



The Air Force JAG Corps -- KEYSTONE LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Building Tomorrow's Leaders Today

History. In the aftermath of highly publicized disciplinary leadership challenges, in 2005 there was a clear need to bring together JAG Corps senior and mid-level leaders to reinforce the soundness of the Corps, focus on the way ahead, and most importantly, emphasize how their leadership is essential to future progress. The first KEYSTONE was held in Keystone, Colorado.

At the time of KEYSTONE 2005, there was no plan to make the Summit an annual event. That was until the feedback -- both signed and anonymous -- came in. It was overwhelmingly positive. If there was any question about whether to convene a Summit the next year, that question was answered with the advent of JAG Corps 21. In 2006, JAG Corps leaders came together at KEYSTONE to discuss the fundamentals of what became a far-reaching transformation of the Corps -- the JAG Corps 21 Program. Once again, the critiques were extremely favorable and encouraging.

Since then, the Leadership Summits have continued because our constantly changing military-legal environment has made them vital to our effort to keep up and provide our client, the Air Force, the very best in legal services. The content of our Leadership Summits has not been mechanically repeated. Each year, the agenda changes to both respond to the suggestions of attendees and to keep the program fresh and timely. In 2010, we began an examination of Foundational Leadership, the principles that form the basis of our service and our legal practice. KEYSTONE offers a superb forum to train JAG Corps leaders on significant Foundational Leadership approaches as we tackle the challenges we face in our military justice, legal assistance, attorney-paralegal teaming, and training initiatives. In 2011, we will continue to train our leaders on how to build tomorrow's leaders today -- exactly the purpose our Leadership Summits were meant to serve.

The Name. The KEYSTONE name was suggested by its initial location; it was retained because of what the word "keystone" symbolizes. In architecture, the keystone is the central, wedge-shaped stone at the top of an arch that locks the other stones in place. The analogy to leadership is obvious. Effective leaders are a unifying force -- they bind their people with core values, a vision, and inspiration to accomplish great things.

Attendees. KEYSTONE brings together our Total Force senior and mid-grade leaders starting with our cadre of JAG Corps staff judge advocates and legal office senior paralegals from all levels of command. Added to that is a variety of other invitees representing diverse elements of the Corps, sister services, and foreign countries.

The Reason. The fundamental reason for KEYSTONE is to provide a singular forum to communicate essential information face-to-face. KEYSTONE allows us to do things that can't be done by VTC, computer-based learning, or email. Interactive breakout sessions and informal gatherings help build communities and shared understandings in ways that digital means can't. KEYSTONE also allows us to offer interactive, expert-led training in areas such as sexual assault prevention and judicial processes and maximizing the benefits of a diverse and inclusive organization. Additionally, KEYSTONE offers CLE opportunities for attorneys, assuring their state licenses and Air Force authorizations to practice as attorneys remain current.

We are not alone in appreciating how gatherings like KEYSTONE offer unique benefits. A Wall Street Journal columnist who attended a conference of 600 information technology leaders was struck by how enthusiastically they responded to in-person presentations and discussions. He observed that even as our society becomes more digitized, the need for, and value of, human contact endures, even among the most innovative people in the IT industry. This fact is underscored by the number of similar "summits" held throughout the Department of Defense and the private sector.

Objectives

- Communicate essential messages on leadership and values face-to-face from Air Force and other senior leaders
- Provide up-to-the-minute information on global, national, military, interagency, and societal issues and developments -- focusing on their impacts on the warfighter
- Expand understanding of how individuals and teams -- from those at installation legal offices to the highest levels of government -- interact to attain national security objectives
- Introduce and explain new JAG Corps initiatives, concepts, and publications
- Provide opportunities to meet and meet with other members of the JAG Corps and other organizations both informally and in structured settings
- Provide a venue for other conferences and events (e.g., The New Colonels' orientation, Article 6 Inspector Training, Military Justice Revival, MAJCOM SJA-LOS Conferences)

Agenda. KEYSTONE features a dynamic list of speakers, including senior officials from the federal government and the joint team as well as prominent experts who discuss the law, leadership and management, human relations, current legal and national security issues, the media, and other topics. The agenda has a broad scope -- from how the JAG Corps fits into the national security structure to how JAG Corps members can best refine their foundational leadership skills to develop the leaders of tomorrow.

Locations. The number of conference centers that have the meeting space, hotel rooms, breakout rooms, and other features required for a summit the size of KEYSTONE is limited. Predictably, such facilities tend to be located in areas that are highly popular for tourism and conferences. Therefore, we must compete with many other large organizations for open dates. Each year we explore numerous potential sites and one is selected based on the suitability of its professional atmosphere, its capacity, and a careful cost-benefit analysis. While the size of our event limits our options, it does help us considerably in negotiating the best value for the government.

The Balancing. We recognize that KEYSTONE comes at a cost. It calls for a week away from the office for at least two leaders from most Air Force legal offices, plus local travel expenses and the time needed to prepare for the event. But, repeated experience has affirmed that the KEYSTONE concept presents a matchless vehicle for ensuring that the Corps' leaders are in concert on goals, ideals, and essential information.

The Future. KEYSTONE will continue to evolve along with the Air Force and the JAG Corps. Its format will depend on what the Air Force needs from its JAG Corps leaders. One thing will endure -- the value of getting people together and devoting focused time to learn and talk about both the big picture and individuals as leaders and Airmen. Ultimately, the success of any organization revolves around its people and their growth as professionals. KEYSTONE has emerged as the benchmark event to develop the kind of leaders the Air Force must have for the increasingly complex legal challenges of the 21st century.

