

New senior enlisted advisor returns to GEOINT roots

By Nancy McGillicuddy, Office of Corporate Communications

Photo by Kevin Clark, Office of Communications

AS THE NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL- Intelligence Agency's senior enlisted advisor, U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Rachel Zeigler serves as Director Letitia A. Long's eyes and ears on all military matters, from the training to the health, morale and welfare of the agency's service personnel.

But, the 24-year veteran did not always picture herself in the military, she said.

"I did not see myself joining the service at all," she said. "But, I got to a point in my life where I wanted a job where I could use my brain."

She decided to follow her father's footsteps into the Air Force, said Zeigler, who hails from Brookfield, N.H.

"Once I made that decision – I was going to go all the way," she said. "Chief was always a goal for me."

Zeigler came to NGA from Scott Air Force Base in September and is slated to serve as the senior enlisted advisor for three years, she said. She is responsible for providing counsel and professional development guidance for enlisted, officers and the civilians.

"Chief Zeigler brings a wealth of leadership experience to NGA that will benefit our military and civilians," said NGA Director Letitia A. Long.

While many military members are used to working in a joint environment, one of the challenges younger service members may face at NGA is working in an environment that is mainly civilian, said Zeigler.

"It's not a traditional military structure," said Zeigler. "I think just navigating the agency can be a challenge."

Her areas of responsibility include NGA's military intern program and GEOINT certification.

Once established, the military intern program will bring junior noncommissioned officers and commissioned officers to NGA for three years, said Zeigler. Participants will have an opportunity to work in multiple key components and take classes in the NGA College.

"They will walk away after three years very 'NGA smart' on the products (the agency) can provide, (and can) then take that information back out to the services," said Zeigler.

The intern program should be up and running by the summer of 2014, said Zeigler.

GEOINT certification applies to military and civilians, and is part of a Department of Defense initiative, said Zeigler. As part of the workforce objective in NGA's strategy, certification will help standardize training and ensure GEOINT practitioners perform at specific proficiency levels by demonstrating common competencies.

"Regardless of the agency you work in, if you are a GEOINT analyst there is common foundational knowledge you (must) have," said Zeigler.

Returning to the GEOINT world is something she enjoys about her new position, said Zeigler, who began her career in strategic and imagery intelligence.

"The other part I enjoy is being able to talk to the enlisted folks and having the opportunity to mentor and teach," she said.

She encourages the men and women she mentors to perform to the very best of their abilities regardless of the position, said Zeigler.

"I know a lot of folks think they need a set path to be successful," she said. "But, it's not so much about the duty position or the location, it's what you do with the job." ✨

