



## SO CAREER PATH



Special Warfare Operators (SO). SOs are responsible for training and preparation for execution of special operations in maritime, urban, desert, jungle, arctic and mountain environments. SOs are experts in special operations tactics and technical knowledge; mission planning; cultural awareness; small-unit leadership; operational risk management; tactical, operational and strategic thinking; tactical communications; tactical air control/terminal guidance; combat diving; para-drop operations; small boat operations; tactical ground mobility; small arms and crew-served weapons; fast roping and rappelling; demolitions/explosive breaching; trauma care; intelligence gathering and interpretation; transportation and logistics; and chemical/biological/radiological/nuclear defense measures.

The SO rating is Sea-duty intensive.

YEARS OF SERVICE	CAREER MILESTONES	AVERAGE TIME TO PROMOTE	COMMISSIONING OR SPECIAL PROGRAMS	SEA SHORE FLOW	TYPICAL CAREER PATH DEVELOPMENT
26-30	FORCM CMDM	26 Yrs 22	CMC, CSEL	48	6th Operational or Non-Operational Tour. Billet: FORCM, CMDM, SEA. Duty: SEAL or SDV Team, TACD&E Squadron, SRT, CNSWC, NLEAD, NSWEN, NSW Group, NSW Unit/Det, TSOC, or NSWAC
22-25	CMDM SOCM SOCS SOC	22 Yrs 20.1 16.5 11.9	CMC, CSEL	48	5th Operational or Non-Operational Tour. Billet: CMDM, SEA, Staff Dept/DIV SEL. Duty: SEAL or SDV Team, TACD&E Squadron, SRT, CNSWC, NLEAD, NSWEN, TRADET, NSW Group, NSW Unit/Det, TSOC, or NSWAC.
18-21	SOCM SOCS SOC SO1	20.1 Yrs 16.5 11.9 6.1	CWO, CMC, CSEL	36	4th Operational Tour or Non-Operational Tour Billet: TRP LCPO, OPS LCPO. Duty: SEAL or SDV Team, TACD&E Squadron, SRT, NLEAD, NSWEN, or TSOC.
15-17	SOCS SOC SO1	16.5 Yrs 11.9 6.1	CWO, OCS	60	3rd Operational Tour or Non-Operational Tour Billet: PLT LCPO, TEAM LCPO, TRP LCPO. Duty: SEAL or SDV Team, TACD&E Squadron, SRT, or NLEAD
10-14	SOC SO1	11.9 Yrs 6.1	CWO, OCS	36	1st Non-Operational Tour. Billet: Instructor, Div or Phase LPO/LCPO, TRNG LPO/LCPO, Staff LPO/LCPO. Duty: NLEAD, NSWEN, TRADET, Training Command, NSW Group, NSW Unit/Det, or NSWAC.
3-9	SOC SO1 SO2 SO3	11.9 Yrs 6.1 3.2 2	STA-21, OCS, SRT, NSWDC	60	1st - 2nd Operational Tour. Billet: Operator, SQUAD LPO, SQDN LPO, DIV LPO, TRP LPO, TRNG LPO, Fire Team Leader. Duty: SEAL or SDV Team, TACD&E Squadron, SRT, or TRADET.
1-2	Accession training, SEAL pipeline training. SEAL NEC O26A awarded upon completion of SQT	Advancement to SO3 upon graduation from SQT.	Special Operations Tactical Medic (NEC O91A) SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) Pilot/Navigator/Operator (NEC O23A).		Recruit Training. Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) training. Military Static Line/Free-Fall parachute training. SEAL Qualification Training (SQT).



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### Notes:

- In 2020, Naval Special Warfare (NSW) established Career Leadership Milestone tracking Navy Enlisted Classifications (NECs) to denote completion of milestone tours within specific NSW commands. These NECs are awarded only after the successful completion of the leadership milestone tours listed in Para. 6 and Professional Military Education (PME) requirements (Ref COMNAVSPECWARCOMINST 1414.6A). The below tables list the applicable SO Career Leadership Milestone NECs within these specific commands:

SEAL Team/Training Command		Special Reconnaissance Team (SRT)		SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) Team		NSW Development Group (NSWDG)	
NEC	Milestone	NEC	Milestone	NEC	Milestone	NEC	Milestone
O26A	SEAL Operator	-	-	O23A	SDV Operator	O29A	D&E Operator
O26L	Squad LPO	O22L	Squad LPO	O23L	Squad LPO	O29L	Team LPO
O26C	Platoon LCPO	O22C	Platoon LCPO	O23C	Platoon LCPO	O29C	Team LCPO
O26T	Troop LCPO	O22T	Troop LCPO	O23T	Troop LCPO	O29T	Troop LCPO

- Legacy Blk 29
  - (PLT LPO) SEAL Team, SDV Team, and SRT Team leadership positions were position Short Title names used until 15 November 2024 and considered MILESTONE COMPLETE to determine “best and fully qualified” per Para. 2 below.
  - NSWG-1 TRADET leadership positions L/W DIV LPO and MOB DIV LPO were position Short Title names used until 2022 and considered MILESTONE COMPLETE to determine “best and fully qualified” per Para. 2 below.
  - NSWG-2 TRADET
    - L/W DIV LPO and MOB DIV LPO positions were used until 2022.
    - SOUC DIV LPO position was used from 2022 until 2024.
    - ASSLT DIV LPO position was used until 2022 and reestablished in 2025.
    - IOT DIV LPO position was used until 2024.
    - These positions during annotated time frames are considered MILESTONE COMPLETE to determine “best and fully qualified” per Para. 2 below.
  - (MAR DIV LPO; LAND DIV LPO; AND SDV DIV LPO) NSWG-3 TRADET – are legacy leadership positions used until November 2021 and considered MILESTONE COMPLETE to determine “best and fully qualified” per Para. 2 below. As a result of force re-organization, NSWG-3 was merged into NSWG-8.
- A Memorandum for the Record (MFR) on command letterhead, signed by the CO to the service member, validates milestone completion during a time frame that is not annotated in a regular report. This MFR may substitute for the commensurate leadership milestone NEC in the event that it has not yet been entered into the members OMPF / ESR. Selection Board eligible members can include a copy of the MFR in their Letter to the Board package.

### Milestone Caveat Clause:

- NSW E6/E7/E8 SO/SB personnel may be assigned to formalized positions of increased rank and responsibility within the NSW enterprise or externally within the Joint Force. If these positions of greater responsibility justify advancement opportunities outside the standard pathways inherent to the NSW ECP, appropriate recognition and consideration should be given. FORCM visibility and approval is required before any Milestone complete NEC and MFR is issued from Echelon III or IV Commanders.
- Example: Due to the unique operational demands inherent to SOF, NSW E6/E7/E8 SO/SB will be required to fulfill specific requirements outside of the typical IDTC. SO/SB personnel can be required to deploy to a specific Joint Operations Area (JOA) to lead, advise, plan, C2, and/or execute special operations at the JSOTF, JTF, or similar O-6 staff level. As directed by NSW TYCOM Commander and FORCM, to fulfill TSOC operational mission-critical requirements. In such cases, these ADHOC deployments can be recognized as fulfilling the criteria for "BEST and Fully Qualified" for promotion and should be considered for concurrent completion of the appropriate NSW NEC milestone.
- Letter to the Board must include supporting documents that verify all MUST requirements.**



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### 1. Operator development notes:

- a. Fire Team Leaders (FT LEADER) positions are considered a developmental leadership opportunity in order to prepare our future enlisted leaders for one of the SQD LPO Milestone positions (Para. 6a).
- b. A typical model for an enlisted SO is to serve one tour as an Operator, followed by two tours as FT LEADER, then a fourth tour, if ready, in one of the SQD LPO milestone positions (Para. 6a).
- c. The only authorized FT LEADER positions are those aligned to SQD LPO positions in (Para. 6a).

### 2. Considerations for determining “Fully Qualified” for advancement from E6 to E7

- a. **MUST** hold the respective “L” (LPO) Leadership Milestone NEC (O26L, O22L, O23L, or O29L).
- b. **MUST** complete the NSW LPO Course or NSW DG LPO Course.
- c. **MUST** successfully complete a minimum of **12 months** in a LPO milestone leadership position (Para. 6a). The time between the evaluation end date and the date of the promotion board should be added to the calculation for time successfully served in the milestone position. Member must account for 12 months in an evaluation or MFR.

### 3. Considerations for determining “Best Qualified” for advancement from E6 to E7

- a. **SHOULD** complete the Career Education Program (CEP 1) Joint Fundamentals.
- b. **SHOULD** complete a diversity tour to one of the following commands: any NSW Group, NSW Unit/Detachment (Det), Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC), Naval Special Warfare Command (CNSWC), NSW DG, any Training Command, or Naval Special Warfare Assessment Command (NSWAC).
- c. **SHOULD** have a minimum of 2 core and 2 advanced qualifications (Para. 5). Member should have Letters of Designation where appropriate.

### 4. Considerations for determining “Fully Qualified” for advancement from E7 to E8

- a. **MUST** hold the respective “C” (Platoon or Team LCPO) Leadership Milestone NEC (O26C, O22C, O23C, or O29C) or be in a leadership milestone position (Para. 6b.) pursuing the “C” NEC which will be addressed in an MFR to the board. Exception to this is noted in milestone caveat clause.
- b. **MUST** complete the NSW Platoon Leaders Course or NSW DG Team Leader Course.

### 5. Considerations for determining “Best Qualified” for advancement from E7 to E8

- a. **SHOULD** complete the Career Education Program (CEP 2) Enterprise Management.
- b. **SHOULD** complete a diversity tour in their career to one of the following commands: any NSW Group, NSW Unit/Det, USSOCOM, TSOC, CNSWC, SRT, any Training Command, NSW DG, NLEAD, Naval Special Warfare Assessment Command (NSWAC), Navy Personnel Command, Bureau of Naval Personnel, or Recruit Training Command Great Lakes.
- c. **SHOULD** have a minimum of 3 core and 2 advanced qualifications (Para. 5).



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### 6. Considerations for determining “Fully Qualified” for advancement from E8 to E9

- a. **MUST** hold the respective “T” (Troop LCPO) Leadership Milestone NEC (O26T, O22T, O23T, or O29T) or be in a leadership milestone position (Para. 6c) pursuing the “T” NEC which will be addressed in an MFR to the board. Exception to this is noted in milestone caveat clause.
- b. **MUST** complete the NSW Troop Leaders Course or the NSW DG Troop LCPO Course.
- c. **MUST** complete the Career Education Program (CEP 3) Joint Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy (JSOFSEA) or the Navy Senior Enlisted Academy.

### 7. Considerations for determining “Best Qualified” for advancement from E8 to E9

- a. **SHOULD** have a minimum of 3 core and 3 advanced qualifications (Para. 5).
- b. *Strong consideration SHOULD* be given to successful *post milestone* E8s that go on to fill Joint Assignments, such as Combined Joint Special Operations Task Forces (CJSOTFs), TSOCs or billets where that E8 acts as the sole Senior Enlisted Advisor (SEA) in a location removed from its higher headquarters.

**8. Qualifications.** Our operators will have a diverse background and have completed the prescribed professional military education (PME). Additional qualifications and NECs are listed below. Note: several qualification short titles have been edited or changed to an NEC.

Core Qualifications	
Long Title	Abbreviated Title
HRST/C Master	HRCM
Lead Combat Swimmer	LCS
Military Freefall Jumpmaster	MIFJ
NSW Breacher	NBRC
NSW Communicator	NCM
NSW Diving Supervisor	NDSV
Small Arms RSO (Range Safety Officer)	SRSO
Static-Line Jumpmaster	SLJ

Advanced Qualifications	
Long Title	Abbreviated Title or NEC
Close Quarters Combat RSO	CQRSO
Demolition Range RSO	DMRG
Dynamic Ground Mobility RSO	DYGM
Dynamic Range RSO	DYRG
Explosive Breaching RSO	EXBR
HRST/C Master Instructor	HRCMI
Indirect Fire RSO	INFR
Language Qualification	LANL
NSW Air OPS Trainer	NAOT
NSW Air OPS Trainer Examiner	NAOTE
NSW Range Officer in Charge	NROIC
SDV Diving Supervisor	SDSP
Stand-Off Weapons/Rockets RSO	STWP
Tandem/Bundle Master	TNBM
Tactical Surveillance Operations	TSO
NSW Senior Mountaineering	NSM
Advanced Qualifications as NECs	
Advanced Special Operations Techniques (ASOT)	O22A
ASOT Manager	O22Q
Joint Terminal Attack Controller	822A
Joint Terminal Attack Controller Instructor	823A
Joint Terminal Attack Controller Evaluator	836A
Master Training Specialist	8MTS
NSW Sniper	O19A
NSW Medic (previously SOCM)	O92A
Special Operations Tactical Medic	O91A
SDV Pilot/Navigator/Operator	O23A
USN Instructor	805A



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### 9. SO Milestone Leadership Positions:

\* See Notes Section

#### a. E6 Milestone Positions

<u>Command</u>	<u>Block 29 Short Title</u>	
SEAL Team	SQUAD LPO	(PLT LPO (LEGACY)) *
TAC D&E SQDN 1	TRP LPO	
TAC D&E SQDN (2,3,4,5)	SQDN LPO TRP LPO OUTSTATION LPO AIROPS DIV LPO EXPL DIV LPO	(Not to exceed 2 per SQDN)
SDV Team	SQUAD LPO	(PLT LPO (LEGACY)) *
SRT Team	SQUAD LPO TRNG LPO	(PLT LPO (LEGACY)) *
SEAL Team 17 & 18	TRNG LPO	
ATC	SNIPER DIV LPO	
ATC Det Coronado	AIROPS DIV LPO	
ATC Det Ft. Story	AIROPS DIV LPO	
ATC Det Ft. Story	EXPL DIV LPO	
ATC Det Hawaii	SDV DIV LPO	
ATC Det Stennis	SOTM DIV LPO	
ATC Det Kodiak	DET LPO	(Previously under NSW Basic Training Command)
BTC	NSWO DIV LPO	
BTC	1 <sup>ST</sup> PHASE LPO	
BTC	2 <sup>ND</sup> PHASE LPO	
BTC	3 <sup>RD</sup> PHASE LPO	
BTC	ASSLT DIV LPO	
BTC	L/W DIV LPO	
BTC	MAROPS DIV LPO	
NAWDC	JTAC LPO	
NSWAC	OUTREACH LPO	
NSWAC	ASSESSMENT LPO	
NSWAC Det EAST	DETACHMENT LPO	
NSWG-1	TRNG LPO	
NSWG-1 TRADET	ASSLT DIV LPO	
NSWG-1 TRADET	SOUK DIV LPO	
NSWG-1 TRADET	LAND DIV LPO	(Previously named L/W DIV LPO) *
NSWG-1 TRADET	MAR DIV LPO	(Previously named MOB DIV LPO) *
NSWG-1 TRADET	MIO DIV LPO	
NSWG-1 TRADET	TACMED LPO	
NSWG-1 TRADET	JTAC CELL LPO	



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### Command

NSWG-1 TRADET  
NSWG-1 TRADET  
NSWG-1 TRADET

NSWG-2 TRADET  
NSWG-2 TRADET  
NSWG-2 TRADET  
NSWG-2 TRADET  
NSWG-2 TRADET  
NSWG-2 TRADET

NSWG-8 TRADET (HI)  
NSWG-8 TRADET (HI)  
NSWG-8 TRADET (HI)  
NSWG-8 TRADET (VB)  
NSWG-8 TRADET (VB)  
NSWG-8 TRADET (VB)

NSWG-3 TRADET  
NSWG-3 TRADET  
NSWG-3 TRADET

NSW UNIT or DET

### Block 29 Short Title

RECCE DIV LPO  
CQC DIV LPO  
TGM DIV LPO

ASSLT DIV LPO  
LAND DIV LPO  
MAR DIV LPO  
ADV RECCE LPO  
TACMED LPO  
JTAC CELL LPO

MAR DIV LPO  
LAND DIV LPO  
SDV DIV LPO  
SRT LPO  
DCS LPO  
ADV TRNG LPO

MAR DIV LPO  
LAND DIV LPO  
SDV DIV LPO

UNIT or DET OPS LPO

(Previously named SOUC DIV LPO) \*

(Previously named L/W DIV LPO) \*

(Previously named MOB DIV LPO) \*

(Legacy Position, used until November 2021) \*

(Legacy Position, used until November 2021) \*

(Legacy Position, used until November 2021) \*

#### **b. E7 Milestone Positions**

### Command

SEAL Team  
TAC D&E SQDN  
SDV Team  
SRT  
NSWG-2

### Block 29 Short Title

PLT LCPO  
TEAM LCPO  
PLT LCPO  
PLT LCPO  
TACMED LCPO

#### **c. E8 Milestone Positions**

### Command

SEAL Team  
TAC D&E SQDN  
SDV Team  
SRT  
ATC Det Coronado  
BTC  
BTC  
BTC  
DET Germany SEA

### Block 29 Short Title

TRP LCPO  
TRP LCPO  
TRP LCPO  
TRP LCPO  
DETCORO SEA  
BTC TRNG SEA  
PHASE SEA  
SQT SEA  
DET-G SEA