



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 CMD CM | 26 Yrs 22 | CMC | 48 | 6th Operational or Non-Operational Tour. Billet: FORCM, CMD CM, SEA. Duty: SEAL or SDV Team, TACD&E Squadron, SRT, CNSWC, NLEAD, NSW CEN, NSW Group, NSW Unit/Det, TSOC, or NSWAC. |
| 22-25 | CMD CM SOC M SOC S SOC | 22 Yrs 20.1 16.5 11.9 | CMC | 48 | 5th Operational or Non-Operational Tour. Billet: CMD CM, SEA, Staff Dept/DIV SEL. Duty: SEAL or SDV Team, TACD&E Squadron, SRT, CNSWC, NLEAD, NSW CEN, TRAD ET, NSW Group, NSW Unit/Det, TSOC, or NSWAC. |
| 18-21 | SOC M SOC S SOC SO1 | 20.1 Yrs 16.5 11.9 6.1 | CWO, CMC | 36 | 4th Operational Tour. Billet: TRP LCPO, OPS LCPO. Duty: SEAL or SDV Team, TACD&E Squadron, SRT, NLEAD, or TSOC. |
| 15-17 | SOC S SOC SO1 | 16.5 Yrs 11.9 6.1 | CWO, OCS | 60 | 3rd Operational Tour. Billet: PLT LCPO, TEAM LCPO, TRP LCPO. Duty: SEAL or SDV Team, TACD&E Squadron, SRT, or NLEAD |
| 11-14 | 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, NSW CEN, TRAD ET, Training Command, NSW Group, NSW Unit/Det, or NSWAC. |
| 3-10 | SOC SO1 SO2 SO3 | 11.9 Yrs 6.1 3.2 2 | STA-21, OCS, SRT, NSW DG | 60 | 1st - 2nd Operational Tour. Billet: Operator, SQUAD LPO, SQDN LPO, DIV LPO, TRP LPO, TRNG LPO. Duty: SEAL or SDV Team, TACD&E Squadron, SRT, or TRAD ET. |
| 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 |

- Starting in Calendar Year 2025 (Fiscal Year 2026 Board), completing Career Education Program (CEP 3) Joint Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy (JSOFSEA) or the Navy Senior Enlisted Academy is required for a member to be considered “best and fully qualified” for advancement from E8 to E9 (Ref: NAVADMIN 217/23).
- 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.
 - (ASSLT DIV LPO; L/W DIV LPO; MOB DIV LPO) NSWG-1 TRADET and NSWG-2 TRADET leadership positions were position Short Title names used until 2022 and 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 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 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.



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1. Operator development notes:

- a. Assistant LPOs (ASST LPO) positions are considered a developmental leadership opportunity in order to prepare our future enlisted leaders for one of the LPO Milestone positions (Para. 6a).
- b. Member **SHOULD** have completed two operational tours as an Operator prior to an ASST LPO tour.
- c. The only authorized ASST LPO positions are those aligned to LPO positions in (Para. 6a).
- d. A typical model for an enlisted SO is to serve two tours as an Operator, followed by a third tour as ASST LPO, then a fourth tour, if ready, in one of the LPO milestone positions (Para. 6a).

2. Considerations for determining “best 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.
- d. **SHOULD** complete the Career Education Program (CEP 1) Joint Fundamentals.
- e. **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).
- f. **SHOULD** have a minimum of 2 core and 2 advanced qualifications (Para. 5). Member should have Letters of Designation where appropriate.

3. Considerations for determining “best 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).
- b. **MUST** complete the NSW Platoon Leaders Course or NSW DG Team Leader Course.
- c. **MUST** successfully complete **16 months** in an operational leadership milestone position as a LCPO/E7 of a SEAL platoon (PLT), Special Reconnaissance Platoon, TACD&E SQDN Team, or SDV PLT (Para. 6.b.).
- d. **SHOULD** complete the Career Education Program (CEP 2) Enterprise Management.
- e. **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.
- f. **SHOULD** have a minimum of 3 core and 2 advanced qualifications (Para. 5).

4. Considerations for determining “best qualified” for advancement from E8 to E9

- a. **MUST** hold the respective “T” (Troop LCPO) Leadership Milestone NEC (O26T, O22T, O23T, or O29T)



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- b. **MUST** complete the NSW Troop Leaders Course or the NSWDC Troop LCPO Course.
 - c. **MUST** successfully complete **16 months** in an operational leadership milestone position as a LCPO/E8 of a SEAL Troop, Special Reconnaissance Troop, TACD&E SQDN Troop, or SDV Troop; or BTC Training Senior Enlisted Advisor (SEA) or ATC Det Coronado SEA (Para. 6.c.).
 - d. **MUST** complete the Career Education Program (CEP 3) Joint Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy (JSOFSEA) or the Navy Senior Enlisted Academy.
 - e. **SHOULD** have a minimum of 3 core and 3 advanced qualifications (Para. 5).
 - f. *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.
5. **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 |
| Demolition Range RSO | DMRG |
| HRST/C Master | HRCM |
| NSW Diving Supervisor | NDSV |
| Small Arms RSO (Range Safety Officer) | SRSO |
| Stand-Off Weapons/Rockets RSO | STWP |
| Static-Line Jumpmaster | SLJ |

| Advanced Qualifications | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Long Title | Abbreviated Title or NEC |
| Close Quarters Combat RSO | CQSO |
| 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 |
| Lead Combat Swimmer | LCS |
| Military Freefall Jumpmaster | MIFJ |
| NSW Air OPS Trainer | NAOT |
| NSW Air OPS Trainer Examiner | NAOTE |
| NSW Breacher | NBRC |
| NSW Communicator | NCM |
| Outboard Overhaul Mechanic | OOM |
| Range Officer in Charge | ROIC |
| SDV Diving Supervisor | SDSP |
| 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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6. 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) (BREACHING Div LPO (LEGACY)) * |
| 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 ST PHASE LPO | |
| BTC | 2 ND PHASE LPO | |
| BTC | 3 RD 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 | SOUC DIV LPO | (Previously named ASSLT 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) * |

| <u>Command</u> | <u>Block 29 Short Title</u> |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
|----------------|-----------------------------|



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NSWG-1 TRADDET
NSWG-1 TRADDET
NSWG-1 TRADDET

RECCE DIV LPO
CQC DIV LPO
TGM DIV LPO

NSWG -2 TRADDET
NSWG-2 TRADDET
NSWG-2 TRADDET
NSWG-2 TRADDET
NSWG-2 TRADDET

SOUC DIV LPO
LAND DIV LPO
MAR DIV LPO
RECCE DIV LPO
IOT DIV LPO

(Previously named ASSLT DIV LPO) *
(Previously named L/W DIV LPO) *
(Previously named MOB DIV LPO) *

NSWG-8 TRADDET (HI)
NSWG-8 TRADDET (HI)
NSWG-8 TRADDET (HI)
NSWG-8 TRADDET (VB)
NSWG-8 TRADDET (VB)
NSWG-8 TRADDET (VB)

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

NSWG-3 TRADDET
NSWG-3 TRADDET
NSWG-3 TRADDET

MAR DIV LPO
LAND DIV LPO
SDV DIV LPO

(Legacy Position, used until November 2021) *
(Legacy Position, used until November 2021) *
(Legacy Position, used until November 2021) *

NSW UNIT or DET

UNIT or DET OPS LPO

b. E7 Milestone Positions

Command

SEAL Team
TAC D&E SQDN
SDV Team
SRT

Block 29 Short Title

PLT LCPO
TEAM LCPO
PLT LCPO
PLT LCPO

c. E8 Milestone Positions

Command

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

Block 29 Short Title

TRP LCPO
TRP LCPO
TRP LCPO
TRP LCPO
BTC TRNG SEA
DETCORO SEA