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*“The responsibility of the commanding officer for his command is absolute, except when, and to the extent, relieved there from by competent authority, or as provided otherwise in these regulations.” (Article 0702.1 of Navy Regulations, 1973)*

As a commanding officer, you are vested with great responsibility. At no time during your Naval Reserve career will you have more influence over more people or will you have a greater opportunity to serve the Navy. Command is often difficult, intense, challenging, and demanding. But those who accept the responsibility, dedicate themselves, and meet the challenges reap significant personal and professional rewards. Although possessing the requisite interest, enthusiasm, and desire to succeed, new CO's often assume their duties without adequate knowledge and/or experience. A change of command is only ceremonial, with the two participants doing little more than shaking hands, reading orders, and saluting. Thus, the new CO is placed in the position of having simultaneously to command a unit and to accomplish many unfamiliar functions and duties.

Your task may be easier if you have previously been an XO, or take over a well-organized, smoothly running unit. However, without an adequate turnover, any new CO may make unnecessary mistakes. Common problems include late and/or incorrect Fitness/Performance reports, inefficiency, mismanagement, and substandard ratings on inspection. Advanced knowledge and preparation will help ensure a smooth change of command. The turnover process should be thorough and businesslike. You should never be hurried into relieving. DO NOT sign the relieving endorsement until all items are

## Assuming Command and Turnover Procedures

covered to your satisfaction. You are not obligated to relieve an unsatisfactory unit without making note of all discrepancies. Don't pay for someone else's mistakes and shortcomings! Some of the established procedures and duties a prospective Unit CO should understand to perform with his/her predecessor include:

- Plan to begin the process on a visit to your new command the month before relieving. A complete and thorough turnover and change of command are difficult to accomplish in one drill weekend.

- Check the inspection file for any uncorrected discrepancies and from the last command inspection or visit. These should be enumerated in detail in the relieving letter. Unit inspection results can clarify command strengths and weaknesses.

- The detaching CO points out to his/her relief any defect or peculiarity of the command, emphasizing deficiencies in safety, operational readiness, training, habitability, or material conditions. Prior inspection results can be referenced, with any command deficiency and corrective action noted.

- The detaching CO prepares a report of transfer of command. This report lists unsatisfactory conditions within the command that may adversely affect safety, well-being, readiness, fiscal integrity, or command performance and specifies proposed corrective actions. The report should, also, contain the incoming CO's endorsement and comments on any unsatisfactory condition. If the incoming CO does not concur with the report, he/she specifies where the report is inaccurate or incomplete and provides the detaching CO the opportunity to make explanation. This relieving letter should be prepared strictly in accordance with U.S. Navy Regulations 1990, Article 0707 and NAVOP 083/85. A copy is retained by each of the officers between whom the transfer of command takes place.

- The detaching CO delivers to his/her relief all unexecuted orders, all regulations and orders in force, and all official correspondence and information concerning

the command and personnel that may be of service to the relief. If a Navy post office is established with the command, a current audit of postal accounts and effects will be given to the relief. All COMSEC material charged to the command is to be inventoried per the COMSEC material system manual. The detaching CO should not remove originals of official correspondence, letters, papers, or documents about the command and personnel, but may retain authenticated copies.

- The outgoing CO musters all hands, inspects the command along with the incoming CO, reads orders, and turns over command to his/her successor who will read orders and assume command. The officer relieved, although without authority after turning over command, is entitled to all ceremonies and distinctions due while in command, until his/her final departure.

After assuming command, you should:

- Immediately and regularly correspond with your Gaining Command to inform them of your assumption of command, to confirm any AT/IDTT previously scheduled, and to ensure proper training is accomplished. Find out and understand any Gaining Command's reserve program instruction.

- Also meet with your Reserve Center CO early on. A frequent and open dialogue with him/her is essential to good unit management as the Center CO is to provide administrative, training, and logistic support.

- Become familiar with COMNAVSURF-RESFORINST 3502.1B, COMNAVRESFOR-INST 3120.2 & 3501 series, the Standard Organization & Regulations Manual (SORM) for the Reserve Unit, and the JAGMAN procedures.

As you transition to the position of Unit CO, your primary duty is to ensure retention, training, and readiness of personnel required to support mobilization requirements. A well-defined plan to familiarize yourself with the unit after assuming command will prevent getting bogged down in routine duties. Organize, manage, and delegate routine functions. This will make time available during drill periods to concentrate on supervision of readiness, training, and retention. ⚓