

# THE U.S. ARMY JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL'S CORPS

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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### GENERAL

1. Question: Why should I consider the U.S. Army JAG Corps?

Answer: The U.S. Army JAG Corps offers a broad-based legal practice and rewarding professional environment. Our training and the variety of legal work you will encounter in your first tour will afford you an unmatched legal learning experience. You will have immediate responsibility for your clients and caseload, an opportunity to sharpen your courtroom skills, and great quality of life for you and your family. Whether motivated by patriotism, love of a challenge, the desire to travel, or a thirst for adventure, you will grow a solid base of experience as a Judge Advocate upon which to build your future successes. We truly are a law firm like no other.

2. Question: Will my experience in the U.S. Army JAG Corps be useful if I leave the U.S. Army after four years?

Answer: Yes. A Judge Advocate uses the full range of legal skills: research, writing, interviewing, counseling, negotiating, briefing, and litigating. The U.S. Army JAG Corps provides new attorneys an excellent opportunity to develop and polish these skills under the supervision of senior Judge Advocates.

### REQUIREMENTS

3. Question: What are the eligibility requirements for active-duty service with the U.S. Army JAG Corps?

Answer: Active-duty applicants must be United States citizens. Dual citizenship is disqualifying—foreign citizenship must be renounced prior to commissioning.

Candidates must be over the age of 21 and cannot have reached their 42nd birthday by the time of commissioning. Age waivers are not available.

Applicants must be physically fit and meet the Army's weight and medical entrance standards.

Applicants must also possess high moral character and leadership potential.

Before entering active duty, each candidate must hold a J.D. from an ABA-approved law school and must be a member in good standing of the bar of the highest court of a state or federal court.

Candidates must be eligible for a security clearance.

4. Question: Does an applicant need prior military experience?

Answer: No.

5. Question: What is the service obligation for a new active-duty Judge Advocate?

Answer: Four years active-duty service.

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### PROFESSIONAL ADVANTAGES

6. Question: What are the professional advantages of serving in the U.S. Army JAG Corps?

Answer: **Immediate challenge and responsibility.** A new Judge Advocate will have clients, cases, or legal projects of his or her own right after training.

**A varied legal practice.** Judge Advocates are expected to develop competency in military justice, international and operational law, administrative and civil law, contract and fiscal law, claims, and legal assistance. Judge Advocates rotate through these *core* practice areas throughout their first four-year term and beyond.

**Broad-based experience.** The first four years of practice in the JAG Corps enable Judge Advocates to develop the litigation, negotiation, research, and client advocacy skills attorneys need to be successful, both in the military and in civilian practice.

**Broad scope of practice.** Judge Advocates are not limited to practicing in their licensing jurisdiction. Judge Advocates practice throughout the continental United States, Hawaii, Alaska, Europe, the Far East, and in deployed locations worldwide.

**Professional relationships.** Judge Advocates come from virtually every state. Judge Advocates are exposed to a variety of individuals, professional skills, and experiences that has no equal in civilian practice.

**Quality of life.** The U.S. Army JAG Corps fosters a family oriented and active life-style, travel, adventure, and lifelong friendships. Judge Advocates receive 30 days of paid vacation (leave) per year. Fitness, both physical and mental is sustained throughout a JAG Corps career.

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### APPLYING TO THE ARMY JAG CORPS

7. Question: How difficult is it to obtain a JAG Corps commission?

Answer: The U.S. Army JAG Corps selection process is very competitive, but all eligible applicants are considered. A Selection Board composed of experienced Judge Advocates reviews all applications and recommends the best-qualified applicants for commissions, based on a “whole person” concept: Basically, not one single aspect of an applicant’s background is decisive. The boards look at every applicant’s background, education, personality, desire to serve, commitment, initiative, etc., and recommend those who best fit the demanding and unique environment of the practice of law in the Army. All Selection Boards have minority and women members.

8. Question: What are the steps in the application process?

Answer: The applicant must submit a complete online application (found at [www.jagcnet.army.mil/JARO](http://www.jagcnet.army.mil/JARO)) and be interviewed by an active-duty U.S. Army JAG Corps Field Screening Officer (FSO) (see a list of FSOs at [www.jagcnet.army.mil/JARO](http://www.jagcnet.army.mil/JARO)). Application and interview are due by 1 November yearly. If chosen by the Selection Board, a candidate must meet the Army's medical and weight standards, be able to obtain a security clearance, and be available for worldwide assignment. The entire process from application to accession can take over one year, so early application is encouraged. 3L law students are eligible to apply, though accession is contingent upon passing a bar exam and becoming licensed with a state and/or federal bar.

9. Question: If I apply to the U.S. Army JAG Corps, am I obligated to serve immediately upon accepting a position?

Answer: No. Applicants offered a U.S. Army JAG Corps commission will be notified of their proposed assignment before incurring any military obligation. An applicant for a direct commission is obligated only upon taking the oath of office on the first day of the [Judge Advocate Officer Basic Course](#). The accessions process takes several months to complete before the applicant attends the basic course, as well.

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## PAYING FOR LAW SCHOOL

10. Question: Will the JAG Corps finance my law school education?

Answer: The JAG Corps sends up to 25 already commissioned active-duty officers to law school each year through its Funded Legal Education Program (FLEP). This program is not available to those not already serving as Army Officers. For more details about the FLEP program, contact Ms. Yvonne Caron at 703-588-6774.

The Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) is active at many colleges and universities nationwide and has two-year graduate school scholarships available for law and other graduate students. The scholarships carry an active-duty or Reserve Army service obligation, depending on the student's contract. Scholarships **do not** guarantee the student a place in the Army JAG Corps. Candidates still must apply for a JAG Corps commission in their third year of law school; those not selected for the JAG Corps will serve their obligation as an officer in another military occupational specialty selected according to the current needs of the Army. Consult your university's ROTC recruiter for more information. You can also visit the Army's Cadet Command website at <http://www.rotc.monroe.army.mil> for additional information about scholarships.

11. Question: Does the U.S. Army JAG Corps have a loan repayment program?

Answer: The Army Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) is now available to new active-duty Judge Advocates. Officers with qualifying education loans made for an educational purpose will be eligible for loan repayment up to \$65,000. Three equal annual payments will be made to the lender(s) on the Judge Advocate's first, second, and third anniversaries in the JAG Corps. New Judge Advocates will apply for SLRP upon successful completion of the [Judge Advocate Officer Basic Course](#). See [www.jagcnet.army.mil/ppto](http://www.jagcnet.army.mil/ppto) for additional information about SLRP.

12. Question: What other financial incentives are available to Judge Advocates?

Answer: Subject to yearly budget funding, Judge Advocates are eligible for different resigning bonuses in return for additional service obligation(s). For current information on available bonuses, see [www.jagcnet.army.mil/ppto](http://www.jagcnet.army.mil/ppto).

Later on in their career, Judge Advocate majors who successfully complete the graduate course at The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School (TJAGLCS) might be eligible for the Critical Skills Retention Bonus (CSRB). This is another yearly revised bonus in return for additional service obligation. Current information is available at [www.jagcnet.army.mil/ppto](http://www.jagcnet.army.mil/ppto).

13. Question: Will service in the Army JAG Corps be qualifying for educational debt relief under other programs?

Answer: The College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRA) of 2007 authorizes, among other incentives, income-based federal education loan payments and debt forgiveness after ten years of qualifying public service employment and on-time loan payments. Only federal education loans qualify; debt-to-income ratio restrictions and employment conditions apply. Judge Advocates are eligible for CCRA programs if they have qualifying federal loans. Final implementing regulations were issued November 1, 2008. Check online for more information about the CCRA, to determine whether your loans qualify for CCRA programs, and to find a loan repayment calculator.

Additionally, in an effort to provide educational debt relief, a number of law schools have established loan repayment assistance programs (LRAP). LRAP varies from school to school, but generally these programs provide assistance to students who work full-time in law-related jobs in the public interest or government sectors. Service in the U.S. Army JAG Corps may satisfy the eligibility requirements for LRAP. Students interested in loan forgiveness should consult their schools for eligibility and application information.

14. Question: May I defer payment on my student loans during my service with the U.S. Army JAG Corps?

Answer: The Higher Education Amendment Act of 1992 ("the Act") has significantly changed eligibility for deferments. Military service no longer qualifies for automatic deferment. Those entering the military must demonstrate economic hardship as defined by the Act. This change applies to loans for which the first disbursement was made on or after July 1, 1993, to an individual who was a new borrower. We recommend that you contact your individual lender to determine whether you may be eligible for a deferment.

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## TRAINING

15. Question: What training is provided for new Judge Advocates?

Answer: New Judge Advocates attend the Judge Advocate Officer Basic Course (JAOBC), a two phase program of initial training that lasts five months. A six week Direct Commissioned Course (DCC) at Fort Benning, GA is followed by ten-and-a-half-weeks of classroom training in military law topics at The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School (TJAGLCS) in Charlottesville, VA. The military orientation includes establishing personnel and finance records, purchasing uniforms, and receiving instruction in several basic areas of military life, including wear of military uniforms, military customs and courtesies, physical fitness and leadership training, and a weeklong field training exercise.

16. Question: What happens at DCC?

Answer: DCC is designed to develop competent leaders. It is a rigorous six-week course in leadership and tactics designed to challenge all new Army officers physically and mentally (West Point, ROTC and Officer Candidate School graduates attend similarly designed courses). The DCC curriculum includes physical fitness training, foot marches, combat training, land navigation training (similar to orienteering), rifle marksmanship, training with night-vision equipment, weapons training, training in nuclear, biological and chemical operations, practical exercises in leadership, and several confidence courses featuring difficult obstacles to challenge students to overcome personal fears and work with a team.

17. Question: Do Judge Advocates receive training or education beyond JAOBC?

Answer: Yes. The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School (TJAGLCS) offers a wide variety of educational programs. Most notably, TJAGLCS offers a graduate course leading to the award of an American Bar Association-accredited LL.M. for Judge Advocates with six to eight years of active duty service. TJAGLCS also conducts numerous continuing legal education (CLE) courses each year. These CLE courses cover all areas of Judge Advocate practice, including military justice, international and operational law, administrative and civil law, contract and fiscal law, claims and legal assistance. These CLE courses have been approved by most states for CLE credit.

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## ASSIGNMENTS

18. Question: Where can new Judge Advocates expect to be assigned?

Answer: Active-duty Judge Advocates must be available for worldwide assignment. New Judge Advocates are generally not assigned to their states of licensure. While all assignments are made based on the needs of the Army and needs of the JAG Corps, Judge Advocate candidates provide their location preferences in writing and discuss them in a telephone conference with the assignments officer prior to receiving orders and beginning the [Judge Advocate Officer Basic Course](#).

19. Question: Will the U.S. Army move my family and my household goods to my first assignment?

Answer: Yes. A commercial mover will move your household goods at government expense to your assignment. You will be entitled to reimbursement for most travel expenses from the move.

20. Question: Will I be assigned to more than one location during my initial obligated tour of four years?

Answer: You may be. Depending on the size of your first duty station and the number of Judge Advocate jobs available there, you may need to relocate to maximize your professional opportunities. The needs of the service may also require your relocation.

21. Question: Where do Judge Advocates live?

Answer: At some installations, on-post housing may be available (at no expense to the officer) in lieu of the [basic allowance for housing \(BAH\)](#). Many Judge Advocates and their families live off-post in leased or privately-owned apartments, townhouses, or single-family homes. The BAH rate varies depending on the cost of living from location to location. This allowance is nontaxable.

22. Question: Are Judge Advocates assigned to combat zones?

Answer: Yes. Over 400 Judge Advocates are currently assigned overseas in over 20 countries including some in active combat zones. They perform legal duties in support of Soldiers and combat operations. Typically, Judge Advocates are not directly involved in active combat, but they may perform some non-legal functions as needed. Judge Advocates assigned to combat zones are entitled to combat pay and to the federal combat zone tax exclusion for income earned during months spent in the combat zone.

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## **JAG CORPS DEMOGRAPHICS**

23. Question: How many JAG Corps officers are in the U.S. Army?

Answer: There are almost 2,000 active duty JAG Corps officers, ranging in grade from first lieutenant to lieutenant general. More than half are captains and first lieutenants; the remainder are in the more senior grades of major, lieutenant colonel, colonel, brigadier general, major general, and lieutenant general. The reserve component and Army National Guards add another 2,600 to total more than 4,500 uniformed JAGs.

24. Question: How many women serve in the U.S. Army JAG Corps?

Answer: More than 25% of Judge Advocates in active duty are women, including many in key leadership positions. Women are strongly encouraged to apply, as are other traditional minorities. The Army JAG Corps is an equal opportunity employer and is a meritocracy that rewards ability, initiative, commitment and performance from all its members.

25. Question: How many ethnic minorities serve in the U.S. Army JAG Corps?

Answer: There are currently more than 300 minority attorneys serving as Judge Advocates. Minorities are strongly encouraged to apply, and will be considered, without distinction based on their merits and the “whole person” concept. The U.S. Army JAG Corps is an equal opportunity employer and is a meritocracy that rewards ability, initiative, commitment and performance from all its members.

26. Question: What is the Army's maternity leave policy?

Answer: Ordinarily, an officer whose pregnancy is uncomplicated can expect to perform duty until delivery, unless she requests ordinary leave. Upon release from the hospital following delivery, the officer receives six weeks paid convalescent leave. An officer may be granted additional convalescent leave with pay beyond six weeks until her medical condition permits her to return to duty. An officer may also be able to request additional ordinary leave beyond her six weeks' convalescent leave, depending on mission demands of her office. Paternity non-chargeable leave up to 10 days is also allowed for an active duty spouse.

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## **PAY & BENEFITS**

27. Question: What is the pay for a new Judge Advocate?

Answer: Military pay is determined by one's military rank and time in service. New Army Judge Advocates enter service as First Lieutenants (O-2) and are promoted to Captain (O-3) about six months later. Officers receive a raise in basic pay upon promotion to Captain and receive automatic pay increases after serving 2, 3 and 4 years. After four years of service, officers typically earn pay increases every two years subject to Congress authorizing annual pay increases. Military pay is comprised of the following components:

- 1) Basic Pay (taxable income). Basic pay is determined by one's rank and time in service (see above).
- 2) Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) (tax-free). BAH is based on rank, whether one has dependents (family members, normally a spouse and/or child(ren)), and the cost of living at the officer's assigned duty station. Judge Advocates who opt to live in government-supplied housing on an installation do not receive BAH; instead, their housing, including utilities, is provided at no charge to them.
- 3) Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS) (tax-free). BAS is the same for all officers, regardless of rank.
- 4) Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) (tax-free). Judge Advocates living in some locations outside the continental United States receive a COLA to compensate for a high cost of living and/or to offset fluctuations in foreign currency exchange rates. The amount varies according to location.

<b>2013 Monthly Pay Rates for Judge Advocates</b>				
<b>JA Officers</b>	<b>1LT (O-2) under 2 years</b>		<b>CPT (O-3) under 2 years</b>	
Basic pay	\$ 3,314.10		\$ 3,835.50	
Annual Taxable Pay	\$39,769		\$46,026	
<b>Monthly Allowances for All Officers</b>				
	<b>1LT (O-2)</b>		<b>CPT (O-3)</b>	
BAS (tax-free)	\$ 242.60		\$ 242.60	
BAH w/out dependents (tax-free)	(varies)		(varies)	
<b>Or</b> BAH w/ dependents (tax-free)	(varies)		(varies)	
<b>BAH Examples</b>				
	<b>W/OUT DEP</b>	<b>W/DEP</b>	<b>W/OUT DEP</b>	<b>W/DEP</b>
Monthly BAH at Fort Hood, TX	\$ 1,023	\$1,116	\$1,170	\$1,491
Monthly BAH at Fort Bragg, NC	\$ 1,071	\$1,227	\$1,188	\$1,515
Monthly BAH at Fort Drum, NY	\$ 1,341	\$1,566	\$1,503	\$1,839
Monthly BAH at Fort Lewis, WA	\$ 1,389	\$1,575	\$1,530	\$1,752

25. Question: Do new Judge Advocates pay for their own uniforms?

Answer: Yes. Each new Judge Advocate receives a one-time uniform allowance to offset these costs, but the allowance does not defray the entire expense. New Judge Advocates receive a list of required uniform items to purchase.

27. Question: Are there other benefits?

Answer: Yes. Members of the U.S. Army have free medical and dental care benefits. Family members also have medical care benefits. If there are insufficient facilities on-post to provide medical treatment to family members, they may be treated by a civilian doctor through government-provided insurance at minimal cost to the member. Group dental insurance is available for families to obtain care from civilian providers for a small monthly premium. Service members and their families can shop at the post exchange (a department store) and the commissary (a supermarket). Both feature reduced prices on many items and are tax-free. The military also has a liberal noncontributory retirement system. Soldiers accrue retirement benefits after 20 years and may increase those benefits with additional years of service. The military also has an optional non-matching Thrift Savings Plan, similar to a 401(k), for use in furthering one's retirement savings.

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### **OTHER OPPORTUNITIES**

28. Question: Are civilian attorney positions available in the U.S. Army JAG Corps?

Answer: Yes. The JAG Corps employs approximately 500 civilian attorneys. JARO handles applications for military positions only. For information concerning the Office of The Judge Advocate General's civilian attorney program, contact Ms. Andrea Moore at (703) 545-2856, or at [Andrea.Moore@hqda.army.mil](mailto:Andrea.Moore@hqda.army.mil). Track available job openings and requirements online at [www.cpol.army.mil](http://www.cpol.army.mil).

29. Question: Does the U.S. Army JAG Corps have a Summer Intern Program?

Answer: Yes. The U.S. Army JAG Corps selects up to 100 law school students every year for summer intern positions throughout the continental United States and overseas. The program is open to second-year students. Further information and online applications are available at [www.jagcnet.army.mil/JARO](http://www.jagcnet.army.mil/JARO).

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