

*The*  
**Reserve Commander**  
*Assignment*  
*Guide*



**August 2012**

## **Purpose**

The Reserve Commander assignment process is different from what many Reservists have experienced in the past, when Integrated Support Command (ISC) Assignment Officers (AO) performed this function. As this is often a Reserve officer's first experience with the centralized process used by the Personnel Service Center's Reserve Personnel Management Division (CG PSC-rpm), we created this guidebook to:

- demystify the assignment process;
- pass along some of our 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 Commander AO at (202) 493-1702.

**The Key Elements**

There are two significant changes to your assignment. First, the assignment is actually made by the combined Reserve O5/O6 Assignment Panel. Second, the level of engagement between the AO, the Program and/or the receiving unit in developing our assignment recommendations is much greater. While PSC makes recommendations to the Panel, it is the Panel that ultimately makes the assignments.

**The Shopping List**

The shopping list of all the Reserve Commander billets, expected to be available in the upcoming assignment season is initially published in the late August-September timeframe via the Coast Guard Portal. The list includes (a) all billets in which incumbents will be tour-complete the following year, (b) billets occupied by Commanders with approved separation requests on file, and Commander billets currently filled by officers of a different grade. Commanders who are tour-complete and who are one-time non-selects for Captain are generally handled on a case-by-case basis. In the assignment year (AY) kick-off message, we ask commands to carefully review the shopping list and provide command concerns by the deadline, which helps us make better assignment recommendations ahead of the Assignment Panel. Additions and deletions based on that review will occur.

In the months and weeks leading up to the Reserve O-5/O-6 Assignment Panel, we publish every billet we believe will be acted upon by the Panel. In addition to updating the Direct Access (DA) shopping list, we issue updates in the Portal (via message traffic, when appropriate) right up until the Assignment Panel convenes. In this way the entire Reserve Commander and Commander (select) population is kept informed of open billets. Changes are announced by ALCGRSV message updates to the shopping list. 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.

**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 particular command and the 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.

## **The E-Resume**

The e-resume is the official (and primary) method of communicating with the AO and the assignment panel. Give us complete information so we 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, we need your e-resume by the date listed in the AY kick-off message. If you send in a late e-resume, you are subject to a process that has already begun, and risk not receiving the assignment of your choice.

## **E-Resume Craftsmanship**

A well-crafted e-resume should allow flexibility and acknowledge possible outcomes. If your e-resume lists only Port Security Unit (PSU) commanding officer billets and nothing else, it 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. **A very narrow e-resume 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, particularly long-term career goals. Do not insert a formal resume as you would normally see in your civilian occupation. Let us know of your career desires, any special considerations, particularly if you are married to an active-duty service member. You may include civilian experience you believe makes you the right fit for a particular billet. This is your vehicle to advise us of your desires and express your concerns. Use it!

## **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. As with promotion boards, DA information is used to make assignments so make sure it accurately represents you.

## **Extensions and Early Rotations**

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

How likely is it that you will 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 as each case is different and decisions are based on individual circumstances. A positive command endorsement will certainly influence assignment considerations.

For early rotations, **it is required 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. “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**

At the Commander and Captain level, all Reserve billets are seen as national fills and members are available for any assignment, regardless of location. This means that reasonable commuting distance is not a primary consideration in the assignment process and Reserve officers are expected to resolve any individual travel issues. At this level, and any level, a paid billet is a privilege and not a right. Commanders who do not receive a SELRES assignment can expect transfer to the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). That said, we understand Reserve officers have civilian occupation and family situations leading to special considerations unique to the Reserve program. We make every effort to take these into account, if the AO is made aware of them. Your best course of action is to be truthful 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 given situation to the Panel.

## **Collocation**

Unlike the Active-Duty assignment process, there is no specific collocation policy governing the Reserve process. However, if you a Reserve officer married to an Active-Duty member, make the AO aware of the situation. In such cases, we will make every attempt to provide suitable options. Where no paid billet is available, we will offer suggestions on how to mitigate any career impacts.

**The Assignment Process**

Armed with the shopping list and your e-resume, we can begin to develop all the information we will need to make assignment recommendations and explain them to the Assignment Panel.

**Strategizing and forming the Slate**

Once all the e-resumes are received, typically in early January, we begin developing a slate, including the name of every officer requesting a particular billet on his or her e-resume. We may place your name on a slate for billets even though you didn't include them on your e-resume. We typically do this in cases in which we find 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 Commander billets, we normally talk directly with the command (Commanding Officer or Executive Officer) that owns the billet. We ask for very simple feedback on each officer we propose. We ask the prospective receiving command 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 deemed acceptable. We don't share details of these conversations with you, just as we don't discuss details of your e-Resume with anyone else.

**Post Script**

If you do not know the Senior Reserve Officers (SROs) at the Headquarters, Area, or District levels, you should become familiar with them. They are an excellent source of career counseling. Along with the AO, you may also want to talk to your District or Area 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 Reserve Commander and Commander (select), 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 or may not be reassigned. If you're a Commander (select) who is not tour complete in an O-4 billet, you have to submit an e-resume. However, it is quite possible you will remain in your current assignment for a year, unless Service needs dictate a transfer. If you're not tour complete and you don't want to move, we may still propose to move you if Service needs require. A common first choice on a Commander (select) e-resume is to remain in place. Give us other choices.

In very unusual circumstances, Lieutenant Commanders of high caliber will be presented to the 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.

**Long-Term Active Duty Orders**

Reserve Officers on long-term active duty orders (EAD, ADOS or 10 USC 12302 e.g. “T10”), generally are not in play for selected reserve assignment.

Members involuntarily recalled under 10 USC 12302), by policy continue to encumber the Selected Reserve billet they were in at the time of recall. Once they come off involuntary mobilization orders, they return to their assigned billets for the duration of their assignments. Officers on long-term, voluntary ADOS under 10 USC 12301(d) are by policy removed from their Selected Reserve billets 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 us know if you are in this situation as it is not always apparent you should be getting assignment consideration. If Commanders come off ADOS after the assignment panel, they must either compete for an off-season assignment, if available, or plan on serving in IRR status until the next AY.

Officers who have taken extended active duty (EAD) contracts are under the active duty process for assignment until their contracts end. Officers who expect their EAD contracts to end in the current AY 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. PSU Commanding Officer assignments and Sector SRO assignments are the first to be completed, and so on. If you are requesting these types of billets, be sure to review current ALCGRSV message traffic to ensure you submit an e-resume to meet these deadlines.

**Command Opportunity and Command Screening Panel**

Eligibility for assignment as Commanding Officer of a Reserve Command is first determined by the Consolidated Major Reserve Command Screening Panel. This process, normally initiated in September through the release of an ALCGRSV message, is slightly different than the Active Duty screening process. Individuals who appear to meet qualifications will be automatically screened, but we recommend you submit an e-resume stating your desire (or lack) for command and your specific qualifications. **Only officers who successfully screen for a PSU command will be considered by the assignment panel for a PSU command.**

**Pecking Order?**

Does all this mean Reserve Commander (selects) and newly promoted Commanders get assigned to billets after more senior Commanders are assigned? No. The process is the same for all, and it’s a process that has placed selected Commanders at PSUs and other desirable positions. Just remember though, we 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 January and February, the interest (and anxiety) level is also understandably heightened. You can 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 the “daisy chain” implications are such that the most likely outcome is not known until just before the Panel convenes. We try to strike a balance between getting information to you quickly and providing you with accurate information that is less likely to change.

By about mid-February we get a sense of the billets for which you may be most competitive. A word of caution: saying you are competitive is not an indication of what we may eventually see before the Assignment Panel convenes. Being competitive normally means you are among the pool of a few candidates from which we believe the billet will be filled. Remember, we are telling other people the same thing. 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.

**Career Progression**

Reserve career paths generally fall into one of two communities, the Sector operational community and the Joint Forces/Interagency community. The challenge at the Commander level is to show you can function in either community at a level of ease and effectiveness expected of senior officers. Because Reserve officer backgrounds are diverse and junior officer tours are often lengthy, early goal setting and planning, as well as good mentoring, are important. If you have always been in a Sector/District community, Commander is typically the last opportunity to break into the Joint Forces/ Interagency community and vice versa. Commanders and Commander (selects) should actively seek to broaden their expertise if they wish to be competitive for promotion to O-6.

**Geographic Diversity**

Remember that at the Reserve Captain, Commander and Chief Warrant Officer level, all billets are viewed as national. Another career consideration at the Commander level is how much geographic diversity do you have in your background? If you have been at the same Sector for the past 10 years, do not expect to stay there as the SRO. In reality, that would not provide a long-term benefit to command and does you a career disservice. If geographic stability is a special consideration for you, make sure your AO knows this. Also understand that this may make a difference between receiving a paid assignment or placement in IRR status.



**Assignment Priority Considerations**

Like the Active Duty assignment process, the Reserve Commander 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 an arduous assignment in a hard-to-fill geographic location won't be taken into consideration. It will. But, it will simply be in the mix of other factors such as career progression, performance, skill sets and Service needs, officer's pay grade, 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**

In the two weeks or so prior to the Assignment Panel convening date, we attempt to notify individuals who are slated for an assignment, although priority for contact is given to individuals who are slated for their fourth choice or lower, or those who are slated for assignments that were not on their e-resumes, including transfer to IRR status. Our forecast is usually accurate. That means most will have a good sense of what the future holds before the Assignment Panel convenes. However, the panel is the final authority, and its members have no obligation to stay with the AO-prepared slate. It is normal that some officers may see something different come out in the message.

We stop communications the day before the panel convening date, and do not return or make calls while the panel is in session. If you do get a call from us during that timeframe, it is at the Assignment Panel's direction. After the panel reports out, we do not discuss their deliberations. As with any board or panel, deliberations are confidential.

**The Panel**

The combined Reserve O-5/O-6 Assignment Panel convenes each year in early March. The panel typically meets for two to three days before issuing the initial report and then recessing during the Requests for Voluntary Action In Lieu of Orders (RILO) period. After that, the Panel reconvenes one more to submit a final report.

**Behind Closed Doors**

Our proposals to the panel are our assessment of the best match of Service needs, unit needs, and your personal desires – in that that order – based upon all the information we have available. We're trying to weave a matrix that best accommodates all the various concerns in filling every vacant billet. We don't pretend that there is a "right" answer; we simply try to achieve the best balance possible in filling every billet possible.

Besides our proposals, we provide the panel source documents, such as screening panel results, your assignment history and a characterization of your record. We specifically note if the recommended billet was on your e-resume, and what billet preference it was. If we know you specifically do not desire an assignment, we note that and we make your best case in stating your reasons. Similarly, we present divergent views when they may arise between a program manager and a field command. We explain our rationale for the assignments we propose and note alternatives as requested. Understand that alternatives are not usually one-for-one replacement, but are rather a series of interlocking decisions sometimes referred to as a “daisy chain.”

## **RILOs**

When the panel’s initial assignments are approved, an ALCGPSC message is released and the two-week RILO period begins.

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 two choices: retirement, or transfer to IRR status.
- Under the RILO process Reserve retirements or changes in status will typically be effective 1 October of the assignment cycle.

Please note that 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. It is 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 two-week RILO period expires, the panel reconvenes. By that time we have had time to consider RILO-caused vacancies and other new developments, and have worked out alternatives 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 ALCGPSC message which constitutes the final report.

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

## **Orders**

We start transmitting orders approximately the end of April. Target date for orders is 01 October of that year. Any questions regarding status of those orders should be directed to your AO.

## **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 DA requires that an estimated report date be entered into the system in order to cut orders, typically 01OCT200X is entered as a default, commands are authorized to arrange exact dates, i.e., direct liaison authorized.

## **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 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.**

**Off-Season  
Assignment Process**

Although the vast majority of Reserve Commander 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, we follow many of the same steps.

When we become aware of upcoming off-season vacancies, we consult with the billet owner to see if it needs an immediate fill. Typically only PSU commanding officer and Sector SRO billets fall into that category, unless Service needs dictate otherwise. All other billets typically will remain vacant, to be filled in the next assignment cycle.

Once that decision is made, we advertise the billet in an ALCGRSV message. 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.

Reserve Commander off-season recommendations are developed by the AO and approved by the PSC-rpm Division Chief.

**GOOD LUCK!**

We hope you find this information useful in understanding the Reserve senior officer assignment process and that it helps reduce the associated stress. 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 AO at (202) 493-1702.