

## Brian Bengs

**Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice**  
**NSU College of Arts and Sciences**  
**U.S. Navy & U.S. Air Force**

### **Ranks**

Airman Recruit  
Airman  
First Lieutenant  
Lieutenant Colonel

### **Entered Active Service**

September 1997

### **Date of Separation**

June 2016



### **Why did you join the military?**

I was a mediocre student in high school and did not know what I wanted to do with my life. I entered the delayed enlistment program at the start of my senior year as a way to serve the nation, experience some adventure, and get money for college if I decided to go. I left for basic training a week after graduation and found my Navy time lacking the adventure I sought, so I left for college when my enlistment expired. After attending college and law school I joined the Air Force JAG Corps for essentially the same reasons I joined the Navy.

### **Describe your service.**

In the Navy, I was assigned to the USS Kitty Hawk (CV-63), an aircraft carrier that was out of the water in dry-dock at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, Pennsylvania, for my entire enlistment. As an unrated sailor I did whatever random task I was assigned.

In contrast, I was a member of the very specialized Judge Advocate General's (JAG) Corps in the Air Force. I enjoyed performing a wide range of law-related jobs over the course of my Air Force career. At my first post, a missile base in Cheyenne, Wyoming, I served as a prosecutor in courts-martial and ran the military justice section.

At the B-2 bomber base in rural Missouri I changed roles to serve as a defense counsel. I then moved to a base in northern Japan where the Air Force and Navy each operated aircraft along with the Japanese Air Self Defense Force. There I was head of fiscal and contract law and occasionally a prosecutor. I also deployed from Japan to a multinational tactical airlift base in Kuwait that operated cargo aircraft ferrying supplies all over Iraq and special operation gunships

that provided direct fire support to ground forces in Iraq. In Kuwait I was the only Air Force attorney so I was involved in whatever legal issue came up from discipline to contracts to rules for the use of force.

Upon returning from Kuwait I was assigned to Eighth Air Force Headquarters at a B-52 bomber base in Shreveport, Louisiana. My responsibilities were supervising administrative punishments, discharges, and military justice at our seven subordinate bases.

After attending another year of law school in Washington, D.C., I was assigned to the U.S. Air Force Academy faculty in Colorado Springs, Colorado where I taught international law, law of armed conflict, and introduction to law courses. I deployed from the academy to the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) on a huge base in Qatar. The CAOC was responsible for planning and supervising the operations of all allied aircraft flying in Iraq and Afghanistan. I worked with British and French legal advisors to ensure our aircraft operated in compliance with the rules of engagement and law of armed conflict when engaging static or dynamic targets.

Upon returning from Qatar, I was assigned to the U.S. Air Force Warfare Center in Las Vegas, Nevada. There, I managed an office of approximately 40 attorneys and paralegals providing a full range of legal services to multiple organizations. I then moved to Oberammergau, Germany, where I took over as the legal advisor and operational law instructor for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) School. In addition to advising the commandant on the school's legal issues, every year I taught an array of NATO operational legal topics to thousands of military and civilian students from 80 different nations. Finally, I returned to Shreveport, Louisiana, to work at Air Force Global Strike Command Headquarters, where I was responsible for the fiscal and contract law section before retiring.

**Highlights of your military career:**

I really enjoyed teaching at the Air Force Academy and working in the CAOC, but the absolute personal and professional highpoint of my life was my time at the NATO School. Living in the Bavarian Alps and working closely with military personnel from 28 NATO member countries to teach interesting and important subjects to thousands of personnel from all over the world is an experience impossible to match, although I am trying here at NSU.

**Do you have a favorite story from your time in service?**

With 26 years of combined active/reserve service I was a part of so many amazing things it's hard to narrow it down. I routinely tell stories in my classes, so I am not going to pick just one.

**How does your military experience influence your work at NSU?**

The topics I teach are the same or closely related to many of the subjects I worked in as an Air Force officer. My perspective on certain issues is shaped by my life experiences, so I bring that to my classes.

**Were you a student veteran?**

Yes. After I left the Navy I was in the reserves, but only had to serve two weeks a year. Thus, I always scheduled my time over the summer break so it would not interfere with classes. I did not experience any problems and the GI Bill enabled me not to worry about money or a part-time job. Graduating with no student loan debt was a huge benefit.

**What are possible advantages to being a student veteran at NSU?**

NSU and the local community are very military friendly. The presence of other veterans on campus provides the type of immediate support network to which you are accustomed from the nomadic military lifestyle.

**What are potential challenges a student veteran might encounter at NSU?**

You will be a few years older than most of the other students in your classes. You will have a much different life experience so it may be difficult to relate to your peers. Being accustomed to behaving in accord with rigid military standards, you may initially find it challenging that others are not too worried about things such as due dates.

**Why might NSU be a good choice for a student veteran?**

NSU is a small campus with small classes. As such, it offers the opportunity to build a closer relationship with your instructors than you would have at a large school. In the military you can easily get lost in the crowd but that is much less likely to happen here because the crowd is much smaller so you can stand out more which is a good thing (despite what you learned in basic training). The VA operates an outpatient clinic in Aberdeen, so healthcare is easily accessible.

**Your message to veteran or active duty students or prospective students:**

The self-discipline and personal skills you developed in the military are the same ones that will ensure your academic success at NSU and professional success in a future career. As a student, I want you in my classes because your military experience gives you insight and a broader perspective that your fellow students simply do not possess. Plus, you are generally not shy about speaking up and getting involved. I spent my entire adult life in public service, so when you are considering what to do with the rest of your life, I hope the same mentality that motivated you to join the military again motivates you to choose a career in public service.

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