

First chief warrant officers attend CGSC

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Five chief warrant officers are the first to enter the Intermediate Level Education program at the Command and General Staff College.

"It's a pilot program to offer a broadening experience to a different category of Army leaders that normally wouldn't have that opportunity," said Col. Bill Raymond, director of the Command and General Staff School.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Percy Alexander (Quartermaster), Chief Warrant Officer 4 Tim Feathers (Aviation), Chief Warrant Officer 4 Richard Myers (Ordnance), Chief Warrant Officer 4 Nathaniel Jones (Air Defense), and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Russell (Ordnance) are the first warrant officers admitted to the CGSC. Feathers is scheduled to be promoted to chief warrant officer 5 today.

Raymond said it adds to the CGSC learning environment anytime Army majors are exposed to people with different perspectives because it introduces a different type of problem solving.

Myers said the U.S. military's roughly 12,000 warrant officers work as specialists in their field. Myers serves as a 915E, senior automotive maintenance officer.

"Because we are subject matter experts, we all possess operational skills but they aren't used," Myers said of the Army Warrant Officer Corps. "So, we get to see the full operations spectrum."

This year's warrant officers average about 20 years of military experience each and a total of 22 deployments, nine in the Global War on Terror. Feathers is beginning his 30th year in military service. He began with the Marine Corps Reserve in 1978, and then enlisted in the Army in 1984. He later entered flight school and was one of the first warrant officers to fly the AH-64 Apache helicopter. Feathers flew the lead aircraft for the 101st Airborne Division in the invasion of Iraq.

Lt. Gen. William B. Caldwell IV, commandant of the CGSC, met with the warrant officers to discuss their upcoming educational experience. He called the CGSC's five warrant officers the "absolute best" and encouraged them to work on a Master of Military Arts and Science degree. Caldwell also said he was "open to exploring possibilities" for the warrant officers to compete for entrance into the School of Advanced Military Studies.

"The whole reason you're here is because we anticipate your rising to the top levels of our Army," he said.

Warrant officers often work as individuals outside a unit, although they do train together. The President of the United States commissions warrant officers at their second rank, so all of the CGSC's warrant officers are commissioned.

Caldwell said many don't fully understand warrant officers and what they do. The warrant officers beat the majors' average



Command and General Staff College Commandant Lt. Gen. William Caldwell IV talks with Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Russell, CWO4 Percy Alexander, CWO4 Richard Myers, CWO4 Timothy Feathers and CWO4 Nathaniel Jones about their participation in CGSC Aug. 27 in the Lewis and Clark Center's main conference room. The Soldiers are the first warrant officers to attend CGSC. Lamp photo by Prudence Siebert.

years of service by at least 10 years, he said, and could add to the education of majors because of their expert knowledge in their respective fields.

One of the warrant officers, Jones, taught joint theater air and defense operations last spring at the CGSC.

Education of warrant officers is shorter than regular commissioned officers. A 28-day Warrant Officer Staff Course is completed sometime during the third or fourth rank. There is also a nine-day course for senior staff warrant officers.

Myers said attending the CGSC has many benefits for him. As a warrant officer, he's had little time to pursue educational opportunities outside the military. His time at Fort Leavenworth will also serve as a respite from his 18 years in the Army and working in his field, Myers said.

"The best part so far is the critical thinking and problem solving abilities we learn here," he said. "It's how to think."

Those critical thinking abilities can help solve problems from a different perspective, Myers said, and "identify more efficient course of action that supports the command's full spectrum of operations."

Myers said he and his fellow warrant officers are hoping to further their own careers through the CGSC experience as well.

"I hope they would consider the education we received and assign us to apply those skills," he said.

Myers said he and his cohorts all hope to change the way other officers think about warrant officers.

"I hope my time here can affect how the (Warrant Officer) Corps itself is perceived," he said. "Very few people deal with warrant officers on a daily basis. The next General Petraeus or the next General of the Army is going here right now, so if we can change how we're seen throughout the Officer Corps, we can affect our future."