

Comparison of Four Allied Military Justice Systems

Captain (Navy) C. Julie Deschênes

Chief Military Judge of Canada

Captain (N) Deschênes enrolled in the Naval Reserve in 1989 and served as a Medical Assistant until she was commissioned as a Maritime Surface and Sub-surface Officer in 1995. While in the Naval Reserve, she received a Bachelor of Laws from Université Laval.

After being called to the Bar in 1996, she practiced criminal, family, and civil law in her hometown of Sept-Iles, Québec, and represented clients at circuit court in remote areas of the Northern part of the province, including Aboriginal communities. She prosecuted files for both Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and for the City before the municipal court.

In 1999, she transferred to the Regular Force as a Legal Officer and was posted as Deputy Judge Advocate Halifax, providing legal advice to units on the East Coast. The same year, she served as an adjudicator on the Claims Commission sitting in Zagreb, Croatia. She deployed for six months on Operation Echo in northern Italy, providing legal advice for targeting operations in support of the NATO-led international Stabilization Force in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and of the international peacekeeping force in Kosovo.

Captain (N) Deschênes served in a variety of positions within the Office of the JAG including the Regional Military Prosecutor Atlantic Region, Prosecution Appellate Counsel appearing at the Court Martial Appeal Court and JAG Assistant Chief of Staff. She also worked for the Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces Legal Advisor as team leader for the Legal Advisory Services.

In 2007, she was posted to Germany as Deputy Judge Advocate Europe advising on both international law issues related to the NATO Status of Forces Agreement and other international treaties, and on national legal issues. In 2008, she was the Acting Head of Mission for Canada as a Sending State, and in 2009 she deployed to Afghanistan, serving as an International Security Assistance Force

Headquarters Legal Advisor in Kabul, then as Joint Task Force Afghanistan Headquarters Deputy Legal Advisor in Kandahar. In this capacity, she supported the Operational Mentoring and Liaison team, the National Support Element and the Air Wing; and served in the positions of legal advisor, as required, for the Battle Group, for the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team and Senior Legal Advisor for the Task Force while occasionally, mentoring an Afghan National Army Legal Officer. She received the Task Force Captain (N)'s Commendation for her service in theatre.

In 2012, she joined the Office of the Chief Military Judge as Legal Advisor to the Court Martial Administration, providing advice on Court Martial proceedings and supporting the new statutorily created Court Martial Rules Committee. In 2015, she was posted to the Directorate of Law/Military Personnel, advising Military Personnel Command on law and policies related to governance, gender equality, harassment, Reserve Force, and authority for provision of Canadian Armed Forces medical care. On promotion to Captain (N) in June 2017, she was posted to the Office of the Chief of the Defence Staff where she provided legal advice in many different areas of law.

Captain (N) Deschênes holds a Master's Degree in International Law from the University of Ottawa. Her degree focused on the jurisdictional aspects of Military Tribunals from the perspectives of both Constitutional and International Human Rights Law. Captain (N) Deschênes was appointed a Military Judge by the Governor in Council on 23 May 2019.

Her Excellency the Governor General in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister of National Defence, under section 165.24 of the National Defence Act, appointed Captain (N) Catherine Julie Deschênes to be the Chief Military Judge, effective 21 March 2024.

Written Materials Provided at CAAF Website:

- Outline for “Comparison of Four Allied Military Justice Systems” Panel