

Our JAG Corps Regimental History



First enlisted soldiers joined the Regiment in World War I; Regimental Sergeant Major Edmond G. Toomey was one of the most remarkable.

Although the legal clerk/paralegal Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) is a 20th century innovation, soldiers serving as clerks, copyists, messengers and reporters have been an integral part of our military legal practice since the mid-1800s. It was not until World War I, however, that non-lawyers were actually *assigned* to the Judge Advocate General's Department (as our Corps was then called).

On March 22, 1918, the War Department published General Orders No. 27, which announced that "enlisted personnel" (to perform legal functions) were "authorized for the period of the existing emergency" [World War I]. General Orders No. 27 further provided that regimental sergeants major and battalion sergeants major would be "appointed by the Judge Advocate General," while sergeants and corporals would be appointed by commanders in the field.

Almost all of these enlisted soldiers were lawyers or court reporters in civilian life; most had been drafted, but some volunteered. Here are some details on one of the most interesting enlisted "trailblazers" in our history:

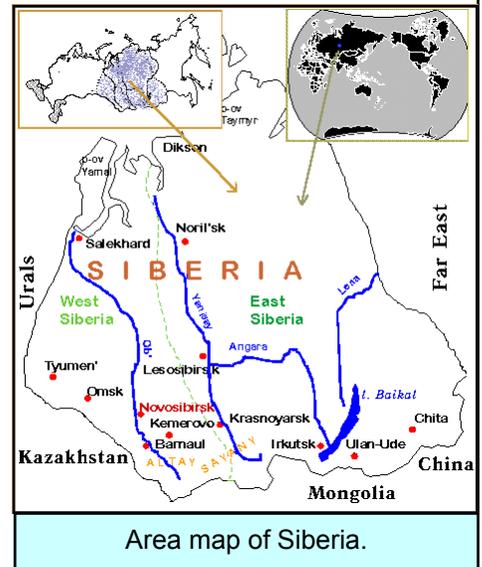
Regimental Sgt. Maj. Edmond G. Toomey. Born in Deer Lodge, Montana in 1892, Toomey attended public school in Montana and California, and



Regt. Sgt. Maj. Edmond G. Toomey (standing) with Maj. Albert Galen, the Expeditionary Judge Advocate, A.E.F.-Siberia. The photograph was taken in Vladivostok, Siberia in 1919.

graduated from the University of Wisconsin's law school in 1916. He then joined the law firm of Galen and Mettler in Helena, Montana, and practiced law until he was "voluntarily inducted" into the Army on April 23, 1918 (he had to get a "waiver" for his "defective vision"! Toomey then served as the JAGD Regt. Sgt. Maj. in 8th Division, Camp Fremont, Calif., until sailing for Siberia in August 1918. He was part of the 8,000-man American Expeditionary Force-Siberia under the command of Maj. Gen. William S. Graves. President Woodrow Wilson had deployed Graves and his men to Vladivostok to protect American guns and equipment along the Trans-Siberian Railway---supplies that had been sent to Siberia when Wilson and the Allies believed that Russia could defeat the Central Powers (Austria-

Hungary, Germany, Turkey) in the spring of 1917. Toomey was the only legal clerk with the Americans in Siberia, and he served alongside the only Army judge advocate in Siberia, Maj. Albert Galen (his old law partner!). In a status report written on Dec. 31, 1918, Galen lauded Toomey for his work: "In reality, he has acted in the capacity of assistant [rather than clerk]... without him it would not have been possible for me to have conducted my office with so limited an office force." Toomey left the Army after redeploying from Siberia and returned to Montana and civilian life.



By Mr. Fred Borch, JAGC Historian, TJAGLCS

George S. Prugh Lecture Update. Dr. Gary D. Solis, retired Marine Corps judge advocate, legal scholar, and author of *Marines and Military Law in Vietnam: Trial by Fire and Son Thang: An American War Crime*, will give the first Maj. Gen. George S. Prugh Annual Lecture in Military Legal History. The lecture is scheduled for Wednesday, April 18, 2007, at TJAGLCS in Charlottesville.