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The Officer Selection Board Process:

The information presented here will cover the DA Secretariat, types of boards, board membership, the officer selection process, and preparing for a selection board. A truly unique broadening assignment at the DA Secretariat has granted me a better understanding of the Army's centralized selection board system. While this article does not provide anything shocking, the intent is to increase transparency regarding the board process and hopefully eliminate myths in the field by providing first-hand information.

The DA Secretariat

The Department of the Army (DA) Secretariat has the distinct mission to conduct all centralized Active Component, Reserve Component, Officer and NCO selection boards for the Army. The DA Secretariat is located at the Human Resources Command (HRC), Fort Knox, Kentucky. Every year, the DA Secretariat convenes over 90 selection boards to consider eligible candidates for promotions, command assignments, professional development schools for officers, warrant officers, non commissioned officers and DA Civilians. Senior leaders are appointed by the Secretary of the Army or the Army Chief of Staff to serve on a special duty assignment as a board member.

Types of Officer Selection Boards

Officer selection boards are governed by law and policy. This include all promotion boards for Chief Warrant Officer Three (CW3) through Major General (MG), all special boards, including Special Selection Boards (SSB), Promotion Review Boards (PRB) and Command Review Boards (CRB). SSBs convene as a result of officer omission from the original board or to reconsider officers who were not selected based on a material error. PRBs and CRBs convene to determine if selected officers should remain on standing selection lists. Some boards are governed only by policy, including school boards such as Intermediate Level Education and Senior Service College boards as well as other boards such as the Reserve Officer Training Corps Professor of Military Science Board. Policy boards also include Battalion and Brigade Command and Key Billet Centralized Selection Lists (CSL). There are also 17 general officer boards held at the DA Secretariat, selecting Brigadier General, Major General, chiefs of the special branches, and boards for Army National Guard and Army Reserve.

Board Composition

Board membership composition is as prescribed by Title 10 U.S. Code, Army Regulation, and Army G-1 Policy. The Director of Military Personnel Management (DMPM) approves membership requirements for boards annually. Preliminary requirements derived in law state that a promotion board must be "appointed by the Secretary of the Army, have five or more officers as members, serving in a grade higher than the grade of the officers under consideration by the board..." and that no member may be "below the rank of major". The Army, through regulations and policy, is more restrictive by regulating that all board members must be in the grade of lieutenant colonel or higher, and must meet specific branch, minority and gender requirements to ensure fair representation of the considered population. Additionally, board members are required to have successful careers with command selection, as well as, no derogatory performance.



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Board Guidance and Mission

The Memorandum of Instruction (MOI) is the key document providing guidance to all board members and tailored to each board. The board MOI derives from the convening authority and is the principal document governing the operation of a board. The MOI's framework is a synthesis and interpretation of multiple inputs including, U.S. Law, DOD Policy, Army Regulation and current senior Army leadership guidance. The MOI's content may vary as the Army's structure, strategy, procedures, and demands continuously evolve. The MOI delineates the board's mission and addresses goals, select objectives, specific skill requirements, and equal opportunity consideration. Board missions are to select either fully or best qualified candidates for promotion, separation, school or command selection. Board members will review all files in the population and each must decide for themselves how to score each officers file, in accordance with the instructions of the boards MOI. The important thing to note is that everyone in the considered population is adequately represented and board members are strictly prohibited from discussing files. Due to these strict guidelines, board members convey 100% faith and confidence in the board process. Board members are not given specific results nor requirements in the MOI. For promotion boards, MOI guidance will state the mission is to recommend either the Fully Qualified or the Best Qualified officers for promotion or selection to meet the needs of the Army. The board members also have a mission to make a recommendation to the Commander of HRC if any officers should show cause for retention on active duty or in an active status.

The Army Selection Board System

Board members review and score board files using an automated system called the Army Selection Board System (ASBS). ASBS displays all documents in the performance folder of the candidates' Army Military Human Resource Record (AMHRR). The performance folder consists of the evaluation, commendatory, education and disciplinary sections if applicable. ASBS also displays the Officer Record Brief (ORB) for cross-reference with the contents of the board file. The first document that will be available for board members to review is a letter to the board president if submitted. Following a letter to the board president, the DA Photo will appear only if the officer has an official photo on file within five years of the board's convene date. Following the photo is the performance section of the AMHRR, pulled directly from the Interactive Personnel Electronic Record Management System (iPERMS). To ensure the voters are seeing the most current information, ASBS is synchronized with iPERMS on the board convene date. The evaluations section of the performance record appears first and includes all OERs and AERs listed chronologically. It is a misconception that only your last five OERs will be available for review, as a board member can reference all of your previously completed evaluations. The commendatory and education portions are listed next. If applicable, the last section displayed in ASBS is the disciplinary information (for example, General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand (GOMOR), or an Article 15). The disciplinary folder does not include restricted items. The restricted portion will only appear if authorized and directed, and MILPER Messages will specifically state if it is visible to the board.



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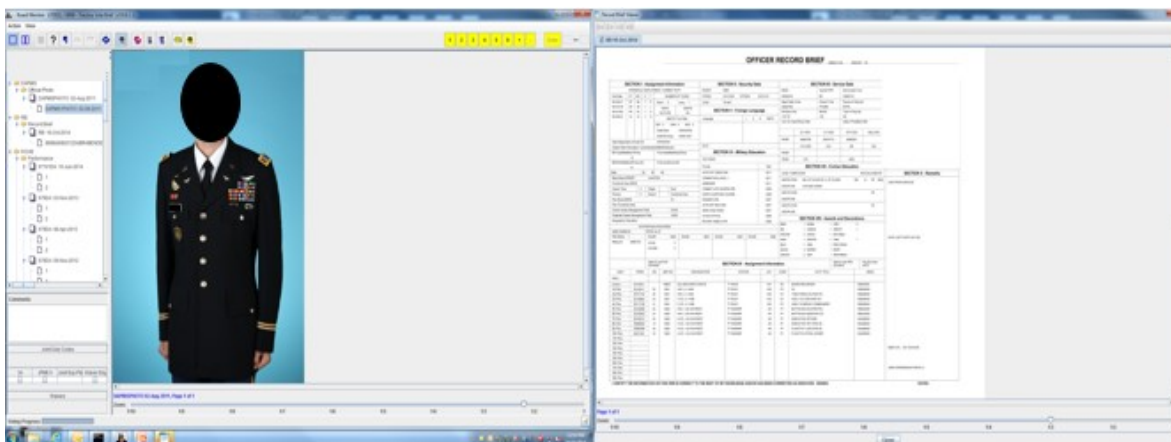


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The Officer Selection Board Process:

An Individual Voter Philosophy

In order to vote the entire population free of prejudice or partiality, board members develop their own individual voter philosophy. An individual voter philosophy is a board member's consistent application of the MOI, their experience, judgment, and the word picture as he or she assesses the contents of each board file and subsequently applies a score. As a primer, the board recorders administer a practice vote consisting of typically 10-15 files to ensure the board members feel comfortable with the voting process prior to record voting. Board Members may take as much time as needed to assess each file. Again, board members must decide for themselves, without discussing with each other, what they consider a high score versus a low score. There is absolutely no talking during voting and board recorders have the distinct duty to protect the integrity of the board process.



The Screen Vote Identifies Potential Below-the-Zone Selects

The board will consider the potential Below-the-Zone (BZ) selects at the beginning of record voting. In accordance with AR 600-8-29, BZ promotions are an essential part of the promotion system; they are intended to provide officers of exceptional ability an opportunity to advance quickly, help the Army retain high quality officers, and incentivize officers to perform at their highest potential. Officers selected from BZ replace those who otherwise would be promoted from in and above the promotion zone; therefore, they must be clearly superior to those who would otherwise be promoted. Officers in the BZ considered population are screen-voted separately to determine their potential for further consideration. Board members quickly assess files to determine if an officer in the BZ population merits further consideration for accelerated promotion. In order to quickly assess files, a simple “Yes, No or Show Cause” screen vote word picture is used. Board members also have the opportunity to recommend officers for show cause consideration. Once the screen vote is complete, the board recorders will create a chart that depicts how many officers received each possible number of ‘yes’ votes, from 17 to 0 (given there are 17 board members). This is not a board decision and the board members will not be aware of who or how many BZ files will be integrated into the hard vote for further consideration. The maximum BZ selection opportunity as defined in the MOI will determine how many BZ files will be advanced to the hard vote.

Example MOI Guidance:
Maximum BZ Selection Requirement: 2

YES VOTES	# FILES	RUNNING TOTAL
17	1	1
16	1	2
15	0	2
14	0	10
13	16	26
12	10	36
11	15	51
10	11	62
9	15	77
8	21	98
7	20	118
6	30	148
5	38	186
4	40	226
3	65	291
2	121	412
1	253	665
0	801	1466

Number of "Yes" Votes → YES VOTES
Number of files with "Yes" Votes → # FILES
Running total of entire BZ population → RUNNING TOTAL
MOI Directs Number of Files to "Hard" Vote → (indicated by a red line pointing to the '2' in the 'YES VOTES' column)



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The Officer Selection Board Process:

The Hard Vote Establishes an OML

Board members hard vote all “In” and “Above the Zone” files to include those BZ files that have been advanced based on MOI guidance. Board members use the hard vote [see Word Picture] to assist them in assigning scores to candidates’ files. Each board member will be provided a copy of this document at their voting station. The Word Picture contains a 1 through 6 voting scale with plus and minus identifiers. All voters will award a single score to each candidate’s file for their assigned board. The use of the plus or minus further delineates a candidate’s position on the final Order of Merit List (OML). For example, a score of 5 is higher than a 5-, which is higher than a 4+, and so on. The word picture also includes a fully qualified line that serves to separate those Officer’s that should not be selected based on their performance and potential. Officers that receive a cumulative score below the fully qualified line will not be selected regardless of requirements. During officer boards, a score of a “one” will initiate the “Show Cause” process. An officer who receives a show cause score will then

- 6 +/- Top Few
Superior Performer
Superior Potential
- 5 +/- Select Ahead of Peers
Outstanding Performer
Outstanding Potential
- 4 +/- Select with Peers
Solid Performer
Good Potential
- 3 +/- Select if there is a Requirement
Average Performer/Potential
- 2 +/- Do not Select
Weak Performer
- 1 Show Cause Consideration

FULLY QUALIFIED
NOT FULLY QUALIFIED

be boarded to determine if they will be retained on active duty. Keep in mind, one board member may score an officer a 3 and another board member could score the same officer a 6+, but no one can tell board members how to vote and no one can force a board member to change their score. Each board member’s vote is weighted equally. Once all voting is complete, the board recorders will run an Aberrant Vote report as a quality control check.

An Aberrant vote is when a file receives at least two scores that vary by 3 or 4 whole numbers depending on the board’s decision prior to voting. For example, your file receives a score of a 5+ from one board member and a 2- from another

board member. That is a whole number difference of 3, and in this example is aberrant. The file would then be sent back to the voters that gave you the 5+ and the 2-. The board members have no obligation to change their score. An aberrant vote is used as a quality control measure, just in case something was missed during the initial screening of your file. This process is only done one time. Once complete, the DA Secretariat creates a pre-tie OML. The board recorders draw both the fully qualified line (FQ) and tentative best qualified line (TBQ) on the OML. The TBQ is based solely off of the Army’s Select Objective in the MOI and is also used as a guide to determine the ties that need to be broken. All board ties on, or directly below, the TBQ line have to be broken. Therefore, all board members have to revote files until they are broken. Once broken, the DA Secretariat generates a post-tie OML to identify “fully qualified” and “best qualified” officers to meet the needs of the Army.

Professional Schooling Selection boards

The two school boards the DA Secretariat conducts for officers are the Intermediate Level Education (ILE) Board and the Senior Service College (SSC) Board. The previously mentioned selection board process is completed in the same manner: vote all files, identify any officers for show cause, and produce an OML. The board also re-validates officers selected the previous year for schools, but had an approved deferral memo. However, unlike selection for command, the deferred officers do not count towards selection requirements and the board will not compare deferred officers with those presently under consideration.



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Board members use a simple “Yes”, “No” and “Show Cause” word picture to quickly assess revalidation. Once deferred Officers are validated, ILE requirements are filled based on the MOI guidance for Resident and Satellite slots. Furthermore, all sister service and foreign school slots are further slated through Leadership Development Division (LDD). The board for Senior Service College (SSC) has a very similar process. Requirements for SSC are still filled based on MOI guidance for Principal and Alternate Slots. Furthermore, the board will select recommendations to attend foreign SSCs. Again, principals and alternates are selected by their OML position, needs of the Army and then their preferences.

Preparing for a Selection Board

One of the most important first steps prior to any board is to read the Military Personnel (MILPER) Message. These messages are usually published between 90-120 days prior to the board convene date and provide valuable information and dates that are key to your preparation including specific eligibility criteria; the My Board File (MBF) open and close dates; and evaluation and photo deadlines. About 60 days prior to the board, officers in the considered population have the opportunity to view, correct, and certify their own board file using the “MY BOARD FILE” application on the HRC website. Voting members will not know if you have certified your file or not. However, failing to view, correct, or certify the board file does not prevent board members from viewing its content. Additionally, certifying the board file does not prevent the official record from changing prior to the convene date. If new documents are posted to the official record after the board file is certified and prior to the board convene date those documents will be seen by the board. Letters to the board president should be limited to addressing unusual circumstances only, explaining something that is not reflected in your board file. A good example would be an Officer is hospitalized for combat related injuries and hasn’t received an evaluation in two years. A bad example would be claiming a mediocre evaluation was received simply because the senior rater did not like you or telling the Board President how great your file is. Even though your letter is addressed to the Board President, all board members will see your letter.

The DA Photo is an officer’s handshake with the board. Although a DA Photo is valid for five years, a new DA Photo is required if you are promoted or have any changes the photo would reflect. You should make necessary alterations to ensure your uniform fits properly, and remember only wear authorized individual awards and decorations. A best practice is to have someone present to inspect your uniform while getting photographed to ensure it is correct. While at the Photo Facility, review the photo after it is taken and ask for another photo if it is unclear or dark. Some common DA Photo errors include: baggy or tight uniforms; Incorrect spacing of badges, insignia, name plates, rank, and ribbons. Refer to the most current AR and DA PAM 670-1 to check regulatory guidelines. The Officer Record Brief is a very important document, as it provides a snapshot of your entire career to the board members. Take the time to update your ORB before My Board File (MBF) closes. There are five main areas to focus on: 1) ensure awards and decorations portion should be up-to-date and match your DA Photo and your AMHRR.



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2) The duty title should match the actual position for that assignment and the associated evaluation. 3) Height/weight discrepancies that occur between your ORB and evaluations are very noticeable to board members. 4) Ensure your overseas and deployment data are up to date. 5) Ensure your Military & Civilian Education sections reflect the documentation in your AMHRR. There are several portions of the ORB that are masked to board members including dwell time, dependent data, marital status and religious preference since these sections should not affect a board member's vote.

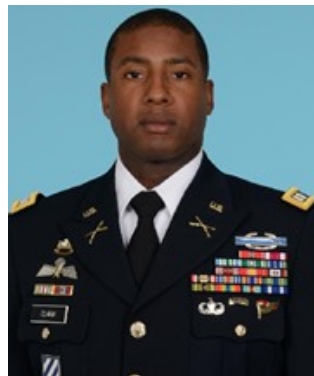
The goal is to present board members with an accurate and complete file. Officers should maintain communication with HRC and inform the correct office according to the MILPER regarding any file errors. The DA Secretariat website is a valuable resource for information concerning schedules, results, and regulations. The website also has a link to a mock board video for individual and unit training. Finally, the DA Secretariat strives to support leader professional development briefing requests for personnel TDY to HRC and will also send board recorders on temporary duty to conduct briefings provided the unit covers transportation costs.

DA Secretariat Link.

<https://www.hrc.army.mil/content/Selection%20Boards>.

Mock Board Video Link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeqGrAUMMiY>



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