

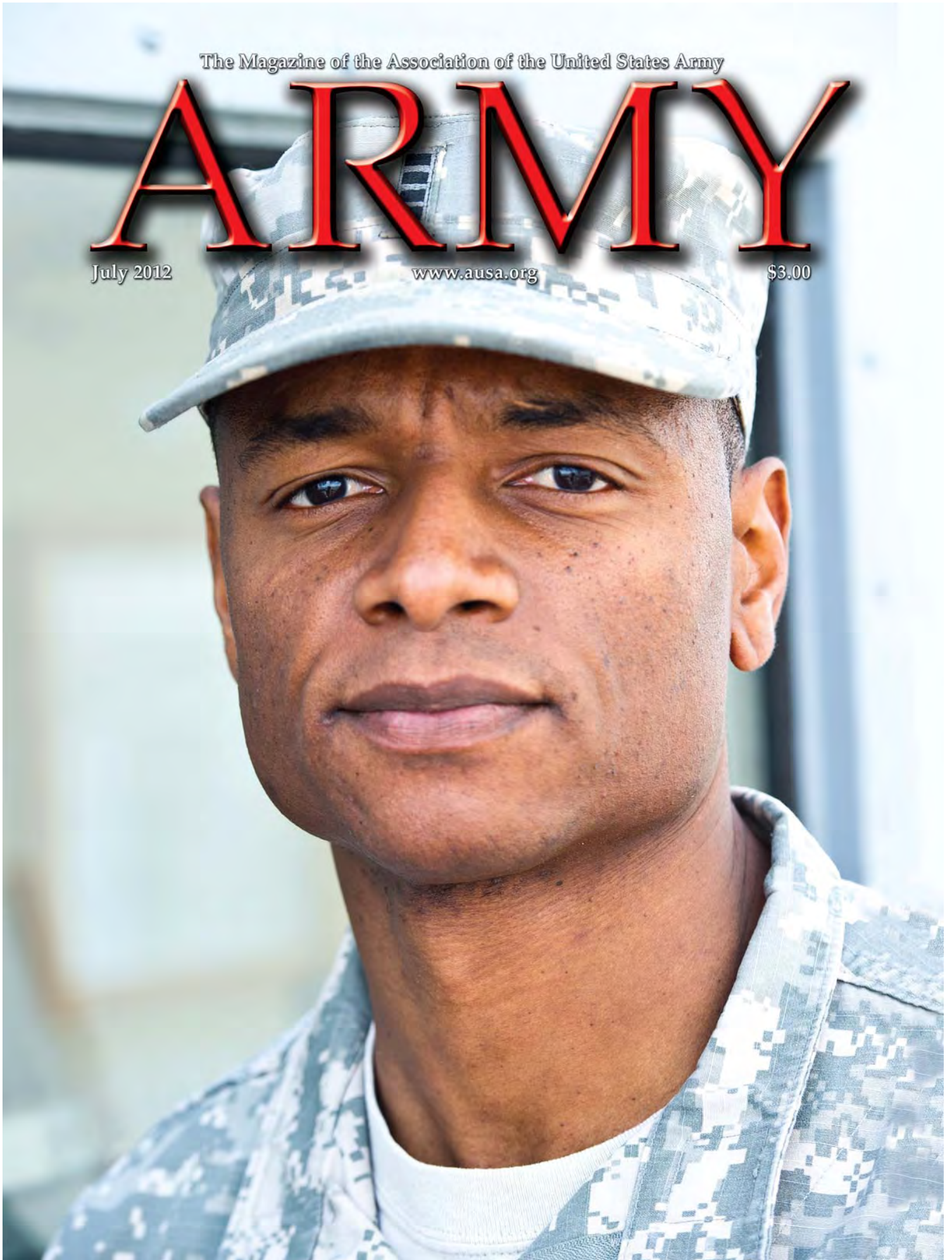
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The U.S. Army Warrant Officer Corps

Still a Work in Progress



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he Army warrant officer corps continues the evolution that began almost a century ago and that grew over the decades in overall complexity, recognition, responsibility, application and training through legislation, changes in policy and regulations. Today, Army warrant officers are changing their corps and themselves through education and an expanded view of their responsibilities. Largely, today's evolution centers on how warrant officers view their place in the Army—not only serving in their traditional role as master technicians, but increasingly as mentors, leaders and, in cases such as maritime vessel masters, as commanders.

Top left, CW3 Ned E. Walsh, chief mate aboard the U.S. Army's Logistics Support Vessel-4 (LSV-4), the LTG William B. Bunker, mans the bridge. LSVs are the largest vessels in the Army's fleet. Top right, CW3 Shane Sherrod guides the LSV-1, the GEN Frank S. Besson Jr., from a Coast Guard dock as he undertakes a practical exercise during advanced training. Bottom left, CW2 Carlos Rivera, the first assistant engineer of the LSV-1 Besson, checks the engine room log.

**Photographs and Text
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Senior Staff Writer

CW4 Christopher K. Montroy, chief of the maritime operations division (training) at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., explains the direction of maritime warrant officer training to some of his fellow warrant officers.



zled guys who hung out together at the back of formations, stayed to themselves and really didn't involve themselves much with things outside their technical area. Don't get me wrong: They were good at their jobs, good soldiers and they helped win wars, but they restricted their authority to the narrow confines of their technical areas. They stayed within what they saw as their lane.

"Today, it's different. Warrant officers lead from the front. Today's warrant officer is much more leader-centric than in the past. We lead physical training; we lead in all areas, not just within our technical responsibilities. In the last 10 years, there has been a definite change."

Warrant officers serve in a variety of fields: administration, intelligence, systems operations, maintenance, bandmasters and other specialized fields.

"The definition of a warrant officer has changed," said CW4 James R. Crouse, the chief marine engineering officer aboard the U.S. Army's logistics support vessel (LSV-4), the *LTG William B. Bunker*, which is an element of the 10th Battalion, 7th Sustainment Brigade, at Joint Base (JB) Langley-Eustis, Va. "It used to be that a warrant officer was a technical expert, but warrant officers now are both technical experts and leaders. I remember—when I was an NCO—that warrant officers were sort of a bunch of griz-

Most of the Army's warrant officers are skilled aviators, and there is a significant concentration of warrant officers within the Army's maritime field as engineers and deck officers. The deck officer field, with experience and promotion, leads to command as vessel masters, starting with smaller vessels such as landing craft and with selection and progressive training leading to command of the LSV-class vessels. At this level of command, the vessel master not only commands the ship but also serves as the detachment commander of the vessel's crew, with all the authority and responsibilities of a commander of any Army unit, including Uniform Code of Military Justice authority. Bandmasters are also commanders.

Aviation warrant officers exercise authority as aircraft commanders and operational mission commanders and fill a variety of aviation jobs that have high degrees of responsibility. The various levels of unit command, however, remain with traditional commissioned officers, captains through colonels. (Army warrant officers begin as warrant officer 1s, WO1, which is an appointed grade, but each selection and promotion to chief warrant officer 2 through chief warrant officer 5 is a commission. A commission, in the legal, technical sense, keeps with ancient and continuing international recognition as a nation's lawful and

WO1 Melissa S. Fields, the 3rd mate aboard LSV-1 Besson, stands watch.





CW4 James R. Crouse, the chief engineer aboard LSV-4 Bunker, explains the vessel's power plant.

documented appointment of an individual as a combatant commander.)

The Army's warrant officer corps has a unique history, reaching back to the latter half of the 19th century when the Army employed civilians acting as "warrant officers" specifically in the jobs of field clerks and pay clerks. They had limited authority to carry out their duties and remained civilians. Formal authority for those fields was legislated in 1916, and the Army Judge Advocate General eventually determined that they had "military status."

The major transitional point, however, was in the maritime field. During World War I, the Army created the Mine Planter Service within the Coast Artillery Corps (which had responsibility for coastal defense, including mine planting in littoral waterways). The Mine Planter Service was made up of licensed mariners who operated the boats. (Army maritime warrant officers today still must hold civilian-equivalent licenses to operate vessels, but the licenses are issued through Army training.) The Mine Planter Service was established and its duties defined by Congress. Thus, the month of that legislation, July 1918, is celebrated as the birthday of the warrant officer corps, and the corps is 94 years old now.

The history of warrant officers continued in an up-and-down fashion, with World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War contributing significantly to the corps' evolution until today's iteration with a full professional development education system and structure that includes the chief warrant officer 5 rank and branch affiliation.

The center for professional education is the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Career College at Fort Rucker, Ala., which offers the central components in warrant officers' careers—from preparing warrant officer candidates to educating the most senior warrant officers for high-responsibility staff positions—and is a component of the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. Each Army branch, however, continues to provide several levels of technical proficiency training for warrant officers in the branch's special-

ties in addition to the college's general professional development courses.

Maritime warrant officer basic and advanced courses are conducted at JB Langley-Eustis, Va. CW4 Christopher K. Montroy is chief of the maritime operations division, which trains all of the Army's enlisted personnel, NCOs and warrant officers in the maritime field.

At JB Langley-Eustis a maritime warrant officer tracks in either the engineering or deck officer field. According to CW4 Montroy, each step of a maritime warrant officer training in the Army's eight-month-long basic deck officer course leads to a higher level of maritime license.

In addition, prospective maritime warrant officers can apply to the program as promotable E-4s. The general benchmark is to bring NCOs at the E-6 and E-7 ranks with about eight years of service into the warrant officer corps, which leaves them time in their careers to make long-term contributions and also the time to complete progressive levels of college education to make themselves competitive for promotions, according to CW4 Montroy. Most of the practical education of maritime warrant officers, however, is conducted on the job, where senior warrant officers continue a tradition that stems from the earliest days of the Mine Planter Service: mentoring while seeing that the best qualified people have the opportunity to progress.

CW4 Kali Pettigrew (whose photograph appears on this issue's cover) is the chief engineering officer aboard an LSV-1, and he takes maritime peer teaching seriously. "On the sea, incompetence will come to the top. The sea will devour you; it is unforgiving," he said.

"When someone looks at a warrant officer, the military and technical education should be a given, but what we have to stress is leadership," CW4 Pettigrew added. "Warrant officers have moved away from being single-sided, a technician; we now must be complete officers, and that means being a leader. Leaders inspire; managers manage."

The Army's warrant officer corps has changed paradigms since 9/11. It is decidedly younger than in previous generations, and it is better educated—not just in the technical sense, but in the academic sense—and each member of that corps must increasingly display the capability for progression and capacity for greater responsibility. Members of today's warrant officer corps embrace their heritage, but they adapt for the future. Given the hard work that has taken the Army's warrant officer corps to get where it is, the quality of adaptability is part of that heritage, too. ★