

HIRING A CIVILIAN ATTORNEY By Rudy Wartella

The Legal Assistance Office on Torii Station is here to help all eligible ID card holders on personal legal matters. In certain situations, we cannot resolve your legal problem and it is necessary to obtain an attorney from the private sector who has the expertise and the knowledge to assist you with your case. These situations most often involve family law matters. Once you hire a civilian attorney, that attorney is your advocate on the case. You should work only with your civilian attorney to resolve your legal issues. We cannot represent you on an issue that is already being handled by another attorney unless we get permission from that attorney to do so.

The Legal Assistance Office maintains a list of Japanese attorneys on Okinawa for issues that involve Japanese law or the Japanese legal system. If you need an attorney in the United States, we can help you find one. Normally, the best way to find an attorney is to ask family members or friends for a referral. If your case is in a jurisdiction near a military base, most legal assistance offices provide referral lists of local attorneys. We can help you obtain one of these lists. Occasionally, there are military reserve attorneys that will represent military members for free or a reduced fee. We can have the resources to look for a reserve attorney in your jurisdiction. The Bar Association for your State may also be able to give you a referral.

Another way to find a reputable attorney is to go the Martindale Website at <http://www.martindale.com>. To find a list of attorneys that practice in your jurisdiction, just type in the City, State and Practice Area (For example: Family Law) and you will get a list of reputable attorneys. Most of these attorneys will have an email address so you can send them your questions. It is usually best to briefly explain your situation and ask them if they would be able to represent you. For example, in a divorce case you might write:

I am a Soldier in the U.S. Army on Okinawa, Japan. I am married with two children. My spouse and I agree on all major issues. My spouse will be moving to State X and I am a resident of State Y. Would you be able to represent me in an uncontested divorce case in State X? Would I have to appear in court? Would my spouse have to appear in court? Would either of us be able to testify telephonically? How much would an uncontested divorce cost? How long will it take? If you are not able to represent me, can you refer me to a local attorney that practices in this area? I can be reached by email at: FirstName.LastName@us.army.mil.

The Torii Legal Assistance Office is here to help you. If we are unable to represent you, we will help you find some one who can.
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