

## How to Join the Reserves after Active Duty

There are three main avenues in which an officer can transition from their current status to a drilling unit in the reserves, known as either Select Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) or Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) units. This whitepaper serves as a simple, how to, summary. It is not intended to be comprehensive, but it will give you the proper orientation to be successful.

**Before you start**, make sure that you are focused and have squared yourself away, administratively, as you depart from active duty. Your local S-1 can help.

As you begin to explore joining the reserves, the guidance on point for officers is MARADMIN 369/17. Practically speaking, **there are three ways in which you can join the reserves:**

### ***Option 1: Transition immediately from Active to Reserve – Direct Affiliation Program (DAP)***

The DAP provides active component officers and Marines with seamless transition into the SMCR or IMA with a guaranteed reserve billet prior to reaching the end of active duty. Officers must be competitive for promotion to the next higher grade and must be, at a minimum, the appropriate height/weight, MOA proficiency and training, no fitness report date gaps, etc.

Judge advocates interested in DAP should contact their career planner.\* The career planner will submit all DAP packages for screening and approval. Officers may request DAP from 120 to 60 prior to their EAS. The career planner will support the officer through the entire process, including finding open billets and similar opportunities.

\* Note – Every Bn has a designated career planner. If you do not know your career planner, simply contact your S-1. You can also Google “USMC career planner” for more options.

For more information, please see MARADMIN 600/18 specific to DAP.

### ***Option 2: Transition after time in the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR)***

While Option 1 is the most seamless, it is very common for officers to have a bit of time between their active duty service and joining a SMCR or IMA billet. A majority of Marines in the IRR are former active component Marines who have not completed their Military Service Obligation. While this is called “broken time” and little will count towards retirement or pay, an officer that remains in the IRR keeps their commission and their options open.

Judge advocates interested in joining a SMCR or IMA billet from the IRR will need the assistance of a Prior Service Recruiter (PSR). A PSR can be found locally by simply googling “USMC Prior Service Recruiter” and the closest PSR’s contact information should come up in the search.

### ***Option 3: Reappointment of a Reserve Commission, then transition from the IRR***

Option 3 is, by far, the hardest way to get into the reserves, administrative speaking. This option only occurs after a commissioned officer is dropped from the IRR roles and he/she is completely separated from the Marine Corps. This is not the recommended option and should only be used if the officer is no longer in the IRR or similar holding status.

To go through the reappointment process, judge advocates would have to go through their local PSR, similar to Option 2. First, the judge advocate would have to receive a commission and then look for SMCR and IMA billets once in the IRR (in a similar process to Option 2).

***How can you learn more about being a reserve judge advocate?***

For information about being a reserve judge advocate and available billets, please visit the Judge Advocate Division, Reserve Legal Support (RLS) site at:

<https://www.hqmc.marines.mil/sja/Branches/Reserve-Legal-Support-RLS/>

If you'd like to discuss directly with a reserve officer, please contact:

- East Coast – LtCol Justin Martell, USMCR at [justin.martell@yahoo.com](mailto:justin.martell@yahoo.com) or (571)970-8332
- West Coast – LtCol Tyson Avery, USMCR at [tyson.avery@gmail.com](mailto:tyson.avery@gmail.com) or (703)304-1432
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