



*THE*  
*CAPTAIN*  
*ASSIGNMENT*  
*GUIDE*



*August 2008*

## Welcome!

The new Captain Assignment Season is underway! For all you veterans of the process, welcome back. We also want to congratulate all the new selectees and welcome them to the Captain ranks. Since the O-6 assignment process is slightly different from what most of us have experienced at the lower grades, we have created this guide to:

- Explain the process
- Pass along some of the rules of engagement we follow
- Provide information that will help everyone involved in the process manage expectations
- Help prepare you to counsel/educate your wardrooms on some assignment process survival tips

While we have targeted the information in this guide at the Captains and Captains-select who are experiencing the process for the first time, we hope all will find it helpful for their personal use and in counseling others. Thus, we are distributing it to all flag officers, and members of the Senior Executive Service (SES).

## Who We Are

The O-6 Assignment Team within CGPC's Officer Personnel Management Division (CGPC-opm) consists of:

- CAPT David Throop, Division Chief and assignment officer (AO) for Chief of Staff, Response/Prevention Division Chief, Academy assistant superintendent, CG-09EA, CG-09 Exec Billets, principal deputies to Flag Officers, CG-82, CG-0921, CG-0922 and positions on CCG/VCG staff.
- CAPT Steven Reynolds, Assistant Division Chief and AO for all O6 Command, Staff, and Liaison billets.
- CWO Mike Jenkins, our executive assistant, and the person who actually issues your orders.
- Ms. Debra Beecham, administrative assistant.

## The key elements

The O-6 assignment process is, to a large extent, no different from what you've experienced in the past, in that the key elements are the **Shopping List, your E-Resume** and—as with the O-5 process—the **Assignment Panel**.

## The Shopping List

The Shopping List of all the O-6 billets we believe will be open in the current assignment season is initially published in August. As a starting point, the list includes all those billets where the incumbent will be tour-complete the following summer. (A fairly accurate preview of the Shopping List can be obtained earlier in the summer

from the rotation dates indicated on the listing of Captains/Captains-select.)

Additions and changes to the O-6 Shopping List will be made as they occur. These can be viewed either on CG Central or the CGPC-opm internet web site. After October 1, CGPC-opm will announce all additions to the O-6 Shopping List via emails. In this way, all Captains and Captains-select are kept informed of billets we think have a greater than 50% chance of coming open. Changes normally occur after the results of the flag officer selection and captain continuation boards, the senior service school selection panel, and the consolidated major command screening panel. Other changes will likely occur as members re-evaluate career and personal goals.

Shopping List updates, especially late in the process, are intended to give potential candidates a chance to consider new alternatives, and frequently are issued to develop contingency plans that may never be implemented. Please don't subject the Assignment Officer or the incumbent in an advertised billet to questions regarding why the billet will be vacant or what is happening with the incumbent.

Please use the Shopping List when developing or updating your E-Resume. We highly encourage you to share the shopping list with your family and discuss your goals and objectives before submitting your E-Resume. If you are tour complete or desire a transfer in the current assignment season, we need your E-Resume by **1 October**. Earlier submission is desired, so please submit your E-resume as soon as possible.

### **The E-Resume and One-Page Biographies**

The E-Resume is your primary - and for the majority of cases can serve as the only necessary - method of communicating with us. Please do not view submitting your E-Resume as an entering position to begin an extensive, iterative dialog with us. Try to give us complete information so we can best serve you. Updates along the way - based on Shopping List changes or other new information - are welcome. The bottom line is that your E-Resume should accurately reflect your personal preferences. Each Captain/Captain Select must also prepare and submit a One-Page Biography by **01 September** - the template is included at the end of this guide. This Bio will be forwarded to the cognizant Flag Officer/SES for each billet that you request, so that they can consider your assignment history, education, and background in determining assignment preferences. It will also be available for use by the Assignment Panel. In addition, these Bios may be used off-season as tools for senior officers to use in selecting captains for designated positions or to select captains to lead teams, special projects, etc.

## **E-Resume Craftsmanship**

A well-crafted E-Resume should allow flexibility and acknowledge possible outcomes. If your E-Resume lists five commands and nothing more, that tells us you haven't considered the possibility of not being assigned to command. The same applies to E-Resumes that list only an extension, or only billets in a single geographic area. If you have an established specialty, but you prefer an out-of-specialty assignment, tell us. But, also consider telling us what your specialty preferences are in the event the Panel can't accommodate your desire. A very narrow E-Resume makes our work almost as easy as a blank E-Resume, as we presume you'll be equally thrilled with any assignment after the few preferences listed. A broad E-Resume tells us your preferences and addresses alternatives that you believe the Service will consider you for, given your specialty background and/or experience. We have received E-Resumes from captains with 15 - 20 diverse billets identified. We have also received E-Resumes with just one billet listed.

## **Extension and Early Rotations**

Extensions are assignment decisions made by the Panel. A request for extension is viewed by the Panel as one assignment preference, one that is hopefully joined by others on the E-Resume. How likely is it that you may be extended in your current billet? That depends on several factors...in some cases the Service need may be best met by extending you in a billet, and at other times the Service need is best met by moving you to afford others the opportunity to serve in a desirable or developmental billets, Extensions are considered 'orders' and if you are granted an extension, you will incur 12 months of obligated service from 1 July of the assignment year you execute your new orders.

For **early rotations**, it is important that your command (Flag/SES) provides us with an email endorsing your early rotation. The purpose of the command endorsement is not to give an opinion of your suitability for the requested billet(s), but rather to address the effect your early departure would have on unit continuity or the overall skill/experience level of the unit staff. "Conditional" positive endorsements (e.g., "I support early rotation for billet X but not for billet Y") are not appropriate. Early rotations most often occur in no-cost transfer circumstances or when a specific specialty or Service need cannot be adequately satisfied using officers that are tour complete.

## **Rotation Dates and Career Implications**

Captains often consider extensions and early rotations in conjunction with two key career events: continuation and 30-year mandatory retirement. For pre-continuation Captains, you'll want to consider where you will be with respect to your continuation board. If you are tour complete or ask to move in the year you will likely be considered

for continuation, realize that non-selection may mean that you will move twice in 12 months. For post-continuation Captains, you'll want to consider where you are with respect to your tour complete date and the 30 year mark. If you are going to be tour complete in your 29<sup>th</sup> year, you may want to consider seeking to move a year early in order to provide for a final two-year tour. Otherwise, the alternatives are to request an extension, compete for a new billet in which you would serve for only one year, or voluntarily retire at 29 years.

## **Special Needs**

Many officers have "Special Needs," but remember that in this context, a Special Need is a specifically defined term describing types of situations involving an officer and/or family that must be approved for acceptance into the Special Needs Program. Any officer with a Special Need must register in this **mandatory** program in accordance with COMDTINST 1754.7 (series), and must check the Special Need box on the E-Resume. When we see that indicator, we work closely with the program administrator in CG-111 to ensure potential assignment outcomes are compatible with the Special Need. Please don't wait to introduce this consideration until after you've received orders, as you make it more difficult for us in our attempts to accommodate your circumstance.

Aside from Special Needs, among the most prevalent concerns many of us have relate to children in high school, caring for aging parents, a challenging housing market, and spouse employment issues. We are sympathetic to those concerns, but you need to know that these issues affect almost every senior officer, and although we are sympathetic to your concerns, it is impossible to accommodate everyone's special considerations.

## **E-Resume Due Date**

Your E-Resume must be received by **1 October**. If you are expecting reassignment in AY08 and do not have an E-Resume on file by then, you can expect to be significantly disadvantaged during the assignment process. If you submit an E-resume after the deadline, you must inform your assignment officer because there is no mechanism in Direct Access to let us know that a new E-resume has been submitted.

## **The OPM Process**

Armed with the Shopping List and your E-Resumes, we can then begin to amass all the information we will need to develop assignment recommendations and explain them to the Assignment Panel.

## Strategizing and Forming the Lists

In October, we engage flag officers and members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) (or their principal assistants) in a dialog concerning O-6 billets under their cognizance. The dialog normally covers special concerns, priorities regarding billets, and information with which to reconcile questions on billets and the broad population of officers meeting specialty/billet needs.

At this time we also start developing a list (candidate pool) for each billet that includes the name of every officer requesting the billet on their E-Resume. We may place your name on a list for some billets even though you didn't include them on your E-Resume, and even when we know you may not be interested in them. We do this in cases where we find you meet the needs identified by the flag officer/SES exercising cognizance over the billet, and an adequate pool of qualified officers was not obtained from those requesting the billet.

## Playing the Slates

In late October or early November, we begin discussing the lists of candidates with the flag officers/SESs—directly or through their principal assistants. What this means is that we give the field flag officer/SES - and flag officer/SES exercising specialty cognizance over the billet, if applicable - the names and one-page biographies of people on the lists described above. In the early stages of considering assignments, we work with incumbent flag officers, but if a turnover is pending, the final input comes from the flag officer who will report to the billet. This procedure favors the position of the flag officer that will be reporting in concurrently with captains being assigned. Normally, the incumbent flag officer and the flag officer ordered in exchange views regarding unit needs.

In filling the Principal Flag Deputy billets, we normally talk directly with the flag officer/SES with cognizance. For the other captain billets, we continue to work through the incumbent's principal assistant, with the understanding that the assistant will coordinate and validate input with the flag officer ordered in.

## What is Revealed?

Here's the information we pass to a flag officer/SES or principal assistant regarding you, when your name appears on a list for a billet: your **year group, specialty, assignment history**, and relevant **training, education or experience** (e.g., assigned to a special study, involved in a certain operation, geographic familiarity with X area, graduate degree in Y). You convey most of this information through your bio summary. We provide general answers to questions regarding your record of performance. We do not pass what assignment preference the billet is on your E-Resume, so please don't worry about listing something 2<sup>nd</sup> as compared to 3<sup>rd</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup>. The

Panel will see your E-Resume, but the billet “owner” will know only that you are in the pool of potential candidates for the billet in question.

**What Kind of Say Does the Billet “Owner” Have?**

In return, we ask for very simple feedback on each officer we propose. We ask the flag officer/SES to tell us, at a minimum, whether they find each candidate acceptable or not. Absent a disqualifying matter of record or lack of requisite experience, most Captains/Captains-select are acceptable candidates for an O-6 billet. The billet “owner” can express which candidates are preferred. We don’t share details of our conversations with the flag officer/SES with you, just as we don’t discuss details of your E-Resume with them. This approach maintains the confidentiality of the process and normally provides a very robust pool of officers for assignment purposes. Flag officer/SES input is considered as an advisory element among the various considerations the Panel takes into account in making assignment recommendations.

**Pre-Continuation vs. Post-Continuation**

While seniority is one factor in the assignment process, please remember that there are no billets designated “post-continuation.” However, the more senior captains are generally assigned to District/Area Chief of Staff, District/Area Response/Prevention Division Chief, Academy assistant superintendent, MLC deputy, principal deputies to HQ Flag Officers, CG-0010, CG-82, CG-0921, and the CGPC (Commander). Captain Throop is responsible for these senior billets, while Captain Reynolds is responsible for all of the other O6 billets. Both sets of billets will be filled from the O6 candidate pool regardless of a member’s “pre” or “post” continuation status. Seniority and experience will continue to be critical factors in the process but depending on the supply-and-demand dynamics associated with any one assignment season, post-continuation Captains will be assigned to a variety of captain billets. So, while there are no absolutes, a good way to get a sense for the “seniority” of a billet is to consider the seniority (+/- 1 year) of the incumbent at the start of their tour, as well as the presence or absence of supervisory responsibilities over other Captains.

**Who’s in Play?**

Every Captain and Captain-select, unless scheduled for retirement is in play. But, of course, we aren’t really going to transfer everyone, so there is a general hierarchy. If you’re tour complete, you will get orders, even if the Panel elects to extend you. If you’re not tour complete and you screen for senior service school, command or ask for orders, you may be reassigned and your billet will be shopped... fleet-ups or reassignment to another billet in the same location are

common examples. If you're a Captain-select, not tour complete, and serving in an O-5 billet, you are normally more susceptible to an early transfer than a person already in an O-6 billet. If you're not tour complete and you don't want to move, we may still propose to move you if a Service need requires it. Examples of this situation would be where we have a billet need for your specialty (operational or technical) or experience that we can't satisfactorily meet with the pool of tour complete officers - this is why we tell you to keep a current E-Resume on file. Yes, fiscal constraints do come into play, but not so much that they overwhelm our mission to best staff the Service for success.

### **Pecking Order?**

Captain-selects and newly promoted Captains do not get assigned to billets after more senior Captains are assigned. The process is the same for all, and it's a process that has placed selected Captains in O-6 commands afloat and ashore, as well as in other desirable positions. We do however, issue orders to fill every vacant billet, including those billets for which no one asks.

### **Marketing**

Each year we've been asked questions like: "Should I call the chief of staff or flag officer?", "Should I send a letter or resume?"; "Should I send a copy of my E-Resume to the flag officer and program director?" and so on. That's not part of our process. Yes, we are aware some officers do some of these things to introduce themselves, and some on the receiving end might find the information interesting. We also know of instances where the officer undertaking the marketing effort has disadvantaged himself/herself. We do not recommend this type of engagement. If a flag officer/SES is interested in talking to you regarding a billet, we provide telephone numbers to them or they may ask us to have you contact them.

### **The Feedback Loop**

As the process takes us into late November and December, the interest level (and, in some cases, the anxiety level) is understandably heightened among the Captains and Captains-select in play for reassignment. You're certainly welcome to call and check on our progress, but we appreciate your patience if the answer you get is "we don't know yet" or "it's too early to tell." Certain parts of the slate are worked out before others, but there is usually some collection of billets for which the most likely outcome isn't known until just before the Panel. We try to strike a balance between getting information to you sooner and providing you with information that is not likely to change. We'll make every effort to keep you updated with information on where we are in working the slate.



Approximately mid-December we start to get a sense of the billets for which you may be most competitive. **One caution:** saying you are “competitive” is not an indication of what we may eventually see before the Panel convenes. Being competitive normally means you are among the pool of a few candidates from which we think the billet will be filled. Remember, we are telling the same thing to a few other people. Will we tell you who? No. We do not discuss your E-Resume with anyone but you, and we don’t discuss other officers’ preferences with you either.

During the week or so prior to the Panel convening date, we attempt to notify each person who is tour-complete or likely to be reassigned what we think the outcome of the Panel will be. That’s usually a very hectic time of the year with Christmas and New Year holidays, so be sure that if you’re going on leave you give us a contact number. Our forecast is usually about 85% or more accurate. That means most will have a good sense of what the future holds before the Panel convenes. However, the Panel - subject to Commandant approval - is the final authority, and they have no obligation to stay with the OPM-prepared slate, so some officers may see something different come out in the message.

We normally stop communication the day before the Panel convening date, and do not return or make calls while they are in session. If you do get a call from us during that time frame, it’s at the Panel’s direction. After the Panel recesses and reports out, we do not discuss their deliberations... those remain confidential.

## **The Panel**

The Captain Assignment Panel convenes each year in early January, usually on the first week. Panel membership consists of five flag officers assigned to serve by the Commandant; the only other people in the room are the two O-6 Assignment Officers, the CWO who supports us as the executive assistant in the O-6 assignment process and Ms. Debra Beecham, our administrative assistant. The Panel typically meets for two to three days before issuing the initial report and recessing for two weeks during the Retirement In Lieu of Orders (RILO) period. The post-RILO session is much shorter, and yields the final report. Assignment decisions made after the final report are made under the off-season process.

Our proposals to the Panel are our assessment of the best match of Service needs, unit needs and your personal needs - in that order - based upon all the information we have available. We strive to optimize overall Coast Guard staffing to maximize mission execution, and at times, that drives us to compromise in balancing unit needs and individual needs/desires. Besides our proposals, we make available to the panel your E-Resume, your one-page biography, letters from

members to the Panel President, source documents such as screening panel results, the names of all personnel asking for a billet, input from the cognizant flag officer(s)/SES(s), and your record. We specifically note that a billet is on your E-Resume, and what choice that billet preference is. If it's not on your E-Resume, we say so. If we know you specifically do not desire an assignment, we note that and believe we make your best case in stating your reasons. Similarly, we present divergent views when they may arise between a program director and a field flag officer. We explain our rationale for the assignments we propose and note alternatives as requested. Please understand that alternatives are not usually one for one replacements, but are rather a series of moves.

### **Retire In Lieu of Orders (RILO)**

When the Panel's initial assignment recommendations are approved by the Commandant, an ALCGPERSCOM message is released and the 15-day RILO period begins.

It is important to understand the RILO parameters. Since not everyone is eligible to RILO.

- If you have 20 years of service, you have no obligated service requirements, and you prefer to retire instead of accepting orders, your request will normally be granted.
- If you are a selected Captain, eligible to retire, and request to retire in lieu of orders, you must also ask to voluntarily have your name removed from the list of Captain selectees.
- If you are a newly promoted Captain, our personnel regulations require you to serve in grade for two years prior to retiring. If your two years of obligated service isn't up by 1 August, or if you have other obligated service (advanced education pay-back, OUTCONUS transfer, tuition assistance, etc.), you are not eligible to RILO.

Please also note that all RILOs must take place by 1 August. You can ask to retire earlier. If you prefer a later retirement date (perhaps to be eligible for a longevity pay raise or to better meet your personal needs), then you need to submit your voluntary retirement (VOLRET) request in time for us to act on it prior to the Panel convening date. Submitting your VOLRET request as early as possible, and preferably prior to Thanksgiving, will allow us the time we need to shop and fill your billet.

### **Post-RILO**

Shortly after the 15-day RILO period expires, the Panel reconvenes, usually with one or more members participating via phone conference. By that time we have had time to consider RILO-caused vacancies and other new developments, and have worked out alternative assignment recommendations for each new vacancy. We

present recommended solutions to the Panel, providing information on each officer involved in the same way as in the initial session.

Panel decisions are announced in an ALCGPERSCOM message, which constitutes the final report.

Those officers who are reassigned during the post-RILO session are also afforded a 15-day RILO period. Backfill actions resulting from post-final report RILOs are addressed as off-season transfers.

## **Orders**

Approximately mid-February, our executive assistant begins transmitting orders, starting with OUTCONUS transfers and other officers known to have early reporting dates. Usually all Captain orders are out by the beginning of March.

## **Off Season**

Although the vast majority of Captain assignments are handled through the Panel process described above, each year circumstances arise which require off-season transfer decisions not contemplated by the Panel. While a panel of flag officers is not involved in off-season assignment decisions, we follow many of the same steps.

When we become aware of an upcoming off-season vacancy, we advertise the billet in an ALCGOFF message, along with any other billets that stand a good chance of opening as part of a daisy chain (unless advertised extensively during the regular assignment season). We “play” the names of officers who respond to the solicitation; along with others we might have identified who also have the right seniority, skills and experience. We consider the cognizant flag officer/SES input, current command endorsements, and our ability to minimize a chain reaction of assignments.

Captain off-season assignment recommendations are developed by opm or opm-a and approved by Commander, Coast Guard Personnel Command.

## **Off-Season Retirements**

Under Personnel Manual policy, eligible officers may submit a request for retirement a minimum of six months and no more than twelve months in advance of the desired separation date. Separation dates of July through October are within the reasonable parameters to afford commands a minimum gap. Earlier requests typically will result in an extended gap, and later requests double incur the billet. We can normally approve a request made within those parameters, but in some cases Service need or circumstances at a unit do not permit approval of the requested date. One important consideration is our ability to backfill the retiring officer’s billet.

There are usually no easy backfill options when a vacancy occurs outside the annual assignment process. For that reason, command endorsements on retirement requests must address backfill requirements. Retirement requests, which would cause an O-6 vacancy off-season, may face disapproval if an acceptable backfill arrangement cannot be found and the command is not willing to absorb a gap. We encourage you to try to plan your retirement to coincide with the assignment season so that we have the best opportunity to approve your desired date. Retirement dates of July through October best align with the normal rotation cycle.

Of course, any officer who is reassigned to a new permanent duty station by the Panel, and who takes no action during the RILO period, is obliged to execute orders and serve at the new permanent duty station for at least one year (two years OUTCONUS.)

## **Conclusion**

We hope you find this information useful in understanding your assignment process and that it helps reduce the associated anxiety. We recognize how important the outcome of assignment decisions is to each individual and to the Service. We hope our messages, voice mail, and website publication, as well as personal contact, will keep you well informed as we seek to meet Service need by balancing the needs of the unit and your individual needs.

**CAPT (or CAPT(s)) First I. Last**  
YG 19XX

**Current Assignment** (*FORMAT: Unit, Position, Date Reported (MMM YY)*)  
USCGC MELLON, Commanding Officer, Jul 06

**Assignment History** (*for all commissioned time starting with most recent*)  
(*MMM YY – MMM YY Unit, Position*)

Jun 03 – Jun 06 G-OCU, Assistant Chief, Office of Cutter Forces  
Aug 02 – May 03 ICAF, Duty Under Instruction

...

**Educational Summary** (*starting with most recent*)  
(*YYYY Institution, Degree or Certificate*)

2003 ICAF, Masters of Science in National Resources Strategy

**Military Personal Awards and Significant National Recognition or Achievement**  
(*Examples*)

LOM, MSM (2), COM (2), ACH  
1999, Excellence in Government Fellow  
1996, CG Witherspoon Inspirational Leadership Award Recipient  
1995, CG Comptroller of the Year  
1994, CG Jarvis Award Recipient

**Significant Current Professional Credentials or Recent Activities**  
(*Examples*)

Merchant Mariner License, Unlimited Master  
Professional Civil Engineer License, State of Florida  
Published, "The Coast Guard at War," USNI Proceedings, May 2003  
Vice President, Alameda CG Officers Association  
Member, Society of American Military Engineers