

YourArmy

Meet the new voice for warrant officers

They want more tech training, better shot at promotion, he says

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The Army's new senior warrant officer is focused on making sure his fellow warrant officers get sound professional military education, the right technical training and proper leader development.

Chief Warrant Officer 5 David Williams is the first full-time Army Staff senior warrant officer, selected for the position in mid-March by Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno.

"The chief asked me to be his eyes and ears for the cohort and advise him directly," Williams said. "My main responsibility, pretty much, is to advise him on the life-cycle management of warrant officers, from cradle to grave: accessions, training, managing PME, the whole thing. For me, personally, my main concern is PME. That's really in line with what the chief's top priority is, and that's leader development, and that's exactly what I'm going to concentrate on."

Williams, an aviator, sat down with Army Times on May 8 to discuss his new role and what's coming up for the 27,000 warrant officers across the Army, Army National Guard and Army Reserve.

Q. How did this position come about?

A. In the Warrant Officer Continuum of Learning Study [completed last year], warrant officers told the Army they felt as though they needed a champion in the Pentagon, someone in the Pentagon who could talk to the chief of staff of the Army, go across the cohort and talk to senior officers, and bring

those things to the chief that they were passionate about. They felt they didn't have a voice in the Pentagon.

Q. What are some challenges faced by warrant officers today?

A. First and foremost, warrant officers are known for their technical expertise. One of the things warrant officers had some concerns about, especially over the last 10 years, 12 years of war, is we had a lot of contractors performing a lot of duties that warrant officers were supposed to perform. They felt they weren't necessarily doing the things that warrant officers did over the years.

They felt the technical expertise of warrant officers was starting to diminish. One of the things warrant officers wanted to see was technical training increased.

Q. What else is the force concerned about?

A. One of the things warrant officers were concerned about is promotion opportunities. Over the years, we have opened the aperture, if you will, of the promotions. We've expanded the window. We've done that for several years, promoting several people, causing the top to be heavy.

A lot of our junior warrant officers are concerned today about their upward mobility in the cohort.

We have a backlog of warrant officers who haven't attended PME. It's coming down, but one of the things we're concerned about is, if we have a backlog, you haven't been to PME, that's an indicator that your leader development is



The Army's new top warrant officer, CW5 David Williams, senior adviser to the chief of staff on warrant officer issues, talks to Army Times May 8 at the Pentagon.

not where it should be. We felt we needed to fix that, and that's what we're doing right now.

Q. How has the ongoing drawdown affected the warrant officer cohort?

A. We have a lot of overages in some MOSs. It's not a done deal by any means, but it's a possibility we'll have targeted [selective early retirement boards] in the future. It's under consideration for FY15 and beyond, but no decision has been made.

And it's not just a drawdown issue. This is more of a 'we have too many at the top and some folks don't have upward mobility.' It's shaping the force.

Q. Have you had a chance to visit the force? What are you hearing from warrant officers today?

A. I've talked to some warrant officers, and not just warrant officers but senior leaders. We want to

make sure we talk to senior leaders so they are giving us the direction they want us to be going. Most recently I was at Fort Rucker [in Alabama]. I talked to students in the staff course, the senior staff course, the captains' career course and the aviation warrant officer course.

There's a lot of anxiety about promotion, the opportunity for upward mobility. They also wanted to know [about] some of the broadening opportunities for warrant officers that are available. And, most importantly, a lot of them wanted to know, what do they have to do to contribute more to the Army?

Q. What advice would you give soldiers who are interested in becoming warrant officers?

A. Does your [military occupational specialty] or career field allow you to become a warrant officer?

That's the very first thing you have to do is to determine if your MOS feeds into the warrant officer ranks, with the exception of aviation.

The second thing would be, read the regulation to see if you meet all the requirements and prerequisites to become a warrant officer.

As a young soldier, maybe an E-4 thinking about becoming a warrant officer, my advice would be: Put out 100 percent, do the best you can, and be extremely professional, and be an expert in what you do as an NCO. In addition to being a noncommissioned officer leader, be an expert in your job, and that's how you can become a warrant officer.

Q. Do you need more warrant officers in the force?

A. We're always looking for people. We're always filling our ranks. We're not always looking for a lot of people in certain MOSs all the time, but we're always looking to regenerate the force. We've got warrant officers retiring all the time.

If you want to be a warrant officer, there are opportunities. If your file is stellar, you'll have a better opportunity to become a warrant officer than someone who's just meeting all the standards.

Q. What's next?

A. One of the most important things for our cohort is leader development and making sure warrant officers understand that they are leaders. That's one of my key things. In my estimation, if you're a great leader, it will transcend into good decision-making in your personal and professional life, versus being just a good technician.

That's one of the things I always highlight, making sure warrant officers understand they're leaders, and how important it is that they're professionally developed. □

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