August 2013

From the Flags

The Judge Advocate General and Deputy Judge Advocate General of the Navy

VICTIMS' LEGAL COUNSEL

The JAG Corps plays a critical role in the administration of a fair, transparent and efficient military justice system that guarantees due process for the accused and promotes good order and discipline. As judge advocates, we are in a unique position to play an additional role in victim support and advocacy. To that end, we anticipate the Navy will announce the establishment of the Navy Victims' Legal Counsel (VLC) Program.

The VLC Program will consist of a small cadre of specially-trained, independent judge advocates who will be detailed to provide legal support to eligible victims of sexual assault. We are still working through the details, but we anticipate an initial contingent of 29 judge advocate VLCs supported by ten civilian paralegals. The VLC Program will be led by an O-6 Chief of Staff and a civilian Executive Director.

The primary mission of the VLC Program will be to provide legal counsel and, as appropriate, advocacy for victims. Navy VLCs will help protect victims' rights through the investigative and adjudicative stages of the military justice system. VLCs will also assist SARCs and VAs in the successful execution of their duties. VLC duties will include:

- Explaining the investigative and military justice processes;
- Advocating the victim's rights and interests; and,
- When appropriate, appearing in court on the victim's behalf.

Our military justice system is superb, in no small part due to the extraordinary efforts of our SJAs, military judges, trial and defense counsel, legal assistance attorneys, legalmen, paralegals and support staff. The new VLC Program will further strengthen our system consistent with due process for the accused. For those judge advocates interested in becoming VLCs, talk to your detailer. We also strongly encourage involvement by Reserve judge advocates, who will be critical to the initial staffing of the VLC Program.

Next week, we will conduct a series of DCO sessions to provide additional information on the VLC Program and to address other updates to the community. RADM Crawford will also discuss the VLC Program in more depth during his site visits in the month of August. Thank you for all you do, and thank you in advance for supporting this important program.

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