

# LOYOLA LAW

## Forces for justice

Loyola alumni embrace  
careers in military law

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**A convert from  
corporate to  
military life**

Major Ja Rai  
Williams (JD '05)

US Air Force, Senior Defense  
Counsel, Colorado Region

Colorado Springs, Colorado

CAREER PATHS

# Forces for justice

Loyola alums  
embrace careers  
as military  
lawyers

**W**hen United States Air Force Major Ja Rai Williams (JD '05) was three years old, she announced to her household that she wanted to be a lawyer. She held onto that goal as she became the first in her family to earn an undergraduate degree, obtained her securities license and worked in the finance industry, and then entered Loyola's School of Law, where she was a Philip H. Corboy Fellow and earned a certificate in trial advocacy.

Williams had always pictured herself in a corporate law setting. Then, during a National Black Law Students Association competition at which military lawyers served as volunteer judges, she met an Air Force judge advocate who told Williams, "You're just the kind of person the Judge Advocate General's Corps is looking for." When Williams graduated from law school and passed the bar, she went straight into the Air Force JAG Corps—and never looked back.

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Major Ja Rai Williams at the Air Force Academy in Colorado



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Lieutenant Lauren Cherry in front of the Blue Mosque in Istanbul

Have JAG job—  
will travel

Lieutenant Lauren  
Cherry (JD '10)

US Navy, Trial Counsel, Region  
Legal Service Office for Europe,  
Africa, and Southwest Asia

Manama, Bahrain

Currently senior defense counsel for four Air Force bases and the US Air Force Academy in Colorado, Williams is one of the Loyola law alumni who have chosen rewarding careers serving their country as military lawyers. Some, like Williams and US Army Reserves Captain Tony Pottinger (JD '05), entered the armed forces for the first time as brand-new attorneys. Others, including US Army Captain Geoffrey Pariza (JD '11), were in branches of service before entering law school and transitioned into legal positions as part of their

commitment to military careers. And still others, like US Army Colonel Paul Kantwill (BA '83, JD '86), started in private practice, then decided to try life as a military lawyer.

"Many of our graduates have found satisfying careers as part of the Judge Advocate General's Corps," says Dean David Yellen. "It's an option that meshes well with the School of Law's tradition of advocacy, and it's very much in keeping with Loyola's mission of public service and contributing to the greater good."

Multiple avenues  
to the Corps

A surprising scope of life experiences lead Loyola alums to pursue careers as judge advocates. Kantwill was a defense attorney in private practice when he and his wife, Nora, decided they wanted to serve and live overseas. "We signed up for a three-year adventure, and 24 years later, here we are still," says Kantwill, who is currently senior

legal policy advisor to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness on a wide variety of legal and policy issues. Other highlights of his almost quarter-century career in military law include serving as deputy senior legal advisor to the NATO commander in Afghanistan; senior legal advisor at the US Army Sustainment Center at Fort Lee, Virginia; and senior legal advisor to the division headquarters responsible for preparing service units and their legal elements for combat rotations to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Pottinger became interested in advocacy when he became a court-appointed special advocate, or CASA, for children in the juvenile justice system. Believing that his place was in public service, he hoped for a position in the state's attorney's office. He was offered one just before law school graduation—at the same time he was accepted as an Army judge advocate after he applied to the Corps as an afterthought.

"All of a sudden I had choices," Pottinger recalls. "The war in Iraq was in its second year, and I was asking myself what I could do to help the country. My family has a tradition of military service, and all those things converged in my joining the JAG Corps." After a series of assignments overseas and at the US Army Legal Services Agency and the US Military Academy at West Point, Pottinger recently left active duty and joined the Army Reserves to accept a civilian position as chief deputy clerk of court at the US Army Court of Criminal Appeals in Washington, DC.

US Navy Lieutenant Lauren Cherry (JD '10) shared Pottinger's interest in juvenile justice and litigation. Prior to attending law school, she'd worked in pediatric mental health, and she earned certificates in trial advocacy and child and family law at Loyola. At a National Black Law Students Association convention, she "spoke to a Navy JAG recruiter, fell in love with what he told me, and commissioned while I was still in law school," she relates. Today, she holds the position of trial counsel for the Navy's Region Legal Service Office for Europe, Africa, and Southwest Asia in Manama, Bahrain. Her job combines prosecution, advising on investigations, and providing legal advice to a multinational maritime security task force.

Pariza had a solidly established military career before entering law school: He enlisted in the Army infantry, became a battalion operations soldier, fire

team leader and sniper, and moved up to squad leader and platoon sergeant. Leaving active duty to go back to school, he earned both his undergraduate and law degrees while in the Illinois Army National Guard.

"Balancing the Army and school was not always easy," Pariza says. "The higher I got up in rank and position the more time had to be put in outside of the normal one weekend a month. I also deployed twice for a year each time in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, once just after I finished my first-year finals at Loyola. On the upside, all my classmates had kept going, so I had a lot of people from whom to draw advice about classes and outlines."

Pariza is currently the administrative law attorney for US Army Garrison Schweinfurt in Schweinfurt, Germany, where he advises on and reviews a variety of investigations. His work also revolves around fiscal law, reviewing units' proposed expenditures and ensuring they have the correctly appropriated funds to make them. "With the current fiscal climate and sequestration, I have not become very popular," Pariza jokes.

Another potential Loyola military lawyer, US Army National Guard Captain Patrick Farrell, has been in the Army for six years. He deployed in Afghanistan before working as a National Guard analyst in Washington, DC, and Hawaii, and now works full time at the Great Lakes Naval Station while attending law school in the evenings. Farrell says he hasn't yet decided whether to join the JAG Corps after graduation or pursue another job while staying in the National Guard. In the meantime, his military experience is helping him balance full-time work and law school because, he says, "I'm used to working on little sleep!"

Early responsibility,  
diverse roles

Many alums were attracted to the JAG Corps for the litigation and other opportunities it provides relatively early in officers' careers. In contrast to many large law firms, where junior associates typically aren't given major

Building relationships  
from Iraq to DC

Captain Anthony  
Pottinger (JD '05)

US Army Reserves, Chief Deputy  
Clerk of Court, US Army Court of  
Criminal Appeals

Washington, DC

» Captain Tony Pottinger has had assignments from West Point to Mosul, Iraq, where he helped train that country's forces in the rule of law.





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responsibility in their first years, the military puts its lawyers in the courtroom almost as soon as they join the Corps.

"I had litigation opportunities from day one. The amount of responsibility I was given right off the bat was far more than I would have had at a law firm, and it was in an environment with real camaraderie and mentorship," says Pottinger.

"I don't think there's any place where you get a more well-rounded experience and great responsibility at a young age," says Kantwill. "We give judge advocates the training and support they need, but they handle their own clients, issues, and cases with notable independence."

Besides taking on substantial responsibility early in their careers, judge advocates acquire a significantly broad range of experience. They tend to receive new orders every couple of years, often changing locales, frequently shifting duties, and sometimes taking on multifaceted leadership roles within their installations. Within the span of a few years, a judge advocate may serve as both defense and prosecution counsel for servicemembers who have been court-martialed; as a legal assistance attorney, helping service personnel with problems ranging from divorces to estate planning to billing disputes; and as an administrative law attorney, the equivalent of in-house counsel.

Serving as both defense and prosecution "has been an interesting evolution," says Cherry, who has done both just three years into her career. "From the defense side, your mindset is you and your client against the prosecution, the government. It's not until you go to the prosecution that you get the perspective of what the case means to the unit and command. Especially here in the Middle East, that

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## DOD subject matter expert

Colonel Paul Kantwill  
(BA '83, JD '86)

US Army, Director, Office of Legal Policy, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Washington, DC

**“Becoming a judge advocate opened my eyes to how well I’d been trained at Loyola.”**

Colonel Paul Kantwill (left, with Delaware Attorney General Beau Biden) frequently testifies before Congress on ways to protect servicemembers in the financial marketplace.



## Army analyst/ law student

Captain  
Patrick Farrell

US Army National Guard,  
Second-year Loyola law student

Chicago



Captain Patrick Farrell spoke at the Hawaii governor's office on the occasion of his commander, Gary Hara, being promoted to two-star general.

may also affect the safety of personnel and national security. So being on the prosecution side has given me insight into the second- and third-order effects of a case."

## Loyola laid the groundwork

Many military alums say Loyola gave them a solid grounding for their current work, not just in

the classroom and clinical advocacy education they received, but also in Loyola's emphasis on serving others—a mission that's consonant with their goals while wearing the uniform.

"Because I hadn't spent much time litigating as an associate at a firm, I didn't have a complete appreciation for the quality of the advocacy instruction I'd received at Loyola until I got into the Army," says Kantwill. "Becoming a judge advocate opened my eyes to how well I'd been trained at Loyola."

Cherry adds, "In everything from preparing a case to making an opening statement to making closing arguments, Loyola prepared me."

"I loved that Loyola emphasizes giving back," says Williams, who is married to US Air Force Chaplain Christian Williams. "It doesn't say, 'Give back to the people who never made a mistake.' It says, 'Give back.' Sometimes I'm challenged morally when defending cases, especially serious crimes. But everyone deserves competent counsel and needs to know they can bounce back, too, with rehabilitation.

"Many of my clients are very young, enlisted straight out of high school, and are making mistakes as they go. Being able to serve as a mentor and role model to my clients is an opportunity I might not have had as much of in the private sector."

## High-profile work

With so much of the US military's activities in the public eye, Loyola judge advocates often find their work in the national and international news. As a prosecutor at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, Williams helped prosecute the case of Captain Michael Fontana, a nurse accused of intentionally giving elderly, terminally ill patients lethal doses of medication. (He was acquitted, and Williams says she believes "ultimately justice was done.")

In 2006-07, Pottinger was in Mosul, Iraq, as part of highly publicized efforts to train Iraqi forces in the rule of law. "That was something they can't prepare you for in law school; you just have to do it," Pottinger recalls. "It was about building relationships, building trust, and coming to a common understanding of what we could do together to bring back a valid, reliable court system in Iraq. It was a very rewarding experience I wouldn't trade for anything, and it helped me get well outside my comfort zone as an American."

Kantwill is a Department of Defense expert on the financial industry and the effects its services and products—including mortgage foreclosures, enforcement actions, consumer law, and the Military Lending Act—have upon military members. He frequently testifies before Senate and House committees advocating for efforts to better protect servicemembers in the financial marketplace, telling the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs in a June 2012 hearing, "Financial readiness of servicemembers and their families is essential to their well-being and ability to contribute to the mission."

## Seeing the world

Judge advocates who receive foreign assignments get the additional benefit of absorbing new cultures. "Our kids got to live in

small German towns, go to German schools, and play on German soccer teams," says Kantwill, who had assignments in Würzburg, Nuremberg, and Katterbach. "It was a unique cultural experience they value to this day."

"Being in Europe is an amazing experience—and it's not all work," says Pariza, whose apartment in downtown Würzburg is right across the street from a Franconian palace.

Travel to cities and countries near an overseas assignment is another perk. "I've had the opportunity to take several trips," says Cherry, "including one to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and another to Muscat, Oman. I loved them both for different reasons. There's a lot of history here in the Middle East, and seeing the evolution of these societies is really interesting."

"We get, at a minimum, one four-day weekend a month that doesn't count against vacation days, so I travel extensively," says Pariza, whose recent trips have included Estonia, Finland, and Spain.

## Staying the course

The benefits, expected and unexpected, of life in the JAG Corps make lifelong converts of many who never expected to make a career of it. Williams, who never saw herself in the military until she joined, now can't imagine herself out of it. "I'd really like to be a military judge," she says. "I love being in the courtroom, and since a judge brought me into the Corps, I think that would be a good way to close the circle."

Cherry says making a career of military service is "definitely an option. I've loved it so far and am excited about my follow-on orders. As strange as it may seem, it's easy to become accustomed to and comfortable with the military lifestyle. You know you're doing important work; you know you'll get to travel and have job security. And, because you change assignments every couple of years, you know you'll get to try new jobs.

"Sometimes the job and location are demanding, especially with all that's going on in the world right now," adds Cherry. "It's not always easy—it's a sacrifice at times—but it's definitely worthwhile." ■

## His garrison's "in-house counsel"

Captain Geoffrey  
Pariza (JD '11)

US Army, Administrative Law  
Attorney, Garrison Schweinfurt

Schweinfurt, Germany

» Captain Geoffrey Pariza balanced law school with his Illinois Army National Guard duties—and returned to full-time Army life as a judge advocate.

