our homes and our lives. Before we offer up the next generation on a silver platter to the war machine, shouldn't we be demanding that Jenna and Barbara Bush put in their time in Iraq?

**Follow Marty Kaplan on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/martykaplan](http://www.twitter.com/martykaplan)**