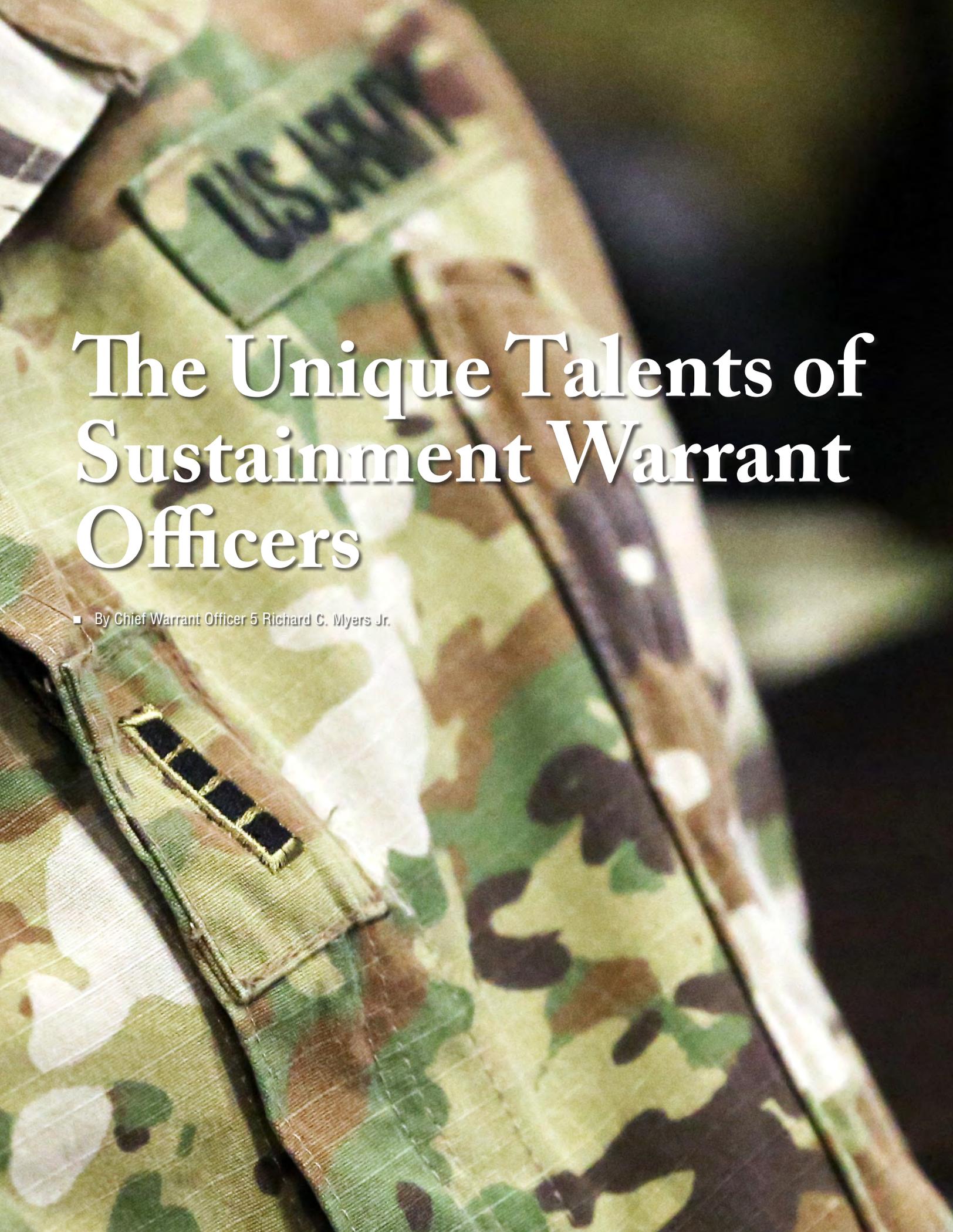




Chief Warrant Officer 4 Tommy Archie, the 2nd Theater Signal Brigade's senior technical advisor, attends a signal warrant officer professional development event on Feb. 28, 2018, in Landstuhl, Germany. (Photo by William B. King)



The Unique Talents of Sustainment Warrant Officers

■ By Chief Warrant Officer 5 Richard C. Myers Jr.

Capitalizing on training, education, and professional opportunities will allow sustainment warrant officers to remain the Army's premier logistics experts.

Sustainment warrant officers are the Army's premier logistics systems experts, innovative integrators of emerging system technologies, and skilled technical advisers. They meticulously administer, manage, maintain, operate, and integrate Army logistics systems across the full range of Army operations.

The Army requires a highly specialized sustainment warrant officer community that is both tactically and technically proficient. Therefore, warrant officer talent must be recognized and cultivated in a manner that supports the Army's ability to build and preserve readiness.

Today's sustainment warrant officers face an unparalleled level of complexity as they execute their responsibilities. Warrant officers are highly specialized but require a broader understanding of full-spectrum operations. They work in an environment of unpredictable requirements and face the dynamic pace of technological change. They have seen their role as a systems integration manager at the tactical level transition to incorporate joint, operational-level, and strategic-level responsibilities.

Now, more than ever, the Army must consistently monitor the operational environment to understand the complexities of change. This means the Army has to establish an effective talent management process across the total force. Developing competent and reliable talent will allow the kinds of adaptations and innovations that are necessary for warrant officers to remain a critical component of the Army's warfighting leadership.

Warrant Officer Careers

Warrant officers require extraordinary investments in time and resources to develop the depth of knowledge essential to serve as the Army's premier technical experts. To eliminate the ambiguity routinely associated with warrant officer careers, and to assist leaders in coaching and mentoring warrant officers, the professional development models for all

19 sustainment warrant officer specialties were updated and added to the Army Career Tracker (<https://actnow.army.mil/>).

Within this career tracker, warrant officers and their leaders can create individual development plans that support training, education, and assignment goals. Assignment management is often confused with career management; therefore, the professional developmental model provides a clear understanding of the operational, institutional, and self-development domain functions necessary to achieve the critical attributes and characteristics required to master specialties.

Career Broadening

Career broadening opportunities should be viewed as the purposeful expansion of a leader's capabilities and understanding. However, it is equally important to recognize that sustainment warrant officer broadening opportunities must remain technically focused and should enhance a warrant officer's ability to conduct sustainment operations in unified land operations.

The sustainment warrant officers' functional depth enables commissioned officers to operate as multifunctional logisticians. Therefore, broadening opportunities must emphasize the mastery of functional skills within their specialty.

Given the focused nature of warrant officer career tracks, the Army must continue to teach senior leaders and warrant officers that key and developmental assignments and nominative assignments (such as at a combat training center, as a small-group instructor, in the Training With Industry program, and at strategic broadening seminars) within the respective warrant officer specialty are indeed broadening opportunities. Assignments to the Army Materiel Command, Army Sustainment Command, Tank-automotive and Armaments Command, and many others provide unique broadening experiences as well.



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Richard C. Myers Jr. takes possession of the Ordnance Regimental Chief Warrant Officer charter during change of responsibility ceremony at Fort Lee, Va. (Photo by Patrick Buffett)

Warrant Officer Utilization

The Army must aggressively seek opportunities to develop and retain the best talent in order to succeed in an increasingly complex global security environment. There is a demonstrated relationship between superior talent and superior performance. Senior warrant officers and organizational leaders must be heavily involved in the utilization process.

Utilization outside the warrant officer's specialty or in a position coded for another rank jeopardizes the warrant officer's development and the organization's and the Army's ability to build and preserve readiness. Similar to officer positions, warrant officer positions are coded by grade because of the scope and complexity required to effectively execute the tasks associated with the positions.

Senior warrant officers, commanders, and mentors must ensure that the utilization of sustainment war-

rant officers enables the career-long development of technical expertise.

Professional Military Education

The warrant officer cohort must recommit to learning. We are not in a position to rest on our laurels and believe that our past achievements are sufficient to carry us into the future.

Our learning environment must be one that prepares warrant officers as intellectual teammates who clearly understand the purpose behind the military operations in which they participate. When we understand the intent, we can truly work with unity of purpose.

Sustainment warrant officer professional military education (PME) must continue to evolve. The education that we provide must take students out of their comfort zones by using innovative teaching techniques and challenging academic curricula.

This past year, the Combined Arms

Support Command conducted a PME analysis to identify warrant officer technical training gaps across all four sustainment branches. As a result, significant changes to programs of instruction are being instituted for both the Warrant Officer Basic Course and the Warrant Officer Advanced Course (WOAC).

Recognizing that the advanced course is the last technical course within warrant officer PME, the Ordnance, Transportation, and Quartermaster branches have all established follow-on technical training for Warrant Officer Intermediate Level Education and Warrant Officer Senior Service Education courses. This follow-on training will give senior warrant officers joint, theater, and strategic level understanding of sustainment operations.

It is important that we get our warrant officers to all phases of PME. PME attendance timelines for the advanced course must correctly align in order for sustainment

warrant officer PME to build upon the skills, knowledge, and experience developed through previous education, training, and assignments. Army Regulation 350-1, Army Training and Leader Development, outlines the goal of warrant officer PME: to afford officers the opportunity to attend schools early in their careers.

That goal resulted in newly promoted chief warrant officers two attending the WOAC within two years after completing their basic courses. The previous policy allowed warrant officers to attend WOAC only upon selection to chief warrant officer three. The new policy allows attendance nearly five years earlier. Unfortunately, having this training too early in one's career creates a significant technical training gap that negatively affects long-term de-

velopment and degrades readiness.

To correct the developmental timeline, the Combined Arms Support Command has established a prerequisite that requires a sustainment chief warrant officer two to have at least two years of time in grade before attending WOAC. This will allow warrant officers to develop the necessary skills prior to attending WOAC.

Leader Development

Leaders must maximize warrant officer professional development opportunities through a deliberate, continual, sequential, and progressive process. Having a warrant officer leader development program is a great technique for tackling warrant officer development areas.

However, to truly develop the team and strengthen the character,

leader attributes, core competencies, and professional competence of warrant officers, you must include them in the officer professional development (OPD) program. Warrant officers should be required to participate in both the warrant officer leader development program and the OPD.

Warrant officers one and chief warrant officers two should attend company-grade OPDs, chief warrant officers three and four should attend field-grade OPDs, and chief warrant officers five should attend senior officer OPDs. In the end, it is about leveraging the diverse talents of the entire team to professionally teach, coach, counsel, and mentor.

Talent Management

The Army is by no means short on



Then Brig. Gen. William J. Walker thanks District of Columbia National Guard warrant officers for their service to the organization on Feb. 27, 2018. Maj. Gen. Walker is the commanding general of the District of Columbia National Guard. (Photo by Spc. Kevin Valentine)

talented sustainment warrant officers, which is why we must manage our stellar performers' careers closely. Chief warrant officers five are some of the most senior and valuable members of the Army.

Consequently, to maximize the unique talents, skills, and knowledge of the most senior warrant officers, we have implemented across the sustainment community a chief warrant officer five talent management process that aligns the skills, attributes, and characteristics of individual warrant officers with the scope and complexity of positions.

Starting this year, all chief warrant officer five assignments will be managed in a similar manner as assignments for colonels who are former battalion commanders. Each assignment will be scrutinized and approved by a senior general officer

board of directors and then personally approved by the Army Materiel Command commander.

This new assignment management process requires a significant cultural shift for both leaders and senior warrant officers. There will be growing pains, but ultimately, it will enable us to align the best-qualified warrant officers with the right jobs at the right times. This talent management process takes into consideration the development of core branch or functional area competencies that have been cultivated through service in progressively more challenging developmental positions.

There is no question that the sustainment warrant officer plays an integral role in the Army's ability to fight tonight. Despite many chal-

lenges, today's warrant officers remain the best-educated and trained cohort we have ever fielded. Leaders across the force must remain committed to transforming and modernizing warrant officer talent management, education, and leader development programs in ways that recognize and cultivate sustainment warrant officer talent to support the Army's ability to build and preserve readiness.

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Richard C. Myers Jr. is the command chief warrant officer for the Combined Arms Support Command. He holds a master's degree in business administration from Touro University. He completed all levels of warrant officer education and is a graduate of the Command and General Staff College.

