

What's in an OJAG code?

Military Personnel - Code 61

By CAPT Scott Thompson
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When I found out I would be taking over Military Personnel - Code 61, I asked my colleague, “Don’t they do recruiting?” I had to confirm that the office was in D.C. and not Millington. Since then, I’ve come to appreciate that the work of Code 61 impacts the careers of every judge advocate.

Code 61 started out as the JAG Corps detailing and community management shop. When the officer detailers and the officer community manager migrated to Navy Personnel Command, Code 61 retained the role of developing the JAG Corps officer manpower policies and strategy. In fact, the assistant officer community manager works in Code 61, and the manpower triad – detailers, officer community manager, and Code 61 – interface daily on issues that touch the entire JAG Corps officer community.

Whether developing strategies to advocate for increased manning, supporting Congressional testimony of Navy leaders, or programming the billets necessary for a command or staff judge advocate to accomplish the mission, Code 61 is involved. This past year has been particularly dynamic as the Navy plans for anticipated budget reductions over the next several years. Thanks in large part to the work of a junior officer in Code 61 and the officer community manager, the JAG Corps was able to successfully defend Judge Advocate Continuation Pay this year despite an overall reduction in Navy special and incentive pays. We were able to limit the impact of Navy-wide “roll downs” in the number of O4/O5/O6 billets by aggressive engagement with Navy Personnel Command through the officer community manager, deputy judge advocate general, and judge advocate general. As a result, the JAG Corps has been more successful than most communities in mitigating the impact of Navy-wide manpower reductions on our promotion opportunity and authorized end strength. We have also defended our postgraduate education opportunity through a detailed validation of every JAG Corps billet that requires subspecialty expertise. The superb ability of JAG Corps detailers to ensure

that qualified officers are consistently assigned to these billets allowed the JAG Corps to send 25 students to postgraduate school this year. Code 61 was the lead for increasing opportunities for judge advocates to attend Master of Laws programs at Harvard, Columbia, University of Pennsylvania, and the University of California, Berkley, among others. Judge advocates will not escape all impact from Navy reduction initiatives, however, we have fared better than many communities as a result of JAG Corps leadership being in the ring fighting for every billet, every postgraduate school quota, and every dollar of Judge Advocate Continuation Pay.

Of course, Code 61 does also oversee JAG Corps recruiting. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of officers throughout Naval Legal Service Command, applications to the JAG Corps continue to increase. Code 61 helps develop the policies and programs that impact recruiting, such as structured interviews, on-line application system, Internship Program, accessions selection board precepts, and diversity outreach. In fact, the JAG Corps is one of the few Navy communities that is almost exclusively responsible for its own recruiting, and is entrusted by Commander, Navy Recruiting Command with over \$60,000 in sponsorship commitments for diversity recruiting.

Code 61 also contributes to the execution of several important JAG Corps quality of life programs. We routinely request nominations for a host of quarterly and annual awards to recognize outstanding members of the JAG Corps. The recently approved JAG Corps telework policy was drafted by Code 61, and we are working closely with Task Force Life Work to implement other important programs.

Assignment to Code 61 can be an important broadening tour for an officer. Certainly, it provides a broad picture of almost every facet of the JAG Corps structure. Service in Code 61 also provides young officers with opportunities to interact directly with senior JAG Corps leaders on a host of issues. The perspective gained working in Code 61 can be invaluable in future leadership assignments. Finally, though, Code 61 provides an opportunity to work with the very best and most motivated members of our community who are helping to recruit, assign, and retain the next generation of judge advocates. ☀

