LAW STUDENTS AND THE MARINE CORPS

The Marine Corps offers many opportunities to the undergraduate (PLC Law) and graduate law students (OCC Law).

Students accepted into the Law Option of the Marine Officer Programs can expect to gain valuable legal experience (both trial and administrative) in a shorter amount of time than their civilian counterparts.

Contact Captain Kozel at 814-237-8578, for more information on being a Marine Corps Judge Advocate (Lawyer).

For additional information see the JAG web site at:

http://web.mcrj.usmc.mil/section/o/index(ol).htm
Service as a Marine Corps Judge Advocate is Unique…

Your service in the Marine Corps will be special. It will be different from any other branch of the military. It is a difference that Marines enjoy every time they don their uniforms.

As a Marine Corps judge advocate you will have two professions instead of one. You will be a Marine Corps officer as well as an attorney at law. That means you must know how to be a leader as well as an attorney.

As a Marine Corps officer, you will have the opportunity to lead some of the most elite warriors that the world as ever known. Unlike the other services, Marine Corps judge advocates are not restricted to the legal field. Every Marine is qualified for combat. Marine training prepares every officer to be a combat leader.

Every Marine Corps officer, no matter what his/her future military occupation, must first be trained, screened, and evaluated at Officer Candidate School (OCS) in Quantico VA to determine whether they meet the standards to lead Marines. OCS is where you and the Marine Corps find out if you have what it takes to earn the title of Marine. Upon completion of OCS you will earn a commission as a Second Lieutenant of Marines. Upon admission to the bar of a federal court or the highest court of a state or the District of Columbia your next assignment will be The Basic School (TBS) also in Quantico VA.

TBS transforms raw lieutenants into functioning Marine Corps officers. No other military service has a school that is anything like TBS. It is considered to be the finest finishing school of its kind in the world. INC. Magazine favorably compared TBS to America’s elite MBA programs. This training will not only enable you to “know your client,” as an attorney, it will also qualify you to request assignment outside the legal field, should you want to try your hand at some other occupational specialty. After graduation from TBS, you will attend the Naval Justice School (NJS) in Newport RI.

At NJS you will receive your initial instruction in the military legal system. Here you will be given the tools you need to operate as an effective Marine Corps judge advocate. You will review substantive criminal law, criminal procedure, trial tactics, civil law, administrative law, and military application of the Federal Rules of Evidence. You will also conduct numerous moot courts to hone your trial practice skills and presentation. After graduation from NJS you will be designated a Marine Corps judge advocate and the journey will begin full force.
THE PLATOON LEADERS CLASS-LAW (PLC LAW) PROGRAM

The PLC-Law program is a Marine Corps officer program for college seniors accepted for enrollment, and first and second law students currently enrolled in American Bar Association (ABA) accredited law schools. After acceptance into the program, the PLC officer candidate will attend one 10-week training session at Officer Candidate School (OCS) in Quantico VA. Upon graduation from OCS, the candidate will be commissioned at second lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps Reserve. The second lieutenant will then be placed on inactive duty. As a commissioned officer in the Marine Corps Reserve the member will remain on inactive duty for the specified period of time in order to satisfactorily complete the requirements for a law degree and admission to the bar. These officers will receive constructive service credit for each year spent in law school prior to commissioning and they will be promoted on schedule while attending law school. This means that when they begin extended active duty they will realize a larger paycheck based upon their length of service and grade.

After receipt of their law degree, members will take the first scheduled state or District of Columbia bar examination, within the jurisdiction of their choice. After admission to the bar, the lieutenant will be assigned to extended active duty. Initial orders to extended active duty will be to attend The Basic School (TBS) in Quantico VA. Following completion of TBS the young officer will be ordered to the Naval Justice School (NJS) in Newport RI. After graduation from NJS and certification as Judge Advocates, the lawyer will then travel to his/her first permanent duty station as a judge advocate.

OFFICER CANDIDATE CLASS-LAW (OCC LAW) PROGRAM

The OCC-Law program is open to graduates of ABA accredited law schools admitted to the practice of law before the bar of a Federal court or the highest court of a state or the District of Columbia. After acceptance into the program, the OCC officer Candidate will attend one 10-week training session at Officer Candidate School (OCS) in Quantico VA. Upon graduation from OCS, the candidate will be commissioned a second lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps Reserve and assigned to duty under instruction at The Basic School (TBS) in Quantico VA. Following completion of TBS the young officer will be ordered to Naval Justice School (NJS) in Newport RI. After graduation from NJS and certification as a Judge Advocate, the lawyer will then travel to his/her first permanent duty station as a judge advocate. Upon successful completion of NJS these officers will receive constructive service credit for each year spend in law school prior to commissioning.
JUDGE ADVOCATE QUALIFICATIONS AND CAREER PATTERNS

Judge Advocate Qualifications

1. Judge advocates are fully qualified, unrestricted officers of Marines.

2. To qualify as a judge advocate, a Marine Officer must be a member of the bar of a Federal court or the highest court of a state or the District of Columbia. A judge advocate must also be certified and designated as trial and defense counsel in court-martials by the Judge Advocate General of the Navy.

3. Judge advocates must develop and maintain significant expertise in an assigned area of the law.

4. Judge advocates who attain the grade of Colonel must be generalists; able to provide advice to Marine Corps Commanders on all legal issues, regardless of subject of area; leaders able to run any legal office, evaluate the legal advice of subordinates in any area of the law; and develop Marines to their highest potential. In effect, they are the senior partners of a 400-lawyer law firm.

Areas of Practice

1. Criminal Law (Military Justice)
2. Legal Assistance
3. Tort Claims
4. Administrative Law
5. Labor Law
6. International Law
7. Operational Law
8. Contract Law
9. Civil Litigation

Career Patterns

1. Judge advocates are normally assigned military law duties for their first three to six years. During this period, they are expected to develop legal research, writing, speaking, and analytical skills. They also develop advocacy skills as government and defense counsel in appellate practice, expertise in administrative law, and delivering effective legal assistance to Marines, Sailors, and their dependents on wills, contracts, family law, and consumer law. Similar to associates in a civilian law firm, however, judge advocates handle legal problems on their own and try their own cases.
2. All Marine Corps Judge Advocates are unrestricted line officers and complete the same initial training Officer Candidate School (OCS), and The Basic School (TBS) as all other Marine Corps officers. They are available to the Commander for assignment outside the legal field, and are therefore unrestricted in position assignment.

3. The first tour of duty for must judge advocates is as a government counsel or defense counsel at a major command law center. Marine Judge Advocates earn “Lead Attorney” status, handling their own cases immediately upon reporting to the Fleet Marine Force.

4. Career judge advocates (many of whom are graduates of the Funded Legal Education Program (FLEP) and have prior line experience) tend to follow three career paths. These are not rigid categories of specialization and most JA’s have had tours in more than one area of legal practice:

   a. Military Justice: tours within the military justice section of a law center; as a military judge; as appellate counsel at the Navy-Marine Corps Appellate Review Activity; or with a Navy Legal Service Office.

   b. Operational Law: service as a Staff Judge Advocate of a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB), or Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), or with a Joint Command.


5. Career judge advocates attend service schools at appropriate times in their career and also participate in the SEP program. SEP graduates receive an advance legal degree (LLM) in criminal law, labor law, environmental law, or international law. These officers then serve in 16 designated billets, which require specialized legal knowledge. Additionally, each year five or ten judge advocates attend The Judge Advocate General’s School, U.S. Army at Charlottesville, VA and receive a LIM in military law.

6. There is considerable opportunity for judge advocates to serve in non-legal billets. Because of the common thread of training that all Marine Corps Officers receive it is not all uncommon for JAs to serve in a wide spectrum of leadership billets. As such, JAs have served as chiefs of staff, commanding officers of Marine Barracks, squadron commanders, operations officers, company commanders, executive officers, non-legal staff officers (HQMC and OJCS), Force Inspector, Director of Family Service Centers, Staff Secretary, Aide de Camp, and Adjutant at Marine Barracks, 8th and I. Many career JA’s also have prior line experience as both ground and aviation officers.

7. Marine Judge Advocates are anything, but your average lawyers. Marine Judge Advocates are first and foremost Leaders of Marines. Marine Judge Advocates receive leadership training and experience that is unavailable anywhere else.
Assignment Locations

1. The Marine Corps is a world-wide organization. Major installations are located on each coast, in Hawaii, and in Japan.

2. Duty station assignments are based upon the needs of the Marine Corps and the desires of the individual. A judge advocate is located in one area from one year for (some overseas assignments) to three years.
COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO USMC LAW PROGRAMS

1. WILL THE MARINE CORPS PAY FOR LAW SCHOOL? Although programs do exist whereby active duty Marine officers are ordered to attend law school, drawing full pay and allowances while tuition is paid by the Marine Corps, no similar program is available to officers who enter the Marine Corps via the OCC (Law) or PLC (Law) programs.

2. IS THERE ANY FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE? There presently is no authorization to offer financial aid to law student officer candidates or PLC (Law) students.

3. WHEN DO I GET PROMOTED? Generally, constructive service is the recognition that the Marine Corps accords those judge advocates who have pursued a professional legal education prior to commissioning. Construction service is a calendar year of credit, up to three years, that is awarded for each academic year of law school completed while not in a commissioned status. This credit advances seniority and eligibility for promotion; pay is not affected. Constructive service NEVER changes a Pay Entry Base Date. Constructive service has no effect on pay. Therefore, a newly commissioned second lieutenant lawyer can expect a promotion to first lieutenant shortly after reporting for initial active duty. For promotion purposes, the Marine Corps places you among your peers as if you had been commissioned concurrently, as you report to law school and your peers commence training at The Basic School (TBS).

4. HOW MUCH WILL I GET PAID? A judge advocate is an unrestricted line officer. As such, you will be paid in accordance with your grade and longevity, as any other officer. A judge advocate receives no “special pay” for being a lawyer. Your OSO can show you the standard military pay scale.

5. HOW IS SERVICE AS A MARINE LAWYER VIEWED BY PROSPECTIVE CIVILIAN EMPLOYERS? That experience gained as a Marine judge advocate can be parlayed into a good employment opportunity is evidence by our many reserve judge advocates who left military practice for a successful civilian career. Service as a Marine lawyer will not be looked upon by civilian practitioners with disfavor. To many, especially those involved in litigation, it will be deemed an asset.

6. DO MARINE LAWYERS GET INVOLVED IN ENVIRONMENTAL, CONTRACT OR LABOR LAW? Yes, with increasing regularity. We are rapidly developing a cadre of judge advocates with specialized training and experience in these disciplines, many acquiring LIM’s through the Marine Corps Special Education Program.
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO MARINE CORPS JUDGE ADVOCATES

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<tr>
<th>COURSE/LOCATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Master of Laws (LLM) George Washington Law Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Judge Advocate Career Course Judge Advocate General’s School</td>
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<td>U.S. Army Charlottesville VA</td>
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<td>National College of District Attorneys University of Houston, Houston TX</td>
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<td>National Institute of Trial Advocacy Boulder CO</td>
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<td>Criminal Defense Lawyer’s Course University of Houston, Houston TX</td>
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<td>National College of State Trail Judges University of Nevada, Reno NV</td>
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Short Course for Prosecuting Attorneys
Northwestern University Chicago IL

Short Course for Defense Lawyers in Criminal Cases
Northwestern University Chicago IL

Military Judicial Conferences
Camp Lejeune NC
Camp Pendleton CA