

## Chief Counsel's Departure Highlights Difficult Decision Facing Many

By Melissa Ziobro, Command Historian

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Mr. Vincent Buonocore, Acting Chief Counsel, leaves the CECOM LCMC today after 26 years of service here.

While some, like deputy to the commanding general Mr. Edward C. Thomas, choose to move to the CECOM LCMC's new headquarters at Aberdeen Proving Ground, others, like Buonocore, choose to stay behind.

The disparity between Thomas and Buonocore's choices highlights the difficult decision facing many in the Command these days.

Buonocore began his career with CECOM as an Assistant Staff Judge Advocate in 1984 after his experiences in private practice left him feeling that "in private practice... you've got to keep business coming in and that essentially means... doing whatever it is the client wants done, whether they have a legal basis to get it done or not... because that's what brings in additional business and keeps your business floating. And I wasn't particularly motivated to look after individuals interests in that way."

About 15 lawyers staffed the CECOM Staff Judge Advocate office when Buonocore joined the team. The post's military population totaled about 2,500 then, compared to under 200 today.

Buonocore recalled his early days working in the recently demolished CECOM Office Building at the northwest corner of Tinton Avenue and Wayside Road in Tinton Falls, saying with a laugh, "It was fairly cramped...My first desk was orange. If you moved up, you got the steel desk that was grey. That was professional...with this Formica on top!"

On a more serious note, he recalled "having a pervasive sense that I was sinking, because I didn't understand any of the acronyms. It was nothing like anything I had learned in law school, and very little of what I had seen in private practice. I remember feeling, 'Oh God. I'll never pick this up'."

Today, the Legal Office appoints mentors to help mitigate this confusion in new attorneys. And the Office has A LOT of new attorneys.

According to Buonocore, BRAC has affected the Legal office "profoundly." For example, he said, "We've got 24 acquisition counsels. Attorneys who are primarily involved in acquisition, which is the meat of what we do. There's 17 people who have about a year or less [experience] out of 24. Of the balance, we've got some folks that were here 4, maybe 5 years. But only a couple who are really seasoned. And that's tough."

Buonocore is hopeful, though, that the CECOM LCMC Legal Office can once again be as it was, "the office that everybody in DA and DoD came to for the toughest, most challenging actions, cases. The ones nobody else was capable of handling, they gave to us and we hit a homerun because we had the horses to do that."

In the meantime, Buonocore created a Senior Acquisition Counsel Position that reports directly to the Chief Counsel. "Given that we have so many inexperienced attorneys on the ground...we took one of the very few attorneys we've got here with a significant amount of acquisition expertise...and put him in a position as Senior Acquisition Counsel. Theory being that he can provide oversight, guidance, mentorship, on that acquisition, on that real-world issue from that position across the board, and establish some consistency and some consistent level of expertise. So far so good."

Buonocore's advice to the CECOM LCMC's new attorneys could apply to all new Command employees, as well as to long term employees choosing to move to APG:



When asked why he decided to leave the Command, Buonocore pointed to this picture of his family and said, "It's not the right time for me. My particular circumstances. This is home." Buonocore resides in Wall Township, New Jersey, with his wife Kim and their sons, David and Matt, and daughter, Mishell.

"Don't get frustrated. And this is a frustrating time, and it's a time when we're going to be in a huge amount of upheaval...Hang in there! You know? Hang in there; it's a time of turmoil and it's going to take awhile for the dust to settle. But it will settle."

Mr. Buonocore has received numerous awards and accolades including the AMC Managerial Excellence Award (2008), CECOM Leadership Award-Executive Level (2008), Commander's Award for Civilian Service (2006, 2000), AMC Attorney of the Year (2001), Achievement Award for Civilian Service (2001), DA Superior Civilian Service Award (2000),

CECOM Leadership Award- Supervisory Level (2000), DA Meritorious Civilian Service Award (1991), and is a four time co-recipient of the AMC Team Project Award.

He leaves the CECOM LCMC for the Veterans Administration as Deputy Assistant General Counsel for Information Technology.