

Court Is Assembled

The JAG Corps Strategy Building a Future-Ready JAG Corps, Inspired by a Legacy of Service

By Members of the JAG Corps Strategy Development OPT¹

The essence of institutional strategy lies in making hard choices . . .²

An effective institutional strategy has multiple components and purposes. It needs to convey a broad, easily understandable outline of the long-term goals of the organization, supported by a detailed plan for how to achieve those goals. It should simultaneously project an inspiring vision for the future that provides its people purpose with enough concrete specificity to be actionable and produce tangible results.

For an Army organization like the Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps, its strategy must support the greater Army strategy, while accounting for the current and anticipated operating environment. Resourcing, capability, and doctrinal gaps must be identified and either mitigated or overcome to transform the JAG Corps of today into the desired Corps of tomorrow. Inevitable changes in the assumptions and variables that formed the foundational planning factors of a strategy can render the best strategy documents outdated in a surprisingly short amount of time.

It was within this context that the JAG Corps Strategy Development Operational Planning Team (OPT) first convened in November of 2024 to review and revise the 2022 JAG Corps Strategy. Although only two years had passed, JAG Corps leadership understood the opportunity to capture feedback on that foundational effort and incorporate profound changes in the operating

and legal environment into an updated strategy and detailed campaign plan. As the pace and scale of change accelerated in the beginning of 2025, there were even questions about whether effective strategic planning was possible at all. Ultimately, this same uncertainty that could have potentially paused strategy development instead reinforced the importance of having an updated strategy in unpredictable times. In a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment, both the guiding vision of a strategy and synchronized efforts of a supportive campaign plan are vital to maintaining sight of our long-term goals while providing the day-to-day legal support that our Army needs now and in the future.

This article provides a brief overview of the planning team's approach to developing the JAG Corps Strategy, the ongoing work, and the future endeavors needed to synchronize strategic efforts and assist our leaders in making difficult decisions on how best to guide our Corps during continuous transformation efforts in a persistently complex, uncertain, and resource-constrained environment. The OPT has striven over nine months to deliberately assess the greatest needs of our Corps and chart a path forward. In a world defined by change, the goal was to create a strategy that provides a rudder to guide us through dynamic waters.

At the beginning of the process, the The Judge Advocate General (TJAG) provided key strategic planning guidance to move away from a time-horizon construct; nest with Army priorities; address innovation and transformation, culture, and climate; and speak to personnel across the entire Judge Advocate Legal Services footprint.

The OPT looked to well-established operational art and design doctrine and the Army Design Methodology (ADM) for approaching complex problem sets. The ADM consists of framing the operational environment, framing the problem, developing an operational approach, and developing the plan.³ The approach to this strategic initiative was further guided by the TJAG-approved JAG Corps Strategic Initiative Planning process—initiate, assess, plan, implement. Using these methodologies, the OPT labored to deliberately assess the greatest needs of our Corps and establish guidelines on how to close those gaps.

The OPT first analyzed the 2022 JAG Corps Strategy against overarching Army and Department of War strategic guidance, priorities, and guidance. The OPT reviewed existing organizational strategies and processes and regularly consulted with strategists from the Department of the Army Plans and the University of Virginia Strategic Initiatives Offices to understand best practices for strategy development and implementation. The



Members of the JAG Corps Strategy Development OPT review Strategy documents. (Credit: Billie J. Suttles)

inaugural 2022 strategy analysis revealed that it was well-written and thoughtfully outlined the breadth and importance of the JAG Corps's mission support to the Army, but lacked specific implementing objectives or a mechanism to systematically guide institutional transformation and measure progress. To understand the entire Corps's needs and recommendations, the OPT solicited feedback from across the Corps's organizations, cohorts, and components—from the field to the institutional level. The OPT regularly worked together over Teams, emails, and an in-person planning onsite supported by JAG Corps subject matter experts, an Army strategist, and the U.S. Army War College. This deliberate, iterative process produced the current JAG Corps Strategy, published on 12 September 2025.

At first glance, you will notice that this

plan is succinct, going from eight typed pages in the 2022 Strategy to just one detailed chart with a short introductory preamble. The goal was not just to be concise but also conceptually straightforward in understanding and execution. The accompanying overview graphic preceding this article depicts an abbreviated version of the strategy and how it supports the Army's enduring campaign plan.

The strategy consists of three lines of effort (LOEs),⁴ each consisting of three strategic objectives⁵ designed to help the JAG Corps reach the desired end state⁶ published within.⁷ As the strategy overview graphic outlines, our Corps's primary needs continue to align with the Army's long-term campaign plan priorities. While the Army's campaign plan is revised, some language will change; however, the JAG Corps's three

LOEs (People, Transformation, and Readiness) will remain nested with the Army's LOEs as depicted in the enclosed graphic. These LOEs are not new for the JAG Corps or Army, which helps guide the long-term aligned interests.

Given full license to conclude whether the updated strategy should be "evolutionary or revolutionary," the OPT concluded that the vast majority of the institutional needs were evolutionary in nature from the previous strategy. The new strategy carries forward the categorical LOEs, and while articulating strategic objectives and establishing a campaign planning process are critical improvements, they are mostly evolutionary in that they build upon efforts already being undertaken within the JAG Corps. However, one capability gap clearly emerged as in need of a revolutionary approach—our

“Strategy is both an iterative process and a product—the reflective synergy of art and science creating a coherent bridge from the present to the future, enabling the translation of ideas into action to get what you want while addressing potential risks to the Nation.”¹²

information technology and knowledge management. The team concluded that not only did that warrant its own strategic objective, but that it would be infused across all nine objectives and the entire strategy because it implicates everything that we do as professionals.

So, what do we do with this strategy? The greatest benefit of an implemented strategy will be the establishment of a systematic, deliberate approach to modernization that integrates with the Army and synchronizes efforts and prioritizes JAG Corps resourcing. In a persistently constrained resource environment, there must be a way to prioritize how much energy and resources we apply to efforts. Consultations with the Army’s strategic planning subject matter experts revealed that in order to have an impactful strategy, we needed to also have an effective campaign plan and implementing governance process to “translat[e] strategy into outcomes.”⁸ Our campaign plan will become the primary way that we design and monitor all significant ongoing strategic efforts, including approving programs, assigning responsibility, and allocating limited resources.

The U.S. Army War College *Campaign Planning Handbook* emphasizes that all important efforts must be included in the campaign plan, and those efforts not aligned with stated objectives should be considered for elimination.⁹ To operationalize the strategy and campaign plan, each strategic objective is led and resourced with leaders across the Corps, including a senior leader champion (general officer or senior executive

service official) to guide efforts, a tactical lead (colonel or GS-15) to direct work, and an OPT to develop each objective.

What is the next step and how can you contribute? If you feel like you missed your opportunity to contribute, do not despair, because we are still at the beginning of this enduring effort. The strategy is published, but it is not just a product—it is an ongoing process.¹⁰ Campaigning is the most important part of this strategic effort, and it is just beginning. The benefit of a strategy and campaigning is the process—more of a journey than a destination. The course may vary and the road will have curves, but we will keep going in the right direction toward the distant horizon. The principal leaders of this process—strategic objective tactical leads—have the road map, a core working group, and are actively planning. Your ideas and input are valuable and crucial to our Corps’s success. Please share your thoughts directly with the tactical leads, through the OPT members, or with the Future Concepts Directorate in the Legal Center as we periodically update the Strategy and continuously develop the campaign plan.¹¹ We eagerly anticipate your contributions! **TAL**

Notes

1. The JAG Corps Strategy Development Operational Planning Team consists of senior JAG Corps leaders from all components and cohorts, supported by The Judge Advocate General’s Legal Center and School Future Concepts Directorate Team.

2. U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY, INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGY:

ARMY STRATEGY NOTE 4 (1 Apr. 2022).

3. U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY, DOCTRINE PUB. 5-0, THE OPERATIONS PROCESS para. 2-89 & fig. 2-4 at 2-17 (31 July 2019).

4. Line of Effort: “Links, tasks, and effects to achieve objectives.” JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, JOINT PUB. 5-0, JOINT PLANNING, at III-31 (1 July 2025).

5. Objective: “The clearly defined, decisive, and attainable goal toward which an operation is directed.” *Id.* at III-20, GL-8.

6. End state: “The set of required conditions that defines achievement of the commander’s objectives.” JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, JOINT PUB. 3-0, JOINT CAMPAIGNS AND OPERATIONS, at GL-9 (18 June 2022).

7. The strategy can be found at *U.S. Army JAG Corps Strategy*, U.S. ARMY JAG CORPS, <https://www.jagcnet.army.mil/Home/public/jagcStrategyInDepth.html> [<https://perma.cc/7TFQ-H6UM>] (last visited Dec. 3, 2025).

8. CHAIRMAN, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, INSTR. 3100.01F, JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING SYSTEM, at A-2 fig. 1 (29 Jan. 2024).

9. DEP’T OF MIL. STRATEGY, PLANNING, & OPERATIONS, U.S. ARMY WAR COLL., CAMPAIGN PLANNING HANDBOOK: ACADEMIC YEAR 2026, at 48 (2025).

10. *See* JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, DOCTRINE NOTE 2-19, STRATEGY, at I-1 (10 Dec. 2019).

11. The Strategy, points of contact, and suggestions can be viewed on the JAG Corps Strategy website on JAGC-Net or by contacting the Future Concepts Directorate at <https://tjaglcs.army.mil/center/fcd>.

12. JDN 2-19, *supra* note 9, at I-1.