



*Editor's Note: This post is part of the FTGN Army Broadening Series that we've extended to run from March 15 to April 2, 2021. Each day, we will publish new insights into the Army's various broadening assignments, starting March 15th, 2021 with an [overview of AIM 2.0](#) and a discussion on how to educate others on assignment selection criteria.*

## **An Unthinkable Opportunity; An Invaluable Experience**

By Doug Meyer and Riley Kennedy

“At the Pentagon, colonels fetch the coffee,” or so the saying goes. This idiomatic – and admittedly hyperbolic – expression is intended to set expectations for the level of rank “in the building.” It’s also a useful check on ego for those leaders transitioning from brigade-level command to a massive staff where even colonels nug on products. This is a useful

backdrop for the strategic broadening experience that is the JCS/OSD/ARSTAFF internship. It offers post-KD captains/pre-KD majors the opportunity to gain insight and experience in national level policymaking to then go back to the force and connect the operational bridge between strategy and tactics.

The Army has an array of broadening opportunities available. Each program offers benefits and the chance to learn and grow. The key is to know yourself, clarify your goals, identify your capability/experience gaps, and then match the right program to fit those needs. There are a myriad benefits to the Joint Chiefs of Staff/Office of the Secretary of Defense/Army Staff Internship. You are far from a “coffee fetcher.”

The JCS Internship - as it is colloquially shortened in name - is a [Broadening Opportunity Program \(BOP\)](#) for post key development (KD) captains. It is a 3-year program with one year spent at Georgetown University earning a master’s degree in policy management, a year on the Joint Staff or OSD Staff, and then a year on the Army Staff.

### **Year One - Georgetown**

Each year goes from June to June. Year One begins with an orientation, usually in the last week of May, to the Masters of Policy Management (MPM) program at Georgetown’s [McCourt School of Public Policy](#). The MPM program is a mid-career degree that provides essential management and analytical skills, balancing analytics, management, and substance within specific policy areas.

Furthermore, you will be exposed to professionals across state, local, and national government - as well as a robust array of students from foreign governments across the European Union, South America, Indo-Asian Pacific, and Middle East. The instructors are tenured professors coming from successful careers as practitioners in policy making. They are bolstered by a cadre of adjunct professors who work in various government and think-

tank jobs by day and then leverage that current experience to teach students in the evenings.

One of Doug's favorite classes was Speechwriting - taught by the former speechwriter to then Vice President Joe Biden and then Secretary of Defense Ash Carter. He also enjoyed Macro-economics for Policy-makers (which he never would have expected to enjoy). Doug used his spring electives and thesis paper to prepare him for his Joint Staff job in cyberspace plans and policy.

Riley found great value in the program's common core classes; specifically, Ethics, Program Evaluation, and the Policy Process, which laid a solid foundation for evaluating policy decisions at the department level. Riley's thesis focused on Army recruitment and marketing to future generations, which helped prepare her for her Army Staff assignment in the Office of the Secretary of the Army.

## **Year Two - Joint Staff/OSD Staff**

After "the best year of your adult life" (grad school life as a full-time job is pretty sweet), you are itching to get back at it. In your second year of the internship, you transition from learning about policy making in theory to writing and developing policy. Second-year interns fill a range of positions on the Joint Staff and OSD where they are treated like, and expected to perform, in roles often reserved for senior majors/junior lieutenant colonels.

Doug spent his Joint Staff year in the J5 Strategy, Plans, & Policy preparing national cyber policy and plans that were signed by the Secretary of Defense, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs (CJCS), and the President. He represented the CJCS's equities at National Security Council Staff meetings in the White House Situation Room and Eisenhower Executive Officer Building (EEOB). Simultaneously, he was able to balance these responsibilities with spending time with his wife and daughters - achieving the personal/family goals he set.

Riley was selected to serve as the Junior Military Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense. In this role, she was able fulfill the spirit of the JCS Internship by accompanying the DepSecDef on his engagements both within the Pentagon and with the White House and other agencies/departments. The greatest value of any assignment within the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) is gaining an understanding of what civilian oversight of the military looks like.

### **Year Three - Army Staff**

Interns spend their third and final year on the Army Staff, where they will “re-green” after getting all that purple (Joint) experience. The ARSTAFF year provides interns the opportunity to see how the Army Enterprise works at scope and scale. It provides an invaluable opportunity to see how the Joint/DoD policy you just helped prepare gets implemented at the organize/equip/train level - the services.

Some example ARSTAFF positions include:

- Strategic Planner to the Secretary of the Army
- Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff of the Army
- Legislative Liaison, OCLL
- Special Assistant in the Initiatives Group, G2
- War Planner, G3
- Executive Officer to the Logistics Initiative Group, G4
- Enterprise Cloud Management Staff Officer, G6
- Close Fires Staff Officer, G8

Riley spent her ARSTAFF year assigned as Military Assistant to the Under Secretary of the

Army. In this role, her portfolio included the Army's Reform line of effort where she focused mostly on Medical Reform. She spent the majority of her time shaping the Under Secretary's engagements and assisting with the Department's transition to "People First." During this assignment, Riley and her husband welcomed their first child. Though being a parent in the military is never easy, Riley truly felt that the Army Senior Leaders set the standard for a work/life balance that made the decision to grow her family simple. This should be an encouraging prospect for any officer considering the JCS/OSD/ARSTAFF internship.

Doug was originally slated to serve his ARSTAFF year as the Special Assistant to the Director of the Army Staff - Lt. Gen. Walter Piatt. But when President Trump announced Operation Warp Speed (OWS) - a federal public-private partnership to develop, manufacture, and distribute COVID-19 vaccines - Doug's role changed. He was selected to serve his ARSTAFF year as the Chief of Operations for Gen. Gustave Perna and OWS.

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Coming out of captain KD time is usually the first time an Army officer gets some autonomy over their career. Considering all of the broadening opportunities can be like staring at a restaurant menu that serves it all, and everything looks good. Sometimes your career timeline will narrow the options. Start with who you are and what you want, which includes what is best for your family/personal life. Where are you (mentally, physically, and emotionally)? Where have you been (career experiences)? And where do you want to go?

The JCS/OSD/ARSTAFF Internship is a phenomenal experience that is rewarding in the moment and will continue to pay dividends for years to come. As a JCS Intern, you will learn the theory of policy making at an elite institution (Georgetown University). Then, you put that theory into action making policy on the Joint Staff/OSD Staff. Finally, you translate policy and strategy into action through the organize/train/equip ([Figure III-1, JP 1](#)) functions

of a Service staff through the [DOTMLPF-P](#) construct.

Neither of us could have imagined the breadth and scope of the experiences we have had serving in our nation's capital. We are walking away with relationships across the spectrum of the public and private national security apparatus that we will maintain for a lifetime. After this three-year internship, we are going back to the force poised to act as a conduit, translating strategic imperatives into execution in the last tactical mile.

*Doug Meyer is father, husband, and infantry officer with over 12 years of active duty service. He has served in billets at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels and has deployed to the CENTCOM and INDOPACOM areas of responsibility. Doug is the Creator and Executive Editor of [The Company Leader](#) - an online forum for leadership lessons from the tactical level of war.*

*Riley Kennedy is a mother, wife, and intelligence officer who has recently transitioned to Functional Area 34 (Strategic Intelligence officer). She has 11 years of active duty service and has served at the Company, Battalion, and Brigade levels prior to starting the JCS Internship. She is the Creator and Editor of [Right and Up](#) - a blog that helps servicemembers and their families discover the best of each military town.*

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