

# Commanding Officer Detach for Cause Study 2010

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**Commanding Officer Detach for Cause Study**

## **Executive Summary**

The Navy requires its commanding officers (COs) to demonstrate the highest levels of leadership, integrity, performance and personal conduct. Approximately one percent of Navy COs are detached for cause (DFC) each year for not meeting the Navy's standards in one or more of those areas. While each of the DFC cases is costly and disruptive, at a minimum, the overall low CO DFC rate of approximately one percent per year indicates that Navy COs as a whole overwhelmingly embrace and embody the highest principles of Naval service. The real story here is not about the relatively small number of COs who fail to meet standards, but rather about the extremely high rate of COs who do live up to the highest standards while serving in one of the most challenging jobs in the Navy.

In 2010 the Naval Inspector General (NAVIG) tasked a team of three post-command captains and one commander to conduct an in-depth review and to assess the Navy's CO DFC cases over the past six years to determine if there are any systemic causes for recent CO DFC cases and to determine if measures to mitigate these causes could be implemented. The NAVIG commissioned a similar study in 2004 based on a spike in the number of CO DFCs in 2003. As part of this 2010 study we reviewed the data, methods, analyses and recommendations from the 2004 study. This 2010 study focuses on cases between January 1, 2005 and June 30, 2010. The very low rate of approximately one percent of COs being relieved annually for cause coupled with the relatively large sample size (approximately 1,500 COs) and the small variance in the number of DFCs on a year-to-year basis prevent making statistical inferences with any significant degree of confidence.

The team collected and analyzed data from Navy Personnel Command (NPC) and Fleet Forces Command (FFC) databases of COs relieved for cause. The team reviewed extensive records to include DFC files, officer service records, Command Screen Board records, leadership training, and interviewed numerous personnel in order to determine systemic causes of CO DFCs.

There was no correlation between CO DFCs and career paths, personality traits, accession sources, time in command, or year groups. The recommendations implemented from the 2004 CO DFC study had no discernable impact on the CO DFC rate.

To better analyze the data, we classified CO reliefs into various categories relating to the reasons for reliefs.

- Significant Event – collision, grounding, allision, or failure of inspection
- Command Performance – mission accomplishment, operational performance, or mission readiness significantly below standards and not performing well

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- Command Climate – satisfactory command performance, but poor morale or performance due to an abusive or unhealthy climate
- Personal Misconduct – inappropriate conduct/misconduct by CO

We further broke down Personal Misconduct into the following five subcategories.

- Orders Violations
- Computer Pornography
- Falsifying Documents
- Adultery, Inappropriate Relationships, Harassment, Sexual Assault
- Alcohol/DUI

Of note, the preponderance of Navy-wide CO reliefs were for Personal Misconduct. Within the category of Personal Misconduct, the preponderance of reliefs were for adultery, inappropriate relationships, harassment, or sexual assault. In 2010 the Adultery, Inappropriate Relationship, Harassment, and Sexual Assault subcategory accounted for nine of the 10 cases (90%). All O-6 CO personal misconduct reliefs in 2010 were for inappropriate relationships. Of the 15 COs relieved in 2010, eight were O-6s. All of the COs relieved in 2010 for command-climate related issues were O-6s. The O-6 relief rate bears monitoring into the future.

This study uncovered no correlation between the likelihood of a CO to be relieved for cause and a CO's career path, personality traits as reflected in standard personality tests, accession source, time in command, or year group. The recommendations implemented as a result of the 2004 CO DFC study have had no discernable impact on the CO DFC rate, which has remained essentially constant since the completion of that study except for small year-to-year variations. Although there is no empirical evidence to support our conclusion, the officers who conducted this study along with the vast majority of personnel interviewed regarding the implementation of the 2004 study's recommendations strongly believe that the recommendations implemented as a result of that study have overall benefited the Navy and may be the foundation for reducing the CO DFC rate in the future.

The following issues, while not the direct reasons for CO reliefs, were significant contributing factors for commands in which the CO was relieved for cause.

- COs, executive officers (XOs) and command master chiefs (CMCs) lacked the skills to recognize that a weak command triad (the special relationships among the CO, XO and and CMC at a command due to their unique responsibilities, thus enabling honest communication via mutual trust based on adherence to Navy standards) existed in their commands and to develop the relationships to make the triads effective.
- Many immediate superiors in command (ISICs) did not effectively oversee the performance or command climate of subordinate commands. Requirements concerning command climate assessments were not routinely followed at many commands and by many ISICs. In some cases, command climate assessments that were completed would

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have provided ISICs opportunities to intervene early and better mitigate factors that eventually led to CO DFCs if accurate executive summaries had been forwarded to the ISIC.

- In the cases of personal misconduct, it appears that COs either did not possess the insight into their motives and weaknesses to prevent them from knowingly engaging in unacceptable behavior or they felt that they had the power to conceal their misdeeds. This phenomenon, termed the “Bathsheba Syndrome”, is expanded upon in this study. This syndrome can likely be mitigated with early and repeated ethics training and 360 degree type evaluations throughout an officer’s career.

The following recommendations are focused on reducing future CO DFCs.

1. Develop an officer leadership training continuum from accession through major command. In order to provide seamless training, the continuum should have one owner to provide oversight and develop curriculum. The continuum owner should exercise control over all of the Navy’s leadership training. The goal of the leadership training continuum is to develop the skills required to be a successful commanding officer. In that regard, training should include;

- Mechanisms such as 360 degree type evaluations and psychometric personality tests (e.g., MBTI) which include reinforcement and improvement on strengths and weaknesses, especially character development, should continue throughout an officer’s career.
- Development of interpersonal skills and character to strengthen weak command triads.
- Self awareness development geared toward recognizing motives and performing self correction when required.
- Leadership training milestones which are required to be met. Attendance should be tracked. Only by exception and approval by the Chief of Naval Personnel should an officer continue to the next career milestone without having completed the associated leadership training. All exceptions should be tracked in a database maintained by the Chief of Naval Personnel.

2. Improved ISIC oversight should be fostered to allow ISICs to better assist COs in identifying potential or ongoing issues early. Timely correction of subordinate commands’ issues is likely to set conditions for a more successful command environment and may reduce negative recourse.

3. Enforce existing requirements for Command Climate Assessments and their corresponding executive summaries. ISICs should be educated to ensure that they do not use the assessments as grading tools but as tools to improve command climates. The surveys should include optional questions on fraternization.

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## Commanding Officer Detach for Cause Study 2010

### Section 1: Introduction

#### 1.A Tasking.

The Naval Inspector General (NAVIG) tasked the team to conduct an in-depth review and to assess the Navy's Commanding Officer Detach for Cause (CO DFC) cases over the previous six years to determine if there were any systemic causes and to determine if measures to mitigate these causes could be implemented. This study, conducted six years after the NAVIG 2004 CO DFC study, focuses on cases that occurred between January 1, 2005 and June 30, 2010.

#### 1.B Team Composition.

The study was conducted by three post-command Navy captains and one Navy commander from the staff of the NAVIG, who for the purpose of this report are referred to as "the team" or "we". Team members are listed below with designators.

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### Section 2: NAVIG 2004 CO DFC Study

In 2004 the NAVIG chartered a team of four Navy captains to conduct an in-depth review of CO DFC cases for the previous five years to determine if systemic factors contributed to the reliefs. The team reviewed NPC databases, type commander (TYCOM) records, command selection and slating process, prospective commanding officer (PCO) training courses, officer career paths and training in addition to interviewing immediate superiors-in-command (ISIC), TYCOMs and their staffs. The team found no systemic factors relating to the 2003-2004 increase in CO reliefs. The team made the following four recommendations for the purpose of improving future CO performance:

- Incorporate a 360° assessment tool at the prospective executive officer (PXO) level
- Develop and implement a refresher course for all major command PCOs
- Improve Operational Risk Management (ORM) training in the Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) PCO pipeline
- Institute command self-assessment training for all department heads (DH) and XOs, and review for adequacy the training provided for PCOs

This 2010 study reports on the status of implementing these recommendations and assesses their effectiveness.

### **Section 3: Relief Process**

Note: The population of COs studied consists of COs who were detached for cause and COs who were relieved for cause who did not go through the Navy's formal process for DFC. Throughout this report the term "relieved" includes both categories of reliefs. This difference is expanded upon in Section 4.B of this report.

#### **3.A Requirements for CO DFC.**

Per Military Personnel Manual 1611-020, DFC is the administrative removal of an officer from the officer's current duty assignment before his or her normal transfer or planned rotation date. The need for DFC arises when an officer's performance or conduct detracts from accomplishing the command mission and the officer's continuance in the billet can only negatively impact the command. In the case of a CO, failure to exercise sound judgment in one or more areas and loss of confidence constitute a sufficient basis for the ISIC to request the DFC of the officer.

#### **3.B Initiating a DFC.**

CO DFC, per Military Personnel Manual 1611-020, is the administrative removal of a CO from the officer's current duty assignment before the normal transfer or planned rotation date. For the purpose of a CO DFC, a CO is defined as an officer who holds authority to punish subordinates under UCMJ, Article 15 and includes XOs who will "fleet up" to CO with UCMJ, Article 15 authority. There are four reasons for initiating a CO DFC:

1. Misconduct
2. Substandard performance involving one or more significant events resulting from gross negligence or complete disregard of duty
3. Substandard performance of duty over an extended period of time
4. Loss of confidence

An ISIC can initiate a CO DFC for any of the above reasons. When the ISIC is not a flag officer, the concurrence of the first flag officer in the chain of command should be obtained prior to detaching the CO.

#### **3.C Action Following DFC Request.**

The CO being relieved of command will normally be issued temporary duty orders to the staff of a superior in the administrative chain of command pending final resolution of the DFC. The DFC will be forwarded via the officer concerned to Naval Personnel Command (NPC) via the TYCOM and the officer's administrative chain of command. The request should be forwarded within 5 working days of receipt by each command in the routing chain. The characterization of "for cause" will not be entered into the officer's record until reviewed and approved by NPC. These actions are all clearly spelled out in Military Personnel Manual 1611-020.



## Section 4: Scope/Methodology

### 4.A. Overview.

We used statistical analysis, examined processes, conducted records reviews, and personal interviews to determine if there are any systemic reasons for CO DFCs. Because the previous study concerning CO DFC was completed in late 2004, the focus period of this study was 2005-2010. We used statistical data for trend analysis from 1999-2010, but focused on 2005-2010. Our DFC records review and personal interviews focused on commander (O5) and captain (O6) DFC cases from January 1, 2008 to June 30, 2010.

### 4.B. Scope.

The cases used in this study consist of official CO DFCs and those COs who otherwise would have been relieved for cause but whose reliefs did not require a change in permanent change of station (PCS) orders, therefore not requiring the formal DFC process to be utilized. The cases were compiled from records of both NPC (DFCs maintained by PERS 8) and a database of DFCs maintained by the staff at U.S. Fleet Forces Command. Our main effort consisted of examining in-depth the cases from 2008-2010. We focused on determining if any systemic causes existed for these DFCs and did not draw any specific conclusions regarding the overall effectiveness of programs such as warfare area or designator specific training pipelines, Command Leadership School (CLS) courses or the detailing process. We examined those and similar programs only in the framework of the impact that they may or may not have in contributing to or reducing the number of CO DFC cases.

We reviewed individual service records for each CO who was relieved for cause between January 1, 2008 and June 30, 2010. Additionally, we reviewed command screening board records and training pipeline records for each major community. We conducted a large number of interviews with COs who had been relieved, their XO's, command master chiefs (CMC), contemporaries, and numerous personnel and leaders of training commands, ISICs, and other major command staffs.

### 4.C. Criteria.

We categorized each case into one of the following categories;

- Significant Event – collision, grounding, allision, or failure of inspection
- Command Performance – mission accomplishment, operational performance, or mission readiness significantly below standards and not performing well
- Command Climate – satisfactory command performance, but poor morale or performance due to an abusive or unhealthy climate
- Personal Misconduct – inappropriate conduct/misconduct by CO

We further broke down Personal Misconduct into the following five subcategories.

- Orders Violations
- Computer Pornography
- Falsifying Documents

- Adultery, Inappropriate Relationships, Harassment, Sexual Assault
- Alcohol/DUI

While some cases consisted of elements that fit in multiple categories, we categorized each case by the most significant reason that was given by the ISIC for the DFC for that case.

#### **4.D Career Path.**

We compared the career paths for the COs studied to see if there were any commonalities between accession sources, year groups, time in command and reasons for relief. We noted no trend, based on career path, to indicate a tendency for COs to act in manners that could lead to their being relieved for cause. The relieved COs came from all commissioning sources and were evenly dispersed among year-groups. The COs' tenures in command at the times of DFC varied from four months in command to within days before the scheduled end-of-tour change of command, indicating no propensity for COs to be relieved more often at any particular point during their command tours.

#### **4.E Officer Service Records.**

We reviewed in-depth the Officer Service Records for COs who were relieved to determine if there were any documented instances of misconduct, substandard performance or any behavior or performance that could be (with the benefit of hindsight) an indication that the officer would behave or perform in a manner which could lead to being relieved for cause. We also screened those records to determine if any of the COs studied stood out as having a history of performance at a level below that of their peers as reflected in their service records, i.e. a record that was not representative of "Best and Fully Qualified". We took this step because during interviews, several individuals talked about relieved COs whose performance and service records indicated that they were not qualified for command but who had been deemed at an early stage of their career by senior officers to be destined for command. Without exception, we found no record with documented misconduct or substandard performance (performance grade below 3.0 in any category). We examined the results of some selection boards and reviewed the records of officers who were not selected for command. Following these reviews and through comparing complete service records, we concluded that the service records supported the members' selections for command and did not contain any indications of prior misconduct or substandard performance. We found nothing in their service records to indicate that COs who were DFC'd or relieved early should not have been selected for command. While our review of the fitness reports revealed no documented substandard performance, we also noted that FITREPs following the reliefs of the COs had a wide range of grades and written comments in block 42. FITREPs for COs who were relieved with associated non-judicial punishment (NJP) were fairly straight forward and consistent, with the results of the NJPs being consistently documented in blocks 42 and appropriately reflected in the associated grades. Some FITREPs in other cases did not mention in block 42 that the COs had been relieved and the corresponding grades did not reflect the reasons for relief. In one case a CO had been relieved for having an affair with the ex-wife of a command member while the member and his ex-wife were reconciling, yet the CO's post-relief FITREP grades were all 4.0 and the top line of block 42 indicated that he was a "mentor" for his subordinates. We found no cases in which a reporting senior wrote a fitness report contrary to Navy instructions, but some reporting seniors glossed over the substandard

performance which led to some COs being relieved. In all cases, however, DFCs were adequately captured elsewhere in service records so that selection boards would have complete awareness of the DFC.

#### **4.F. Command Screening Process.**

We reviewed the command screening processes for the Aviation, Submarine, and Surface communities. We conducted interviews and reviewed precepts for each community mentioned above. Though these command screening boards were administrative, they were conducted much like statutory boards. Board precepts were reviewed thoroughly to include legal reviews and were signed for approval by the Chief of Navy Personnel. The board members were approved by the Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel and were from diverse backgrounds. The precepts clearly identified the procedures and requirements for selections to command. To ensure fairness, except under extraordinary circumstances, members were not allowed to serve on the same board two years in a row and no member was allowed to make personal remarks about a candidate that could be considered adverse unless such matter was included in the candidate's service record. While the restriction on adverse comments protected individual members, there was no restriction to protect the rest of the pool against over inflation of a candidate's record. The precepts did allow board members to make unsubstantiated positive comments about candidates, perhaps thereby prejudicing the other candidates. It is our collective opinion that the benefits of allowing positive comments outweighs the risks and does not lead to unqualified candidates being selected for command. This opinion is based on our individual experiences while serving on screening boards, our interviews with personnel who served on command screening boards and the results of the command screening boards that we reviewed. Likewise, we noted no indications that potential over inflation of a candidate's record resulted in unqualified candidates being selected for command. Such indications might include fitness reports that were noticeably weaker than those of other officers who were selected for command or some sort of punitive or administrative note in an officer's record which would indicate that the officer was not qualified for command. Following board selection, the lists of selected officers were reviewed for past or pending disciplinary and administrative action to include NJPs, DFC requests, and ongoing or substantiated IG Hotline complaints.

It is our opinion, based on our in-depth record review, personal interviews and personal experiences that the command screening process is fair and chooses the most qualified members for command. The command screening process does not contribute adversely to the CO DFC rate.

### **Section 5: Data Analysis**

#### **5.A Database.**

As shown in Figure 1, 80 Commanding Officers were relieved from January 2005 through September 2010. The 2010 reliefs only reflect data through 30 September 2010. Figure 1 reflects the years that COs were relieved, and not necessarily the years that the DFCs were approved.

As stated earlier in this report, the database includes COs who were DFC'd and COs who were relieved for cause who did not go through the Navy's formal process for DFC. Throughout this report the term "relieved" includes both categories of reliefs.

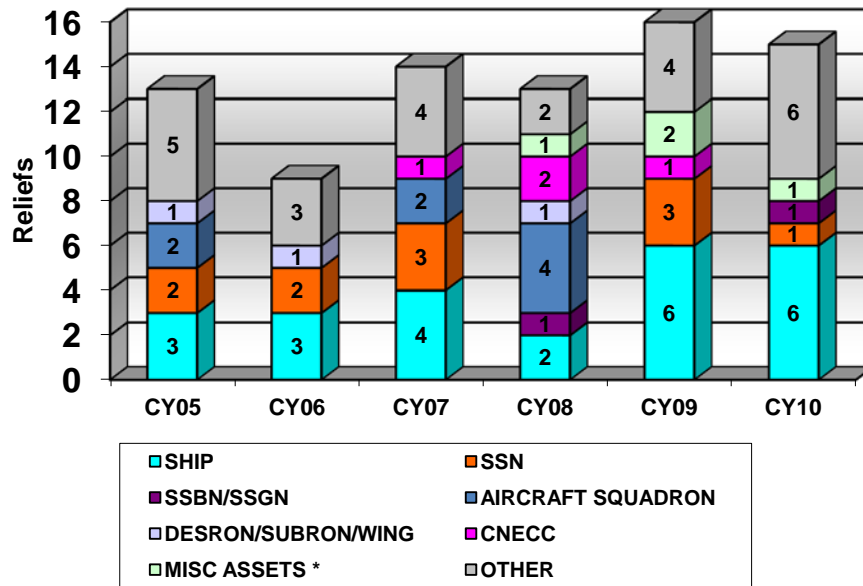


Fig. 1 – CO Reliefs (Navy Wide)

### 5.B. Relief Rates.

Figures 2 through 5 depict the CO relief rate Navy-wide and by major communities. The bar graphs show the number of reliefs per year and are indexed to the left y-axis. The line graphs are the percentages of COs relieved and are indexed to the right y-axis. The average rates are represented by horizontal black lines indexed to the right y-axis. The percentage of reliefs each year appears above the bar graph.

#### 5.B.1 Relief Trends Navy wide.

Figure 2 shows a slightly increasing trend in CO reliefs since 2004. In only one year since 2005 has the percentage of COs relieved been below the 12-year average of .84%. Due to the relatively low relief rates, the percentages are sensitive to small changes in the numbers of COs relieved year-to-year. A change of one CO equates to approximately a change of .06% in rate for a given year. The number of COs relieved each year since 2004 was fairly consistent, at 12 +/- 4. The range of COs relieved for the last four years is 14 +/- 2, with a peak in 2009 of 16.

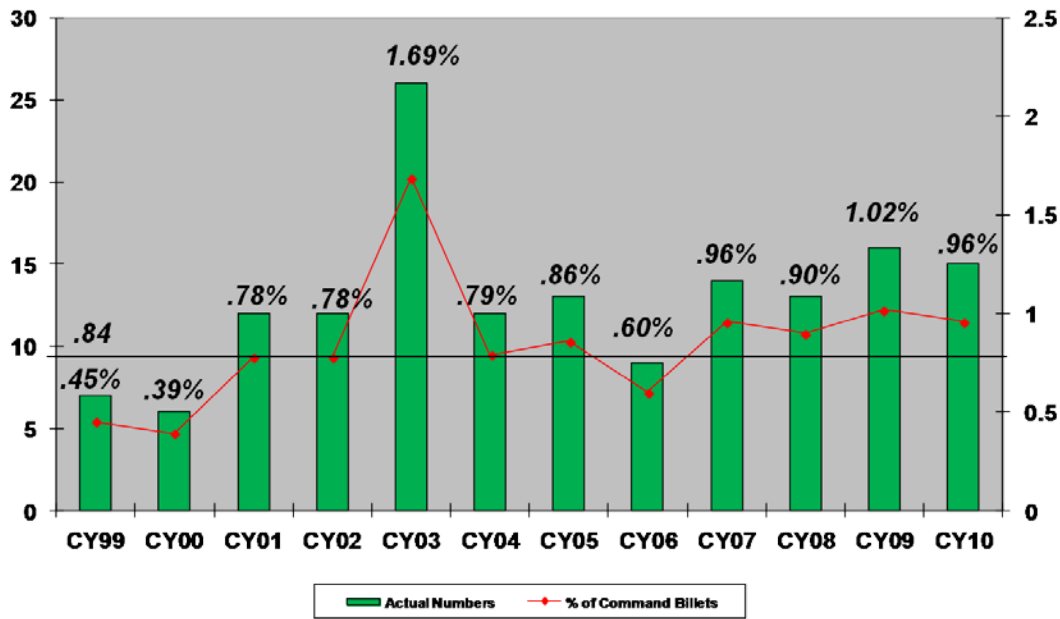


Figure 2 – Number and Percentage of COs who were Relieved (Navy Wide)

**5.B.2 AIRFOR Relief Rates.**

A comparison of Figure 2 with Figure 3 shows that the AIRFOR relief rate fluctuated more from one year to the next than the overall Navy rate. The AIRFOR average rate was the lowest of the major communities over the past 12 years. For four of the six most recent years, the AIRFOR average was below the 12-year AIRFOR average of .76%. There have been no AIRFOR CO reliefs since 2008, when the average was 2.11%. We could find no definitive reason why the AIRFOR relief rate has been historically lower or why it fluctuates more than the relief rates of other communities.

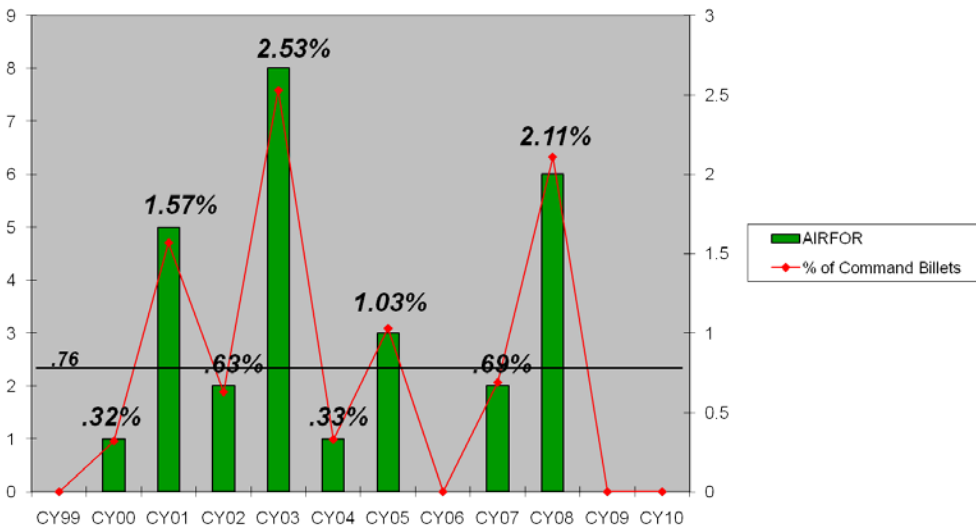


Figure 3 – Commanding officer relief AIRFOR

### 5.B.3 SUBFOR relief rates.

As shown in Figure 4, SUBFOR had the most consistent relief rate of any of the warfare communities, with 2 +/- 1 COs being relieved each year except for 2003.

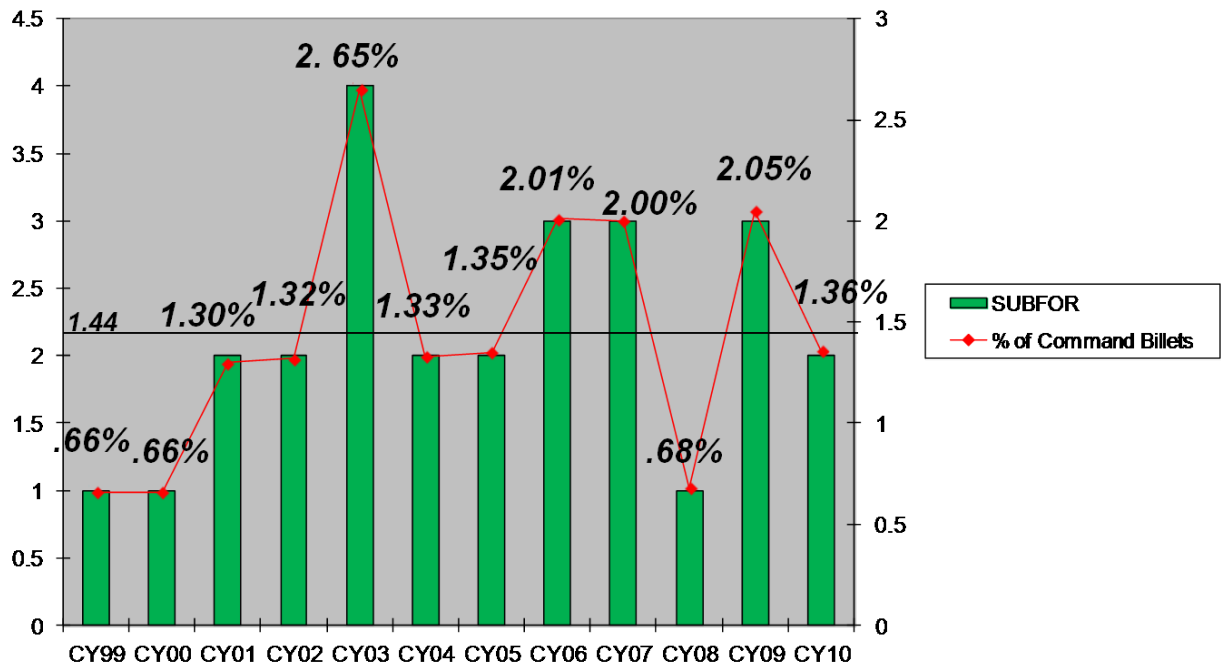


Figure 4 – Commanding officer relief SUBFOR

### 5.B.4 SURFOR relief rates.

SURFOR's historical relief rate, Figure 5, has been very consistent with SUBFOR's historical relief rate. While SURFOR's relief rate in each year from 2005-2008 was below the SURFOR historical average of 1.42%, in 2009 there was a significant increase which remained consistent in 2010. We could not determine any likely cause for the recent spike in SURFOR's relief rate.

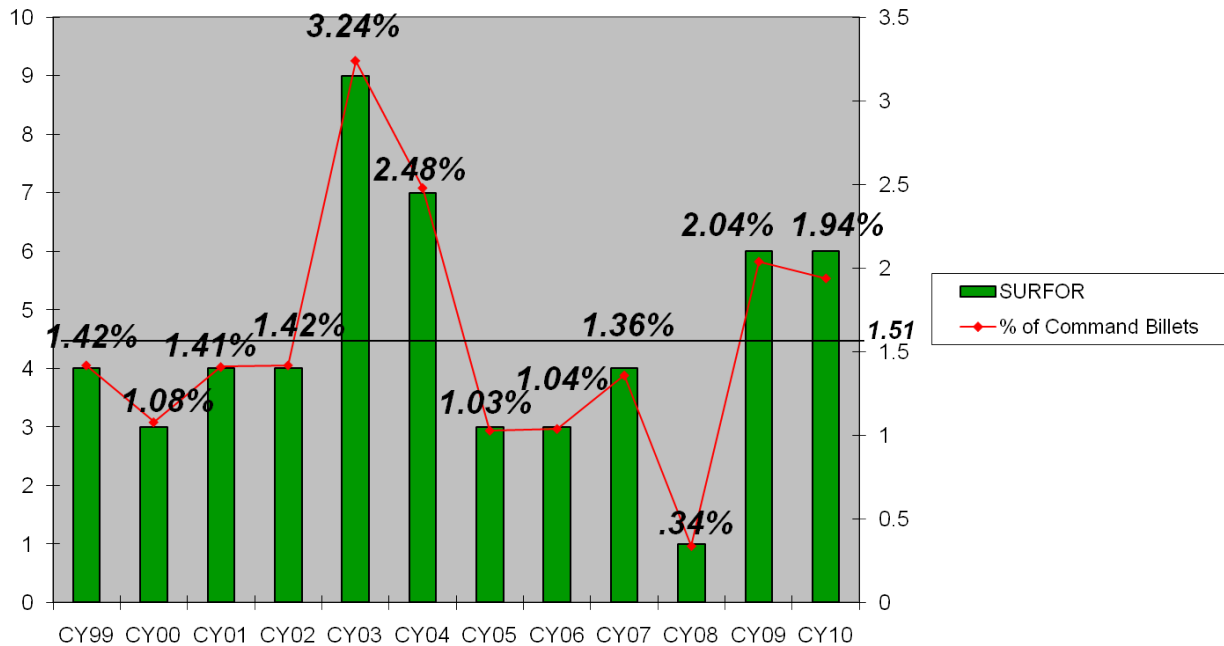


Figure 5 – Commanding officer relief SURFOR

**5.B.5 Community relief rate comparison.**

The SURFOR and SUBFOR relief rates, when compared to each other, have been essentially the same since 2004. Each year the two communities were within one CO relief of having the same rate as the other. AIRFOR has a significantly lower overall average and year to year rates tend to trend opposite SUBFOR and SURFOR. When AIRFOR has a relatively low CO relief rate (2006, 2007, 2009, 2010), SURFOR and SUBFOR have relatively high rates. When SURFOR and SUBFOR have a relatively low rate (2008), AIRFOR has a high rate. We could find no reason for this apparently inverse relationship.

**5.C Relief by Category.**

Figure 6 is a breakdown of relief by category. Personal misconduct accounts for the preponderance of reliefs. From 2008-2010 all but one of the command climate-related reliefs also involved personal misconduct on the part of the CO as a secondary reason for relief. Classifying those particular command climate-related reliefs in the category of Personal Misconduct would make that category even more significant as compared to other categories. Reliefs for significant events remain very consistent at approximately two per year. Reliefs for command performance, while fluctuating more than other categories on a year-to-year basis, averaged 2.3 per year.

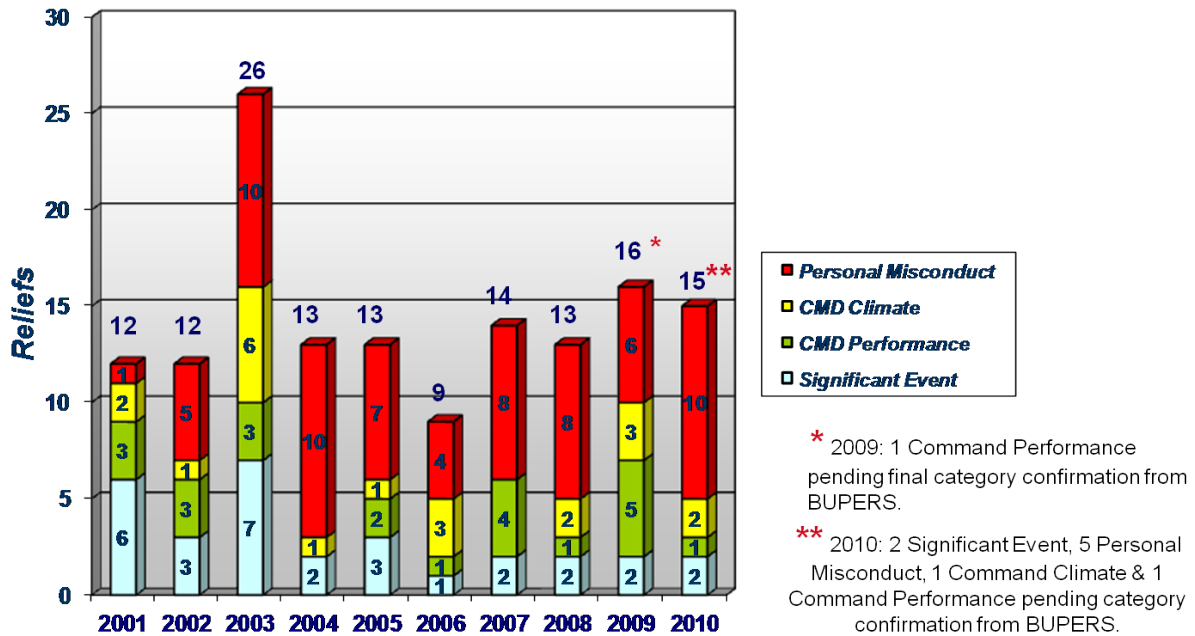


Figure 6 – Commanding Officer Relief by Category 2001 - 2010

### 5.C.1 Personal Misconduct Subcategories.

Figure 7 provides a snapshot of personal misconduct cases from 2005-2010. Of note, there have been no reliefs for cases of computer pornography or falsifying documents since 2007. In 2010 the Adultery, Inappropriate Relationship, Harassment, and Sexual Assault category accounted for nine of the 10 cases (90%). Alcohol abuse was the reason for the remaining one case. A secondary factor in the 2010 alcohol-related relief case was sexual harassment. Eight of the nine reliefs in the category of Adultery, Inappropriate Relationships, Harassment, and Sexual Assault Reliefs were for inappropriate relationships.

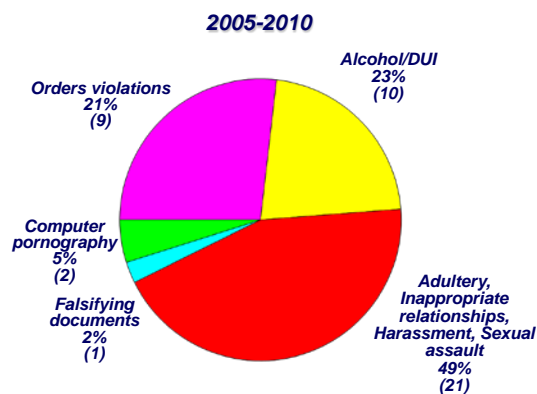


Figure 7 –Personal Misconduct by category



### 5.D. Relief by Community.

Figure 8 shows Navy-wide relief by community. The preponderance of reliefs were for personal misconduct. Within AIRFOR and SURFOR, personal misconduct reliefs account for 73% and 48% of the reliefs, respectively. SUBFOR reliefs are fairly evenly spread throughout the four categories. Reliefs for significant event are essentially evenly divided between SURFOR and SUBFOR. Of note, the five reliefs of major shore station commanders were all for personal misconduct and three of the five were aviators (officers with a designator of 1300 or 1310) who were relieved during the years that AIRFOR had no reliefs of its subordinate commanders (2009-2010).

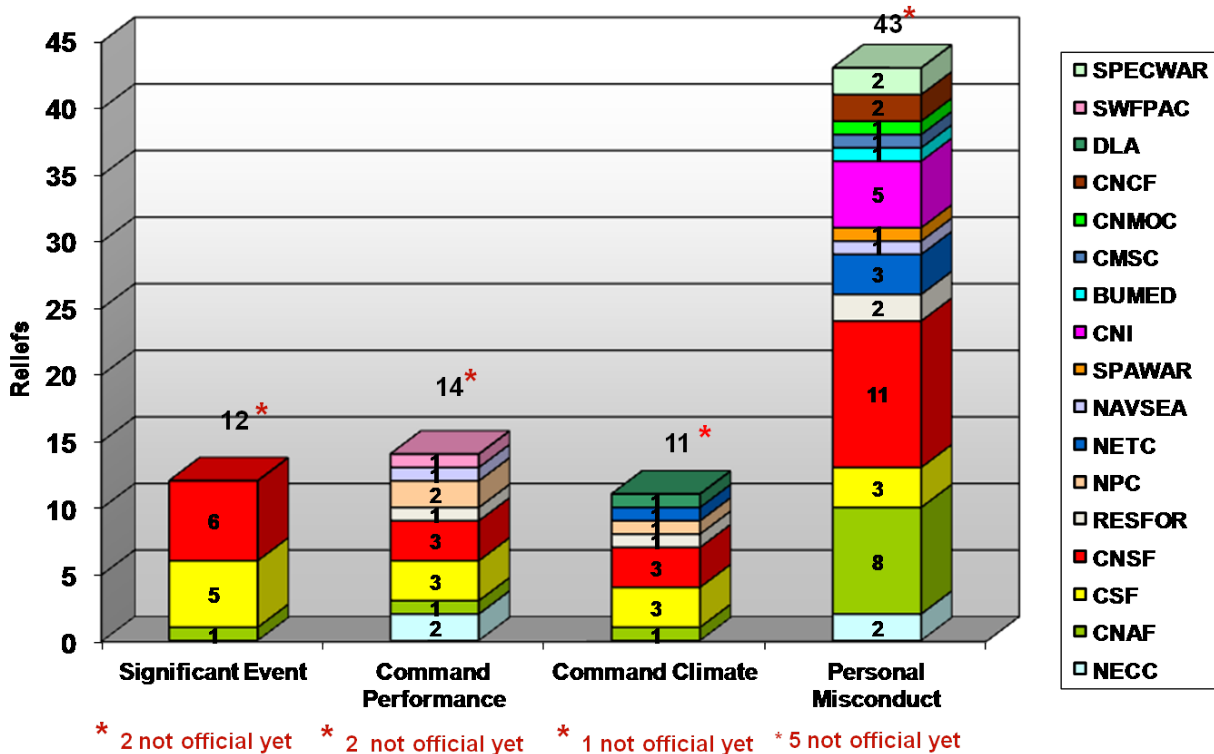


Figure 8 – Reliefs by Community Navy-Wide

### 5.E O-6 Reliefs.

Figure 9 shows O-6 relief rates from 2005-2010. The chart reveals a steady increase in O-6 reliefs starting in 2008. 2010 was the first year that the rate of O-6 CO reliefs was higher than the rate of O-5 reliefs. The data reveals an upward trend from 2007-2010. Of note, the number of O-6 reliefs each year for personal misconduct is relatively constant, but recently O-6s have been relieved for command climate and command performance issues as well as a significant event. If not for the recent increase in O-6 reliefs, the number of Navy-wide CO reliefs for each of the years since 2007, as shown in Figure 1, would have been less than the number of Navy-wide reliefs in 2007. Additionally, of the 15 reliefs in 2010, over half of them were O-6 reliefs, including all of the command-climate related reliefs. In 2010 all of the O-6 personal misconduct reliefs were for inappropriate relationships.

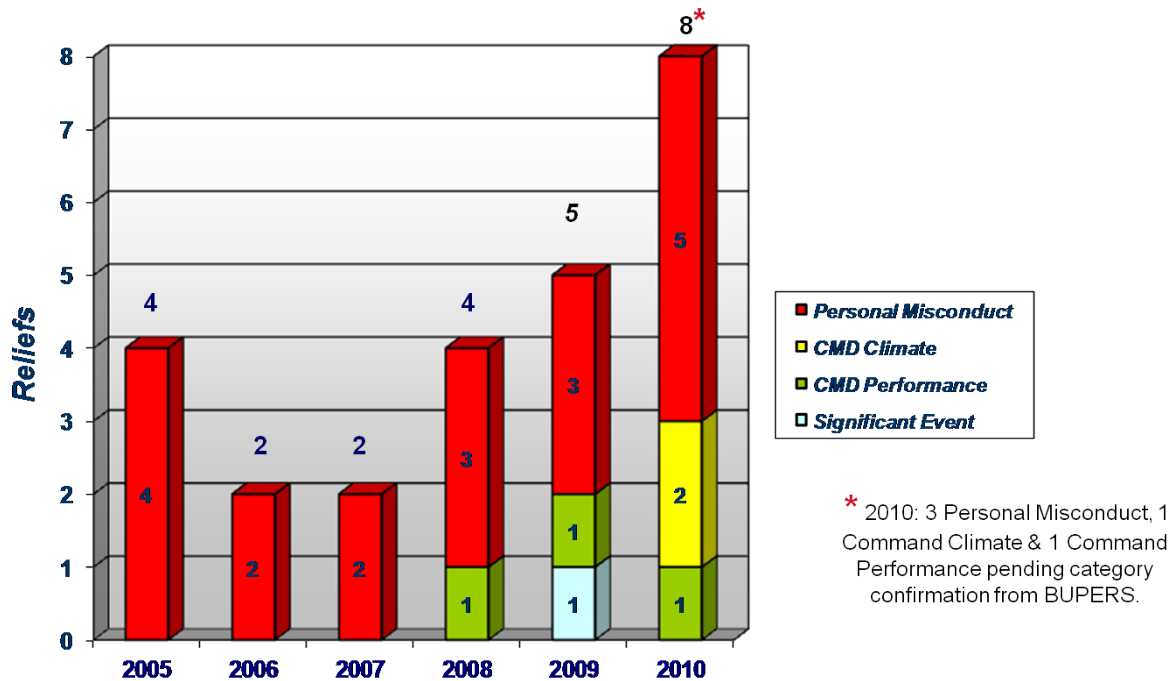


Figure 9 O-6 Reliefs by category

### 5.F Personality traits.

We examined personality traits (as indicated on standard questionnaires that are based on self-reporting) to determine if there was any correlation between personality traits and The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a psychometric assessment questionnaire designed to measure psychological preferences in how people perceive the world and make decisions. Command Leadership School (CLS) uses the MBTI as a tool to show prospective O-5 and O-6 COs their potential personality strengths and weaknesses as they prepare for command. We compared the CLS MBTI assessments for O-5 and O-6 COs DFC'd from January 2005 through April 30, 2010 with all of the O-5 and O-6 CO CLS MBTI assessments from the same period. We found no significant differences between COs who were relieved early and the COs who were not relieved early. The data showed that the percentage of COs relieved in each of the 16 MBTI four-letter trait categories were within two percentage points of the overall CO group in each of the categories. No names or personal data were associated with the MBTI that we reviewed, in order to ensure privacy.

### 5.G Data Summary.

There is no significant difference in SUBFOR and SURFOR relief rates over the past five years. AIRFOR's relief rates since 2005 are lower than SUBFOR and SURFOR's relief rates each year for that period. AIRFOR had a significant drop in relief rates from 2008 to 2009 and maintained a 0% relief rate through September, 2010. The preponderance of Navy-wide CO reliefs are not based on a command's or a commander's poor performance in a warfighting capability category (Significant Event or Command Performance) but rather in the category of Personal Misconduct. Within the category of Personal Misconduct, the subcategory of Adultery, Inappropriate

relationships, Harassment, and Sexual Assault contains the preponderance of reliefs. Personality traits as demonstrated in the MBTI do not indicate any propensity for COs with any particular traits to either be relieved early or not be relieved early, as well. The three major warfare communities each have had COs relieved in each category (Personal Misconduct, Command Climate, Command Performance or Significant Event) within the last five years. While at the time that this study was conducted, AIRFOR commands had no reliefs in the previous two years, three aviators had been relieved for personal misconduct while in major command of shore installations. The data show that COs from all communities are similarly susceptible to being relieved early for the same types of problems; personal misconduct, significant events, command climate or command performance. Likewise, no community has a significantly higher or lower relief rate than other communities. AIRFOR has been successful since 2008 in eliminating reliefs of operational commanders, but aviators have higher rates of early relief in major shore installation commander billets. If the AIRFOR success rate is maintained in the future, the Navy would likely benefit from studying the reasons for AIRFOR's success. The O-6 relief rate has increased for each of the last four years.

## **Section 6: Assessments / Opinions**

### **6.A Significant Event.**

Significant events which led to CO reliefs occurred as early in the command tour as the CO's first time at sea with his new command to as late in the CO's tour as two days prior to the regularly scheduled end-of-tour change of command. The COs relieved as a result of significant events included both first-time COs and those in major command. The events leading to the COs' reliefs included hitting a buoy, death of a crew member during an at-sea evolution, collision with another ship, and collision with a pier. The ISICs we interviewed all stated that the significant event itself did not necessarily directly cause them to relieve the CO, but rather that the subsequent investigations documented significant procedural compliance problems and/or a CO's acceptance of substandard performance over a period of time.

#### **6.A.1 ISIC Involvement.**

ISIC involvement with the commands whose CO's had been relieved as a result of a significant event varied in style and degree. Several of the ISICs worked closely with their subordinate commanders while others took a much more hands-off approach.

#### **6.A.2 Command Triad.**

The Command Triad (CO, XO, CMC) in each of the significant event-related CO relief cases was typically either dysfunctional or weak. The reasons for poor synergy in the triads varied from one member of the triad being overbearing, usually the CO, to other members being ineffective in communicating within the triad. While some members of triads stated that they felt their triad had worked well, evidence showed that the CO had undermined or marginalized one or both of the other members of the triad.

#### **6.A.3 Other Factors.**

Personnel who we interviewed offered a wide variety of theories and strong opinions regarding why CO's were being relieved for significant events. Among the most prevalent theories were

decreases in training time leading to less proficient crews and COs, decrease in crew and CO experience levels (to include a decrease of sea time throughout a COs career) and an increased pressure to perform more tasks with less resources. While the factors in these theories may have resulted in lower levels of fleet readiness and increased stress on the commands and COs, the data do not support the theory that CO relief rates for significant events are tied to changes in these factors. While pressures associated with these factor may have increased over time, reliefs for significant event has remained constant (Figure 6) and an association between the two cannot be demonstrated.

#### **6.A.4 Significant Event Summary.**

The major warfare communities are responsive in making appropriate institutional corrections following significant events. COMSUBFOR chartered a “deep dive” into root causes of the submarine community’s significant event over the past several years and is implementing appropriate corrective actions. In response to a high-visibility grounding, COMSURFOR has made appropriate changes to the Surface Force Training Manual. COMSURFOR is also developing a method to track mariner experience throughout an officer’s career to determine if it could be useful in enhancing readiness. Surface Warfare Officer School (SWOS) has started to grade and record students’ individual performance in seamanship, to include simulators and rules of the road examinations. Officers must demonstrate minimum standards of performance in order to graduate and move on to the next career milestone..

#### **6.B Command Climate.**

CO reliefs in the last five years due to command climate issues have occurred in seven communities (Figure 8). The highest numbers have been in the submarine and surface warfare communities, with three each. Of the 11 command climate reliefs since 2005, 10 were initiated either following an investigation on a related issue by Navy Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) or due to formal complaints either to Congress or an IG. Only one command climate related relief occurred as a result of an ISIC recognizing the climate issues through routine oversight. The evidence in each of the 10 cases following an NCIS investigation or formal complaint shows that the types of climate issues that directly led to DFCs were not known by the ISICs prior to the investigations or complaints.

The ISICs for commands with a CO DFC varied significantly in their leadership styles and their degrees of involvement with their subordinate commanders. We found that even the ISICs who had close relationships with subordinate commands and commanders did not get an accurate sense of the command climate prior to being made aware of other significant problems in the command.

As with reliefs for significant events, the Command Triads (CO, XO, CMC) in these cases were almost without exception either dysfunctional or weak. Again, the reasons for this weakness varied from command to command, including one member of a triad being overbearing in one command and other members of the triad being ineffective in other commands. In one case, the commanding officer did not trust the CMC, leading the CMC to stop providing effective leadership to the command’s chief petty officers. In this case, the command climate started to

improve when a new CMC reported aboard and began working on improving the command triad relationships.

We reviewed several Command Climate Assessments from commands which had a CO relieved for poor command climate. In most cases these Command Climate Assessments revealed the poor climates in the commands. The COs typically did not act on the assessments. They did not develop and execute plans to correct the deficiencies nor did they forward accurate executive summaries to their ISICs as required by instruction. Several of the commands did not perform an assessment, thus eliminating one tool available to the COs to obtain unfiltered information on the command climate. We found much anecdotal evidence that ISICs typically do not enforce the requirement for commands to forward command climate survey summaries to ISICs.

### **6.C Personal Misconduct.**

As noted earlier, personal misconduct accounts for the preponderance of CO reliefs and spans the largest number of communities. There were no trends or common sets of circumstances which might help to identify COs who may be susceptible to being relieved for personal misconduct. For example, some COs who were relieved had behaved poorly while deployed, some while living at home with family, some were geographic bachelors, some were having family or marital problems but many were not. We investigated the widely held theory that most COs who were relieved for personal misconduct likely exhibited similar behavior in the past. We did not find evidence that any of the COs had demonstrated this kind of behavior prior to screening for command. Some COs had been counseled informally and/or formally regarding their behavior by their ISICs prior to their reliefs but did not change their behavior or refused to believe they were not conducting themselves in a professional manner.

Many cases involved acceptable behavior with other service members which changed over time into inappropriate behavior. For example, one CO went periodically to the officer's club on-base to build camaraderie with the junior officers and ended up in an adulterous relationship. In another example a CO who talked periodically with one of his crew members about each other's children ended up in an inappropriate relationship with that crew member. In some other cases, COs were knowingly conducting themselves inappropriately; having affairs with other spouses in their neighborhoods, with other officers' wives or with other service members.

In almost all of these cases, the COs conducted themselves in manners which would almost certainly expose their actions to discovery. The COs became overconfident and felt that they could control the situations. The Bathsheba Syndrome, discussed in more detail in Section 6, helps to explain this phenomenon very well. There is a large volume of work available regarding preventing executive failure, including personal misconduct. Several people who have done work in this field conclude that this type of failure can be mitigated through opportunities for self awareness and related ethics training throughout a career. This conclusion helps to form the basis for one of our recommendations in Section 8.

As was the case with some other categories of CO reliefs, command climate assessments were either not conducted or when they were conducted; the executive summaries were not forwarded to the ISIC. In some cases of fraternization and adultery, several members of the command had

been aware of the conduct before a complaint was filed. Command members did not come forward to report these inappropriate relationships for a variety of reasons. In these cases, a properly conducted command climate assessment would have provided the CO and the ISIC the insight needed to help take corrective action. The poor adherence to instructions regarding command climate assessment instructions provides the Navy an opportunity to mitigate some factors which may otherwise ultimately lead to a CO DFC. In Section 8 we recommend better adherence to these instructions.

As was the case in other categories of CO reliefs, the command triads in these cases were typically weak.

#### **6.D Command Performance.**

As noted in paragraph 5.C, reliefs for command performance averaged 2.3 per year, with the highest number occurring in 2009 (five) and lowest in 2010 (one). The COs' times in command prior to relief ranged from four months to 37 months. The majority of these reliefs were due to command failures during exercises or inspections or due to poor procedural compliance command-wide. In one case the CO was relieved very early in his tour after having assumed command of a unit with long-standing but undiscovered problems of procedural compliance. This particular CO was not provided a viable opportunity to succeed and did not recognize during his tour that his command needed outside help until confidence in the CO's leadership was unrecoverable. Similar to other categories of CO reliefs, the command triads in these cases were typically weak.

#### **6.E DFC Requests.**

We comprehensively reviewed each DFC package for the COs relieved from 1 January 2008- 30 June 2010. In all but two of the cases the DFC requests unquestionably supported the ISIC's recommendations to relieve the Commanding Officers. In one of these two cases the DFC request was appropriately disapproved by BUPERS. In the other case, the CO had been in command for 30 months before being detached for cause due to a loss of confidence. The relieved CO was able to factually refute the individual allegations which led to his being relieved, but was not able to restore his ISIC's confidence in his ability to lead his command. Under the MILPERSMAN, loss of confidence is sufficient cause to relieve a CO.

DFCs requests are accurately tracked by PERS 8 and are thoroughly reviewed prior to final disposition. While outside the scope of our study, we did find several cases of COs who were relieved early but for whom DFC requests were not submitted. Community personnel managers were able to modify permanent change of station orders at the requests of ISICs to facilitate relieving COs early without requiring a formal DFC package to be submitted. Without requiring DFC requests to be submitted, there was no reliable way to determine how many cases existed in which the CO was detached early and departed quietly and "successfully" when a DFC might have been more appropriate.

#### **6.F Leadership Training.**

We examined training throughout officers' careers to determine if the training pipeline was meeting the Navy's needs in light of CO DFC rates. Leadership training courses are structured

to occur throughout an officer's career, from accession through flag ranks. Included in leadership training are Division Officer, Department Head, PXO, PCO and Major Command leadership courses. The communities work well at covering community specific leadership items, appropriate tactical and technical training. When deficiencies in training courses are noted, training is quickly improved.

CLS is led by a post major command captain and staffed by highly qualified post command commanders and captains. The two week PCO course (10 working days) focuses on core leadership principles including mentoring subordinates, command climate, decision-making, the command triad, ethics, core values and team building. Between 2005 and 2010, 44% of COs relieved either did not attend CLS as a PCO or did not attend follow-on CLS after being selected for O5 or O6 command. Note: The one-week Major Command Leadership Course was established in 2007. The Navy has recently improved the rate of PCOs attending the CLS PCO course. CLS data show that all commander and captain PCOs scheduled to attend CLS in 2010 attended either the 1 or 2 week course. The ethics training portion of the CLS PCO course includes the reading and discussion of *Bathsheba Syndrome: The Ethical Failure of Successful Leader*. The Bathsheba article states that "many of the ethics violations we have witnessed in recent years result from a ready willingness to abandon principle – not so much a matter of ethics as of virtue and lack of fortitude and courage."<sup>1</sup> This syndrome explains why COs relieved for personal misconduct may not have exhibited prior destructive behavior. In addition, the article goes on to state that a CO's "success leads to control of resources and inflated belief in personal ability to control outcomes."<sup>2</sup> This actual or perceived autonomy has the potential to take a CO down a path of ethical failure and poor decision making. CLS uses this article as an awareness tool to show, in part, that a CO must remain humble and maintain strategic focus.

CLS teaches the importance and value of the command triad but CLS does not expand on the necessary interpersonal skills needed for an effective command triad.

CLS conducts 360 degree evaluations of each attendee of the PXO, PCO and Major Commander courses. These evaluations are used as awareness tools for the members. If a member is so inclined, he or she can use the results to work on improving strengths and mitigating weaknesses, but there is no mechanism to help develop the PXO or PCO beyond supplying them with the results of their evaluation. At this late point in an officer's career the ability to develop new interpersonal skills may be diminished compared to developing these skills earlier in a career. The surface community and some accession sources conduct 360-type assessments earlier in an officer's career but no other community routinely takes advantage of these types of assessments early in an officer's career. Conducting the 360 degree evaluation earlier in an officer's career creates an opportunity for the Navy to mitigate some factors which might otherwise ultimately lead to a CO DFC. In Section 8 we recommend that the Navy take advantage of this opportunity.

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<sup>1</sup> The Bathsheba Syndrome: The ethical failure of successful leaders Ludwig Dean C; Longenecker, Clinton O

*Journal of Business Ethics*; Apr 1993; Research Library, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 269.

**6.F.1 Leadership Training attendance.**

The Center for Personal and Professional Development (CPPD) and CLS have compiled a comparison of the actual officer leadership training with the Navy’s planned leadership training course billets averaged over the last three years (Figure 10). The effort of CPPD and CLS to track throughput versus planned attendance is the only reasonably available source of data regarding CLS attendance rates. Department Head (DH) throughput is well below planned while Division Officer (DIVO) training is oversubscribed. Of the successful COs between 2005 and 2010, thirteen percent did not attend the PCO course while the absentee rate for COs relieved during the same period was forty-four percent. This difference indicates that attendance at the CLS PCO course has a positive effect on preventing COs from being relieved early. The fact that many officers do not attend the corresponding leadership course for their billet creates an opportunity for the Navy to provide a better continuum of training and mitigate some factors which might otherwise lead to a CO DFC. In Section 8 we recommend that the Navy take advantage of this opportunity.

	AV	SURF	SUB	CHAP	HR	INTEL	JAG	MED	NUC	SPECD	SPECW	SUPP	Other	Avg Annual Throughput (07-09)	Avg Annual Plan (07-09)	%	Delta
MCLC	46	40	16	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	4	0	0	111	168	66.07%	(57)
PCO	151	108	33	0	12	0	2	21	0	21	15	8	30	401	459	87.36%	(58)
PXO	14	72	51	1	11	1	0	25	0	26	21	4	21	247	324	76.23%	(77)
DH	135	271	114	16	7	2	1	66	0	17	0	104	67	800	1901	42.08%	(1101)
DIVO	884	394	307	42	4	7	39	343	3	142	0	247	114	2526	1776	142.23%	750
														4085	4628	82.80%	(543)

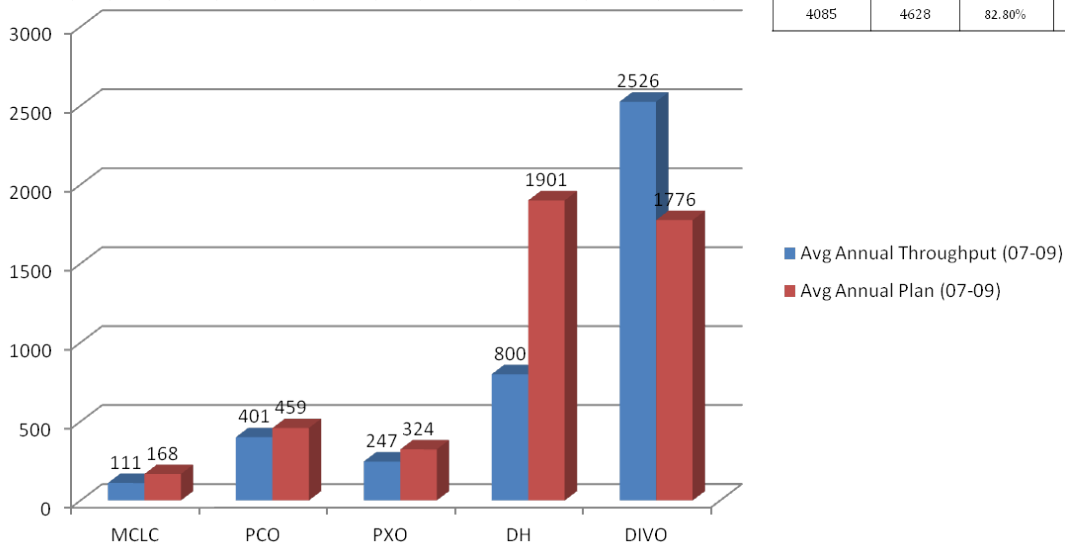


Figure 10. Three year average throughput vs planned

**6.F.2 Leadership Training Continuum.**

While there are leadership courses designed to occur at each stage of an officer’s career, the Navy does not have a leadership training continuum that builds on leadership skills from accession to major command. The leadership courses are disjointed and do not build upon each other to provide consistent developmental education in the areas of ethics, core values, Navy



customs and traditions, and communication. Developing such a continuum would create an opportunity for the Navy to mitigate some factors which might otherwise ultimately lead to a CO DFC. In Section 8 we recommend that the Navy take advantage of this opportunity.

#### **6.G. Command Climate Assessment.**

We found a general misconception that command climate assessments were performed to assess how well a CO was performing rather than as tools to help COs optimize command performance by understanding the climate. Many people felt that conducting an assessment immediately following a change of command was too soon since the results of the assessment would be more indicative of how the previous CO had performed rather than how the current CO was performing. It is likely that command climate assessments would be a better tool for commands if there was a broader understanding throughout the fleet that these assessments are tools for assessing the current climate and to enable the CO to develop and implement measures to improve the climate. The correct use of assessments, to include accurate executive summaries for the ISICs, would have highlighted to the ISICs the personal behavior and command climate issues earlier in almost all of the CO DFCs in those categories.

#### **6.H. Systemic Causes for Reliefs.**

Underlying all of the recent CO reliefs is the failure of the Commanding Officer to ensure that the CO or the CO's command followed procedures and met minimum standards. Obviously, in the cases of personal misconduct, COs failed to meet personal and ethical standards. A CO is responsible and accountable for decisions affecting the CO's respective commands. However, a strong working relationship within commands' leadership triads allow for COs to better assess and address issues. While, the command triad does not replace or relieve a CO of responsibility of command, it is a vital tool to assist the CO in carrying out command responsibilities. A failed or weak leadership triad was evident in almost all of the cases that we reviewed. With the exception of command performance-related reliefs, ISICs were generally unaware of pre-existing factors which contributed to the relief of subordinate COs. The following issues, while not the primary reasons for CO reliefs, were significant contributing factors.

- COs, XO's and CMCs lacked the skills to recognize a weak command triad and then to effectively develop the relationships to make the triad effective.
- Many ISICs did not practice effective oversight of the performance or climate of subordinate commands.
- In the cases of personal misconduct, COs either do not possess the insight into their motives and weaknesses necessary to prevent them from knowingly engaging in unacceptable behavior or they felt that they have the power to conceal their misdeeds.

### **Section 7: 2004 NAVIG CO DFC Study**

The 2004 NAVIG CO DFC report team made four recommendations. Each recommendation was implemented to varying degrees.

- The 2004 team's recommendation to incorporate a form of the 360° performance assessment tool into the PXO training track of all communities was implemented. The

CLS PXO course now conducts these assessments for all students. The DFC rates do not indicate that introducing this recommendation had an impact on lowering CO DFCs.

- The recommendation to develop and implement a refresher course for all major command PCOs was implemented. CLS has developed and implemented this course, which gets good reviews from its students. Despite the number of major commanders relieved for cause, we believe that this course has improved overall the leadership skills of major commanders across the fleet.
- The Surface Warfare PCO course incorporates ORM theory and practice throughout the course. This recommendation has had no apparent impact on reducing the rate of CO DFCs.
- The recommendation to institute command self-assessment training for all department heads and XOs and to review the content of this training was not implemented.

Despite implementing the majority of the recommendations from the 2004 NAVIG DFC study, the DFC rate has not appreciably changed since 2005. We did not uncover the reasons behind this apparent lack of intended effect. However, it is our opinion that the recommendations of the 2004 study form a solid foundation for reaching a long term reduction in the rate of CO DFCs, and perhaps just as important, for improving the leadership skills and performance of leaders in all commands throughout the Navy. The recommendations in Section 8, below, are partially based upon building on the recommendations that were implemented following the 2004 report.

## **Section 8: Recommendations**

Even while working to make the percentage even higher, the Navy should continue to emphasize that 99% of COs are successful and continue to uphold the highest standards of leadership, integrity, performance and personal conduct.

The following recommendations are focused on reducing the very small percentage of CO reliefs that are DFCs. In considering a wide spectrum of possible recommendations we were careful to evaluate each for possible second and third order effects which could reduce the effectiveness of the vast majority of commands. While we believe that implementing the following recommendations will improve the performance of all commands, we have not conducted any specific analysis to assess that improvement:

1. Develop an officer leadership training continuum from accession through major command. In order to provide seamless training, the continuum should have one owner to provide oversight and develop curriculum. The continuum owner should exercise control over all of the Navy's leadership training. The goal of the leadership training continuum is to develop the skills required to be a successful commanding officer. In that regard, training should include;

- Mechanisms such as 360 degree type evaluations and psychometric personality tests (e.g., MBTI) which include reinforcement and improvement on strengths and weaknesses, especially character development, should continue throughout an officer's career.

- Development of interpersonal skills and character to strengthen weak command triads.
- Self awareness development geared toward recognizing motives and performing self correction when required.
- Leadership training milestones which are required to be met. Attendance should be tracked. Only by exception and approval by the Chief of Naval Personnel should an officer continue to the next career milestone without having completed the associated leadership training. All exceptions should be tracked in a database maintained by the Chief of Naval Personnel. The database, at a minimum, should include name and reason for exception.

2. Improved ISIC oversight should be fostered to allow ISICs to better assist COs in identifying potential or ongoing issues early. Timely correction of subordinate commands' issues is likely to set conditions for a more successful command environment and may reduce negative recourse.

3. Enforce existing requirements for Command Climate Assessments and their corresponding executive summaries. ISICs should be educated to ensure that they do not use the assessments as grading tools but as tools to improve command climates. The surveys should include optional questions on fraternization.

Note: During our study, we found several cases of COs who were relieved early through action initiated by their ISICs but did not go through the DFC process. We also noted that those same individuals who had been relieved did not meet the criteria listed in paragraph 2 of MILPERSMAN 1611-020, outlining conditions when DFCs are not appropriate. It is imperative that all ISICs who relieve COs who fall under the criteria for a DFC follow Navy instructions on personnel matters; in particular the MILPERSMAN.