**Helicopter Sea Assignments**

Congratulations! If you are receiving this email, you are almost done with your first shore tour of 30-33 months. Whether you are excited at the prospect of a future Department Head tour or just looking to finish out your initial MSR, I’m looking forward to helping you through this process.

Please read through this document fully as it answers a lot of the questions you may be ready to ask. Reading through the document will also help inform the choices you put into your preference sheet. Your preference sheet is due the first day of the ninth month prior to your PRD (see below). I encourage you to submit your preference sheet early (if possible) to maximize my SA to your preferences.

Keep in mind, if you prioritize “location” over “billet,” you might find that only non-career enhancing jobs are available. While these non-career enhancing jobs might allow you to stay in your preferred location, they can impact your ability to make O4 and DH. Regardless, I will do my best to work for you and your preferences.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **PRD / Preferences Due** | | | | | | | |
| JAN | 1-Apr | APR | 1-Jul | JUL | 1-Oct | OCT | 1-Jan |
| FEB | 1-May | MAY | 1-Aug | AUG | 1-Nov | NOV | 1-Feb |
| MAR | 1-Jun | JUN | 1-Sep | SEP | 1-Dec | DEC | 1-Mar |

Preference sheet guidance:

Note: First off, I am YOUR detailer (not your command’s). The Navy provides me with the list of priority Sea Duty billets that need to be filled. My job is to help you find your Second Sea Tour billet based on your preferences and what the Navy has available. As you have heard, much of this process is based on timing and strength of record. Your job in this discussion is to communicate with your command’s leadership and ask them about your timing. If you and your command want you to submit a PRD adjustment request (>+3mo), you want to apply to TAR, or you want to convey an intent to resign, the earlier you submit that information the better. All of those things take time and can reduce the window to negotiate orders, especially when submitted late.

* Please rank all locations and jobs in number order (i.e. do not “x,” black out, or delete places and jobs that you do not desire, just rank those to the bottom or your list.
* Read the directions carefully as you mouse over each box – it helps input data into the database correctly (obvious, but you’d be surprised…)
* Talk to your chain of command to determine when your projected Highwater (HW) FITREP will occur. If that conflicts with your PRD, discuss that conflict with your XO and myself as soon as possible to discuss possible PRD adjustments.
* Your XO can help you find your Not Earlier Than (NET) / Not Later Than (NLT) dates. Input the date in YR/MO format (2001 for January 2020). This can help me match available jobs with your timing based on your preferences. I will make every effort to detach you at your PRD, but realize that detach date can change based on your preferences as well as the ever present “needs of the Navy” (priority sea billets and manning requirements).
* Use the notes section for anything you want to help me understand or provide context to. For example, you may have a Change of Command you need to stay for, or you may already have a highwater FITREP and need to detach prior to the following FITREP cycle. There may also be work or school constraints that you want considered. If, after discussion with your chain of command, you have no constraints, write “no timing constraints.”
* In the notes section annotate “DH aspirations” or “No DH aspirations” before any other personal comments. When trying to find the best match of orders, it’s important for me to understand what your long-term goals are – knowing your DH desires helps me understand and inform your preferences in our discussions and in the event that we can’t find your #1 choice of job in #1 choice of location.
* If you have COLO or EFM, annotate that immediately following your DH intentions on the preference sheet and make sure your spouse/dependents are listed in DEERS/NSIPS.
* If you are open to orders overseas, let me know and I can show you what we have available a little earlier than the normal negotiating window (helps you plan out your life/move a little easier).

If you desire to be a DH, I expect that your preferences show career enhancing jobs listed at the top of your preferences. If you list other jobs, I may advise you that you will be incurring risk for O4 and DH. If you do not desire to be a DH, then you should not expect to be assigned to the most competitive jobs.

Admiral’s Aide/Protocol Officer/Flag Secretary nominations will not be on a normal timeline. Each is different and you will normally receive feedback directly (not via me) regarding selection, two to three months from the advertised report date. When indicating interest in an aide job, understand that these jobs are amongst the most highly selective jobs in the NAE; flag officers typically only select those with outstanding records. It can be a difficult waiting game, but please be patient as you wait for an interview and notification. There is more information listed below under “Aide”. Again, patience is important for this process. You will also need an official photo to submit with your package.

Traditionally you can expect to get verbal orders three to six months out from your PRD, however, many jobs under a nomination processes (Flag LT) may cause your orders timeline to be shorter while Executive Services coordinates your nomination (you become “NOM Locked”).

Not all jobs will fit your PRD and timing. Your command has the ability to adjust your PRD +3/-1 months with concurrence from Placement and the Detailer (me). If you want to try extending on shore duty longer than three months, you will need to submit a PRD extension request (another file on the PERS-43 website) with Command endorsement via e-mail to me. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Ensuring operational sea duty billets are filled (“needs of the Navy”) as well as needs of the command requesting the extension, are the main things considered when PERS reviews PRD extension requests. Extension requests resulting in less than 12 months between your MSR and PRD are unlikely to be approved unless you offer to execute a minimum time on station of 12 months on a follow on second sea tour after your requested PRD extension.

**FAQs:**

Disclaimer: I realize that many of you have little desire to serve in a Disassociated Sea Tour and only a few of you are excited to serve as ship’s company, but the majority of the jobs posted (over 90%) are ship’s company sea duty billets. Competition for jobs other than ship’s company is also very fierce. As with most things in the Naval Aviation Enterprise (NAE), your ability to compete for the most desired jobs or the most desired locations is heavily based on the strength of your record.

As background, when you receive your “wings of gold,” our contracts included time intended for a second sea tour (Disassociated Sea Tour). Some of you will be ready to depart the Navy following your next tour. Please keep in mind that because most of you are still under contract (time prior to your Minimum Service Requirement, or MSR), you will need to serve at least 12 months in a disassociated sea tour (the Minimum Tour for Separation, or MTS) and serve long enough to reach your MSR, which may result in orders being issued to depart shore tour sooner than your PRD if you signal separating at your MSR is your priority.

Take a look at the FAQ and let me know what questions or concerns you have. Each of you have different timing, records, and “life” considerations going into this process, so the better informed you are about your options, the better I can help detail you to your second sea tour.

- **Can I see a list of all billets available and just pick from those?** Unfortunately it’s not that simple. Available billets usually post to me 3-6 months out, which is about when you are detailed into the jobs. Most of you are going to fill jobs that will be vacated by officers screened for DH or who fail to select for O4 two times (FOS) and are separated by the Navy. Because both of those timelines are unknown until the results of their respective boards are complete (and DH slate and training track is released), the timelines are highly variable. Sea duty jobs are fair-shared between aviation communities so the jobs can be “traded” to match preferences and timing or can be “filled” at a moment’s notice by an aviator offering to fill it from another community. The most competitive billets and the most desirable locations typically have 30-40 people competing for the same job. In some cases there may be as many as 80 officers competing for a single billet. Timing, preferences, and competitiveness of record all determine the final disposition of those jobs with high interest. For all of these reasons, posting a list of jobs is not an effective means of conveying jobs available. During a three month detailing window, a mix of jobs and locations will be available; I will work with your preferences to find the best match possible as soon as your window opens and I have your preferences.

- **If I don’t like my job options now, can I extend and try again in the next detailing window?** You have to anchor on a PRD before negotiating orders. Rolling back PRD to achieve a chance of a better / different job would disadvantage people in the next negotiating window and prevent another fleet aviator from rolling to shore duty to fill your billet on time.

- **I want to get out at my MSR, can I just extend at my current command or roll to a shore duty nearby until my timing is up.** As long as you have 12 months remaining to your MSR, you are eligible for sea duty. Extending on shore duty prevents a fleet aviator from going to the job they need for career progression. These requests are not normally approved. You can request to be released from your active duty service obligation; however, this process is lengthy (may last more than six months) and are generally only approved when there is a compelling reason. Normally you lose the majority of your negotiating window and are detailed to a billet remaining. If you intend to separate/retire, you can a) rotate at your PRD and submit your request to separate (after 12 months on station) or you can b) request to rotate to sea duty early (with blessing from your current command) to begin the process there (separation requests must be submitted NET 12 months and NLT 9 months from your desired date). If you are unclear with your intentions, expect to be issued orders to sea duty that allow you to complete 12 months on sea duty prior to your MSR.

**- Can I rotate to another shore duty job in the local area? It will save the government money because you don’t have to move me and I just want to get out at my MSR.** Sea duty jobs are the #1 priority fill for NPC and many are currently gapped. As long as you have 12 months to your MSR, it is a worthwhile investment to PCS you into one of these high priority billets. A senior LT earns around $100k / year, which is significantly more than the cost to PCS. Due to billet priorities and NPC sea-shore rotation policy, I cannot detail you from shore->shore to serve out the rest of your commitment.

**- Are there any flying jobs available?** There are three typical flavors of flying jobs for non-WTIs: PEP, C-12s Bahrain, and CVW staff.

PEP: There are typically only 1-2 PEP fills a year. These typically involve nine months of language training followed by 24-36 months in a foreign country. To serve the full tour, you need to have a great record to ensure you will make O4 and not FOS out while overseas. Generally, you need to be an EP first tour and tracking for an EP highwater in a production squadron to be considered.

C-12s: All C-12 Bahrain jobs are shared amongst all flavors of aviators within the NAE. As a result, the helo community typically only fills one C-12 Bahrain job every 18 months. These are typically 24 month “accompanied” tours. C-12 flying jobs in GITMO, Japan, and other locations are overseas shore duty.

CVW Staff: About half of the CVW staff jobs are filled with non-WTIs. These jobs are treated as ‘community fill’ jobs. When there is insufficient WTI inventory to fill the CVW staff jobs with a WTI, community leadership will look for officers with the absolute best records to represent the community on the Airwing staff. Generally this means officers with stellar performance in both their first sea tour and production tour. Being fully ACTC qualified and having prior CVW experience historically helps probability of selection but are not absolute. Typically 2-3 candidates will be nominated to the CVW where CAG and DCAG will make the final selection.

Single TMS: DIFOPS orders to support HSC Firescout (MQ-8) operations. Prior experience preferred, but FRS syllabus provided for those with experience and not current.

All of the second sea tour flying jobs are extremely competitive; therefore you musthave a strong record to remain competitive amongst your peers for these jobs.

**- Can you write me geobach orders since I am getting out at my MSR?** If you are going to unaccompanied overseas orders, you will work with PSD to establish a “Designated Place” for your family. You are entitled to a PCS to / from that Designated Place if on unaccompanied overseas orders. At that point, you will receive entitlements (BAH) based on dependent location. Primarily this impacts officers serving 12-18 months unaccompanied in Bahrain. There are no unaccompanied / geobach orders to CONUS sea duty. If assigned to a ship, you may elect to utilize the Unusually Arduous Sea Duty entitlement. This means that you may create a Designated Place, similar to unaccompanied overseas orders. If your family is at a different location other than your ultimate duty station, you will receive BAH based on dependent location. You will not receive two BAH entitlements. It is your choice to either live on the ship or rent/buy on your own. This entitlement does not require specific verbiage in your orders – it is an entitlement that you are authorized anytime you take orders to a ship. PSD will work with you on the necessary paperwork for this entitlement.

**Disassociated Sea Tour Job Descriptions**

This is intended to give insight into what some of the sea duties include; it is not an all-encompassing list and is meant as a starting point for discussion. Not all of these jobs may be available during your orders window, which is why it is important to clearly state your priority – billet type or location. There are also billets available ***occasionally*** which are not on this list, such as overseas staff positions that also receive Sea Duty credit or other “hot fills.” Please let me know if you’d like more info on “off the beaten path” type billets.

**Aide**

Flag Aide jobs are very competitive and beneficial for your career. These jobs are demanding and generally last between 1.5-2 years. Officers with impeccable records are the most competitive for these positions. Not all aide jobs are eligible for sea duty credit. Three and four star staffs, as well as deploying (CCSG for example) Flag Aide positions are typically assigned sea duty credit. Be advised, major staff aide jobs given sea duty credit are coded as shore duty and come with the **Minimum Tour for Separation for shore duty (24mo)**. Nomination packages require a bio and a recent (1-2 years) official photo on the signed form. I recommend drafting and holding on to your bio until you know which Admiral you want to send your application to, then emulate his or her biography (just the paragraphs of the biography) for submission on the template I will provide you. Please be sure your Chain of Command reviews the biography before you send it to me.

*Note: If you are nominated for an aide job and do not get selected, you can expect to receive orders to a ship due to the length of the nomination process. If you are not comfortable with a ship as a backup plan, you should not request an aide billet.*

**Carrier**

- Assistant Navigator

Currently, there are only three helicopter ANAV positions. Because of the visibility of these jobs, these are selected from amongst the top performers and go through an administrative screen process. They will be fair-shared between the HSM and HSC communities. You will be given the opportunity and expected to get your OOD letter. You will also run the CDO Underway (U/W) program along with the Navigator to qualify Air Wing O4s while deployed.

*Note: The designation of OOD can also be earned on an Amphib – regardless of where you earn the qual, you will get the AQD for your record.*

- Shooter

Typically, shooters are division officers for very large divisions, sometimes as large as 200 personnel. Shooter does not always afford you the opportunity to earn an OOD designation; however, this is understood at the various screen boards and does not count against you. If you have the opportunity to earn an OOD or CDO (U/W) and can manage to lead your division while earning the qualification, I recommend you go for it.

- Assistant Air Ops / Assistant Strike Ops

Asst Air Ops and Strike Ops are also competitive jobs that play well in DH boards. In these jobs, you will work in the various operations divisions on the carrier. As the Asst Air Ops Officer, you will work on running the daily air ops within the carrier’s airspace. As Asst Strike Ops, you will work with the Strike-O, CAG staff, and Air Wing squadrons on writing each day’s Air Plan. This job can possibly afford you the opportunity to earn your OOD/CDO U/W, depending on the policy of the carrier CO.

- Tactical Action Officer

As a TAO in training, you will get qualified on the different warfare modules to include Surface, Undersea (sub), and Air Defense of the carrier. Once qualified in the different modules, you will sit TAO U/I. When ready to act as the TAO, you will have a board with the ship’s Captain, Operations Officer, and other qualified TAOs.

All jobs on a Carrier are career enhancing!

**Amphibious Ships (LHA/LHD/LPD)**

- LHA/LHD

This is a great leadership experience since you could be responsible for upwards of 200-300 Sailors. It also affords you the opportunity to earn an OOD (U/W) and CDO designation. When screening for DH or CO, the OOD (U/W) qualification is highlighted to members as valued. The jobs available on the ship are Air Department and Safety Officer; both jobs are equally career enhancing. The benefit of the Safety Officer billet is that you are a Department Head working directly for the XO. Depending on the ship, the Air Boss will likely encourage you to qualify in tower, so you will be controlling aircraft and closely interacting with the Air Department officers as well. For the Air Department billets, depending on manning, you will generally start off as a division officer, either V-1 (Flight Deck) or V-3 (Hangar Deck). This is a great time to knock out your general ship qualifications and get to know a large portion of Sailors in the department which will pay dividends when you likely move up to the Assistant Department Head, or Mini Boss position at the Air Boss’ discretion.

- LPD

The smaller L-class ships also afford opportunities for leadership, OOD designation, and competition outside of your community. Billet roles are typically a combination of Air Boss and Safety Officer. As a Department Head, you work directly with the XO. Although you have fewer Sailors working for you than you might on the LHA/LHD, you are the Air Department Head, responsible to the CO for all Air Operations to include aviation inspections and certifications.

All jobs on an Amphib are career enhancing!

**Expeditionary Mobile Base (ESB)**

ESBs are forward afloat staging bases. They combine an Active Duty component with a CIVMAR component and operate under a Blue and Gold crew concept. The billet on board is an OPS Afloat billet that puts you on board working as an Operations Officer as well as the Air Officer. There are currently three commissioned ESBs 3, 4, and 5. ESB 6 is currently still in PCU. Opportunities to earn your OOD qual will depend on the ships leadership and deployment cycle.

**Destroyer Squadron (DESRON)**

Traditionally open to the HSM community only. Located in Norfolk, Mayport (one), San Diego, Everett, Pearl Harbor (one), Japan (one), Bahrain (one), and Singapore (one), you are the LAMPS SME and LEC (LAMPS Element Coordinator) for the DESRON Commodore. DESRON staffs generally deploy on the carrier, so you get carrier experience and experience working daily with the CAG staff/Air Wing (CVW) to coordinate the HSM detachments amongst the CSG as well as LOG movements to and from the DESRON ships. You can also request an opportunity to get up on the bridge for OOD or CDO U/W. DESRON Commodores generally desire an HSM hard charger to fill this billet.

**Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON)**

Currently open to the HSC community only. The PHIBRON Air Ops officer fills the role as the helicopter representative on the PHIBRON staff on an Amphib. PHIBRON commanders rotate between Aviators and Surface Warfare Officers. PHIBRONs are located in Sasebo, San Diego, Bahrain, and Norfolk.

**Mine Countermeasures Squadron (MCMRON)**

Currently open to the HM community only, but HSC (EXP) can also play for the billets as they take on the OAMCM mission set. Locations (one each): Bahrain, Sasebo, San Diego, and now Rota!

**Carrier Strike Group (CSG) Staff**

CSG jobs are open to all types of aviators. However, the command usually desires someone with ASW experience. If you do get one of these jobs, you will work on the Admiral’s Strike Group staff and field all helicopter operations questions. You will deploy with the strike group embarked on the carrier. It is usually possible to earn your OOD/CDO U/W qualification. This is not CVW Staff (flying), so make sure you understand that on the preference sheet.

**Fifth Fleet / Seventh Fleet Staff**

There are no longer any numbered fleet sea duty billets in San Diego, Naples, or Norfolk. Sea duty billets are still available at 5th Fleet (Bahrain) and 7th Fleet (Japan). These are great staff tours that offer insight into big Navy operations. For all of the staffs, you could be assigned to a region desk, operational planning staff or work anti-terrorism force protection issues. A job at one of these numbered fleets overseas can be career enhancing, but typically doesn’t have the upward mobility of a traditional disassociated sea tour.

Due to recent policy guidance, 5th Fleet staff tours are lower priority than operational sea duty. Expect that all ship jobs will have to be filled before I can send officers to NAVCENT / 5th Fleet.

**Single T/M/S (Firescout)**

Supports HSC-21 or HSC-23 Firescout deployments. Expect roughly 6 months of workups and HARP, followed by 5-7 months of deployment. Upon return, you will support command Firescout program. Seeking those with current or prior MQ-8 experience, but can also provide FRS syllabus (case by case).

**PEP/NSA BAH**

There are various PEP (flying with foreign aircraft outfits) billets which may available. You will still receive orders finalization in the month listed above based on your PRD. NSA BAH is an outfit which flies C-12s in Bahrain; however, not all jobs at NSA BAH are flying jobs. Helo aviation will only fill about one C-12 Bahrain job every 12-18 months. Please understand performance and timing come into play for these jobs and that they are extremely popular and therefore extremely competitive. Neither of these jobs are considered career enhancing.

**GSA**

GSA fills are rarely available these days due to the draw down in combat operations. You can opt to move your family to a new location in CONUS or keep them at your current duty station (if CONUS) if you fill a GSA. I assume you will keep your family in the current location and cost the orders that way, so please let me know if you plan to move your family somewhere (CONUS) while you are deployed. The combat GSAs have traditionally been located in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Horn of Africa (HOA). There are occasionally some non-combat GSAs in places such as Kuwait or Bahrain (e.g. Sheik Isa airfield).

**NSW LNO / UAS / SRT**

The Command requires at least 20 months on station, so timing is an important determining factor for assignment to these billets. You will fly UAVs and deploy with SPECWAR in support of their missions. The minimum PFA score is excellent. There are four fills every two years for these jobs and many people are interested in these jobs, so the competition is fierce. By name requests or previous completion of a screener do not factor into assignment for these jobs anymore. These jobs are not considered career enhancing.

**Naval Gunfire Liaison Officer / Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF)**

As a Plans/Action Officer at a MEF you will primarily be responsible for tracking Marine forces deployed globally. You will also liaise with Navy commands to arrange ship availability for DLQs and amphibious exercises. A working knowledge of Marine Corps organization and MEU life cycles is extremely beneficial for this job. This billet shares more in common with flag aide/shore tour billets since you will be working for the Commanding General (CG) at a MEF and the likelihood of deploying is low. This job can sometimes afford the opportunity for you to earn your Fleet Marine Force warfare device. Occasionally FIRES jobs are available as a NGLO controlling naval gunfire. \*Minimum PFA score is excellent. There are minimal fills each year for this job (from 2-4). These jobs are not as career enhancing as traditional disassociated sea duty jobs.

**Inter-service Transfer (IST)**

If you are interested in an IST to the USAF/USCG/USMC/USA, please be sure to convey your desire to me as soon as possible. The process to request a Contingent Letter of Resignation (a requirement by the other services before you go up for their commissioning boards) can be a 4-6 month process that goes all the way up to DCNP for final adjudication. Per CNP’s NAVADMIN 288/17, IST requests prior to serving out your obligations are most likely going to be disapproved.

**Resignation**

Please be sure you call to talk to me if you are considering resignation. I want to make sure you understand what options are open to you following your initial aviation contract commitment before you decide to leave the Navy altogether and timelines associated with your decisions.

**Redesignation / TAR**

If you intend to apply for redesignation / TAR, you will have to engage with those communities regarding timing and eligibility. You are required to let me know if you are putting a package up for those boards. In most cases, if I initiate orders before the board meets, you will no longer retain eligibility, so it is in your best interests to let me know both via email and in your preference sheet that you intend to apply.

**Failure to Select for LCDR**

If you did not make LCDR, please e-mail me to set up a time to discuss your record, the opportunities afforded to you after failing to select, and the impact a failure to select has on your career progression. I want to be sure you are educated prior to your next board.

Thank you for your time and for reading this far! Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions.

Very respectfully,

/s/

Tom “BJ” Mennerich