

FY21 IW O5/O6 IWC, Command and Milestone Board Observations

TALENT within & across IW is both **EXCEPTIONAL** and **STRONG**. Margins for selection were small and narrow; records are increasingly well constructed and thus competitive.

ENDURING FEATURES

•• This board is about IW community mission and leadership. FITRs in aggregate should document and illuminate professional IMPACTS to the IW Community, the Navy, and achievement of IW war fighting and readiness outcomes. Clear and consistent message in the Officer's record is the easiest way to determine "fully" and "best" qualified.

•• We must consider Great Power Competition, not only "the last war." Our board actions should reflect member appreciation of records that "ride to the sound of the FUTURE guns." The rebalance to force development, force generation, and force employment around major combat operations in the maritime domain should be communicated clearly to ALL IW wardrooms.

•• Sustained superior performance (SSP) in all assignments is **CORE** to all communities, to include (though not exclusive to) milestone jobs, and is **KEY** to selection. SSP IS:

- Consistent evaluations **ABOVE** RSCA.
- Hard AND soft breakouts - soft breakouts against all designators is important throughout your record, especially in 1-of-1 situations or very small IW summary groups. It adds context to the level of performance. This is especially true in O-4/O-5 milestone assignments when competing against other (non-IW) designators (e.g., CSG, Fleet staffs). **Soft breakouts must be reasonable and realistic to be accepted with certainty by Board members.**
- Trending right in the FITRs (P, MP, to EP) over time and breaking above the Reporting Senior's Cumulative Average (RSCA) and group cumulative average. Trait averages below RSCA should be easy to understand (i.e. reason called out in FITR by Reporting Senior, be a first newly reported FITR, a "Selected" report, etc.). If there is ambiguity in the situational context of an at-or-below RSCA report, then member should consider a Letter to the Board (LTB) with supporting documentation/information. Note: do not recommend a LTB when there is no substantiated context.

•• Career diversity that provided broad exposure to multiple key disciplines is a key factor in discerning the Officer's ability to serve in a variety of positions; geographic diversity helps also. In short, tours should increase in scope, complexity, and responsibility across both an operationally and geographically diverse career.

•• Competitive, major staff tours/experience are a good thing (OPNAV staff, Joint Staff, OSD, IFOR, 4-star Fleet staffs (USFF/CPF)).

••• Reporting Seniors must actively MANAGE their RSCA, and use it judiciously. If the RSCA is too high, then you cannot highlight a particularly stellar Officer. Protect your ability to “raise your voice.” Use “resetting or managing RSCA” for genuine adjustments and provide your policy as context, given that this (by itself) may be viewed skeptically by boards. Likewise, it is acceptable for a Reporting Senior to set a low Trait Average policy for selectees, but that policy should be set early and remain consistent over time – and be noted in the FITR.

••• Ensure common and consistent recommendations for the next career milestone and COMMAND in Block 40 and 41. Reporting Seniors should be judicious in their recommendations; COMMAND should not be the default. Flag Officers and Current CO's recommendations are highly valued when screening for command. **Inconsistencies** in recommendations leave the board to guess. Boards will also notice when the same Reporting Senior omits a command or MS recommendation, especially if they had already given one.

••• Flag recommendations should only come from a Flag officer. Any other mention of Flag is wasted space and does not carry weight.

••• ABSENCE of CMD or MS recommendations may be ambiguous; ambiguity leads to low confidence scores and low confidence scores lead to non-selection.

GENERAL

••• Documented **leadership** experience, influence, scope of responsibility & outcomes is an important factor [people, resources, missions, functions].

••• Documented contributions to organizational transformation help us highlight individuals delivering our desired future. Our community health is directly tied to our agility and ability to focus/motivate teams on new strategically aligned outcomes.

••• Documented community “we value” in the FITR [ACQN, Space, Certs, Joint] as published in the Convening Order. Previous years’ convening orders are great guides.

••• To be CONSIDERED for command, your CMD QUAL board must be COMPLETED and command recommendation ENDORSED by the iBoss. Recommend completion before wearing O-5 and greater than 60 days prior to board convening to ensure the Command Qualification reflects in your record. Members must VERIFY that the Command Qual AQD is included in the OSR.

*** Reporting Seniors should take care to identify specific competencies as opposed to only using billet titles in blocks 29 and 41.

••• FITRs need to contain clear language from Commanding Officers:

- Clear, common language should be used to ensure understanding and to highlight the importance of the job, performance, etc.

- Reporting Seniors need to be clear in their opening and closing comments. If a member is marked below the RSCA due to policy (selects, etc.) or to set RSCA, this needs to be specifically/explicitly stated. The board should not be left to interpret any ambiguity on their own.
- Changes to promotion recommendation should be clearly stated. This can be due to promotion to the next rank or declining performance; make this clear to the board.
- Maintaining Average with Officers in Selected status is clearly Commander's business, but consideration should be given and appropriate explanation made in BLK 41 to ensure future board members understand how these officers are progressing at a pivotal time in their career.

•• Officers **MUST** own their record. Officer Record maintenance remains extremely important in order to provide board members with the most accurate picture possible. It is incumbent upon the Officer to ensure the accuracy and completeness of their record. Ensure the OSR is complete with AQD/Sub-Specialty codes captured and up to date. There are only 24 spaces for AQD/sub-specialty codes, ensure your most important 24 are visible. Per NAVADMIN 247/20, an official photo in current grade is required to be in the official service record but will not be used in any board proceedings. Officers should fully review their record and previous Convening Orders well before the board (and when they submit their FITR); Confirm that your career is appropriately documented...document, document, document! Commanding Officers and Mentors should be active in guiding careers. Sloppy records send a signal.

•• Letters to the Board that clarify are of value. Other LoRs less so. BY DESIGN, the record should stand on its own merit. The best letters address missing items (Command Qualification, FITREPs, Degrees, JPME completion). Letters that address specific FITR issues should include documentation from the Reporting Senior that signed that report. Letters that do not address one of these issues tend to distract from the record.

•• An Officer that goes before the board and is not interested in a Milestone or Command assignment (for the FY they are being considered) should submit a letter requesting to have their record removed from consideration ("Don't Pick Me" letter). This is a clear message to the board that preserves opportunity for others who desire and can support these assignments. This counts as a year of non-selection which keeps an officer viable for future consideration if the member is eligible for additional screening "looks". This is much appreciated by Community Leadership and is not looked upon negatively. It is the right thing to do if the Officer cannot answer the call to duty for the position they are being screened for. Commanding Officers, Detailers and Mentors should be active in ensuring this practice is widely understood.

•• LTBs are due NLT 10 days prior to board convening; don't bust the clock.

•• LTB and SECNAV approved retirement requests are helpful in clearly articulating the Officer's desires.

OCEANO Observations

*** Talent level is high and competition in all categories remains fierce. General board guidelines apply. Convening Order language remains consistent over time. The combination of SSP, superior leadership, leading both military and civilians and sound METOC counsel continues to win the day.

*** Specific reference to sound METOC counsel should be included in FITREP language, so that the application of METOC knowledge is clearly understood.

*** Convening order language for O6 Command is a valuable reference for OCEANO officers of all grades. Programmatic and/or policy experience at major staffs (outside of Milestones) such as OPNAV, BUPERS/NPC, SECNAV, or Joint Staff, along with experience at CNMOC and NAVIFOR provide insight into valued tours throughout an officer's career.

CW Observations

*** Superb talent from which to choose Officers for both milestone and command. Proven (rated) performance in leadership (CO, XO, OIC, DH) assignments, superior performance in at-sea and shore milestone assignments, geographic diversity, and diversity across core CW disciplines remain the foundation of selected individuals.

*** Documenting progress towards Joint Qualification is necessary. Our current precept is written with JPME Phase I as a requirement for several boards, but JQO progress is emphasized and is a discriminator. Suggestion: JPME Phase I should be done NLT O-4. Officers must understand that Joint progress is highly valued and must be demonstrated in a record.

*** Career Diversity counts ((Cyber/SIGINT/EW), (Fleet/National/COCOM)). Understand the potential impact to your career if you select one track and stick with it. Commanding Officers at both the O-5 and O-6 level MUST have all three core areas: SIGINT, Cyber and EW.

*** Discerning expert knowledge across the CW portfolio from tactical EW thru SIGINT to cyber security/cyber operations design/execution was a challenge AND increasingly the expectation of a well-prepared senior officer. Owning TACSIT could be reinforced. Post grad STEM and JNT, ACQ and Space are valued.

*** Commanding Officers at the O-6 level must have SSP in an O5 MS as well as a completed Master's degree (or higher) and JPME Ph I.

*** The best way to document a Milestone is with the AQD. Officer's should take care to get the AQD in their record as soon as the MS is complete.

*** In addition to Advanced education degrees, advanced technical certificates are also valued.

*** For the O-5 Milestone screen board, candidates MUST have JPME I and the best candidates will have shown SSP in O4 Milestone.

*** Individuals should take advantage of all opportunities to earn Acquisition AQDs. Failure to do so when given the opportunity may be viewed negatively.

*** Ensure documentation of all core disciplines throughout your career in Block 41 of Fitness Reports.

*** Records reflect inconsistent record preparation and lack of precept and convening order review.

IP Observations

*** Highly talented and experienced IPs across the board. Demonstrated sustained and superior performance, variety of assignments in core areas, and documented increases in roles responsibilities and complexity in ALL assignments, but in particular MS, reflected in best records.

*** Advanced technical education that enhances IP skill sets is required. Grade-appropriate IP community qualifications expected. JPME Phase I required for O6 MS. Progress toward/ completion of JPME/JQO highly desirable.

*** Space and Acquisition experience is beneficial, but not directly attributable to selection, as those officers also performed well in other traditional IP assignments.

*** Wide employment as global network and Fleet-wide leaders and IW drivers is reflected in the best records. Demonstrating expertise in multiple/all IW tenets is hard. Demonstrated success in leading IP core missions afloat, expeditionary and ashore shows a powerful commitment to IW and Fleet success. Post grad STEM (related) valued.

Intelligence Observations

*** AMAZING TALENT from which to choose Officers for both MS and COMMAND. Sustained Superior Performance in all assignments [leadership | sea | shore] remain the foundation of selected individuals. Given a requirement for a “well rounded career”, be mindful of multiple operational tours in the same specialty area.

Note: Leading OPINTEL teams remains our core competency.

*** DO NOT shy away from competitive tours where there is a large summary group. Those hard EPs carry more weight than soft break-outs. As intel officers, we all have had plenty of opportunities to seek a big summary group and its absence [or presence] is obvious to a board.

*** Officers should review their record as compared to “Fully” Qualified and “Best” Qualified considerations per the Precept and our community brief. Clear/concise records that communicate “best & fully” qualified criteria [when/where applicable] are ideal. CMD QUAL, JPME PH I, and a Master’s Degree are all fully qualified criteria to be eligible for O-6 Command.

*** The most competitive records documented substantiated/quantifiable leadership – number of people led and [if applicable] size of budget managed. Both metrics help demonstrate the scope of responsibility and if favorably documented [above RSCA and break-out], serve as an indicator of potential for success in future leadership assignments.

*** Records that showed impactful decision-making [and outcomes], in addition to leadership, were especially well regarded.

*** Records that showed increasing scope of complexity & responsibility and were competitive were also especially well regarded.

*** If you were not selected this year, ABSOLUTELY / POSITIVELY stay “in the game”! Additional time + additional paper can make a difference, especially if it demonstrates and documents SUSTAINED SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE!

*** Seek any opportunity to be a Recorder at a Board [admin or statutory].