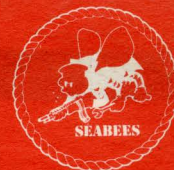




CIVIL ENGINEER CORPS
100th ANNIVERSARY
MARCH 2, 1967

UNITED STATES NAVY
CONSTRUCTION BATTALIONS
SEABEES IN ACTION

"CONSTRUIMUS, BATUIMUS - WE BUILD, WE FIGHT"
"CAN DO!"



SEABEES
25th ANNIVERSARY
MARCH 5, 1967

JOIN THE SEABEES - SERVE THE WORLD

15 August 1967

SEABEES IN VIETNAM

A Brief Look at the U. S. Navy's Construction Battalions
in Construction Support and Civic Action
in the Republic of Vietnam

The Third Naval Construction Brigade was recommissioned on June 1, 1966 by Rear Admiral R. R. Wooding, CEC, USN. The present Commander is Rear Admiral J. V. Bartlett, CEC, USN. The Brigade's headquarters is in Da Nang. Captain A. R. Marschall, CEC, USN, Commander of the 30th Naval Construction Regiment (30th NCR), acts as Deputy Brigade Commander from his headquarters in Da Nang. Commander R. L. Foley is Acting Commander of the 32nd NCR at Gia Le (Phu Bai).

The Third Brigade has operational control of Naval Construction Regiment(s) and other Naval construction force units in Vietnam. (Refer to chart, last page, for complete Seabee organizational structure in the Republic.)

Admiral Bartlett is "number one" Seabee in-country. The "King Bee" in the Pacific is Rear Admiral W. M. Heaman, CEC, USN, Commander, Naval Construction Battalions, Pacific, with headquarters in Hawaii.

Ten Naval Mobile Construction Battalions (MCBs) are presently deployed in Vietnam --- all in the I Corps area. Five are located in the general Da Nang area, two are presently at Chu Lai, two are currently operating at Phu Bai and one deployed at Dong Ha.

Presently there are 19 MCBs in the Navy. This represents an increase of nine over the pre-Vietnam posture. Of the 19, seven are homeported at Davisville, Rhode Island, five at the newly re-opened Construction Battalion Center at Gulfport, Mississippi, and seven at Port Hueneme, California.

The average battalion consists of about 800 Seabees, of which there are about 25 officers, the majority of which are Navy Civil Engineer Corps officers. A construction battalion normally deploys to Vietnam for a period of eight months.

SPECIAL DETACHMENTS DO SPECIAL WORK

Sometimes battalion work requires a special 16 to 100-man detachment to complete a programmed job. Special detachments from the battalions have been widely used in the I Corps area of Vietnam where the Seabee battalions have been assigned.

They have rebuilt and extended several airfields near the De-Militarized Zone (DMZ). At Khe Sanh, in the extreme northwest corner of the Republic of Vietnam, this was accomplished by a unit from MCB TEN assigned to the Army's Special Forces detachment there. Other detachments from MCB's SIX, TEN and FOUR worked on the airstrip at An Hoa, while another team from MCB's SEVEN and TEN built the airfield at Dong Ha and presently MCB ELEVEN is deployed there building the 17,000 man combat base.

In another instance, MCB FOUR selected a 16-man detachment, headed by a First Class Petty Officer, to build a messing and shower facility for the Marines in an area still contested by the Viet Cong. The only access to the site was by river. All equipment, building supplies and Seabees had to be transported on Marine Am-Tracks. Two squads of Marines provided most of the security, while the Seabees themselves provided the remainder.

There has been confusion as to whether Seabees are Marines. A Seabee is "a sailor in greens" --- though the Seabee-Marine relationship has historically been a close one.

SEABEES -- A NATURAL FOR CIVIC ACTION

While in Vietnam, Seabees undertake their own people-to-people programs called civic action. Seabees work at orphanages, give medical and dental aid to local villagers and provide food, clothing and soap for the poor from parcels they receive from home.

One Seabee's home town church contributed money to help purchase a pump and motor to supply an orphanage with running water. Another Seabee received a \$112 Christmas check from his home town American Legion Post. The money is helping to support a Vietnamese child at a local Da Nang orphanage.

An orphanage receives compound improvements; a village gets its first fresh water well; homes are repaired following an airplane crash; a school gets a new dormitory and classrooms; a bad tooth is pulled and a minor cut bandaged; and a small child gets his first shower with a bar of soap.

SEABEES TRAIN HARD AND PRODUCE THE MOST

The large scale commitment of Seabees to the war in Vietnam has proven the value of the long, hard peacetime deployments made by Navy MCB's. The continuing emphasis during peacetime on training, mobility and self-sufficiency characteristic of the Navy's MCB's can be seen in the Seabee's construction products in Vietnam.

The battalions that have taken part in the Southeast Asian conflict have all shown the same capabilities. A battalion can deploy to a new location, establish and maintain itself, and commence construction production with a speed, effectiveness and flexibility unmatched by any other military engineering unit.

The Seabees are accomplishing about ten percent (about \$100 million) of the programmed construction in Vietnam. What General MacArthur wrote to Admiral Ben Moreell, Seabee Boss during World War II, is as true today as then -- "The only trouble with your Seabees is that I don't have enough of them."

SEABEES -- PAST AND PRESENT

The Seabees were born during World War II when the Navy realized it couldn't depend on civilian construction specialists to work on fortifications on newly-stormed Pacific islands. Construction personnel were as likely to be attacked as the Marines who were fighting the enemy from foxholes.

The jobs tackled by the Seabees in the island-hopping campaigns of World War II were hard and dangerous. Very often you would hear a Seabee identify himself as "a soldier in a sailor's uniform, having Marine training, and doing civilian work for WPA wages."

There were over 250,000 Seabees at the height of the war, in contrast with today's approximate strength of over 15,000 Seabees on active duty.

SEABEES LAND IN VIETNAM

On May 7, 1965 -- the anniversary of the fall of Dien Bien Phu -- Seabees of MCB TEN joined with members of the Fourth Marine Regimental Landing Team to make the first major amphibious landing since the Korean War...at the beaches of Chu Lai, Vietnam. This was the first Seabee landing with the Marines since World War II, and at Inchon in the Korean conflict.

Immediately after landing, MCB TEN's Seabees began constructing an expeditionary airfield on deep, shifting sand. Although there were tremendous difficulties in construction, Marine jets were screaming off the airfield for Viet Cong targets just 23 days after the landing.

In early June 1965, MCB THREE became the second battalion in Vietnam. They made their headquarters at the base of Hill 327 west of Da Nang. Their major project during this deployment was the rebuilding of a road leading to the Marine missile site atop the hill.

Then from Port Hueneme, California -- "home of the Pacific Seabees" -- came MCB NINE to establish its camp next to the South China Sea, near Da Nang East. The Seabees of NINE immediately started working on a variety of construction projects. Chiefly among these was a large, 400 man Navy Hospital and an extremely difficult road to a missile site on Monkey Mountain which overlooks Da Nang Bay.

SEABEE PROJECT BECOMES VIET CONG TARGET

Bitter attacks were leveled against NINE by the Viet Cong. They thus became the first Seabee battalion to come into direct contact with the enemy since World War II.

For two months the Seabees worked at top speed to build the much needed Navy Hospital for wounded Marines operating in the I Corps area. During the early morning hours of October 28, 1965, the Viet Cong mortared the construction site, destroying eight of the almost completed hospital buildings.

The next day the Seabees went grimly about the business of cleaning up the debris and starting all over **again**. It was completed as previously scheduled on January 10, 1966, despite the Viet Cong efforts.

The second major attack against the Seabees of NINE came early in the morning of January 25, 1966, when thirteen 81mm mortar rounds exploded within the camp area and 17 rounds landed in the camp's perimeter area. During NINE's deployment, 98 of their Seabees were wounded, including their commanding officer. Two Seabees died of their wounds.

VIETNAM SEABEE EFFORT GROWS

To coordinate the Navy's mobile construction work in Vietnam, the 30th Naval Construction Regiment was re-established at Da Nang in the summer of 1965. The 30th NCR is presently under the command of Captain A. R. Marschall, CEC, USN. The regiment had been inactive since the giant Cubi Point, Philippines, airfield was completed. The airfield was built by the Seabees in the early 1950's -- a task many civilian engineers had said was impossible.

Seabee strength was increased to four battalions in Vietnam when MCB EIGHT, previously an Atlantic battalion, moved to Port Hueneme and almost immediately deployed to Da Nang. Once in Vietnam, EIGHT's Seabees commenced work on port facilities and other projects in support of Navy and Marine efforts in the Da Nang area.

MCB FIVE became the fifth battalion to deploy to Vietnam when it relieved MCB THREE at Camp Hoover, at the base of Hill 327 near Da Nang. In December 1965, MCB FOUR relieved MCB TEN at Camp Shields in Chu Lai. The camp was named in honor of Seabee Marvin D. Shields, who was awarded the CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR posthumously in September 1966, for his actions during the defense of Dong Xoai, an Army Special Forces Camp. Shields is the first Navy man to be so honored in Vietnam.

The Seabees of NINE were relieved at Camp Adenir in Da Nang East in early 1966 by MCB ELEVEN. And in March, MCB THREE returned to Vietnam for its second tour and established a camp at Rosemary Point near the Chu Lai Airfield. This brought to five the number of Seabee camps in operation in Vietnam. In addition to building their own, the Seabees of THREE built-up port facilities and storage areas for the Naval Support Activity at such a rate they were awarded the "Best of Type" designation as the best Pacific Coast Seabee unit in 1966. MCB ONE landed at Red Beach Da Nang the same month to begin construction of the Naval Construction Forces headquarters complex (now the home of the 3rd Naval Construction Brigade, 30th Naval Construction Regiment and two NMCB's) and the huge Marine supply depot just across Highway 1. MCB ONE later received "Best of Type" in the Atlantic and the Peltier Award for best of both fleets for this deployment.

Also on loan from the Atlantic command, MCB SEVEN landed in April at Phu Bai, just south of Hue, the old imperial capital of Vietnam. SEVEN's major tasks were: building Marine cantonments, establishing their own camp, and construction of a huge supply area.

When the fighting in Operation Prairie became fierce near the DMZ in the late summer of 1966, the Seabees of SEVEN came to the aid of the Marines and upgraded the existing runway at Dong Ha -- despite the fact the runway was in constant use. They also constructed mess halls and living quarters for the Marine fighting forces.

MCB TEN became the second battalion to return to Vietnam when it replaced MCB FIVE at Camp Hoover in May. The same month, MCB SIX left the home of the Atlantic Coast Seabees at Davisville, R. I. to relieve MCB EIGHT at Camp Faulkner in Da Nang East. In August 1966, MCB NINE arrived for its second tour in Da Nang and established the second camp at Camp Haskins, Red Beach. The home of the 30th NCR was moved from downtown Da Nang in June of 1966.

During 1966 the Navy began a program of re-commissioning Construction Battalions which had been in "mothballs" since the end of World War II. The first of these newly re-commissioned units, MCB FORTY, arrived at Chu Lai to replace MCB FOUR in September. The major task facing them at that time was the completion of a crosswind runway at the Chu Lai Airfield before the monsoons began in October. With detachments from MCB's ONE, THREE and SIX they completed this and at the same time constructed cantonments for the Korean Marines who are camped south of FORTY's base at Camp Shields.

In October, MCB FIVE returned for its second tour and replaced MCB ELEVEN at Camp Adenir. MCB FIFTY EIGHT, the second of the newly re-commissioned battalions, arrived from Davisville to relieve MCB ONE at Camp Haskins.

And as 1966 ended, the first battalion from the re-activated Construction Battalion Center at Gulfport, Mississippi, MCB SIXTY TWO, arrived at Camp Campbell in Phu Bai to relieve MCB SEVEN. December also saw MCB THREE being relieved at Rosemary Point by MCB EIGHT, which was starting its second deployment to Vietnam. Two other new battalions, MCB's 133 and 121 arrived in-country in February and August respectively while MCB THREE deployed to Phu Bai to become the first Seabee battalion to return to Vietnam for its third tour.

SEABEE CHAIN OF COMMANDS

Operational and Area Coordination

- COMMANDER, U. S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, VIETNAM
- COMMANDER, U. S. NAVAL FORCES, VIETNAM
- COMMANDER, THIRD NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BRIGADE
- COMMANDER, 30TH NAVAL CONSTRUCTION REGIMENT
- COMMANDING OFFICERS, NAVAL MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALIONS

Administrative Control

- CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
- COMMANDER IN CHIEF, U.S. PACIFIC FLEET
- COMMANDER SERVICE FORCE, U.S. PACIFIC FLEET
- COMMANDER, U.S. NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALIONS, PACIFIC
- COMMANDING OFFICERS, NAVAL MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALIONS