



Members of the 82d Airborne Division Office of the Staff Judge Advocate and North Carolina A&T ROTC pose at the General Greene Monument at the Guilford Courthouse National Military Park. (Photo courtesy of author)

News & Notes

82d Airborne Division Pairs with North Carolina A&T State University for Historic Staff Ride

By Captain Parker C. Holstein

In a unique blend of history and career exploration, the 82d Airborne Division's

Office of the Staff Judge Advocate (OSJA) embarked on a meaningful joint staff ride

with North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University's (NCA&T) Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) cadets last spring. Participants visited the Revolutionary War's Guilford Courthouse battlegrounds. This staff ride served as more than just a historical excursion; it was a strategic effort to connect judge advocates (JAs) with potential future members of the Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps.

"The staff ride was a great opportunity for us to simply get known. Many cadets, as they progress through ROTC, are unaware of the fact that the JAG Corps exists or the fact that there are opportunities for them to serve in the JAG Corps," remarked Major (MAJ) Andrew Nist, then-3d Brigade Combat Team brigade judge advocate and officer-in-charge for the event.

The staff ride began at the Battle of Guilford Courthouse in present-day Greensboro, North Carolina. Fought on 15 March

1781, this battle was a significant encounter during the American Revolutionary War that saw Major General Nathanael Greene's Continental Army clash with Lieutenant General Charles Cornwallis's British forces. Although the British emerged tactically victorious, they suffered substantial losses that contributed to their eventual surrender at Yorktown. The battlegrounds today serve as a poignant reminder of the complexities and sacrifices of war.

For the ROTC cadets and JAs, the visit to Guilford Courthouse was an opportunity to stand where historic figures once stood and to reflect on the enduring principles of military leadership and strategy. Mr. Harold Allen Skinner Jr., the U.S. Army Soldier Support Institute command historian at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, led the group through the hallowed grounds while providing unparalleled institutional knowledge. He is the foremost expert on the Guilford Courthouse Campaign and author of *A Game of Hare & Hounds: An Operational-level Command Study of the Guilford Courthouse Campaign, 18 January-15 March 1781*.¹ First Sergeant Raymond Bavry, senior military science instructor at NCA&T ROTC, emphasized the educational value of this hands-on experience: "The cadets enjoyed the staff ride and were able to learn about a battle that pertains to our local history. Walking the battlefield and understanding the terrain also allows attendees to better understand the complexity of command and highlights the human dimension of battle."

Before the tour, ROTC cadets were paired up with junior JAs to brief portions of the battlefield once they arrived. This added tremendous value to the experience by fostering a collaborative environment between the cadets and JAs. It provided the opportunity to discuss historical lessons and reflect on their applications to contemporary military practices.²

Captain (CPT) Shelby Brown, military justice advisor at the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82d Airborne Division, noted, "The event was a great intersection between our organizations. It was a valuable opportunity to engage with NCA&T cadets to learn about their experiences and interests in the Army." MAJ Nist highlighted the recruitment potential of these engagements: "Our



CPT Cal Burton (second from left) presents a brief on a pivotal stage in the battle at Guilford Courthouse. (Credit: CPT Parker Holstein)

staff ride allowed us to establish contact with commissioning cadets and spread awareness about the JAG Corps." CPT Cal Burton, then-chief of legal assistance for the 82d Airborne Division, stated, "Being paired with several cadets from the local ROTC program allowed me to expand my knowledge of the ROTC program and network with potential future JAs."

MAJ Nist added, "The cadet I had lunch with, a criminal justice major, was very interested in the program when I discussed it with him. By building awareness, we will hopefully get more FLEP applicants as these cadets commission and tell their battle buddies about the program." CPT Burton corroborated by stating, "Many cadets asked us about our careers as JAs, and several were interested in applying to the JAG Corps."

This blend of historical education and career mentorship proved to be a fruitful endeavor that other units and institutions should consider replicating. Engagements

like these are vital for cultivating informed, motivated, and connected future officers, and they underscore the importance of innovative recruitment strategies that leverage both historical insight and personal interaction.

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1. HAROLD ALLEN SKINNER JR., *A GAME OF HARE & HOUNDS: AN OPERATIONAL-LEVEL COMMAND STUDY OF THE GUILFORD COURTHOUSE CAMPAIGN, 18 JANUARY-15 MARCH 1781* (2021).
2. To learn more about the Guilford County Courthouse campaign, visit *Guilford Courthouse*, NAT'L PARK SERV., <https://www.nps.gov/guco/learn/photosmultimedia/multimedia.htm> [<https://perma.cc/UP2K-GU28>] (last visited June 30, 2025).