

## DH Detailing, Diving Deeper into the Process

I remember being an officer on shore tour, playing the DH slate and wondering what was happening at PERS-42 for my detailing; what the process was and why it took so long (or at least perceived to take long) to receive my verbal assignments. At that time, PERS-42 was at the point where an officer submitted a ranked order list of Homeports and DH job. Through the years, PERS-42 has received great feedback in our transparency efforts, but we know there is more that we can do to take the “worst case thoughts” out of an officer’s head, and perhaps provide officers more comfort. The following discusses the process of the DH Sea Detailer’s slating drumbeat.

I often get asked the question, “I’d like to extend here on shore tour, that’s not a problem, right?” In typical submarine fashion, it depends. The basis for assignment to a SOAC class is primarily an officer’s PRD, ensuring that the officer meets their SOAC window (a recent change to JUL of their 7<sup>th</sup> YCS, i.e. Year Group (YG) 19 should start SOAC in JUL26) for Statutory (O-4) and Administrative (XO) Screenings. Promotion zone expansion has seen several in-route DHs go in-zone for O-4, prior to them checking into their DH assignment. To remedy this, we are vectoring SOAC grads to arrive at their DH tours at least 6 months prior to their first below zone look for LCDR. This is usually the year before they go in-zone for their first administrative look for XO AFLOAT. This allows the CO to observe the officer for a sufficient amount of time to write a FITREP recommending promotion to LCDR and selection for XO. In the example above, a YG19 officer that starts SOAC in JUL26 will arrive to their boat in JAN27 and serve 6 months as a DH prior to their first below-zone look for LCDR and approx. 16 months prior to their first look for XO AFLOAT. An officer detailed to a STRAT WEPS billet incurs an additional 4-6 months of training, which makes it all that much more important that officers meet their SOAC window. A YG19 officer that starts SOAC in JUL26 that is then detailed to a STRAT WEPS billet will arrive to their DH tour in APR27-MAY27, giving that officer a narrow opportunity to submit a Letter to the O-4 Line Board to show they are in a DH assignment.

Naval Submarine School has limited class sizes compared to the number of department heads in the fleet who require reliefs. This combination can sometimes result in a small number of officers who must be shifted between classes to equalize student loading. However, these shifts normally involve only a 1-2-month delay in detaching from the previous command. The Division Officer Shore and Sea Detailer work closely together to balance out each class, ensuring the right number of officers exist to relieve the fleet and SOAC class loading. PERS-42 looks out for an officer’s career timing and attempts to balance out the constituent’s desires with setting that officer up for future success. Division Officers on their shore tour should contact their detailer about 9 months prior to their PRD to confirm SOAC class assignments.

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## The Process

*\*NOTE – E-mail correspondence is predicated on each officer updating their e-mail contact info in NSIPS/NFAAS. Please ensure this information is kept up to date.\**

*\*NOTE - Uncertainty surrounding ship schedules, split tour options, and unscheduled personnel losses in the fleet make it very difficult to determine the availability of ship billet openings more than 6 months in the future. This precludes discussing department head assignments earlier than about 2-3 months prior to the SOAC class convening date.\**

### Milestone 1: Initial Preference (4-6 months prior to SOAC convening)

#### **OVERVIEW:**

- Incoming P-DHs receive an e-mail from either the Division Officer (DO) Shore or Department Head (DH) Sea Detailer ~6 months prior to SOAC convening date
- Officers receive orders to SOAC 4-5 months prior to SOAC convening
- P-DHs submit Initial Preferences ~4 months prior to convening (specific date discussed in e-mail from DH Detailer)
- Oftentimes, this correspondence is combined into a singular hand-off e-mail ~4-5 months prior to SOAC convening

#### **DETAILS:**

Approximately 6 months prior to a SOAC convening, the DO Shore Detailer contacts the perspective students for a SOAC class, confirming their assignment. This e-mail serves as the handoff to the DH Detailer. At this point, officers receive an introduction e-mail from the DH Detailer, describing the process moving forward along with a request for an officer's **Initial Preferences**. The **Initial Preferences** is the opportunity for the officer to rank their homeport and billet desires. Additionally, there is a spot for expressing the overall desire (Homeport, DH billet, operational/shipyard, or ship platform). The officer should only state one overall desire unless they truly would be happy with anything they list. An example of this is an officer that states their overall desire is to be an ENG on an operational VA Class submarine in Pearl Harbor. **If that officer is detailed to an ENG billet, a VA Class submarine or Pearl Harbor, PERS-42 believes that we have met the officer's desire.** Officers are encouraged to put additional information in their **Initial** Preferences as well. Some examples include and are not limited to:

- Spouse's geographic area of interest for school/work
- Major family milestone/concern

While the detailer cannot accommodate to every need, the more an officer expresses, the better the detailer can understand the impact to the officer and their family. With limited space in the **Initial Preferences** excel file, officers are encouraged to provide this additional information in the body of the e-mail they return to the DH detailer.

The e-mail also discusses issuance of orders to SOAC occur 4-5 months prior to the convening date. Submission of **Initial Preferences** to the DH Detailer is requested 3-4 months prior to

SOAC convening. The detailer, when creating the slate in Milestone 2, will use these **Initial Preferences**.

Milestone 2: Slate Preferences (~2 months prior to SOAC convening)

**OVERVIEW:**

- DH Detailer builds slate based on Fleet DH PRD's and billets filled/not filled from previous slate
- P-DHs receive second e-mail 1-2 months prior to SOAC convening containing the 'Billet Slate'.

**DETAILS:**

The next milestone in the process is receipt of a second e-mail from the DH Detailer that officers will receive 1-2 months prior to convening SOAC. This e-mail contains the officer's **Billet Slate**, along with details and rules on how to fill out the preferences. The **Billet Slate** contains the boat, billet and a rough schedule for the boat. One comment received discussed the desire for more specificity in the boat schedules so that an officer could understand better what their DH tour will entail (i.e. All SY, XX deployments/patrols, etc.). The **Billet Slate** sheet will list this information but it is only a snapshot in time and may become outdated as operational schedules and shipyard availabilities shift. The **Billet Slate** cannot be issued to a SOAC class until the previous SOAC class has an approved slate and receives their verbal assignments. This allows the DH Detailer to know exactly what billets were filled and occasionally, which were not filled.

*What do you mean not filled?*

Occasionally, there will be more students in a SOAC class than there are billets in the fleet that need to be filled. To ensure PERS-42 is maintaining a good flow of officers to the fleet, the DH Detailer will work with submarines in the fleet to shift their DH's PRD to the left. This shift could be for several reasons to include, but not limited to:

- 1) Ship's operations (ie. a DH's 36 month PRD is JUN and the submarine is scheduled to deploy in MAY. It may be better for the ship to rotate their NAV early)
- 2) DH met all major career milestones (XO screening, waterfront screening, deployment, etc.) and needs to rotate to catch up to year group
- 3) Evenly space out DH rotations

After determination of a submarine's ability to rotate their DH early, the job is placed on the slate as a **MAYBE FILL**. The DH Detailer uses the **Initial Preferences** submitted to determine which homeports or billet types are needed. For example, if there are 6 officers that list Groton as their #1 choice on their **Initial Preferences** and there are only 4 Groton on the original slate, the detailer looks at the next SOAC Slate and recognizes that there are 6 Groton submarines. The detailer, after working with the submarines in Groton as described above, will move one of

those assignments into the current SOAC slate, thus there would now be 5 Groton submarines to better meet the overall desire of the class.

### Milestone 3: Slate determination, Approval and Concurrence

#### **OVERVIEW:**

- P-DH returns Slate Preferences 3-4 weeks prior to SOAC convening
- DH Detailer determines the slate
- Slate is briefed and approved by PERS-42
- Naval Reactors (NR) concurs with slate

#### **DETAILS:**

**Billet Slates** are due back to the detailer back approximately 3-4 weeks prior to SOAC convening. This gives the DH detailer 2-3 weeks to finalize the slate, obtain PERS-42 approval and NR Concurrence (for ENG billets). The goal is to give verbal assignments within 1-2 weeks of the SOAC convening. This timing may be adjusted earlier based on classes convening around holiday times.

*So, what happens during slate determination?*

Once all the slate preferences are submitted, the detailer creates a spreadsheet that overlays each officer's desires in preferential order, along with their performance through the Accession pipeline, Division Officer Sea and Shore tour. Other specific circumstances such as Co-Location (COLO), Exceptional Family Member Program and DH guarantee are also highlighted.

The next step in slate determination is to detail officers to difficult assignments, such as a struggling ship, a ship that will have a DH relief occur close to a certification event, etc. Top performing officers, as assessed by the above criteria, must fill these assignments and the needs of the submarine fleet may not align with the individual desires of the SOAC class. Desire is **ALWAYS** taken into account, but officers must understand that the needs of Navy is a factor that plays into the detailing process and talent must be even distributed across all waterfronts. If an officer is being evaluated for a difficult assignment, the DH detailer will obtain a letter of recommendation from the officer's At-Sea Commanding Officer to ensure he/she is the right fit for the job.

Following these assignments, each class is slated as a whole to balance the various factors involved for each officer. While assignments are ultimately dependent on available billets, several other factors are considered in determining an officer's assignment, to include individual billet preference, previous duty history, command employment and schedule, wardroom strengths and weaknesses, and the officer's career needs. Some examples of career needs are:

- A SY JO should get deployment/patrol experience
- A two crew officer should experience a SSN mission
- A SSN JO should experience a two crew submarine

The DH Detailer produces multiple COAs that balances out the desire of each officer with each of the requirements/discussion points above. After carefully and thoughtfully evaluating each COA, the slate is finalized and prepared for routing to PERS-42. The slate routed to PERS-42 consists of the officer's name, assignment, performance, ranked number of assignment being detailed, initial preferences, Division Officer sea and shore assignments, nuclear proficiency clock date, the name of the DH being relieved and that DH's time (in months) they served as a DH.

The DH Detailer briefs PERS-42, describing the thought process and reasoning for detailing an officer to the assignment and after answering any questions, the slate is approved by PERS-42.

Following PERS-42 approval, the slate is sent to NR for concurrence. NR validates the performance record of all officers assigned to an ENG billet.

*The question I receive the most...I want to be an ENG, am I ENGable?*

I get asked this question all the time and my response is always the same. "If you want to be an ENG, put that on your preferences and make me tell you that you can't be an ENG." While your nuclear performance throughout the accession pipeline plays a large factor into your ability to be detailed to an ENG billet, if an officer did not perform well in the accession pipeline but did extremely well in their time after PNEO, it is still possible for that officer to become an ENG. The DH detailer must reach out to that officer's At-Sea CO to solicit a recommendation regarding their performance. Based on the recommendation, non-nuclear performance and the officer's shore tour job, it is possible to get concurrence to detail the officer to an ENG billet.

*Milestone 4: Officers receive verbal assignments within ~1-2 weeks of SOAC convening*

**Overview:**

- Verbal assignments received
- Officers receive chance to express desires for a different assignment

Upon receiving NR concurrence, the DH detailer will issue **Verbal Assignments** by phone.

During the phone call, verbal assignments are given and additional questions regarding the detailing process are answered. The DH Detailer will also ask for the officer's thoughts on their detailing assignment. **THIS IS THE CHANCE FOR THE OFFICER TO STATE THEIR DESIRE FOR A DIFFERENT ASSIGNMENT.** That does not mean that the DH Detailer is going to go back to the drawing board. An officer should plan on executing the verbal assignments given. However, the detailer keeps a running list of desires and when an Unplanned Loss (UPL), split tour or other manning shift occurs in the fleet, this list is used to determine if an officer's desires will line up with the available billet. If the available billet will meet a higher desire for an officer and the original orders the officer received can still be filled in the same required timeline, the DH

Detailer will reach out to that officer and discuss the possibility of their orders changing. Nothing is ever definitive in the detailing realm!

Unexpected events during the slating process or while at SOAC can lead to assignment changes, but every effort is made to prevent changing homeports during SOAC unless an individual volunteers for the change.

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I appreciate the opportunity to share a deeper look into the process utilized and hope the document takes some concerns off your mind. We desire to be as transparent as possible and welcome any additional feedback.

Please contact LCDR Daniel W. Stickles with any further questions.

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