

CAREER NEWSFLASH

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4th Quarter, 2004

E6 BOARD ROLL-UP



The FY-04 selection board slate has come to a close with the adjournment of the Staff Sergeant Selection Board on September 20, and the results of this board show that the competition continues to get tighter. The In-Zone (Promotion Zone) selection rate was 64.8%, down 3.7% from last year's board. The Above Zone dropped 3.5% to a selection rate of 25.7%. There were 2,308 selections to Staff sergeant, broken down as follows:

Above Zone 416 selected out of 1,616 considered (AZ Selection Rate of 25.7%)

In Zone 1,833 selected out of 2,830 considered (IZ Selection Rate of 64.8%)

Below Zone 59 selected out of 2,249 considered (BZ Selection Rate of 0.026%)

Though both In-Zone and Above Zone selection rates appear to have decreased, it is important to note that the overall share of allocations taken by the above

zone continues to rise. The percentage of total allocations taken by the above zone in 2002 was 10.9%, in 2003 it was 13.8%, and this year 18%. A similar trend was evident for the FY04 GySgt Selection Board. Marines in the above zone are doing an outstanding job of improving their competitiveness and they are taking more allocations every year.

PME completion climbed 1% from last year, to 93% this year. The significance of this increase is that even with the PME waiver for the FY-04 board stated in ALMAR 026/04, Marines are continuing to complete grade-appropriate PME despite high operational tempo. We must continue to point out that while not required for promotion eligibility this year or in FY-05 (ALMAR 035/04), PME continues to be a consideration in overall competitiveness, and our Marines are stepping up to the challenge.

The photo submission rate was 89.7%, an increase of 2.5% over last year. This is the second year we have seen improvement, but

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COUNSELING TEAM

- **MSgt Coon**
Head, Career Counseling Unit
- **GySgt Criley**
Career Counselor
- **GySgt Lannon**
Career Counselor
- **GySgt Perkins**
Career Counselor
- **GySgt Payne**
Career Counselor

we can still do better. Photos are not only required, but with the allowance for photos in the utility uniforms and the storing of digital photos in the Marine's record for up to one year, there is little excuse for a missing photo. The board had little sympathy for garrison Marines missing their photos while their peers - deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, or the host of other current commitments - were able to submit their pictures.

The 2004 Staff Sergeant Selection Board, like the 2003 board, requested that we address the completeness of Marines' Official Military Personnel Files (OMPF). This year there were approximately 788 discrepancy notices for missing information such as awards and more importantly, fitness reports. Over 500 records were noted for missing fitness reports. Although this is much better than previous years, the fitness report is the primary tool used by those making decisions about careers. For this reason, it is imperative that Marines ensure they receive a signed copy from their Reporting Seniors in order to reduce the number of missing reports. If for some reason the original report does not make it to HQMC for entry into the Official Military Personnel File, it will be easier to correct the discrepancy if the Marine has the signed copy. For further information on missing fitness reports, please refer to Career Newsflash Volume 3, Issue 2. These discrepancies, if not corrected, cause the board to have an incomplete picture of the Marine's accomplishments and performance to weigh against peers. Identifying and correcting these

HOW DID WE DO?

RATES	FY04	CY03	CY02
PME Submission	93.0%	92.3%	94.9%
Photo Submission	89.7%	87.1%	85.7%
IZ Selection	64.8%	68.5%	73.1%
IZ Percentage of Allocations	78.8%	83.1%	87.6%
AZ Selection	25.7%	29.2%	37.7%
AZ Percentage of Allocations	18.0%	13.8%	10.9%

discrepancies prior to the board convening rounds out the record, and also says a lot to the board about the Marines who take the time to ensure the completeness of their records.

The board was given an additional 130 promotion allocations in the weeks prior to adjournment. This highlights how imperative it is for Below Zone Marines to make every effort to be fully prepared for promotion, to include updating records, completing PME, and submitting a photo. While the board understands that some Marines are unexpectedly pulled from the below zone into the adjusted promotion zone resulting in some imperfect records, it always reflects positively on Marines who have taken time to prepare.

SNCO promotions are competitive; no stone should be left unturned in preparing for promotion. The OMPF is the Marine's sole representative to convey their performance and accomplishments as well as their potential to serve at the next higher rank. Marines should

strive for excellence, continually seeking greater responsibility and challenges. Additionally, a consistent, resounding message from all selection boards is that Marines are not being counseled enough, meaning that there does not seem to be a solid relationship between reporting officials and those being reported on.

This is necessary in order for Marines to unleash their potential.



By GySgt Criley

Enlisted Career Counselor, HQMC

THE BELOW ZONE

Have you ever wondered how Marines get selected from the below zone? What made their record stand out from the rest? Who determines which Marines will be considered from the below zone? Are you or your Marines doing what is necessary to be competitive for selection from the below zone? All of these questions will be addressed in this article to help you and your Marines improve your chances of "standing out" and competing for early selection to the next higher rank.

As professional Marines we should ask ourselves the following three questions. What kind of impact am I making on my units mission? Am I demonstrating the skills and abilities expected of the next higher grade? And finally, what kind of impact am I making on the Marines under my sphere of leadership?

Often, Marines in the below zone do not consider the reality of being looked at by the selection board. Many believe that they come into the below zone with another year to prepare. As a result, competitive Marines often hinder their chances of early selection by simply not being prepared. Marines should understand that selection boards may select a minimum of one to a maximum of 5%

(whichever is greater) of that year's total allocations per Military Occupational Specialty from the below zone. The selection board is tasked with selecting the best and fully qualified, sometimes the best and fully qualified are found in the below zone.

Once a selection board convenes and board members begin screening packages, the president of the board alone will screen packages from the below zone. He will be in search of those stellar achievers and strong performers who "stand-out" above their peers. Once identified, these competitive packages will be given to a board member for preparation to be briefed and presented to the rest of the board members for consideration for selection.



Sgt Alex R. Diaz remains focused while manning his M-2 .50 caliber machinegun.

Marines will never be aware that they were looked at while the board was in session. In fact, Marines that are selected from the below zone are quite often surprised to find their name on the final promotion message. It is important to know that Marines that are briefed and not selected from the below zone are not considered as passed over, it's considered a "free-look."

What defines a successful below zone Marine? They are mission makers. They have a tenacious work ethic and an undying dedication to mission accomplishment. These Marines are making a significant impact at their units. They are also strong leaders who are driven by the desire for success. They are continually esteemed, praised, and recognized by their Reporting Officials. They are described by their Reporting Officials as Marines who display the rare pristine qualities most needed and sought after in Marine Corps leaders. They are well respected by their peers and seniors alike and are the kind of Marines you would want with you in your fighting position in the heat of battle.

Successful below zone Marines are warriors who continually exceed expectations of their leaders. In peacetime or war, they are the ones that will go above and beyond the call of duty. They are Marines who understand the Commanders Intent and can work well from a Frag Order with little to no guidance. In short, these Marines are passionate about the mission and positively impact their unit.

Being competitive is not just limited to your performance in your MOS or billet assignment. It also includes excelling in training - specifically in the areas of your PFT, marksmanship, and PME. A training record can say a lot; it conveys to the board members the caliber of Marine you are. A competitive training record will paint a better picture of the Marine that is willing to go the extra mile to be more competitive. Most Marines

already know this and strive to do their very best.

Along with remaining competitive, Marines should ensure the accuracy of their record. There are certain basic steps you can take to prepare your record ahead of time. Marines whose records are prepared increase their chances for selection. Your record is your personal resume. Refer to Volume 1, Issue 2 of the Career News Flash and the records checklist located on the Career Counselor's website to assist in preparing your record.

Does ensuring that your record is prepared guarantee that you will be looked at for selection from the below zone? Of course not, but it will certainly help, and will definitely enhance a strong record. When it's all said and done, the overall determining factor comes down to the Marines individual performance.

In summary, Marines that are selected from the below zone are well-rounded, strong performers. Regardless of the mission or assignment; they hit the deck running. In MOS, on a Special Duty Assignment, in combat, or peacetime, they maintain sustained quality performance. They are the leaders of the pack and stand out above their peers. They will foster unit cohesion and act as a mentor to peers and juniors alike. These Marines are of the highest caliber and always remain fully engaged in the mission. They are consummate professionals who exhibit the strong qualities desired and admired by all Marines. Do you have what it takes?

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By GySgt Lannon
Enlisted Career Counselor, HQMC

NOTE

Maradmin 337/04 announced that the SNCO Career Distance Education Program (7100) has been discontinued and been replaced by the revised 8100. To satisfy the PME requirements for promotion to Gunnery Sergeant, Staff Sergeants must complete either the 7100 or the 8100. Those Marines currently enrolled in the 7100 will have until 30 June, 2006 to complete the course.

OBJECTIVE OF PME

When it comes to Professional Military Education (PME), there are a number of different sentiments that Marines hold. When referring to the resident PME courses, some believe that it's "a PT Academy" or "Boot Camp revisited." Whether it's the resident or nonresident course, the sentiment that is usually expressed is, "I've got my check in the box!" The truth of the matter is, whether attending an academy, completing a Marine Corps Institute correspondence course, reading from the Marine's reading list, or furthering your education through off-duty college courses, PME is designed to make us more effective leaders on and off the battlefield.

General Carl E. Vuono, Army Chief of Staff, stated "the competence of our future leaders and their leadership are determined by our ability to educate and train them..." Although some people seem to have a natural ability to lead others, most leadership skills don't come naturally. They are learned through hard work and study. Consequently, education and training are important and separate tools used in the development of an effective fighting force. These tools are complementary and interwoven at every level of professional development.

PME is the lifelong study of the foundations of the military profession. PME is designed to equip Marines with the skills, confidence,

understanding, and vision to exercise sound military judgment in battle. We must always be prepared for war, therefore, a common body of knowledge must exist within our Corps. This provides a universal understanding of the basis on which decisions are made and actions carried out even in the "fog of war." The Marine Corps' PME program is a dynamic, integrated, and progressive learning system for educating Marines throughout their careers, arming them with the knowledge to win wars. Lieutenant General Van Ripper once stated "there is no reason why professional warriors cannot be over 5,000 years old mentally – as that's how old our history books cover conflict."

Marines can enroll in courses for their current grade. Once they have satisfied the PME requirements of that grade they can enroll in the courses of the next higher grade. To gain maximum benefit, Marines should attend their resident course once selected for the next higher grade or as soon as possible once promoted. For those who have had the

opportunity to attend their resident course, the experience is like no other! You have the rare opportunity to be among your peers in grade and across MOSs. The dynamics that exist by virtue of the wealth of knowledge and experience among Marines at the academy is unparalleled. In fact, most Marines have discovered that attending their resident course is one of the more rewarding experiences of their career.



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Essentially, intellectual growth is not only beneficial to us as leaders and to our future leaders, but to the Marines we lead, our Corps, and our nation, which we so proudly serve. It increases the breadth and depth of warfighting and leadership fitness. Therefore, it is incumbent upon every leader to pursue a lifelong program of mental fitness in much the same manner as

he or she does physical fitness. In a follow-on article, we'll identify the objective of each level of education required for each grade.



By GySgt Perkins
Enlisted Career Counselor, HQMC

CAREER RETENTION

As most Marines are well aware, the new Enlisted Retention and Career Development Manual, MCO P1040.31J, was released in June 2004. Because this order affects all enlisted Marines, it is important to understand the retention policies. Chapter 4 had the most changes from the previous MCO P1040.31H and the biggest impact on careers.

The first change was the guidance for the definition of both continuous and broken service. Under the old order, continuous service was defined as an active duty Marine who reenlisted within three months after separation. Under the new order, MCO 1040.31J, this has changed to not more than 90 days. Although this may seem insignificant, because some months consist of 31 days, this new policy changes the number of days a Marine has to make a decision about a new contract. The same holds true for broken service as well with the new definition being more than 90 days



Policies affecting retention is something all Marines should be concerned with.

vice 3 months. This will have an effect on whether or not a Marine will keep his or her original date of rank.

The second point of interest is the policy on reenlistment prerequisite waivers. Depending on the situation or incident, some Marines may have to request a waiver from their Commanding General, or acting, in order to reenlist. Chapter 4 outlines those circumstances such-as less than a high school graduate or alternative credential holder. More importantly, the new order has added those instances that will not be waived. Some examples include a Marine who has submitted for retirement or when the Lautenberg Amendment applies. Although this does not apply to most Marines, it is necessary for the senior leadership to understand this policy when counseling Marines on career options.

A point of contention that must be clarified, is the issue of sergeants who have been twice passed for promotion to staff sergeant asking for voluntary discharge. The retention manual states

that if a sergeant has been twice passed, he or she may elect to be voluntarily discharged and be treated as an involuntary separation for the purpose of entitlement for separations pay. Approval or disapproval of the request will be based on the needs of the Marine Corps, (MCO P 1900.16F, MARADMIN 440/03 AND MSG/CMC/2915362JUN2001). However, under the guidance of the Enlisted Career Force Controls Program (ECFC), Sergeants may reenlist for up to thirteen years, the 2P or twice passed policy does not apply. Because the voluntary discharge only applied when the 2P policy was in affect, sergeants who have been twice passed for selection are not entitled to separations pay

unless denied further service by HQMC MMEA-6. Change 1 to the retention manual will address this policy.

Because retention is something all Marines should be concerned with, it is imperative that we all take an active interest in the policies that guide it. This article has highlighted some issues but is not all encompassing; please refer to MCO P1040.31J for more details on those policies affecting retention.



By GySgt Payne
Enlisted Career Counselor, HQMC

MMEA COMMAND VISITS

During the month of October 2004, the Manpower Management Enlisted Assignments Branch (MMEA) will begin its annual tour of major commands to provide manpower support. Marines will have the opportunity to speak to their Monitors about assignment issues and work with their Unit Career Retention Specialists and the Retention Section (MMEA-6) towards retention requests to include possible on-the-spot reenlistments for eligible Marines. Additionally, the Enlisted Career Counselors will be on site to provide individual career counseling as well as provide high quality briefs to Career Marines and the senior leadership on career issues.

Career counseling is based on a review of the Marine's official record. It is both necessary and imperative for any career Marine in the rank of Sergeant and above to have a recent copy of their official records with them when seeing a

Counselor during any of the MMEA Command Visits. Career Counselors do not carry official records with them since they have no way of knowing who is likely to seek counseling while traveling.

Ordering your official records from MMSB takes time, do not procrastinate as the Command Visits are fast approaching.

It is the responsibility of the individual Marine to order his or her Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) and Master Brief Sheet (MBS) from the Personnel Management Support Branch (MMSB). As processing time takes a few days, Marines should not procrastinate.

There are a couple of options available for ordering your official records. The first and probably the easiest way is to request a copy via email. To do so, send a request to the 'MMSB organizational mail box'

(MMSBOMPF@manpower.usmc.mil) and provide your full name, social security number, complete unit address (to include street, unit number, PCS box number), or home mailing address. Specify if you want a copy of your OMPF, MBS (old and/or new), or both. The second option is either



MMEA-64

ENLISTED CAREER COUNSELING UNIT (MMEA-64)

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We have not decided all the topics for the next newsletter and would like to hear from you regarding what you want to know more about. Please send us your suggestions by email.

to fax or mail a request with your signature along with the aforementioned information. Both the fax number and mailing address can be found on MMSB's website.

Along with individual counseling, the Career Counselors will host several "power house" Career Briefs aimed at specific audiences in order to assist active duty Sergeants and above in gaining a competitive edge. The following is a list of briefs offered:

Career Brief 101 (E5 - E6) Introduction to all aspects of career management; the SNCO Selection Board Process; and, the responsibility of the individual Marine

Career Brief 301 (E8 - E9) Career Progression and guiding SNCO Careers. This brief also identifies factors that have a significant impact on the careers of our SNCOs.

Career Brief 601 (E8, E9, RS, RO) Key notes taken from selection

boards and trends regarding fitness reports.

Contact your local Career Retention Specialist for times and locations for each brief or ask them to schedule a brief if it is not on the schedule, also refer to Maradmin 354/04 for more amplifying information. We are your supporting arm and provide a quality service that needs to be taken advantage of.

At this time, the Career Counseling Unit would like to welcome GySgt Brian R. Criley to the Career Counselor Team. He has joined us from 2nd Battalion, 6th Marines at Camp Lejeune. GySgt Criley is an 0369 who has had distinguished service throughout his career. His knowledge and experience is a solid addition to our section.



**By GySgt Payne
Enlisted Career
Counselor, HQMC**

MMEA Command Visit Schedule

MARFORLANT	5-7 October, 2004
II MEF/MCB CAMLEJ/COMCABEAST	20-29 October, 2004
I MEF/MCB CAMPEN/COMCABWEST	29 November-10 December, 2004
MARFORPAC/III MEF	4-15 January, 2005

Send comments and suggestions regarding this newsletter to GySgt Payne at payneas@manpower.usmc.mil