

The
ENS-LCDR
Assignment
Guide



August 2005

Purpose

This document contains principles in the O4 and below assignment process. 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. We have created this guide to:

- demystify the assignment process;
- pass along some of the rules of engagement we follow; and
- provide information that will help everyone involved in the process manage expectations.

The Key Elements

The key elements in the assignment process are the Shopping List and your E-Resume (formerly known as the ADC and affectionately called a “dream sheet.”) These key elements are the basis for beginning the assignment season. The timing of your final assignment decision generally depends on your rank. The majority of O4 assignments will be approved before the O3 assignments,

etc. The Officer Assignments Branch Chief will be the final approval authority for all O4 and below assignments, based on recommendations by the individual Assignment Officers.

The Shopping List As a starting point, the shopping list includes:

- Billets in which the incumbent officer is scheduled to rotate or separate in 2005.
- O4 billets filled by an O5(select) who will be tour complete in 2005. AO's update the O4 shopping list after release of the O5 promotion board results.

Commands are strongly encouraged to review and verify the accuracy of the shopping list. Discrepancies should be reported to the AO responsible for that billet.

The DIRECT ACCESS shopping list is dynamic, and ideally real-time. New additions/deletions to the shopping list will, however, also be published via message. The greatest number of changes will occur after the O5 promotion results are published and after the O5 assignment panel. Officers should recognize that shopping list additions, especially late in the process, are intended to give potential candidates a chance to consider new alternatives. However, occasionally we are reacting to proposals or contingency plans that might not come to fruition.

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, ensure that you submit your E-Resume by the published deadlines.

The E-Resume

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. 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. In that regard, let us give you a reality overlay.

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 that your desire can't be accommodated. A very narrow E-Resume makes our work almost as easy as a blank E-Resume, because we will 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 with 15 - 20 diverse billets identified. We have also received E-Resumes with just one billet listed.

The E-Resume allows individual officers to update their selections as often as they would like. You should update it based on changing circumstances (e.g., new solicitations, AO input). We have reviewed E-Resumes that were changed 4 times in one week. Take the time to develop a well-crafted E-Resume the first time and submit it prior to the submission deadline. The E-Resume system is a passive system. The AOs will do a DIRECT ACCESS query of the billet candidates very soon after the deadline. If you submit an updated E-Resume after the deadline, then ensure you notify the servicing AO via phone or e-mail that you have submitted a new E-Resume; otherwise you may not be considered for the new assignments requested. This is absolutely critical since DIRECT ACCESS does not provide an automatic notice that you have made an E-Resume change, it is a passive system that requires the system be queried. Once the Assignment Officers have extracted candidate pools from DIRECT ACCESS after the E-Resume submission deadline, there is typically no reason to go back and look for changes.

Use the comment section to amplify your assignment request. Let us know of your career desires, special considerations you want us to consider, etc. This is the vehicle to advise us of your desires and express your concerns. Use it!

Extensions and Early Rotations

Extensions are assignment decisions made during the normal course of the assignment process. A request for an extension is viewed as one assignment preference, one that is hopefully joined by others on the E-Resume. A Command endorsement is required for an extension request.

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 golden rule of thumb. Each case is different and is based accordingly.

For early rotations, it is important that your command endorse 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, i.e., what are the losing command's backfill requirements if this officer rotates early? "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.

Special Needs

Many officers have "special needs," but remember that in this context, a Special Need is a specific term defining types of situations involving an officer and/or family that must be approved to be accepted into the Special Needs Program.

Any officer with a Special Need must register it in this mandatory program in accordance with COMDTINST 1754.7 (series). This will result in a special flag in DIRECT ACCESS that is visible to the AOs- it only tells us that you have a Special Need, not the details. When we see that indicator, we work closely with the program administrator in G-WKW 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; you make it more difficult for us in our attempts to accommodate your circumstance. Enrolling is not optional, the Service requires active duty personnel to enroll in the Coast Guard Special Needs Program. This ensures early identification of families with special needs, maximizes the provision of quality service to reduce family stress and undue hardship, and minimizes costly, disruptive off season reassignments and early return of family members from outside the continental United States.

Being enrolled in special needs does not give anyone the advantage for any particular job. Having access to a specific health care professional is not a consideration if the medical care can be met elsewhere.

Familiarize yourself with Work Life policies. We find many people who should be enrolled in the program are not. The reason given most often is the member doesn't want to bother the Coast Guard, or they don't want special treatment. If you have a situation that qualifies as a Special Need, you must register. Once enrolled, it helps us to accommodate your needs. Whatever the medical condition or other situation, the Work Life staff can tell us where your needs can be met. It may not be somewhere you believe you should be, and you may not be able to stay in an area just because you like the doctor you have now, but we will strive to locate an assignment area where the Special Need can be met. That's the key. The worst thing you can do is nothing. If you have a Special Need, get enrolled!

Other Concerns

Aside from Special Needs, among the most prevalent concerns many of us have relate to children in high school, caring for aging parents, and spouse employment issues. We are sympathetic to those concerns, but you need to know that these issues are often so common they become the norm, not exceptions. As such, it becomes impossible to accommodate everyone's desires.

Collocation

The collocation policy allows married active duty members the opportunity to reside jointly whenever possible. However, couples should realize that the Service might not be able to collocate them throughout their careers depending on Service need and professional development. In cases where tour lengths are not aligned, assignment officers may adjust the tour length of one member to allow for both to transfer in the same assignment season.

Both married members desiring collocation should tailor comments in the E-Resume to address desire for collocation with spouse. We recommend that couples work together

on their E-Resumes, and give the assignment officers reasonable geographic and billet options. Further information on this policy can be found in the PERSMAN, Article 4.A.8.

**Assignment after
Advanced Education**

If you are looking for reassignment coming out of graduate school, there are several things to consider. You can expect that you will do a staff tour associated with the advanced education that you have recently received. For example officers competing for the Command and Staff course should expect assignment to a position in the Defense Operation Program. Many billets are tagged to have a graduate school “pay back” fill. While the program manager for your Training Allowance Billet will make a recommendation, the final assignment resides within OPM-2. The best time to attend graduate school is coming off a primary specialty tour. This will allow payback assignment without leaving your operational specialty too long.

E-Resume Due Date

Please submit your E-Resume according to the timelines advertised by the AY05 kickoff message. Why so soon? That’s when we begin a broad assessment of program and unit needs across paygrades, evaluating tradeoffs, and taking a vertical look at workforce issues before moving forward in our horizontal (by pay grade) assignment panels and decisions. We try to take timely soundings and adjust to changes as we progress. Delayed submission of an E-Resume will reduce your assignment choices.

**The Assignment
Process**

Armed with the Shopping List and your E-Resume, we can then begin to develop all the information we will need to develop assignment recommendations.

**Strategizing and
Forming the Lists**

Considerable time goes into laying groundwork. Commands are given the opportunity to submit command concerns that will be considered by CGPC-opm early in the assignment season. Programs and units are contacted to discuss skills requested for incoming officers. 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 for each billet that includes the name of every officer requesting the billet on his or her E-Resume. We may place your name on a list for some billets even though you didn’t include them on your E-Resume, even when we know you may not have requested them. We do this in cases where we find you meet the needs identified by the command/staff office exercising cognizance over the billet, and an adequate pool of qualified officers was not obtained from those requesting the billet.

In filling most O4 and below billets, we normally talk directly to unit Executive Officers, or the supervisor for the officer in the billet. For most billets we continue to work through the incumbent's principal supervisor, under the assumption that the principal supervisor will coordinate and validate input with the Commanding officer, office chief or flag officer as necessary.

Who's in Play?

Who is really in play during an assignment season? The short answer is every officer who is tour complete, has requested early rotation to meet some Service need, or is more senior in rank than the billet they are currently assigned. Officers with approved retirement requests are not normally considered for reassignment. However, there is a general hierarchy. If you're tour complete, you will get orders, even if you are approved for an extension. If you're not tour complete and you ask for orders, you MAY be reassigned. Fleet-ups or reassignment to another billet in the same geographic area are common examples. If you're a Lieutenant Commander (select), not tour complete, and serving in an O3 billet, you are normally more susceptible to an early transfer than a person already in an O4 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.

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. Command cadre assignments and high profile billets requiring interviews, e.g., Military Aide to the President, Congressional affairs etc. are the first to be completed, and so on. If you are requesting these types of billets, be sure to review current ALCGOFF message traffic as well as the opm-2 website to ensure you submit an E-Resume to meet these deadlines.

Pecking Order?

Does this mean that Lieutenant Commander (selects) and newly promoted Lieutenant Commanders get assigned to billets after more senior Lieutenant Commanders are assigned? No. The process is the same for all, and it's a process that has placed selected O4s in O4 commands afloat and ashore, as well as in other desirable positions. However, we do issue orders to fill every billet for which there is a vacancy, including those billets for which no one asks.

Career Progression

Officers should have a good idea of a desired career path going into their second tour – it is difficult (and sometimes impossible) to be “entry level” in any career path as a LT. So early goal setting and forethought, as well as good mentoring, are extremely important. Progression within a community is typically gained by seeking positions of greater responsibility while acquiring the skills and qualifications that will make the officer competitive for future positions within that community. Officers should generally plan to return to their community every other tour; this enables you to maintain proficiency while gaining valuable out of specialty experience. Available number of officers with your specialty background will determine if you are able to compete for assignments out of specialty. Some specialties do not have enough officers to fill the billets in specialty, i.e. aviation and marine inspectors, therefore out of specialty opportunities are difficult to arrange.

Out of Specialty Tours

Most officers have a primary specialty (e.g., operations afloat/ashore, marine safety, aviation, engineering, etc.) that they pursue through tours with increasing

responsibility. However, many also acquire a sub-specialty through advanced education or training (e.g., financial management, operations research, etc.) and often desire to rotate between their specialty and sub-specialty. This is a desirable career track that allows an officer to maintain proficiency in two areas. It is possible, and even encouraged, to obtain and maintain this career track. Occasionally, officers request to rotate between two specialties; this is normally not possible because the significant investment in training necessary to maintain both specialties would not allow for those officers to complete necessary staff tours, which enhance their professional growth.

Additionally, many officers desire tours outside of both areas (e.g., Congressional affairs, aide, CGLO, etc.). These are encouraged and often competitive. Officers desiring to complete these rotational tours should review their career progression. It is generally best to apply for these positions when completing a tour in their primary specialty. This will enable you to go out of specialty and then return while still current. Out of specialty tours enhance an officer's professional expertise by giving him/her a broader understanding of the CG and how it fits into the national government.

**Assignment
Priority
Considerations**

Unlike enlisted assignments, the officer assignment process does not include formal recognition for officers who have completed tours of duty in hard-to-fill or particularly arduous assignments. As such, there is no automatic assignment preference afforded these tour complete officers like there is for enlisted personnel as outlined in PERSMAN Chap 4. This is not to say that completion of a tour of duty in an arduous duty assignment or hard-to-fill billet 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 paygrade, other personal desires of the member, and so on. It should also be noted that there is no formal Humanitarian Assignments program for officers. Cases involving severe family hardships that do not fall under the Special Needs program (as discussed previously) will be considered as yet another factor in any given assignment.

**OCONUS
Assignments**

OCONUS positions are considered earlier in the assignment season also. We do this to give officers requesting OCONUS assignment extra time to complete the logistical issues associated with an OCONUS move. This also allows assignment officers to consider larger candidate pools of officers that have not served at an OCONUS unit while developing assignment recommendations. Some specialties have high numbers of OCONUS billets and require us to "recruit" candidates to fill these large number billets. Aviation has a large number of pilot billets in Alaska, and some years there are not enough officers requesting these positions. Therefore, at the beginning of the assignment season the candidate pool of officers will include all officers due for rotation that have not previously served at an OCONUS unit.

**The Feedback
Loop**

As the process takes us into December and January, the interest level (and the anxiety level) is understandably heightened among the officers in play for reassignment. You're certainly welcome to call and check on things, 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 late in the assignment season. 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 informed on where we are in working the slate via SITREPS and our website.

Typically, in early February for LCDRs, and late February for LTs and below we start to get a sense of billets for which you may be most competitive. One caution: saying you are "competitive" is not an indication of what we may eventually see at the conclusion of the assignment process. 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.

What is revealed?

When the Assignment Officer identifies a candidate for an assignment, that candidate is proposed to the unit or office where that billet resides. For most billets, only one officer will be proposed; NOT a list of officers to choose from. Here's the information we pass to the principal supervisor: 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). We provide general answers to questions regarding your record of performance.

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 principal supervisor to tell us whether they find our proposed candidate acceptable or not. Absent a disqualifying matter of record or lack of requisite experience, most officers are found acceptable. We don't share details of our conversations with the principle supervisor with you, just as we don't discuss details of your E-Resume with them.

We do not supply a list of candidates and ask the receiving command to rank order them.

Are all billet assignments treated the same? No. For the billets that are the assistants to the flag officer/SES — the flag officer/SES's preference is usually accommodated, except where there is competition between principals for the same officer.

Retirement Requests

The best time to submit a retirement letter is late summer, prior to commencement of the assignment season. This will allow the assignment process to effectively shop your billet and arrange for a timely, skilled replacement. Retirement requests can be submitted at any time during the year, but keep in mind, the later in the assignment process the more difficult it will be to meet requested dates and meet Service needs to fill the billet. Due to the lack of officer experience in certain specialties, i.e., Marine Inspection and Aviation, our practice is to require 12 months notice. The officer will have input to the retirement dates (6-12 months out) until orders are issued, then RILO rules come in play. Refer to PERSMAN Chapter 12 for retirement letter submission

format.

Orders

Orders are issued in descending rank as the slates for each paygrade are approved. We start transmitting orders, starting with OCONUS transfers and other officers' known to have early reporting dates. Usually the vast majority of OCONUS orders are issued in January/February and the majority of CONUS orders being issued in February/March.

DIRLAUTH

The majority of officer orders are issued with the following paragraph, "Firm reporting date to be coordinated between transferring and receiving commands. DIRLAUTH." While DIRECT ACCESS requires that an estimated report date be entered into the system in order to cut orders, typically 01July200X is entered as a default, commands are authorized to arrange exact dates, i.e. direct liaison authorized/DIRLAUTH.

Security Clearances

Another timely issue involving orders once cut is security clearance. Some positions require an increased security clearance that has long lead times to complete. It is in your best interest to start the ball rolling at the earliest possible opportunity. The responsibility to start this process rests with the departing command.

RILOs

When the assignment process results in orders being issued via DIRECT ACCESS, certain officer's are eligible to retire in lieu of orders (RILO). Refer to PERSMAN Chapter 12 for details.

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

- You must formally request retirement from CGPC-opm-1 within 15 days of DIRECT ACCESS orders issue date.
- 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 selected for promotion, 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 promotion selectees.
- If you are newly promoted, our personnel regulations require you to serve in grade for two years prior to retiring. If your two years of obligated service aren't up by 1 August, or if you have other obligated service (advanced education pay-back, OUTCONUS transfer, etc.), you are not eligible to RILO.
- You must have 10 years commissioned officer service time at time of retirement.

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 request in time for us to act on it prior to orders being issued.

Off-Season

Although the vast majority of officer assignments are handled through the process

described above, each year circumstances arise which require off-season transfer decisions not contemplated during the normal assignment timelines.

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 consider 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 billet owner's input, current command endorsements, and our ability to minimize a chain reaction of assignments.

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. 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 (see PERSMAN). Retirement requests that would cause an off season vacancy may face disapproval if an acceptable backfill arrangement cannot be found and the command is not willing to absorb a gap.

Advanced Education Tab Process

The Coast Guard convenes postgraduate selection panels each summer to select officers to attend an advanced education program on a full-time basis.

The selection panels are held throughout the summer (June through September) to select the best qualified candidates based on the precept. Each panel consists of 3 members – the cognizant AO, program manager representative, and an at-large member. Once the message is released with the results, the primary selectees should begin the process of applying to schools, which should be done in consultation with the program manager. Many programs have preferred schools. Generally, we follow a “one-move” practice, which means you will either go to school where you are currently assigned or where it is likely you will be assigned upon completion of the program. Although this is not a hard fast rule and there are exceptions for a variety of reasons, it is something that we strive for. If you are an alternate, you should start the school application process as soon as you have been offered a tab, which can only come from CGPC-opm-1. This will ensure you receive orders in a timely manner.

If you are non-selected for promotion after you have been selected for an advanced education program, you will be removed from the list. If you are already in school, you will usually be removed from school and receive orders to another position.

Agreements/Recalls & Continuation

Every year officers ask about “contracts.” More accurately they are called “Reserve Extended Active Duty (EAD) Agreements”, “Retired Recall to active duty”, or “Regular Officer Continuation.” Below paragraphs will describe the three typical situations. CG Policies can be found in PERSMAN Chapter 1, 4 & 11.

Reserve Extended Active Duty (EAD)

Reserve Extended Active Duty agreements (EAD) apply to Reserve Officers that are requesting to come onto active duty for some period of time, usually 1-5 years. The approval of an EAD request depends on several factors: needs of the Service, needs of a unit, desires of a member. That sounds an awful lot like the assignment process. Well it is. Approving an EAD agreement is an assignment decision. Does the CG need people with your job skills? Does the unit you are requesting need people with your rank/job skills? Is there a billet for you to fill? How many other people who are active duty are asking for the same job? Are you willing to go where the CG needs you? Assuming you are eligible to apply (PERSMAN), you compete for a job and an EAD opportunity just like everyone competes during the assignment season. Keep in mind, performance is also a major player in the decision to approve an EAD agreement.

Officer Continuation

LT Continuation applies to officers on the ADPL only. The decision to offer an officer continuation is made as part of the promotion board process. If the promotion board fails to select an officer for promotion to LCDR for the second time, the board will then consider if the officer's performance warrants the offering of continuation on active duty. The promotion board will determine if the service record reflects that the officer performed well at the LT level, but has not yet demonstrated the requisite performance required to serve in the next rank. If you are offered continuation, and you are tour complete, then you will be part of the assignment process like every else. Officers are typically offered continuation for a 2 year period of time.

Retired Recall to Active Duty

Retirees and others who are facing mandatory retirement are not eligible for EAD contracts. Their only way to return to active duty is by requesting retired recall. Retired recall is typically for a short duration to fill a service need. The member actually retires from the Service and if the recall is approved, returns to work at the same rank. Eligibility requirements are discussed in the PERSMAN. A crucial part of the retired recall approval is the rank of the individual requesting retired recall. The CG is limited, by law, to a certain number of O-4 and above officers. Officers in these ranks are considered "control grade" officers. In order for a retired recall request to be approved the following conditions must be met:

1. There must be enough space in the controlled grade
2. The CG needs an officer with your rank and specialty
3. There exists a vacant billet at the unit you desire
4. Your past performance warrants you coming back to the CG

If you are successful in your bid for retired recall, you will be paid just the same as the day you left the Service. Impacts on your retirement benefits when you return to retired status depend on the length of time you serve in the retired recall capacity. Typically

your base pay calculation does not change, only the percentage does. If interested, you should contact your assignment officer or OPM-1.

GOOD LUCK!

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 look forward to serving you and hope that our messages, website, as well as personal contact keep you informed.