

## From the Regimental Historian and Archivist: Noncommissioned Officers Academy Celebrates 10 Years



BG Black passes the guidon to first NCOA Commandant, SGM Ray

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Sergeant Major Howard Metcalf, 8th Regimental Sergeant Major, was a major proponent of moving all MOS 27D NCO education to the LCS.

17 June 2014 was an important anniversary for The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School (LCS) and the Corps---the 10th anniversary of the Noncommissioned Officers Academy (NCOA). Activated at the LCS on 17 June 2004, the NCOA has educated and trained hundreds of paralegal Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs) in the Army over the last ten years.

The decision to create a stand-alone NCOA was the culmination of a number of events, one of the most important being the Army's creation of "Career Management Field 27 Paralegal" on 1 October 2001. For the first time in history, the Army recognized enlisted personnel in the Corps as paralegals. This new status brought with it an increased recognition that the Corps must take more responsibility for the education and training of NCOs, and that the time had come to centralize all officer, warrant officer, and NCO legal training. Since judge advocates, legal administrators, and court reporters were already being taught at the LCS, the next logical step was to transfer the NCO paralegal courses from The Adjutant General's Soldier Support Institute at Fort Jackson, South Carolina (where they had been taught since 1995), to Charlottesville and the LCS.

Moving NCO education to the LCS was only part of the issue, however, since the larger question was how this

education should be taught, and who would teach it.

While Major General Thomas J. Romig, then serving as The Judge Advocate General, considered a number of options, he ultimately endorsed the idea of establishing a stand-alone NCOA at the LCS. This concept had long been championed by Major General Romig's top enlisted advisor, Sergeant Major Howard Metcalf. Metcalf was convinced that NCO paralegals must be educated alongside judge advocates, legal administrators, and court reporters, because a single, shared learning environment would ensure that the Corps was 'training' the way we would 'fight.'

On 17 June 2004, the NCOA was activated, with Sergeant Major Michael Ray assuming duties as the first Commandant. In October 2004, the first students began arriving for classes and, in the seven months that followed, the NCOA trained 23 senior and 59 junior NCOs. Central to this early time period was a challenging field training exercise (FTX) held at Fort Pickett, Virginia. A full day of the FTX was devoted to urban combat training and improvised explosive device identification, as these were the two most challenging aspects facing paralegals deploying to Afghanistan and Iraq.

In 2005, the NCOA was awarded full accreditation as an academy by the Army's Training and Doctrine Com-

mand (TRADOC) and was also recognized as a "Learning Institution of Excellence." In January 2012, TRADOC again accredited the NCOA as a "Learning Institution of Excellence" (the highest possible accreditation).

Today, the NCOA conducts ten courses over five training cycles a year. Each cycle consists of five weeks and two days. Two concurrent classes are trained each cycle--the Advanced Leader Course and the Senior Leader Course. Education and training is conducted using the seminar format, which shifts the teaching methodology from "what to think" to "how to think."

Students learn through group participation and assignment as discussion leaders. As the NCOA marks its tenth year at the LCS, its presence demonstrates the wisdom of creating a comprehensive training and leader development program in a single, shared learning environment. There is every reason to believe the NCOA will continue to play a prominent and important role in legal education in The Judge Advocate General's Corps.

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