18 September 2012

INFORMATION PAPER

SUBJECT: Unit Claims Officers – Investigation Requirements

1. **Purpose.** To inform commanders and heads of Army and DoD organizations or activities of the requirement to appoint unit claims officers and direct prompt investigation of incidents involving potential liability on the part of the U.S. Government.

2. **Facts.**

a. Department of Defense Directive 5515.9 requires Commanders and heads of Army and DoD organizations to assist the Army in the investigation of incidents involving their Soldiers, employees, or equipment that may give rise to claims for or against the United States.

b. Army Regulation 27-20 prescribes the appointment of unit claims officers (UCOs) to investigate incidents of loss or damage. Organizations that generate a significant claims load should appoint a UCO on standing orders. Immediately upon identification of a potential claim, commanders should contact the Fort Belvoir claims office in the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, 9990 Belvoir Drive, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, telephone no. (703) 805-4377 for help with the appointment of a UCO.

c. The purpose of a claims investigation is to determine the facts of an incident. It develops definitive answers to such questions as "when," "where," "who," "what," and "how." The investigation performed by a UCO provides the basis for every subsequent step in the administrative settlement of a claim or the defense of a law suit. Upon notification of an incident that may result in a claim, the UCO should contact the claims office for advice and assistance.

d. Prompt investigation is critical to determine the facts of potential claims prior to the departure of personnel and witnesses due to PCS, ETS, or retirement. Some factual issues may become impossible to determine after personnel are no longer available.

3. **Conclusion.** Unit commanders and heads of Army and DoD organizations should appoint a unit claims officer and contact Mr. Gregory V. Hand, Chief, Claims, at (703) 805-4377 if they become aware of incidents that may result in a claim for or against the U.S. Government.

Mr. Gregory V. Hand/805-4377
Approved by COL Keeler, SJA