

Torii Station Wins Prestigious Chief of Staff Award for Excellence in Legal Assistance

On Wednesday, 18 July, the 10th Regional Support Group Legal Assistance Office on Okinawa was named as one of two small offices to win the coveted Chief of Staff Award for Excellence in Legal Assistance for Fiscal Year 2011. The other winner in this category is the Netherlands Legal Service Center.

The 2011 winners in the medium-sized office category included: Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center and Presidio of Monterey, Grafenwoehr Legal Center, Kaiserslautern Law Center, National Training Center and Fort Irwin, Northern Law Center, Patton Law Center, US Army Accessions Command and Fort Knox, US Army Japan and I Corps (Forward), and US Army Research, Development and Engineering Command and Aberdeen Proving Grounds.

The large office winners were: I Corps and Joint Base Lewis – McChord, XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, 1st Armored Division and Fort Bliss, 1st Infantry Division and Fort Riley, 3rd Infantry Division and Fort Stewart, 10th Mountain Division (LI) and Fort Drum, US Army Fires Center of Excellence and Fort Sill, US Army Pacific, US Army Signal Center and Fort Gordon

The Reserve Component winners were: 12th Legal Support Organization and US Army Support Activity, Joint Base McGuire Dix Lakehurst

According to HQDA, the selection rate for winners in this year's competition reflects a careful evaluation of the applications, recognizing only those offices that were truly exceptional. Offices that did not win this year continue to deliver quality Legal Assistance; however, they did not demonstrate the degree of excellence to satisfy the award criteria.

A Historical Perspective

In 1987 this award was named the Chief of Staff's Award for Excellence in Legal Assistance. **Although judge advocates oversee the legal assistance and preventive law programs, the programs are actually the responsibility of commanders.** The Chief of Staff's Award honors those commands that have committed their legal resources to help Soldiers and their Families with their personal legal problems.

The criteria for evaluating the nominees include: The extent and quality of a nominee's legal assistance and preventive law programs; responsiveness to clients' needs, the professionalism of the attorneys and supporting personnel, and the use of legal specialists and noncommissioned officers. Any innovations by an office that benefit the legal assistance and preventive law programs are evaluated. Although statistics may be submitted, workload is not the sole factor used to evaluate nominees.

The Judge Advocate General appoints a board to evaluate the nominations. The President of the board is the Assistant Judge Advocate General for Military Law. The Chief, Legal Assistance Office, Office of the Judge Advocate General; the Chief, Legal Assistance Branch, The Judge Advocate General's School; one company grade judge advocate officer; and one legal specialist or noncommissioned officer are members of the board. The board recommends an office in each category to the Judge Advocate General, who selects the winners. *Excerpts from the Military Law Review, Volume 122, pp 339, 40.*