



TORII LEGAL ASSISTANCE

OFFICE OF THE STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATE



WHAT LEGAL ASSISTANCE ATTORNEYS CAN (AND CANNOT) DO FOR YOU... BY: RUDY WARTELLA

*Adapted from an article written by
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As many of you know, free legal services are available to military and civilian members of the Okinawa Military Community, as well as to their family members. Military retirees are also entitled to our services. The services you can expect to receive depend on the nature of your legal issue. Our goal is to provide you with as much help as possible before you have to engage the services of a private attorney.

Since we are not located near a U.S. court, we cannot provide in-court representation. In some cases we help clients prepare legal documents for filing in U.S. courts, and occasionally we can help a client participate telephonically in a U.S. court proceeding. However, we are not able to represent you in a U.S. court, and we cannot be your attorney of record in a U.S. court case.

Legal assistance attorneys help their clients identify options and make informed decisions. The more you know about your rights and responsibilities, and the more you know about how the process works and how you will be affected, the better you can make decisions about what to do next. In most cases, we will provide information to a client and then the client will decide what to do, hopefully understanding the full range of consequences that may result from those choices.

For military administrative matters, we help clients assess their rights and options, and help put together a comprehensive and cogent packet of documents in support of their position. If you have been notified that you are to be held financially liable for lost or damaged military property, if you have received a negative OER or NCOER, or if you are seeking to correct your military records, we can make sure you properly respond to the action and fully articulate and document your position. Our experience and training, combined with your first-hand knowledge of your situation, help ensure that your response or request is best designed to protect your legal rights.

We often receive non-legal inquiries that typically result in referrals to other agencies. Legal assistance attorneys normally have no ability to resolve pay disputes or interfere with command decisions. Our regulations do not permit us to provide advice concerning civilian employment matters such as pay, personnel, discipline, or civilian performance evaluations. We can only give general procedural information regarding claims or lawsuits against the U.S. Government. Sometimes we receive inquiries for which we have no prior experience, and we have to do some research in order to determine whether legal assistance is appropriate, and, if it is, what kind of assistance we can render. In most cases, you can expect to receive information and advice that will help you assess your situation and decide what to do next. Whether your inquiry concerns estate planning, family law, tax issues, consumer rights, or military administrative issues, we are here to provide you free advice and help you make well-informed decisions.