

The
Reserve Junior Officer
(Ensign – Lieutenant Commander)
Assignment Guide



September 2011

RESERVE JUNIOR OFFICER ASSIGNMENT GUIDE

Reference:

- COMDTINST M1001.28A Reserve Policy Manual
- Annual Reserve Officer Kick-off message (i.e. ALCGRSV 042/011)
- RPM-2 webpage: <http://www.uscg.mil/rpm/rpm2/>

Purpose:

The Reserve junior officer (JO) assignment process is centrally coordinated at CG Personnel Service Center, Reserve Personnel Management Division. While primarily of interest to officers anticipating reassignment, our goal is for this guide to be of equal value to commands, career counselors and mentors. This guidebook was created to:

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

As this is a constantly evolving process we welcome any feedback on making this a better guide

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The Key Elements:

The key elements in the assignment process are the Assignment Year (AY) Kick Off message, the shopping list and members' e-resumes

The Kickoff Message:

Each AY will be announced by an ALCGRSV message containing important information regarding the assignment process as well as timelines and actions required of members and their commands. The annual kickoff message is usually released in late summer and will be posted to the RPM-2 webpage.

The Shopping List:

The shopping list will be composed of billets expected to be available in the upcoming assignment season and will be published both in Direct Access (DA) and to the RPM website (for IRR members and others without access to DA). The shopping list includes all billets where the incumbent will be tour-complete the following year, billets where we have approved separation requests on file for the incumbent, or billets currently filled with an officer who needs to rotate due to needs of the service (members' two pay grades senior to the billet's rank, etc.).

Initially, the shopping list is released in DA for use by commands (not members expecting to PCS). Commands are asked to carefully review the list and provide any command concerns before the shopping list is released for members' use. Additions and deletions based on that review will occur, so members should not consider the shopping list "valid" until such time that the kickoff message deems it suitable for members' use. Some changes will likely happen through billet reprogramming actions and Service needs (request for Retirement, IRR, etc.). Additions to the shopping list, after the e-resume deadline, will typically be announced via Coast Guard Message System (CGMS) with updates posted on the RPM-2 webpage.

Contacting Commanders or Incumbents:

When reviewing the shopping list, members typically build a list of preferred billets and try to get an understanding for the command and the work involved. Members often choose to contact the command that owns the billet or the current incumbent to get an appreciation for the duties and expectations associated with being assigned to that particular billet and unit. Note: Often the billet title does not accurately reflect the actual duties associated with the position number. Also, as units execute reprogramming actions, there may be changes associated with a billet that are a departure from the duties of the past. Assignment Officers (AOs) are available to provide counsel and assist in tracking down the owning command.

The E-Resume:

The e-resume is the primary and only mandatory method of communicating with the AO. AOs can aid in crafting e-resumes and offer tips to best communicate assignments desires. It is ok to change/update your e-resume, based on shopping list changes or other new information, so long as members adhere to the kickoff message deadlines. If a member updates his/her e-resume, consider the new e-resume as the only e-resume; do not add one position and assume the AO will check previous e-resumes and know the member wants to be considered for the opportunities on previous

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e-resumes. Each e-resume supersedes the previous one and should be considered the only e-resume the AO will review. An email to the AO informing him or her of an update is the best way to ensure the most recent e-resume is received. Please use the most current shopping list when developing or updating an e-resume. If a member is tour complete or desires a transfer in the current assignment season, the AO needs the e-resume by the date listed in their Junior Officer Assignment Year kickoff message (may be titled CAPT-ENS Kickoff). Late e-resume submission places members at great risk of not having their job preferences considered. Members shall contact their AO prior to the submission deadline, when it is apparent that they cannot meet the e-resume deadline.

E-Resume Craftsmanship:

A well-crafted e-resume should allow flexibility and acknowledge several possible assignment opportunities. If an e-resume lists only an extension or only billets at a single unit – that may suggest that the member has not considered the possibility of being assigned to other locations. **A very narrow e-resume (one or two billets) with limited comments often leaves AOs in the position where they are unable to make an assignment based on what is requested, so the member is offered an assignment that is not on their e-resume. A realistic e-resume lists a multitude of assignments possibilities and preferably, more than one geographical location.** A broad e-resume communicates assignment preferences and addresses alternatives that a member believes is beneficial given his/her specialty background experience or professional development desires. Past assignment history, qualifications, and other info noted in DA is not necessary in the e-resume.

Direct Access Information:

Be sure that all the personal information, from security clearance, academic degrees, contact information, emails, etc. are correct in Direct Access (DA) at all times. If information is missing or incorrect in DA or a member's record, the member should forward the appropriate documentation to his/her Servicing Personnel Office (SPO) for entry into DA.

Extensions:

Extensions are assignment decisions made by the AO. Extensions are not guaranteed and are based on several factors including the current member's need to remain in the billet to gain the full advantage of the range of skill sets, the member's need to diversify and other member's in competition for that particular billet.

A request for an extension is viewed by the AO as one of several assignment options. Officers often make the mistake of only listing their current assignment when requesting an extension. This practice does not improve a member's odds of getting an extension and leaves him/her at risk of not being considered for other assignment opportunities that would have been acceptable if the officer knew the extension would not be granted. There is no single rule of thumb and each case is different; communicating with AOs during the specified counseling period is key.

Early Rotation:

In early rotations, as with extensions, a positive Command endorsement is required on the member's e-resume. The purpose of the command endorsement is to address the effect of a member's early departure on the unit continuity or the overall skill/experience level of the unit staff. "Conditional" positive endorsements are not appropriate (i.e., "support early rotation, if member is replaced with

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someone other than a recent A-school graduate.”). Early rotation most often occur when a Service need cannot be adequately met using officers that are tour complete. In unusual instances, they are made to benefit the member’s career development.

Reasonable Commuting Distance (RCD):

Each assignment is based on several factors, including reasonable commuting distance (RCD) and member desires. Other considerations include service need, command concerns, member’s career development and the member’s rank. Keep in mind that there are often more Reserve members than SELRES billets, so members should consider a **paid billet as a privilege and not a right.**

RPM attempts to assign officers to vacant positions within RCD whenever possible. Though an assignment consideration, RCD is often exceeded due to the geographic constraints of the Reserve assignment system and the need for geographic and experiential diversity for future promotion and career enhancing opportunities.

Special Considerations:

Balancing family, civilian employment and Coast Guard duties is well understood by AOs. RPM makes every effort to take these factors into account when made aware of them. Open dialog with AOs allows the best opportunity for all parties to understand the impact of decisions on a Reserve officer’s career and allows the AO to best consider the assignment impact on an individual.

Co-Location:

Unlike the Active-Duty assignment process, there is no specific co-location policy governing the Reserve process. The best way to accommodate co-location with an Active-Duty spouse is to ensure that, immediately upon notification of the spouse’s new orders, contact is made with your AO. In such cases, AOs 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. Armed with the shopping list and the member’s e-resume, the AO can begin to develop all the information needed to make assignment recommendations and decisions.

The Assignment Process:

As per the timeline indicated on the Kickoff message, program managers and units submit their concerns for their Reserve officer positions that are open in the upcoming assignment season. The dialogue normally covers special concerns, billet skill set needs, and information with which to identify the population of officers meeting the billet and unit needs.

Once all the e-resumes are received, a slate is developed by the AO that includes the name of every officer requesting a billet in that particular AO’s account. The billets are filled based first on Service needs, so your AO may place members on a slate for billets even though the member did not include the billet on their e-resume. This is typically done in cases where a member meets the criteria of the billet and an adequate pool of qualified officers was not obtained from those requesting the billet.

When filling most Reserve junior officer billets, AOs take career history and civilian background into consideration. Absent disqualifying **matters of record** or lack of requisite experience, most officers are found acceptable for an assignment. AOs will not share details of their decision process with

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members, just as they don't discuss details of member's e-resume with anyone other than that member.

Senior Reserve Officers (SROs):

Senior Reserve Officers (SROs) at the local command, District or Area level are another excellent source of career counseling and assignment guidance. In addition to the AO, talk to your unit's SRO; they have a wealth of information they are willing to share, but it helps 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 the member is tour complete, then the member will get orders, even if the AO elects to extend the member or place the member in a non paid status (IRR). If the member is not tour complete and the member asks for orders, then the member may be reassigned if that is in the best interest of the Service. Fleet-ups and intra-unit transfer are common examples of this. A member who is promoted to O-4 should expect to be assigned to an O-4 billet as soon as the member is tour complete and in rare cases before being tour complete. 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 their training investment.

Reserve Officers on long term active duty orders, (i.e. EAD, ADOS or Involuntary Mobilization), are not typically in play for Selected Reserve assignments. See annual kick off message for specifics.

Long Term Active Duty Orders:

In the case of members involuntarily recalled on Title-10 (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 unless they have surpassed their rotation date. At that point they would go through the normal assignment process. Officers should monitor message traffic and adhere to the guidance in the annual kickoff message to communicate to AOs when they expect to complete ADOS, EAD or other types of long-term active duty orders.

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 Deployable Specialized Forces (DSF) Units (Maritime Safety and Security Teams, Port Security Units, Strike Teams) require these units be staffed at the maximum extent possible. Every effort is made to fill all Personal Allowance List (PAL) billets, thus junior officer assignments are made accordingly. Officers that live within RCD of these units should expect one or more assignments to these commands during their career. Following the DSF assignments, operational commands are the next priority followed by staff assignments. Careful consideration is given in matching members to billets so that service needs, career development and member desires are maximized.

A promising Reserve career path consists of having experience in two areas, such as Sector operational community and the Joint Forces/Interagency community. The challenge for the junior officer is to gather competencies that will allow him/her to successfully function in both

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communities. Since Reserve officer backgrounds are diverse and junior officer tours are lengthy, early goal setting, forethought, and good mentoring is extremely important. Junior officers should aggressively seek CG operational expertise and 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 critical for professional development. That said, if a member wants to compete successfully at the next level, focusing on the Commandant's Reserve Policy Statement can help a member get a better understanding of Service priorities for the Reserve Component.

Developing a Career as a Coast Guard Officer provides an overview of the unique characteristics of an Active-Duty officer's career. This document provides an overview of fundamental officer corps roles, leadership development, officer specialties, and expectations at major career milestones and can be found at: http://www.uscg.mil/opm/opmdocs/Developing_a_Career_as_a_CG_Officer.pdf.

Career Progression:

The Commandant's Guidance to Officer Selection Boards and Panels contains expectations for the qualities needed in the officer corps, (located on the RPM-1 website <http://www.uscg.mil/rpm/rpm1>). It also contains specific guidance for boards considering officers for selection for promotion at all grades from Ensign to Flag Officer. This guidance is part of each selection board precept, and supplements Chapter 5 of the PERSMAN on the basic criteria for selecting officers for promotion – performance, professionalism, leadership, and education. Individual officers seeking assignment counseling should contact their AO (as specified by the Kickoff message), their SRO, and PSC Officer Career Management Branch (PSC-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 develop a career is a must and should also be a high priority.

Strategizing and forming the Slate:

A long range career question to ask as a member progresses through the ranks is how much job diversity should be in a member's background? If a member has been at the same Sector and/or same specialty for all JO tours, **they should not expect to stay there.** In reality, this neither benefits the command long-term nor does it benefit the member. If geographic stability is a special consideration for a member, then it's the member's responsibility to insure the AO is aware of this special situation. Also understand that this may make a difference between being placed in a paid billet and/or being transferred to the IRR.

Over-billeting:

On a limited basis, junior officers may be assigned in an over-billet status at a command where another officer already occupies the position to which the member will be assigned. This will be done rarely, and based on a variety of factors including RCD, training capacity and command need.

AO Decision Process:

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

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in the mix of other factors such as career progression, performance, skill sets, 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 by the AO as yet another factor in any given assignment decision.

AO assignment proposals are their assessment of the best match of Service needs, unit needs, and the member's personal desires – based upon all the information available. AOs try to weave a matrix that best accommodates all the various concerns in filling every vacant billet while trying to achieve the best balance possible in filling Service needs.

Retirement in Lieu of Orders (RILO):

When the AOs initial assignments are approved, RPM will release orders as stated in the kickoff message. Members should be sure to follow the kickoff message's guidance on the RILO process. Note: Unlike the Active-Duty RILO which is strictly a request for retirement, the Reserve RILO can request retirement, or transfer to the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR).

Consideration:

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

PCS Orders:

Shortly after the RILO period expires, the AO will have to consider RILO-caused vacancies and other new developments, and attempts to fill each vacancy. RPM starts transmitting orders as per the timeline in the Kickoff message. It is the SPO that completes the data system requirements in DA and provides the signed/endorsed copy of PCS orders.

Off-Season Assignment Process:

Although the vast majority of Reserve JO assignments are handled through the AY process described above, each year circumstances arise which require off-season transfer decisions not anticipated by the AO.

When an AO becomes aware of upcoming off-season vacancies, the AO consults with the billet owner to see if it needs an immediate fill. Typically only DSF 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 over-billet or unbudgeted status. In these cases, eligible officers may be fleeted into the vacant position without changing their current rotation date and the billet will be shopped the next AY where the incumbent, as well as other officers, can compete for it.

In cases when off-season billets need to be filled, AOs will typically advertise the billet in CGMS. AOs consider the officers who respond to the solicitation, along with others identified who also have the right skill sets for the billet. If there are no volunteers for a DSF billet, select and direct of

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officers within the RCD may result.

Good LUCK!

We hope this information is 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 members and hope that our messages, website, and personal contact keep members well informed. If you have additional questions, please feel free to submit an email to: ARL-PF-CGPSC-rpm-2-Assignments@uscg.mil.