

## FY22 Information Warfare Community O4 Milestone and Leadership Board Observations

Talent across the Information Warfare Community (IWC) is staggering and as a result selection to milestone and especially leadership is extremely competitive and margins for selection were razor thin. Sustained Superior Performance (SSP) in diverse, challenging and demanding operational tours sends a clear message to the board that an officer has solid potential to serve **AND** excel in milestone and leadership jobs across the IWC.

The below are intended to provide observations on the FY22 IWC O4 Milestone and Leadership Screen Board (#22426) that convened on 16 November 2020 and adjourned on 20 November 2020. The vast majority of the observations below apply to all IW communities, but community specific insights, where applicable, are highlighted.

### General:

- **Convening Order (CO).** The CO contains explicit language that defines “Fully” and “Best” qualified officers. This “Fully” and “Best” qualified criteria is the lens through which records are reviewed by the board. All officers should thoroughly read and understand the convening order and draft/write FITREPs for themselves and their subordinates accordingly. Clearly document operational support and articulate leadership roles within the FITREP, to include the scope of responsibility, operational impacts and number of personnel led. **When writing FITREP inputs, start with the CO for the admin and statutory boards for which you are next eligible.**

- **Mentor.** Seek mentors early in your career, both within and outside the IWC. Ask mentors to review your record and to do so in the context of the CO for the next board your record is eligible.

### Performance:

- **Defining and Clarifying SSP:** SSP with **HARD** competitive breakouts, across a variety of challenging and demanding tours, sent a message to the board that an officer has solid potential to serve and excel in milestone and leadership assignments across the IWC. Once records were in the crunch, a key discriminator was that regardless of how long onboard, if the member didn't have a hard breakout, it was imperative that the officer's record had a soft breakout; explanation of why they didn't breakout (i.e. “Stuck in Traffic”); and/or why they are below Reporting Senior Cumulative Average (RSCA) (i.e. “Managing Average”). This is particularly important for 1-of-1 tours.

- **Intel Specific:** Leading OPINTEL teams remains a core competence for intelligence officers. Credible **SOFT** breakouts are important but do not represent a complete substitute for **HARD** competitive breakouts; nevertheless, **SOFT** breakouts in operational assignments – especially milestone – against peers is **CRITICAL** to demonstrate SSP.

- **Recommendations for Milestone and Leadership.** Consistent recommendations in blocks 40 and 41 for leadership and milestone matters. It was helpful to see a reporting senior state that an officer is recommended for: Milestone, Command, XO/OIC, Leadership. The frequency and consistency of those recommendations appearing in an officer's record is a factor that was considered.

- **Points to Consider - Selection for Leadership.** Sustained Superior Performance (SSP) in O4 milestone tours is critical for selection for O4 leadership as it represents the standard for “Best Qualified” as per the convening order. **Officers should not pass-up an opportunity to get to milestone as soon as possible** as documented performance in milestone is critical to achieving “Best Qualified” for leadership selection.

Documented performance in milestone and success in leadership roles, to include department head, division officer, or other leadership positions are discriminating factors. Be sure to document clearly in the block 41 of milestone FITREPs that a milestone tour is in fact a milestone tour – don't place the briefers or the board in a position of guessing or assuming.

- To emphasize, career timing becomes vitally important for selection to Leadership. An officer must have demonstrated SSP in O4 milestone to be considered among the "Best Qualified" for selection. Therefore, if you wish to be selected for leadership so that you can be assigned to an IWC leadership tour (XO/OIC), it is important to get to milestone as soon as you can.

- **Points to Consider - Selection for Milestone.** SSP in *ALL* assignments and demonstrated IW expertise are discriminators and evidenced by consistent above RSCA trait averages, hard and soft breakouts, and repeated recommendations for leadership and milestone jobs.

### **Record Management:**

- **Record Ownership.** It's your record, review it regularly and ahead of EVERY board, to verify completeness. Ensure FITREPs, education, awards, and AQDs are updated. **Send a Letter to the Board if necessary, especially when there is a short time between the FITREP end date and the board convening.** "Letter to the Board" considerations are covered in greater detail below.

- **Valued Qualifications and Experience.** Ensure that qualifications and experiences are properly captured in FITREPs and reflected, as applicable, in the OSR. Specifically, command qualification, graduate degree, and JPME-I completion must properly annotated in the OSR to ensure, without question, that those qualifications will be factored into the board's assessment of an officer's record. At worst, acknowledge those qualifications, degrees, certs, etc. in block 41 of the FITREP, but know that that is not a substitute for updating the OSR appropriately.

- **Intel Specific:** Block 41 of FITREPs should identify operational tours similar to how block 41s identify milestone tours. Intel officers often perform a number of arduous (e.g. FDNF, Afloat) and selectively screened (e.g. DEVGRU) operational tours and that should be specifically annotated in block 41.

- **O4 October Periodic FITREP:** Due to the compressed timing between this board and the O4 periodic FITREPs, it is the member's responsibility to verify FITREPs are submitted to the board for consideration. If a FITREP is not reflected in the PSR, consider submitting it as a letter to the board, especially if that FITREP is documenting performance in milestone.

- **OCEANO Specific:** This is especially important when the latest FITREP is the first observed FITREP after NPS/PG school.

- **Letters of Extension for FITREPs.** Carefully consider using Letters of Extension instead of a short FITREP, especially when the next FITREPs will be NOB and when in a milestone tour. Don't leave it to the board to assume whether or not your performance during that short period would have earned you the EP.

### **Letter to the Board (LTB):**

- **General LTB Guidance.** Keep LTBs concise. LTBs should add value to your record (FITREP, Award, or to explain an anomaly/ambiguity) LTBs must be received at least 10 days before the convening date, but this board extended that deadline to support the closeout of the October O4 periodic FITREP cycle. The Electronic Submission of Selection Board Documents (ESSDB) is by NPC policy the preferred means of

submitting LTBs and is an effective and streamlined method to do so. As always, following submission, verify the LTB includes all pages and the forms are clearly legible and follow up with the My Navy Career Center (MNCC).

- **“Don’t Pick Me” Letters.** An eligible Officer who does not intend to pursue MS/LDR assignment should submit a LTB requesting the board to remove their record from consideration (“Don’t Pick Me” letter). If the officer does not do this it could place the officer in a position where he/she may be slated to an assignment his/her personal and professional goals do not align and consequently could result in an officer having to formally decline assignment resulting in a permanent Field Code 17 (FC-17) being placed in that officer’s record. Additionally, the aforementioned scenario deprives an officer that would have intended to go to a milestone or leadership assignment the opportunity to do so.