

How to play a JAG
by Beeman

beeman:
Howdy all!!!

beeman:
I was asked to do a panel on how to play a JAG as I play one in real life

Charles Star:
that sounds fun!

beeman:
This workshop will cover how to play a JAG in role play, not about Fleet or Group JAGs in the OOC context

beeman:
I often incorporate JAGs into my roleplays, especially when playing at a HQ-level

beeman:
In the U.S. Navy, usually only larger ships have a JAG embarked on them and it seems from the show that many ships do not have a JAG onboard or we would see their involvement in command decisions

beeman:
Because the role of a JAG, is really to **advise**

beeman:
JAGs advise the command-- usually the CO or an Admiral

beeman:
So in role play, I usually have one at the HQ-level

Charles Star:
Wait, this isn't about running kangaroo JAG court cases in my fleet?

beeman:
Or if it's a particular large ship, you could have an embarked JAG

Mimi:
Boing

@Charles Star

Wait, this isn't about running kangaroo JAG court cases in my fleet?

beeman:
No

Rich:
Like how they are on carriers?

Rich:
If the show is accurate

beeman:
Aside from advising the command, JAGs are often involved in criminal cases. This is where we usually see their entrance in roleplay

beeman:
A JAG's role is also to advise the *investigation*. That is, to answer any questions the investigators may have about the law, obtaining any necessary warrants, etc.

@Rich
Like how they are on carriers?
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beeman:
Exactly! In the Navy, carriers have an embarked JAG aboard. Usually two!

SideshowKaz:
Hell yes

SideshowKaz:
I'm so interested in this one

beeman:
So when roleplaying, if you have a JAG aboard, involve them in your investigations. They aren't just in Court all the time. I spend most of my time outside of Court actually, mostly advising commanders or investigators

beeman:
If you've ever seen The Wire, the fictional character Rhonda Pearlman is a great example of advising an investigation and later prosecuting it

Rich:

Like "federation has treaty with these people." Or "local laws say you can't walk on grass so follow x protocol "

beeman:

Yes, absolutely!

Penta:

Do RL JAGs/Staff Judge Advocates have much of a role in *operational* decisionmaking? Like, law of war stuff?

beeman:

And this is truly what happens IRL too

Plain Simple Grogu:

Sort of like a mission specialist?

@Penta

Do RL JAGs/Staff Judge Advocates have much of a role in *operational* decisionmaking? Like, law of war stuff?

beeman:

We do actually. Almost every command decision is run by the JAG. Consider them like the consiglieres of the military without the corruption/crime stuff

SideshowKaz:

It. Is a role thats sorely needed

beeman:

Often, JAGs will actually pre-draft a policy that is written by the Command. Commanders do very little of the grunt/drafting work. They just edit and sign basically

@Plain Simple Grogu

Sort of like a mission specialist?

beeman:

Yes, just in a legal context

@beeman

We do actually. Almost every command decision is run by the JAG. Consider them like the consiglieres of the military without the corruption/crime stuff

Penta:

I'm going to forward that description to some retired DOD civilians I know....It might fit better than you intend.:)

SideshowKaz:

I've seen some investigations that need a. Shove in the right direction of investigating

beeman:

Yes! JAGs sometimes gives tips to investigators. Keep in mind though that JAGs shouldn't be investigating nor running the investigation. That's where the line is drawn

beeman:

Because you don't want to be your own witness in the trial you're prosecuting!

Rich:

Thats when NCIS comes in?

beeman:

I have often given agents a suggestion though--- Hey, the crime you are looking into has these elements (what you need to prove in court). I would suggest asking XYZ or looking into ABC to find evidence of those elements

@Rich

Thats when NCIS comes in?

beeman:

Yes!

beeman:

Yet remember, your security teams can often run investigations on your sims. You don't need to call NCIS in

SideshowKaz:

I want to apply a good chunk of law degree to RP but need to know how rather than advising OOC and no one listening to me

beeman:

NCIS actually deals with terrorists/major crimes. A lot of your low-level offenses usually go through your attached law enforcement. Even for major cases, local law enforcement still has a big hand in the investigations

Rich:

Cool

beeman:

I will give an example from real life and hopefully it gives you some ideas for how to apply these principles in your sims

beeman:

We were investigating someone for fraud. He was selling personal info (socials) on the Dark Web/to his buddies

beeman:

We first got onto him cause we found credit cards in his dorm and then started pulling that thread... we pulled the statements of the credit cards (that didn't belong to him-- he was supposed to be closing the accounts)

beeman:

Then we obtained a warrant to seize his electronics

beeman:

As a JAG you advise on whether there is probable cause to pursue a warrant

beeman:

Then you go to the commander, which in the military, usually the CO is the one to grant the warrant, not a judge

beeman:

The investigator, so your Security officer, would brief the CO on the investigation thus far and why they suspect evidence to be where they want to search

beeman:

So in the case we're discussing, we wanted to seize his cell phone/laptop/etc. because we saw on the statements, there were attempted charges on online stores

beeman:

Remember, in an investigation you're gathering as much evidence as possible! Just cause 1 piece of evidence points to a person, doesn't mean you stop there

beeman:

So in the example case, we received a warrant and your security officer would be the one to execute it. Searching for the device or asking the person for it

beeman:

(Btw, this case is long over and I am not revealing anything sensitive)

beeman:

Well, sometimes your investigators will find new information from other crimes that may necessitate an additional search. Cause remember, you can only search for what is allowed on the warrant (yes, even in the military)

beeman:

So our investigators stopped and who did they call? ***The JAG***

beeman:

Hey, ma'am or sir, we were searching the device of so and so and discovered evidence of a new crime: ABC

beeman:

Then you basically repeat the steps above--- obtain a new warrant for the new crime

beeman:

Cause Warrant 1 was for evidence of fraud

beeman:

The new crime was drugs... so Warrant 2 is for drug evidence now

beeman:

Now this gentlemen actually fled in the middle of the investigation--- basically AWOL

beeman:

This is where your NCIS type folks got involved-- they actually left the fraud stuff up to our base law enforcement

beeman:

Yes, the JAG gets involved in AWOL as you are advising the command to sign the notice

beeman:

Then every unit and law enforcement knows

beeman:

We actually ended up triangulating his cell position (which also required a warrant)

beeman:

The major crimes folks were the ones to apprehend him and we threw him in the equivalent of the brig

beeman:

The Brig is a short-holding cell

beeman:

If anyone is sentenced to a lengthy term in prison, they are actually transferred to a long-term facility

beeman:

Because he proved himself to be a flight risk, we kept him in the brig

beeman:

Now, there are some U.S. due process considerations that I've seen play out to various ways in the Starfleet world. I won't belabor those points, yet if you have any specific questions on what the process looks like, feel free to ask

beeman:

I will say that in the military, your commanders are the ones making

beeman:

Yup, I usually do that over viewscreens like the shows

beeman:

In real life, we use telephonic testimony (even civilian courts do this)

beeman:

And we also use video conferencing

Penta:

huh, I thought they wanted people in the same room.

beeman:

We've done preliminary hearings IRL where the judge is VTC

beeman:

That is always preferable, yet even before COVID, sometimes that's not possible, especially in the military

Penta:

nods

beeman:

Extrapolating that to Star Trek and you get even more justification

Penta:

sure.

beeman:

We saw in the series that Court-Martials even occur aboard ships, which don't happen in the Navy (you usually get flown ashore)

Rich:

like they had to go to starbase to determine data rights

beeman:

I feel like that was more complex as he was an android

beeman:

Usually your senior attorneys are at the headquarters level

beeman:

You have 2 senior attorneys on base usually - think Commander/Lieutenant Commander types

beeman:

Onboard a ship, you'd probably have a Lieutenant Commander and a Captain as a JAG

beeman:

err-- Lieutenant

beeman:

I am Air Force lol so converting ranks is interesting

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beeman

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Then for your HQ with an Admiral as a CO, usually the JAG is a Captain

beeman:

the senior one I mean

beeman:

JAG offices (not counting on ships) usually have many lawyers and paralegals working in them

Rich:

so Air force would be like a captain and a major?

beeman:

exactly, except we don't have "embarked" JAGs because we only have bases

beeman:

So we have JAG offices at each base

beeman:

Smaller bases, your senior attorneys would be a Maj/Capt

beeman:

One thing I also want to mention is that JAGs review changes in regulations, contracts, etc. so it isn't all about the criminal world

beeman:

I spend a lot of times reviewing changes in regulations, procurement/construction contracts, etc.

Penta:

JAGs in a procurement context are like toddlers: Always screaming no, I was told.

beeman:

That's changed a lot

beeman:

We always try to figure out a way to yes

Penta:

Ooooh, exciting to hear.

beeman:

I may tell you, we can't do it this way, but we can do it another way

beeman:

Well, I appreciate everyone's attention during the panel! I am simming in RPG Writing these days so feel free to come find me or DM with any questions you may have!

Charles Star:

Does that mean we can hold a real JAG trial now?

beeman:

LOL. Only if you've filled out all the paperwork