

The
**Reserve Ensign - Lieutenant
Commander**
*Assignment
Guide*



APR 2008

Purpose

The Reserve junior officer (JO) assignment process is primarily managed by the local Integrated Support Command (ISC) Assignment Officer (AO). While primarily of interest to officers anticipating reassignment, our goal is for this information to be of equal value to commands, career counselors and mentors. This guidebook was created to:

- clarify the assignment process;
- identify the basic of the rules of engagement; and
- provide information to help everyone manage expectations.

As this is a constantly evolving process we appreciate any and all feedback in what would make this a better guide. Your point of contact is the current Reserve Junior Officer AO at your local ISC.

The Key Elements

The key elements in the assignment process are the shopping list and your e-resume. Depending on your local ISC's process, there may be a Junior Officer Assignment Panel as well. Remember, while your ISC AO makes recommendations to the Panel, it is the Panel that ultimately makes the assignments.

The Shopping List

The shopping list of the entire Reserve junior officer billets expected to be available in the upcoming assignment season for your ISC's AOR is typically published in February via message traffic and in Direct Access (DA). The list includes all billets where the incumbent will be tour-complete the following summer, billets where we have approved separation requests on file, or the billets currently filled with an officer senior to the billet's rank (O4 in an O3 billet). Officers that are tour complete and who are one time non-selected to the next higher grade will usually be treated on a case-by-case basis. Immediate reassignment is required where a Reserve officer is promoted to a grade senior to that of their Commanding Officer.

In the initial message, commands are asked to carefully review the list and provide any command concerns before the assignment panel meets. Additions and deletions based on that review will occur. The greatest numbers of changes normally occur right after the shopping list is released as commands verify billet changes and member rotations. Other changes will likely occur as members evaluate career and personal goals and through billet growth due to Service needs.

Since each ISC is responsible for the shopping list in their AOR there is no consolidated list of jobs open nationally other than in direct access. For ease of use current ISC shopping list messages are posted on CGPC-rpm's web site.

**Contacting
Commands or
Incumbents**

As you review the shopping list, you will start to build your own list of preferred billets. At that point, you probably want to get a better read for command and work involved. Contact the chain of command that owns the billet or the current incumbent to get a feel for the expectations and current tasks. Remember, while we would like the billet title to accurately reflect the actual job description, this is not always the case. Also, what a command may have the incumbent doing currently may not be what they have in mind for incoming personnel. Contact your AO first if you have any questions or have trouble tracking down the owning command.

If you have a specific concern or extenuating circumstances impacting your assignment, please convey this information directly to the AO.

The E-Resume

The e-resume is your primary and the only mandatory method of communicating with the AO and the assignment panel. Give your AO complete information so they can best serve you. You should feel free to contact your AO to get advice, but the e-resume is the final, official statement of your desires. Updates along the way, based on shopping list changes or other new information, are always welcome. An email to the AO letting him or her know you have updated your e-resume is the only way to ensure that your most recent e-resume is being acted upon. The bottom line is that your e-resume should accurately reflect your personal preferences.

Please use the shopping list when developing or updating your e-resume. If you are tour complete or desire a transfer in the current assignment season, your ISC needs your e-resume by the date listed in their Junior Officer Assignment Panel kickoff message. If you send in a late e-resume, you are subject to a process that has already begun.

E-Resume Craftsmanship

A well-crafted e-resume should allow flexibility and acknowledge possible outcomes. If your e-resume lists only an extension or only billets at a single unit, that tells us you haven't considered the possibility of being assigned to other locations. A very narrow e-resume (1 or 2 billets) with limited comments makes our work almost as easy as a blank e-resume, because we will presume you will equally entertain 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.

Use the comments section to provide amplifying information, starting with the best contact numbers for you. Your AO does not need a formal resume as you would normally see in your civilian occupation. Let them know of your career desires, any special considerations, and anything from your civilian experience that makes you the right fit for a particular billet. This is your vehicle to explain your desires and express your concerns. If you have a specific concern or extenuating circumstances impacting your assignment, please convey this information directly to the AO.

Direct Access Information

A word on Direct Access information in general. Yes, AOs do review that information and use it as well. Be sure that all the personal information, from security clearance to academic degrees to contact numbers, is correct. It is used to make assignments so make sure it accurately represents you. If information is missing or incorrect in the record you must forward the appropriate documentation to your Servicing Personnel Office (SPO) for entry into Direct Access.

Extensions and Early Rotations

Extensions are assignment decisions made by the Panel. A request for extension is viewed by the Panel as one of, hopefully, several assignment preferences.

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; at other times the Service need is best met by moving you to afford others the opportunity to serve in a desirable or developmental billet. There is no single rule of thumb since each case is different and decisions are based accordingly. A positive command endorsement will certainly influence assignment considerations.

For early rotations, as with extensions, a Command endorsement is required on your E-Resume. 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 when a Service need cannot be adequately satisfied using officers that are tour complete. In unusual instances they are made to benefit the member’s career development.

Special Considerations

Unlike the senior ranks where all Reserve billets are seen as national fills and members are available for service wide assignment, junior officer level assignments are somewhat more geographically bound. This means that reasonable commuting distance is one of several primary considerations in the assignment process. Other considerations include service need, command concerns, member’s career development and member rank. But remember at the JO level, and at any level, a paid billet is a privilege and not a right.

Balancing family, civilian employment and Coast Guard duties is well understood by your AO. The ISC makes every effort to take these into account, if the AO is made aware of them. Your best course of action is to be frank with your AO. This allows the best opportunity for you to understand the impact of your decisions on your Reserve career and allows the AO to best represent your situation to the Panel. This information is best conveyed via an e-mail to your AO vice placing in the E-Resume.

**Reasonable
Commute Distance
(RCD)**

JO Panels attempt to assign officers to vacant positions within RCD if one is available. RCD is generally defined as 50 miles or 1.5 hours travel time under normal driving conditions from home to duty site. If government meals and quarters are available then RCD is 100 miles or 3 hours travel time. Though an assignment consideration, RCD will most likely not be a significant consideration in your assignment due to the geographic constraints of the Reserve assignment system, and the need for geographic and experiential diversity in your career necessary for promotion to Commander and Captain. The earlier in your career you accept the potential for traveling in your assignment the easier it will be to work with when it happens.

Collocation

Unlike the Active-Duty assignment process, there is no specific collocation policy governing the Reserve process. The best way to accommodate co-location with an Active-Duty spouse is to insure that, immediately upon notification of the spouse's new orders, contact is made with the local ISC. In such cases, we will make every attempt to provide suitable options. Where no paid billet is available, AOs will make suggestions on how to mitigate any career impacts.

**The Assignment
Process**

Armed with the shopping list and your e-resume, the ISC AO can begin to develop all the information needed to make assignment recommendations and explain them to the Panel.

Strategizing and forming the Slate

In February, ISCs contact program managers and units in their AOR concerning their Reserve junior officer positions that are open in the upcoming assignment season. The dialogue normally covers special concerns, billet ownership, and information with which to identify the broad population of officers meeting billet needs.

Once all the e-resumes are received, typically in early April, a slate is developed, including the name of every officer requesting the billet on his or her e-resume, for each billet. The billets are filled from highest to lowest priority so your AO may place your name on a slate for billets even though you didn't include them on your e-resume. They typically do this in cases where you meet the criteria of the billet owner and an adequate pool of qualified officers was not obtained from those requesting the billet.

In filling most Reserve junior officer billets, AOs normally talk directly with the Active-Duty logistics officer or executive officer that owns the billet. AOs ask for very simple feedback on each officer proposed particularly if the prospective receiving command finds the proposed candidate acceptable or not. Absent a disqualifying **matter of record** or lack of requisite experience, most officers are found acceptable. AO will not share details of these conversations with you, just as they don't discuss details of your e-resume with anyone else. AOs typically also discuss slate options with senior IDPL leadership at the unit and District levels.

Post Script

A word on senior Reserve officers (SROs) at the command, District or Area level. If you do not know who they are, you should. They are another excellent source of career counseling and assignment guidance. Along with the AO, talk to your unit's SRO. They will have a wealth of information they are willing to share, but you have to ask.

Who's in Play?

Who is really in play during an assignment season? The short answer is every junior officer unless scheduled for retirement. 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 or place you in a non paid status. If you're not tour complete and you ask for orders, you may be reassigned. Fleet-ups are a common example of this. A member who is advanced to O-4 should expect to be assigned to an O-4 billet as soon as one comes available and are so normally more susceptible to an early transfer than a person already in an O-4 billet. Officers promoted to the pay grade O-3 or below are less likely to be reassigned before their normal tour rotation. This allows more continuity for training and command return on investment.

In very unusual circumstances, Lieutenant Commanders of high caliber will be presented to the O5/O6 Centralized Assignment Panel for assignment. These personnel are carefully selected from the senior Lieutenant Commander ranks, have an outstanding record, a strong command endorsement, and have requested assignment to typically hard to fill billets. If assigned to a senior officer billet they obviously do not compete in the JO assignment cycle and their billet will be shopped.

Long Term Active Duty Orders

Reserve Officers on long term active duty orders, (i.e. EAD, ADSW or Involuntary Mobilization), are not typically in play for selected Reserve assignment.

In the case of those members involuntarily recalled on T10, by policy they should continue to encumber the selected Reserve billet that they were in at the time of recall. Once they come off T10 orders, they should go back to that command and billet. At that point they would go through the normal assignment process.

For those officers on long term ADSW (sometimes also masked as voluntary T10), they are by policy removed from their selected Reserve billet while on those orders. If, due to the duration of the orders, they are likely to come off orders in the assignment cycle, we recommend they compete in the process. Please let your ISC know if you are in this situation as it is not always apparent you should be getting assignment consideration. If members come off ADSW after the assignment panel, by policy they will be over billeted in a paid status until the next assignment cycle with Command endorsement and concurrence.

Those officers who have taken an Extended Active Duty (EAD) contract are considered active duty officers. As such, they are under the active duty process for assignment until their contract ends. Officers who expect their EAD contracts to end in the current assignment year should seek out the AO for specific guidance.

Hierarchy of Assignments

Generally, assignments are considered “top down” to ensure the most robust candidate pools of officers are considered for the highest priority billets. The missions and deployable nature of High Priority Units (HPUs: Maritime Safety and Security Teams, Port Security Units, Naval Coastal Warfare Units) require these units remain fully staffed. All PAL billets must be filled and so junior officer assignments are made accordingly. Officers that

live within RCD of these units should expect one or more assignments to these commands. Following the HPU assignments operational commands are the next priority and so on. Careful consideration is given to matching members to billets so that service needs, member desires and career development are in balance.

Pecking Order?

Does all this mean that O-4s get assigned first, then O-3s and so on? No. The panel process is the same for all, and while matching member rank to billet rank is desirable, there are other factors including skill set and training opportunity that come into play. Just remember though, AOs attempt to issue orders to fill every billet for which there is a vacancy, including those billets for which no one asks.

The Feedback Loop

As member interaction in the process heightens in April, the interest level (and the anxiety level) is also understandably heightened. You can call and check on things, but the answer you may 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 the “daisy chain” implications are such that the most likely outcome is not known until just before the ISC’s JO Panel in May. AOs try to strike a balance between getting information to you quickly and providing you with accurate information that is less likely to change.

At the end of April AOs start to get a sense of the billets for which you may be most competitive. Being competitive normally means you are among the pool of a few candidates from which we think the billet will be filled. Remember, AOs are telling other people the same thing. Will they tell you who your competition is? No. AOs do not discuss your e-resume with anyone but you and so they won’t discuss other officers’ preferences with you either.

Career Progression

A successful Reserve career path consists of having experience in two areas, the Sector operational community and the Joint Forces/Interagency community. The challenge for the junior officer is to gather competencies that will allow him or her to successfully function in both communities. Since Reserve officer backgrounds are diverse and junior officer tours are lengthy, early goal setting, forethought, as well as good mentoring are extremely important. Junior officers should aggressively seek CG operational expertise and then broaden their experience into the Joint/Interagency communities, making use of their CG expertise. Remember, at the JO level performance of current duties and gaining CG operational expertise is the key to promotion. That said, if you want to compete successfully at the next level, remember the Commandant’s Reserve Policy Statement and the three areas of Reserve mobilization: Maritime Homeland Security, domestic and expeditionary support to National

Security, and response to natural and manmade disasters.

Always remember that career counseling by the Sector, District, and Area SROs is available and recommended. Additional resources to assist in general officer career planning are available in CG Central at My Workspace > Career Management > Officer > Assignment > Assignment and Career Management Guides, under the Officer Retention and Career Management area, and also on the CGPC web site. These resources are mostly geared toward your Active-Duty counterpart but are important references as we move to a “Broadened Specialist” construct for careers. The concept is based on junior officers developing in-depth knowledge in one specialty and adding additional knowledge and skills as they become more senior.

Developing a Career as a Coast Guard Officer provides an overview of the unique characteristics of an Active-Duty officer’s career. This new document provides an overview of fundamental officer corps roles, leadership development, officer specialties, and expectations at major career milestones.

The Commandant’s Guidance to Officer Selection Boards and Panels contains expectations for the qualities needed in the officer corps. It also contains specific guidance for boards considering officers for selection for promotion at all grades – from Lieutenant to Flag Officer. This guidance is part of each selection board precept, and supplements Chapter 14.A.3 of the Personnel Manual where the basic criteria for selection (performance, professionalism, leadership, and education) are found.

Individual officers seeking career counsel should contact their ISC AO, Their Senior Reserve Officer at the unit, CGPC-rpm, and also the Officer Career Management Branch (opm-4). The Officer Career Management Branch’s advice revolves around competencies and career paths, performance management, and career broadening strategies. Finding mentors to help you develop your career is a must and should be a high priority.

Career Diversity

At the senior officer level, all billets are viewed as national fills. That is not the case at the JO level where training opportunities and command needs are more conducive to geographic stability. However, a long range career question to ask as you progress through the ranks is how much job diversity do you have in your background? If you have been at the same Sector or same specialty for all your JO tours, do not expect to stay there. In reality, this neither benefits the command long term nor does it do your career justice. If geographic stability is a special consideration for you, make sure your AO knows this. Also understand that this may make a difference between being placed in a paid billet or being placed in a non pay status.

Overbilleting	On a limited basis, junior officers may be assigned in either an unbudgeted or overbillet status at a command where no vacant PAL position exists. This will be done based on variety of factors including RCD, training capacity and command need. This is a temporary assignment for one year only. Officers assigned in such a way are expected to compete for a budgeted position in the next assignment cycle.
Other Assignment Considerations	Like the Active-Duty assignment process, the Reserve assignment process does not make formal recognition for officers who have completed tours of duty in hard-to-fill assignments or lengthy involuntary recalls. This is not to say that completion of a tour of duty in an arduous assignment or hard-to-fill geographic location won't be taken into consideration - it will. It will simply be included in the mix of other factors such as career progression, performance, skill sets and Service needs, officer's pay grade, other personal desires of the member, and so on. It should also be noted that there is no formal Humanitarian Assignments program for Reserve officers. Cases involving severe family hardships would fall under special considerations and will be viewed as yet another factor in any given assignment.
Prior to Assignment Panel	AOs 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 them during that time frame, it's at the Panel's direction. After the Panel recesses and reports out, AOs do not discuss their deliberations. As with any board or panel those are, and will remain, confidential.
The Panel	A JO Assignment Panel is usually made up of representatives from the Active-Duty and Reserve officer corps, typically represent the major commands and district in the ISC's AOR. This mix brings Reserve expertise into the room in the form of the SROs and also ensures that the Operational Commander's needs are best met.
Behind Closed Doors	AO proposals to the Panel are their assessment of the best match of Service needs, unit needs, and your personal desires—quite frankly, in that order—based upon all the information available. AOs try to weave a matrix that best accommodates all the various concerns in filling every vacant billet. They don't pretend that there is a “right” answer; AOs simply try to achieve the best balance possible in filling every billet possible.

Besides AO proposals, member generated correspondence to the Panel President, your assignment history, and, in some cases OERs that have been requested from you are available to the Panel. AOs specifically note if a particular billet was on your e-resume, and what billet preference it was. If you specifically do not desire assignment to a specific command, it is noted and your AO makes your best case in stating your reasons to the Panel. Similarly, AOs present divergent views on your potential assignment to a specific billet if they arise between a program manager and a field command. Ultimately, your AO is trying to explain to the Panel the rationale behind any proposed assignment and not any alternatives as requested by the Panel. Understand that alternatives are not usually one for one replacement, but require a daisy chain of moves.

Request In Lieu of Orders (RILO)

When the Panel's initial assignments are approved, the ISCs will release a results message that begins the typical one month RILO period.

It is important to understand the RILO parameters...and the difference between the Active-Duty RILO process and the Reserve RILO process.

- Unlike the Active-Duty RILO which is strictly a request for retirement, the Reserve RILO encompasses one of several choices: retirement, non paid assignment to a command, or transfer to the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR).
- Under the RILO process Reserve retirements or changes in status will typically be effective 1 July of the assignment cycle.

Please note all these options have varying career impacts. While we fully understand that the Reserve career is typically your secondary or tertiary life consideration, these decisions should not be done in a vacuum. Consult your mentors before making a decision not to accept a billet assigned. It is also in your best interest to call your AO and get a complete understanding of options, outcomes, and down range ramifications.

Post-RILO

Shortly after the one month RILO period expires, the AO will confer with the Panel President to determine if another panel will reconvene, typically as a “virtual” panel with the AO being the facilitator. By that time they have had time to consider RILO-caused vacancies and other new developments, and have worked out alternative daisy chains 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 another ISC message which constitutes the final report.

Orders

ISCs start transmitting orders approximately in the May/June timeframe with 1 July being the effective date of transfer. After the results of the assignment panel are announced you should contact your Servicing Personnel Office (SPO) concerning when you will receive the paper copy of your orders. It is the SPO that completes the data system requirements in Direct Access and provides the signed/endorsed copy of your orders.

A standard tour length for junior officers is 5 years, regardless of type of unit; however, diversity of assigned duties should be sought. This job diversity may be available within a single command, but if not, seeking reassignment to another command may be the only means and would be considered after 3 years.

Security Clearances

Another issue requiring timely action once orders are cut is your security clearance. Some positions require an increased security clearance that has a long lead time to complete. It is your responsibility to your departing command to begin the security clearance process. It is in your best interest to start the ball rolling at the earliest possible opportunity.

Off-Season Assignment Process

Although the vast majority of Reserve JO 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 senior officers is not involved in off-season assignment decisions, AOs follow many of the same steps.

When an ISC becomes aware of upcoming off-season vacancies, The AO consults with the billet owner to see if it needs an immediate fill. Typically only HPU billets fall into that category. All other billets typically will remain vacant and will be filled in the next assignment cycle, unless there are officers assigned to that unit in an overbillet or unbudgeted status. In these cases, impacted eligible officers would be flected into the vacant position without changing their current rotation date.

Once that decision is made, AOs advertise the billet in a message. AOs consider the names of officers who respond to the solicitation, along with others they may have identified who also have the right seniority, skills and experience. If there are no volunteers for an HPU billet, select and direct of officers within the RCD may be the ultimate result. In that situation, typically an adhoc panel is put together to address the assignment.

GOOD LUCK!

We hope you find this information useful in understanding the Reserve junior officer assignment process. We recognize how important the outcome of an assignment decision is to each individual and to the Service. We look forward to serving you and hope that our messages, voice mails, website, as well as personal contact, keep you well informed. If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact your ISC or CGPC rpm at (202) 493-1702.