UNITED STATES NAVY

SEABEE

CONSTRUIMUS BATUSIMUS ISSUE NO. 1, 2005 WWW.SEABEE.NAVY.MIL

MEET THE NEXT FORCE MASTER CHIEF OF THE SEABEES! 

OPERATION UNIFIED ASSISTANCE

Bees & Marines go all out for disaster relief in tsunami-ravaged Southeast Asia

The Unknown ‘Bee-29s’ of World War II

True Tales of the ‘Seabee Cold Case Unit’

Desert Bees Help Secure Iraqi Elections
Members of New Horizons Task Force and local Haitians take down a tent that housed 35 boys at an orphanage to replace it with a larger and ventilated shelter. U.S. Navy Seabees and other military services deployed to Haiti as part of Exercise New Horizons, a joint task force designed to conduct humanitarian and civic assistance. New Horizons provides U.S. medical and engineering units a great opportunity to refine skills and making daily life better for Haitians. (U.S. Navy photograph by LT. L. Cohen.)
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At all levels of rank and achievement, it is as they come. RADM Loose and I agree:
Master Chief candidates was as high-rpm Regiment this fall when I rotate out to my
the Twenty Second Naval Construction –Ed.
would be CMDCM James D. Fairbanks.
Experience. From my personal knowledge something you become, and then it remains
I HAVE BEEN A SEABEE for most of my adult life. As most readers of this magazine know (whether Active or Reserve, Veteran, Retiree or their family members), being a Seabee isn’t just something you do. It is something you become, and then it remains a part of you for the rest of your life.
That certainly describes my Seabee Experience. From my personal knowledge of many of you out there, it describes your Seabee Experience as well.
That means I will always be a Seabee, even when I no longer serve as your Force Master Chief—an aspect of my long career that is approaching this year.
RADM Loose announced that his relief would be CMDCM James D. Fairbanks. [See the lead Newsbreak item on page 12. ]Ed. He will be the second FORCM of the Seabees and will come into the job from the Twenty Second Naval Construction Regiment this fall when I rotate out to my next assignment.
I’m here to tell you that our group of Master Chief candidates was as high-rpm as they come. RADM Loose and I agree: At all levels of rank and achievement, it is honestly amazing to see the talent pool in our Seabee community. Please join me in welcoming Master Chief Fairbanks to the most rewarding, most fulfilling and probably one of the most challenging jobs he’s ever going to have. I know he will love this job as much as I have.
Such remarkable achievement, of course, as we have often reported in these pages, is not confined solely to the Active Component. On page 20, see the story of pages, is not confined solely to the Active Component. On page 20, see the story of one of the most challenging jobs he’s ever
every Seabee everywhere, everyday.
Candra Baldwin clutched the plaque honoring her late husband, wiping tears from her eyes as she recalled the type of man and Seabee he was. “Joel was an extraordinary family man,” she said. “We had an outstanding friend. He had a great volunteer spirit and he truly would give someone the shirt off his back.”

Chief Builder Joel E. Baldwin, 37, was killed Dec. 21 in a suicide attack on a crowded mess tent in Mosul, Iraq. His wife received the Purple Heart March 23 in honor of her late husband, wiping tears from her eyes as she recalled the ceremony, including Baldwin’s family members. “We all thought so much of your husband. You continue to have our deepest sympathies,” Baldwin’s commanding officer at the Naval Construction Training Center Gulfport, CDR John Rice, said the Seabee always motivated others.

“Joel Baldwin was always a motivated Seabee,” Rice said after the presentation. “He always came into class with a smile on his face. He was always a motivated guy and made the students think.”

Claudia Baldwin said the military, the community and many agencies have helped her cope with her loss. She added that her husband would be very proud of the Purple Heart. “Joel was the epitome of gung-ho,” she said. “He loved his country and he loved his troops. This is a great honor. It makes me very proud. He deserves this.”

Melissa M. Scallan wrote this story for the Biloxi Sun-Herald. Copyright 2005 The Sun-Herald. Used with permission.
I was once in the chow hall watching the news and the reporter was commenting on events in Fallujah. I recalled seeing that same reporter earlier in the day and he was reporting from a location not far away from where I sat. It reminded me that we’re here in the very midst of historic, news-making events. But it strikes me as odd that much of my job, like many other jobs here, is very ordinary.

Like now, for example. As I write this I’m in the public affairs office, at the computer composing a story, and later sending e-mail quite like I would this I’m in the public affairs office, at the computer composing a story, and later sending e-mail quite like I would...
Command Master Chief James D. Fairbanks, currently assigned to the Twenty Second Naval Construction Regiment (22NCR), has been selected by RADM Michael K. Loose, commander, Naval Facilities Engineering Command and chief of civil engineers to succeed FORCM Harrell T. Richardson in October as the second Force Master Chief Petty Officer of the Seabees.

Chief Fairbanks' name was announced among those who already know him, the word that comes up most often when discussing the new Force Master Chief, but emphasized that he “get there on his own.” “I feel great appreciation for all of the great people I’ve worked with throughout my career, especially the Seabees who work hard everyday and make us all proud to be a part of this great organization.”

During his tenure as Force Master Chief, Fairbanks will interact with Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Terry Scott and other Fleet and Force Master Chiefs to improve Navy programs. He will also join the MCPON’s panel of the Navy’s most senior enlisted leaders to help make decisions for the Navy as a whole.

The NCF’s Force Master Chief is the “voice of the Seabees” to the highest levels of the Navy and even the federal government at large, where he can continue to provide positive influence on important benefits for his Sailors. Even though there is much work to be done, Fairbanks noted how the NCF and the Navy as a whole have improved significantly since he enlisted in 1977. “We've had so many improvements to our people programs in the Navy, such as Navy College, the Thrift Savings Plan, Navy Knowledge Online and many others. There are so many opportunities for Sailors to excel today,” said Fairbanks. CAPT Mark Handley, commanding officer of the 22NCR, says Fairbanks’ great Seabee knowledge will help him in his new job. “He has the critical experience that is necessary for the job of Force Master Chief. He has been an operations chief in combat, a battalion master chief and right now he is a regimental command master chief. Master Chief Fairbanks pulls all of this experience together, and I think that gives him a keen sense of leadership,” Handley said. Handley also added that Fairbanks possesses the important communication skills and the highest level of experience to excel in a big job. “He knows how to interface with senior enlisted and senior officers. He leads his peers, his juniors and his seniors. I know he has made a better officer,” added Handley.

“He takes care of his troops.” This is a typical phrase that people use to describe Fleet and Force Master Chiefs, who uphold an air of professionalism and stimulate better communication at all levels of the chain of command. They strengthen the chain of command by working within it to foster a better understanding of the needs and viewpoints of enlisted members and their families. Fairbanks said the key to success as a leader is caring about your people. “If leaders put their people first, they will always have a go team.”

AL ASAD, Iraq — Chief of Naval Operations ADM Vern Clark, sixth from left, and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) Terry Scott, third from right, pose for photos with Sailors from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 23. The Seabees were repairing runway damage and helped expand airlift operations while rebuilding Iraq.

---JO1 Christopher Bush
**NAVFAc To Build Test Facility for President’s New Helicopters**

The Presidential Helicopter Programs Support Facility at NAS Patuxent River in Southern Maryland will house the entire VXx team, including engineering, aircraft maintenance, logistics, program management, and the flight test and evaluation spaces. The VXX hangar, a new 11-story air operations control tower will be constructed as part of this contract. Preliminary scope and design development was authorized by Congress with the initial funding now of $36.8 million, and the total cumulative value not to exceed $84.4 million. The program office, and NAS Patuxent River will work closely with NAVFAc, the VXX program office, and NAS Patuxent River during the design and construction of these facilities. The contract will be incrementally funded as authorized by Congress with the initial funding now of $36.8 million, and the total cumulative value not to exceed $84.4 million.

**NMcb 40 Seabees Welcome ‘King Bee’ on Okinawa Trip**

OKINAWA, Japan—The Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 40 hosted the Naval Construction Force’s top leaders Feb. 19 during the battalion’s third month of deployment here.

RADM Michael K. Loose, commander, Naval Facilities Engineering Command and chief of civil engineers, along with Force Master Chief Petty Officer of the Seabees Harrell T. Richardson, arrived over the weekend to address the crew and tour the construction project sites.

After presenting several Seabees with their Seabee Combat Warfare pins and other awards during a morning ceremony, the “King Bee” spoke about how the upbeat attitude of the Seabees is far-reaching into the surrounding communities of Okinawa.

“Yesterday, I spent the entire day with your customers, from Marine generals to Marine colonels, and I can tell you across the board you have literally blown away every customers’ expectations,” Loose said.

“Before they get to work, they see you out in the dark, and as they are on their way home, they still see you working.”

He said the prevailing perception of the Naval Construction Force throughout the island is reflected in the phrase “a Bee of activity,” complimenting the diligent work ethic and positive attitudes of NMCB 40 Seabees.

“What you are doing here in Okinawa is extremely important, probably more important than you may know,” said Loose. “I heard from the three colonels yesterday—and they wished their Marines had the good order and discipline you have. You are now the model citizens, or as your sign says on the gate, the ambassadors for the U.S.,” he said.

“I have probably been to 30 different site inspections, and this is the best I have ever seen from a customer ranting and raving and bragging about the Seabees, so you are doing great,” Loose concluded.

The admiral’s tour began in the morning at the Special Boat Unit Facility project in White Beach. Upon his return to camp, Loose spent the next several hours interacting with the crew.

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NEWSBREAK

‘Can Do!’ Reserve Seabees Mobilize Compassion for Homeless Veterans

Seabees, community leaders and veterans groups hammered together a deal to provide first-class living conditions for homeless veterans in the Iowa Quad Cities area. They’re three-quarters of the way there already.

STORY BY MARY LOUISE SPEER & IT1 DARRYL HOWLETT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY IT1 DARRYL HOWLETT & JAKE JACKS

Seabees from the Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Center Rock Island, Ill., military veterans and contractors gathered March 19 to celebrate the completion of a third unit in the Veterans for Veterans Housing Project at College Street Apartments in Davenport, Iowa. The event was marked by a ribbon-cutting and a flag-raising ceremony. “On behalf of the two local Navy construction battalion units, thank you for inviting us to participate in such an incredibly worthwhile community project,” said LCDR Scott Svoboda, commanding officer of the Rock Island reserve center, home of the Seabee Reserve participants. “It has been an outstanding collaboration effort for an extremely commendable cause—showing appreciation to our nation’s veterans.”

Among other hard-working community and veteran groups, numerous Rock Island Reserve Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 25, Det. 0225, and Amphibious Construction Battalion 1, Det. 113, were instrumental in doing the grunt work to bring the townhouse complex back into first-class living condition. Attendees at the dedication included representatives from Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 299, the Run to the Wall motorcycle club, business leaders from Associated Builders & Contractors and a Naval Honor Guard.

The push to provide permanent housing for local homeless veterans and their families kicked off on Veterans Day 2003, when four Iowa Quad-City Rotary groups pledged $15,000 for a down payment on a four-unit apartment building. The single complex is comprised of 1100-sq-ft townhouse units, each with three bedrooms, new appliances and water heaters. The first two units needed extensive remodeling, according to project manager Builder 1st Class Jeff Kaczinski, a Seabee assigned to the ACB 1 detachment. The just-completed third unit needed even more attention, getting torn down to the wall studs before being built back up to its current high standard. The fourth unit has had new sheetrock installed and is expected to be completed in the coming weeks.

“It’s a good feeling knowing that we’re this much further to having all four units completed. It has been a huge effort,” Kaczinski said. He credited numerous area contractors for their generosity and assistance with the project, which was begun by Merrill Anderson, the president of Veterans for Veterans Housing.

“There are two neat components about this,” Anderson said. “First, this fills a need for permanent, secure housing for veterans in the Quad-Cities. Second, we’re doing this with no government money.”

This type of project is termed “permanent supportive housing,” according to Anderson. “There is plenty of temporary housing, which is defined by stays ranging from overnight to nine months. This is longer term, up to one or two years. Until this project, there was no housing of this type strictly for veterans in the Quad-Cities [Davenport and Bettendorf, Iowa, and Moline and Rock Island, Ill.].”

For example, Anderson said, one of the next occupants is a 55-year-old veteran who had developed a degenerative disc problem. He had done physical work all his life, but when he was no longer able to do that work it put him in an economic tailspin and he developed depression. The man lost his house and was living in temporary housing.

“He is enrolling in school to be retrained,” Anderson said. “While he is retraining, we can help him live in an affordable, three-bedroom apartment. When he is retrained, he can get a decent-paying job and not be behind the financial eight-ball that normal housing would put him in while he was in school.”

“I’m very proud of the work that started long before I came,” Svoboda said. He took over as commanding officer at the Rock Island Reserve Center in December. “My role is to help equip the Seabees and empower them to take on projects like this. It amazes me what they’ve done with those units.”

Svoboda applauded the community’s assistance in seeing the project through. “I’m impressed by the supportive nature of the community with the military,” he said. This Seabee/community/veteran group expects to complete work on the Davenport apartments later this spring. “We’re hoping the next phase would be done on the Illinois side,” Kaczinski said.

Portions of this story originally appeared in The Quad-Cities Times (www.QCTimes.com) and are copyright 2005. Reprinted with permission.
NMCB 4 Sweeps Six Big Annual Awards

The Navy League, the Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) and the Civil Engineer Corps (CEC)/SeaBees Historical Foundation honor enlisted and officer men and women each year who make great contributions in leadership and inspiration within the Naval Construction Force and the U.S. Navy. With the announcement of several 2004 award winners, five awardees are currently serving with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 4, homeported in Port Hueneme, Calif.

McMahan's critical master-planning solutions helped lay a firm foundation for rebuilding and maintenance of electrical infrastructure supporting the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit. In a similar fashion, Chief Builder (SCW) William Wright won the Navy League’s 2004 Claude V. Rickett’s Award for Inspirational Leadership. His efforts improved force protection and morale for more than 1,200 Marines conducting offensive operations in the North Babil Province of Iraq. Wright also served as assistant officer-in-charge of the tactical construction team during the reconstruction phase of Operation Al Fajr in Fallujah. Wright’s efforts there not only earned him the attention of the Navy League, but also that of the CEC/SeaBees Historical Foundation—which awarded him the Ingalls Shipbuilding Seabee Engineer 2nd Class Robert D. Stetham Award for Inspirational Leadership.

Secretary of the Navy Gordon R. England, Navy League National Director General Captain Winifred I. Surina, and admiral and general officers presenting the awards in person congratulated the NMCB 4 Seabees and CEC officers for their exceptional leadership and performance of duty.

Wright wasn’t the only member of NMCB 4 to be recognized by the CEC/SeaBees Historical Foundation. LT Jeffrey McCoy also stood out among his peers, earning the Rear Admiral Lewis B. Combs Award. The esteemed Combs Award recognizes an officer who distinguishes himself among Active, Reserve, inactive, retired and civilian peers for outstanding contribution to military engineering. McCoy’s critical master-planning solutions helped lay a firm foundation for rebuilding operational bases for Iraqi security forces. He led his troops on 169 convoys covering more than 2,600 miles throughout Iraq and the Sunni Triangle. He also supervised 21 engineering surveys of damaged bridges, military camps, supply routes and force protection structures.

The CEC/SeaBees Historical Foundation also recognized Seabees' contributions in Fallujah with the Medal of Honor for heroic actions in Vietnam (SEA/BEES Magazine No. 3, 2004). LTNG Sean Stewart earned SAME’s 2004 Marvin Shields Award for outstanding contributions to facility construction and maintenance. While serving as an air detachment platoon commander, Stewart demonstrated exceptional leadership, tactical and technical prowess in a combat environment.

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Seabee Named 2005 Navy Reserve Sailor of the Year

50,000 candidates were boiled down to one; second Bee one of five finalists

John G. Cotton announced the selection of Seabee Utilitiesman 1st Class (SS) Tom Mock as the 2005 Sailor of the Year recognition ceremony in Washington, D.C.

PHOTOGRAPH BY PH3 PAULA SATO

STORY BY JO1 MIKE MILLER

NEW ORLEANS—Chief of Navy Reserve VADM John G. Cotton announced the selection of Seabee Utilitiesman 1st Class (SS) Tom Mock as the 2005 Sailor of the Year (NSROY) during a ceremony at Navy Reserve Forces Command here March 30.

Mock is a Reservist attached to Navy Supply Support Battalion 1 at Navy Marine Corps Reserve Center (NMCR) Phoenix. He was chosen from among a candidate group of 50,000 Navy Reservists.

Cotton presented each finalist with the Navy Commendation Medal for meritorious service.

Another Seabee, Engineering Aid 1st Class (SS) Stephen Harmon, from Fleet Support Training 1610, NMCR Houston, was one of five finalists.

"The finalists are chosen by a selection board," said Navy Reserve Force Master Chief (AW/NAC) Thomas W. Mobley. "Those five are brought to New Orleans for interviews, evaluation and selection. A second board, comprised of five master chief petty officers, then makes a recommendation to the chief of Navy Reserve, who, in turn, makes the actual selection."

"Those candidates for Sailor of the Year are the best of the best," said Cotton. "When I show their resumes to the master chiefs at the Pentagon and tell them who they are and what they do, they shake their heads in amazement and say, ‘Where do you get these people?’ I tell them, ‘America.’"

Cotton praised Mock’s achievements, including his deployment to Iraq.

"Mock is the type of Sailor that gives me confidence in the future of our Navy," said Cotton. "He is the type of Sailor I brag about when I am touring our great nation."

"I am a United States Sailor and a Navy Seabee," said Mock. "I have had the privilege of serving on a ballistic missile submarine as well as in Iraq in support of the global war on terrorism, and many other places. But as I stand here today, I am serving with some of the finest Sailors I have ever known. We are one force and ours is one fight. It is very humbling to receive this award, and I will continue to lead and serve in the United States Navy."

Mock will be meritoriously advanced in July to chief petty officer during the Sailor of the Year recognition ceremony in Washington, D.C.

NMCB 74 Chaplain honored with distinguished service award

LT Marc Massie, the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 74 command chaplain, was selected March 10 to receive the 2005 Military Chaplains’ Association (MCA) Distinguished Service Award in the U.S. Navy category.

The MCA’s are given each year to chaplains serving with Navy, Marine Corps, Army, Air Force, Veterans Administration and Civil Air Patrol units. Massie earned the award primarily for his efforts to support NMCB 74 personnel during the battalion’s deployment to Fallujah, Iraq, in 2004.

“One of my main goals was making sure I attended all the convoy briefs with the troops before they left the wire,” Massie said. “I said a prayer and would just be there for them.”

SIX ADDITIONAL SEABEE UNITS ARE AWARDED PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION FOR OIF

NAB LITTLE CREEK, Va.—Six Seabee units have been added to the Presidential Unit Citation (PUC) originally awarded to units of the First Marine Expeditionary Force (1 MEF) in November 2003.

The citation was awarded for performance against enemy forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom from March 21 to April 24, 2003.

The additional Seabee units now eligible to receive the award are the First Marine Expeditionary Force Engineer Group (1 MEG) Command Element, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 7, NMCB 15 Air Detachment, NMCB 21 Air Detachment, NMCB 25 Air Detachment, and Construction Battalion Maintenance Unit (CBMU) 303 Detachment.

"During 33 days of combat to the transition to civil-military operations, 1 MEF sustained a tempo of operations never before seen on the modern battlefield, conducting four major river crossings, maintaining initiative and sustaining forces,” read the original citation from Secretary of the Navy Gordon England.

NMCB 7 is an active duty battalion based in Gulfport, Miss. NMCBs 15, 21 and 25 are Navy Reserve units from Kansas City, Mo.; Lakehurst, N.J.; and Fort McCoy, Wis. respectively. CBMU 303 is also a Reserve unit based in San Diego, Calif. The MEG Command Element was comprised of members from various commands and units.

These units were added to the original list of Seabee units receiving the citation that included 30th Naval Construction Regiment (NCR), NMCB 5, NMCB 74, NMCB 133, NMCB 4, Naval Construction Force Support Unit 2, Underwater Construction Team 2 Air Detachment and 22nd NCR.

— Daryl Smith
Election Day in Iraq
How Seabees provided security for Iraqi polling places

STORY BY LT JEFF MCCOY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PH3 TODD FRANTOM

FALLUJAH, Iraq—After six months on deployment in most locations, a Seabee unit often begins to wind down operations as its secure draws toward a close. But when the Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 4 got the nod to provide support to the first free elections in Iraq in more than 50 years—not long before the battalion came back to the States—they eagerly answered the call.

The work began several days prior to Election Day, when teams of Seabees hauled hundreds of concrete security barriers to polling sites in remote areas near the Syrian border.

NMCB 4’s team arrived to a crowded camp in the middle of the night after nearly nine hours traveling across the desert terrain. Construction Mechanic 3rd Class Bruce Dennis, too tired to find a sleeping spot, flopped his sleeping bag out comfortably. Despite the near freezing temperatures that night, he got some well-needed rest.

“I wrapped up like a cocoon—it was needed rest,” Dennis said.

While planning their next mission the following day, the Bees heard an improvised explosive device (IED) detonate nearby—another reminder that insurgents would pull no punches to impede free elections.

On the day prior to elections, the team convoyed to Ar Rutbah, a city of 15,000 in Western Iraq, to set up a polling center. The site had no polling booths, but this was no problem for NMCB 4 Seabees.

Builder 3rd Class Donald Lehl led a crew to build voting booths, and in a few hours, the crew had constructed 12 sturdy booths with ledges and partitions.

Equipment Operator 2nd Class Todd Johnson worked feverishly throughout the day, moving concrete barriers that keep vehicles away from the polling center and offloading supplies. Other Seabees helped set up metal detectors, portable generators and concertina wire. In fewer than eight hours, the Bees completed a secure and highly functional polling site.

On the ride back to camp, a Marine security team was encountered blocking the road. They had just discovered a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) and cordoned off the area. Insurgents had packed the doors of a sport utility vehicle with explosives wired to the dome light. The vehicle was set to detonate when the door was opened.

Later that evening, relieved to be back in a secure area, the team joked about putting bumper stickers on their civilian cars with sayings like “I brake for IEDs” and “My other bumper sticker is VBIED.”

Lehl said he was proud to have contributed to the election effort. “To be making history and to help liberate an oppressed people, it feels pretty good.”

When the voting was over, the team packed up their equipment at the polling site. As the Seabee vehicles lined up to leave, an elderly man and his adolescent son walked up and asked if he could still vote. The independent election supervisor directed the team to dig the dome light.

He provided instructions, the man dutifully filled out his ballot on the hood of the Seabee Humvee, and another small step on the path to a democratic Iraq was complete.

The Provisional Support Battalion
Drawing on the classic Seabee “We Build, We Fight” legacy, Seabees—along with storekeepers, electronics technicians, culinary specialists and others—stepped up alongside their Army and Marine counterparts to provide additional combat security support during the Iraqi election process.

The Provisional Support Battalion (PSB) was established just prior to the elections under the direction of the First Marine Expeditionary Force (1 MEF) commanding general. The troops supplemented infantry forces by utilizing Army, Navy and Marine support assets normally employed in near security positions. Senior PSB staffs said the Seabees proved a powerful asset during the days prior to the election.

“The Seabees drew upon their basic capabilities and training in defense tactics,” said Marine Corps Sgt. Major Richard Smith, Command Sergeant Major of the First Marine Expeditionary Force Engineer Group (1 MEG). “I have every confidence that they will excel at whatever they are asked to do in support of the election process.”

Four female Seabees were assigned directly to polling stations, screening female citizens as they entered the voting precinct.

—JCC Suzanne Speight

When Seabees Came to Town
U.S. Navy EM2 Majd Awad (left), originally from Bahrain, plays with local Iraqi children on Iraqi Election Day. Seabees assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Seven (NMCB) 7 worked in partnership with residents of a small Bedouin village on the outskirts of Najaf, Iraq, to build a school and to implement improvements to the village water, electricity, and sanitation facilities. Wherever the Seabee convoys travelled (below), they were most often met by droves of small Iraqi children—kids who, like kids all over the globe, have an appreciation for a fine lollypop and the excitement brought by friendly strangers coming to town.
Not long after the devastating tsunami in Southeast Asia Dec. 26, 2004, more than 400 Seabees prepared to deploy or were already en route to the region to provide a variety of disaster recovery efforts, from clearing roads and removing debris to assessing damage. Approximately 50 Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 40 embarked in USS Fort McHenry (LHA 43) and went to Indonesia, with an additional 250 Seabees from Okinawa deployed shortly thereafter. Approximately 100 Seabees from NMCB 7 deployed to Sri Lanka and about 30 Seabees from Underwater Construction Team (UCT) 2 went to Thailand to perform port surveys and assist in offloading Maritime Pre-positioning Force ships.

“The American taxpayers made an investment in a very solid and robust military capability that has a wide range of uses,” said ADM Thomas Fargo, Commander, U.S. Pacific Command, “and we’re demonstrating the value of that investment.”

**Operation Unified Assistance**
Under the direction of the U.S. Pacific Command and the American joint-service Combined Support Force (CSF) 536, more than 13,000 U.S. Navy, Marine Corps and other service members provided humanitarian assistance to millions of people affected by the tsunami—triggered by an offshore 9.0 earthquake in the region that swept Southeast Asia on Dec. 26, 2004.

The Navy/Marine Corps team played an integral role in the Department of Defense's intensive humanitarian effort alongside other federal and international agencies in support of the governments of Thailand, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and other nations affected by the disaster.

NMCBs 7 and 40, with elements from the Thirtieth Naval Construction Regiment (30NCR) and divers from Underwater Construction Team 2, were a hard-hitting force in rendering effective aid in the tsunami-damaged areas in southern Sri Lanka. Seabees deployed all over the region performed all manner of disaster relief, from simply picking up debris to clear a schoolyard to contingency construction, road clearing and runway repair projects. The Sailors and Marines they accompanied used their equipment to deliver fresh water and provide other aid to the victims of the tsunami. The Seabee divers from UCT 2 went to Thailand, where they provided support to the Navy.

STORY BY JO2 BARBARA SILKWOOD, JO2 CHAD V. PRITT AND JOSN S.C. IRWIN

challenges of its own.

“The threats come in the form of typhoid, malaria, dengue fever, cholera, dysentery and other waterborne diseases,” he said. Portillo stressed the importance of maintaining the highest possible level of cleanliness—and he re-emphasized the need to follow prescribed medical procedures without fail.

“You must take care of yourself first before you can help anyone else, because the more who become ill, the less effective the unit as a whole can be in providing assistance to others,” Portillo said.

Among the first group to leave for the tsunami zone was Construction Electrician 2nd Class Jonathan Nelson of NMCB 40’s Bravo Company. He put a fine point on the magnitude of the humanitarian need and the necessity to keep a clear perspective on the hard work the Seabees knew they faced.

“We have a difficult task ahead of us that will prove to be both physically and mentally demanding on everyone involved,” Nelson said. “If we are able to put the situation into perspective and remember the cause we are supporting, it will be easier to deal with what we see and hear while we are there.”

NMCB 7’s group arrived Jan. 13. Aided by the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, which arrived Jan. 11, the Seabees began initial work at the Port of Koggala, removing debris from a school building. The Seabees worked with the 15th MEU Marines and the USS Duluth to unload supplies from a ship and deliver materials to the site.

Seabees and Marines load supplies from a vertical replenishment at sea onto USS Fort McHenry (LSD 43). The ship was deployed with troops from Combined Support Force 536 aiding in Operation Unified Assistance, the humanitarian operation effort in the wake of the tsunami that struck Southeast Asia.

“Like everyone else out here, I feel perhaps for the first time in my career a new sense of service. I’ve been in the service of my country for over 34 years. This is a different kind of service and when it’s all said and done, perhaps the one I’ll be most proud of.”

— Lt. General “Rusty” Blackman, USMC, Commander, Combined Support Force 536

In a scene reminiscent of World War II, Seabees from NMCB 40’s Detachment Indonesia are transported by landing craft from USS Fort McHenry (LSD 43) to USS Essex (LHD 2) en route to the beach.
the group completed several operations in the southwestern Sri Lanka cities of Koggala and Galle, including clearing a schoolhouse site of rubble before demolishing two nearby unstable structures.

Many of the projects involved work at local schools. In Galle, the Navy and Marine Corps team demolished two buildings at the Uswat Hasala Muslim Ladies College that had been rendered structurally unstable by the pounding water. They also cleared 250 cubic yards of rubble, making the site safer and available for reuse.

Other important school-related projects included demolition and clearance of buildings at Salputhua Central College and Da Silva Elementary School.

“We’ve seen an immediate effect through our efforts,” said LT Jorge Cuadros, NMCB 7’s on-site officer in charge. “Within two days of clearing the demolished schools, children were back to their classes learning.”

Cuadros had led a comprehensive engineering assessment of the area, including a mangled railway system. “It was amazing to see miles and miles of devastation,” Cuadros said. “Parts of the railroad tracks looked as if they were picked up and thrown 20 feet off course.”

Slow-moving tsunami survivors also had to deal with the burden of contaminated drinking water and structural damage beyond repair to many buildings. NMCB 7, in conjunction with the Marines’ 9th Engineer Support Battalion and the Austrian Army, led the way in distributing more than 10,000 gallons of drinking water to relief camps near and around Sri Lanka’s tsunami-ravaged coastline.

Members of the 70-person group improved the city’s protective seawall by shifting large rocks to vital positions. They also reconstructed restroom facilities on school grounds. NMCB 7’s main objectives were completion of engineering efforts approved by local government officials and clearing the community of hazardous debris.

The Seabees exhibited their Can Do! attitude by applying it to demolitions, returning the railroad system to its original layout and performing limited construction projects at the relief camps throughout Sri Lanka.

The Seabees also were tasked with hauling away a number of large fishing boats that were swept up to a kilometer inland by the tsunami, blocking busy streets and pedestrian transit areas.

Moving the beached fishing vessels to the Galle harbor for repair was another step the group took to help the local economy regain a toehold in the vitally important fishing industry and begin a swift recovery.

“We [will] work until the [Sri Lankan] government feels it is ready to turn the workload over to local contractors,” Cuadros added. “Being able to respond to the relief effort so quickly is just another example of how ready our battalions are to help out in situations like this.”

Top: A local woman salvages timber from the Ahangama Primary School in Sri Lanka as Chief Builder Efekt C. Galloway from NMCB 7 works in the background. The school was destroyed by the tsunami. U.S. Marine Corps photograph by Cpl. Josh H. Hauser. Middle: NMCB 40’s HM1 Donald Prewitt (L) and CM2 James Stromberg carry their seabags as they load onto Landing Craft Utility (LCU) 1651 inside USS Fort McHenry’s (LSD 43) well deck and prepare to transfer to USS Essex (LHD 2). Prewitt and Stromberg are Seabees then assigned to Detail Indonesia. U.S. Navy photograph by PH3 John P. Curtis. Bottom: A U.S. Navy SH-60B helicopter from Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron Light 47 delivers supplies in Kotte Panga, Sumatra, where officials conducted surveys in the devastated region of Aceh to determine the needs of tsunami victims. U.S. Navy photo by PH40 Jordan R. Beesley.

Message from the Hon. Gordon R. England, Secretary of the Navy

“To the Sailors and Marines [who supported] Operation Unified Assistance and your fellow military and civilian counterparts,

“The tsunami that struck Southeast Asia Dec. 26 was a horrific tragedy. American Sailors and Marines, American warships and helicopters provided essential assistance to tsunami victims in difficult and dangerous circumstances. Your compassion, professionalism and dedicated efforts were awesome. Well done!

“With more than 6,000 flight hours and more than 20 million pounds of medicine, food and water delivered to date, you saved thousands of lives and eased the suffering of thousands more. America’s sea services once again brought great resources and flexibility to bear in the noble cause of helping others.

“Your fellow Americans are proud of all of you and what you accomplished. Those whom you assisted are grateful for your help, for your care and for your friendship. You showed the world American compassion and mercy. At sea, ashore and in the air, you brought honor to yourselves and to our nation.

“Thank you for your continued service to our Navy and Marine Corps, to our nation and to the world. Thanks for all you’ve achieved and for continuing to help others in the future.”

S P E C I A L

UNIFIED ASSISTANCE
Seabees from Navy Reserve Naval Mobile Construction Battalions (NMCB) 74 and 21 are back home following Operation Frosty Teamwork, the field component of Exercise Bearing Duel 2005 that was conducted at the Camp Shelby, Miss., national mobilization site.

The mission of the Bearing Duel field exercise is to train Bee battalions and certify them for possible future deployments.

Over the course of a month-long operation from mid-February to early March, nearly a thousand Active and Reserve Seabees trained side-by-side in this comprehensive training exercise that combined resources and integrated administrative, logistical and operational components.

More than 400 Bees from NMCB 21 out of Lakehurst, N.J. and more than 600 Active Bees from NMCB 74 in Gulfport, Miss., contributed to contingency construction projects and engaged in combat operations training, learning to operate in a hostile field situation and sustaining simulated operations in this realistic environment.

According to NMCB 21 operations officer LCDR Dave Diefenderfer, this field exercise presented a unique set of challenge from previous field exercises, including movements of personnel from the LSA to both outlying sites and command and control elements.

“The command element was permitted to communicate with the dets,” Diefenderfer said, “but they were not allowed to assist with any issues on the ground, thereby necessitating command and leadership in the field at the small unit level.”

To give this scenario a “real life” topspin, the instructors and the aggressors’ strategy included hard-hitting tactics that could be employed any time of day or night.

“Even though our battalion comes from 10 detachments, unit cohesiveness and integrity came together with the successful integration of small-unit leadership,” Diefenderfer said.
Residents of Trevorton, Pa., were surprised to see Navy Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 21 Detachment 0521 personnel descend upon the sleepy little town in camouflage BDUs, heavy equipment and hardhats at the ready. The Seabees were present in this remote area of Central Pennsylvania to perform road construction training. As with many Seabee training projects, the job prepared members for an upcoming field exercise and provided hands-on training with road improvements and large-vehicle operations. But it performed a public service as well. Police cold-case investigators hoped that the road construction would facilitate transportation of boats to a flooded strip mine pit they intended to search to recover evidence crucial to a 15-year-old homicide case.

STORY BY YN1 ANNA LAPORTE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JO1 MIKE MILLER
As the Seabees rolled through the small town in a gigantic olive-drab Navy dump truck, the citizenry must have wondered what was going on. Onlookers couldn’t know that the Bees had been asked to assist the Sunbury City Police and Pennsylvania State Police in a dormant investigation involving a missing single mother who had resided in the area.

Barbara E. Miller disappeared on June 30, 1989, reportedly under suspicious circumstances. Police actively investigated the case for the first few years but developed few leads. As time wore on, the activity on the case fell off as other cases pressed for police attention.

In 2002, a task force was stood up to re-open the Miller case. Hundreds of people were interviewed and numerous leads were pursued. Along the way, dogged police work developed significant information that indicated the body of Barbara Miller had been deposited in an abandoned, water-filled strip mine known as “The Canyon.”

Homicide Task Force members made many trips to the location to look for clues, but they encountered significant difficulty in doing so. The existing one-mile road leading to this body of water was littered with large boulders, overhanging branches and washouts, making it hard for police to travel to the area without considerable time and effort—and the exclusive use of four-wheel-drive trucks.

After making a number of these thorny trips, police determined they had to develop a plan for improvement of the road to permit passage of trailered boats to The Canyon. Boats would be needed to accomplish planned underwater searches. When the task force experienced frustration in obtaining assistance from other sources, they contacted NMCB 21 and the Seabees agreed to pitch in. Homicide Task Force members Sgt. Degg Stark of the Sunbury City Police and Cpl. Richard Bramhall Jr. from the Pennsylvania State Police Milton Barracks were impressed with the hard work, persistence and commitment of the Bees in making further investigative leads possible in the Miller case.

Using minimal equipment—in five days—these Seabees turned a rough, pitted road that formerly required 35 minutes to traverse into a smooth, two-lane dirt roadway that could accommodate the 15-ft-wide by 30-ft-long pontoon boats police divers needed to tow in to search the mine pit.

“These Seabees did a fantastic job,” Stark said. “That road was terrible—we broke a leaf spring on a 4WD vehicle we used to get up there. The ‘road’ was so narrow that tree branches were scratching the police vehicles.

“With the Seabees’ help, we got our pontoon boats up there with sonar and remotely piloted vehicles and we made some progress investigating our case. We absolutely could not have gotten this done this way without their help.”

Chief Equipment Operator (SCW) Martin O’Horo, then the NMCB-21 Det. 0521 officer in charge, said, “Not only was this a good training evolution for my troops, but also benefited the community—which is something that all training projects should be able to do.”

Seven members participated in the road work training. It required widening more than a half-mile of roadway and filling large holes in the sections of the road with existing material found at the site. Several of the craters measured up to 30 ft long, 7 ft wide and 3 ft deep.

Seabees also trained on the use of bulldozers, grading and the removal of rocks, some of them very large. In addition to O’Horo, other NMCB 21 participants included Equipment Operator 2nd Class Douglas C. Jumper, Builder 2nd Class Joseph Pehanick, Equipment Operator 2nd Class (SS) Timothy T. Waters, Equipment Operator 3rd Class Thomas F. Davison, Equipment Operator 3rd Class Robert Maskyar and Construction Mechanic 3rd Class (SS) Joseph M. Richardson.

With mobilization always a possibility for Navy construction battalions, road-building training like this only strengthens Seabee abilities and readiness.

That it may help hard-working police find a killer was a bonus.
SEABEES AND MARINES CROSS-POLLINATED THEIR WARRIOR DNA IN IRAQ AS A CONTIGUOUS MANEUVER FORCE THAT PENETRATED BAGHDAD JUST 19 DAYS AFTER KICK-OFF. THOSE LESSONS LEARNED SHOW THE WAY TO A NEW TRAINING THOUGHT PROCESS. HERE IS HOW AND WHY INCD IS REWRITING THE NAVAL CONSTRUCTION FORCE

The 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (1st MEFF) took Baghdad in just 19 days of penetrating Iraq's border with Kuwait because, in large part, it attacked swiftly across the desert of Southern Iraq.

IMEF attacked further and faster than any similar forces ever have in modern times. Integral to IMEF operations and its victory in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) were the Seabees, organized as a combatant commander called the IMEF Engineer Group (IMEG).

The most important lesson learned by the Naval Construction Force during OIF was that, like the Marines it supports, the NCF must be a maneuvering force—moving faster, farther and lighter than ever in its 63-year history. To build the proficiency required, the model for NCF military training also had to move.

Implementing OIF lessons-learned meant tinkering with the genetic structure of how Seabees are trained and Seabee DNA is rooted deep. The changes would make us a tougher, faster, more agile force, but let's face it: Nothing like this occurs without lots of thinking and lots of discussion. OIF accelerated much of that.

"Train like you fight, fight like you train" is a phrase we all know, but now it is going to take on a new meaning—one that affects every swinging hammer in the Seabee Nation, from the battalion commander to the Equipment Operator driving the MTVR to the Culinary Specialist warming up a field kitchen.

Actual combat experience in OIF suggested that Seabee units should take a building-block approach to unit-level instruction and practice it at the cornerstone of NCF military training—the battalion-level field exercise (FEX).

The new FEX concept emphasizes construction operations in support of fast-moving battlefield action, and it provides practical concepts to rehearse as part of a Marine Corps battlefield organization.

The combat zone experiences of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 4 during its trip to OIF led us to rethink our existing field exercise training. Here's how we expect it will work:

(Continued...)

STORY BY CAPT JIM WORCESTER AND LCDR CHRIS KURGAN

NAVAL MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALION FOUR
The battalion moved into the FOB in two movements. The first convoy consisted of a Jump Command Post (Jump CP) and staff, security company (with a collection area in with crew-served weapon teams. A mortar section provided additional fire support.

The lead convoy established defense of the FOB site in accordance with SAFE (Secure the area, Automatic weapons placed, Fields of fire established, Entrench) and the security company secured the area, digging fighting positions.

Line company leadership placed crew-served weapons and assigned fields of fire. The Jump CP established a more permanent Combat Operations Center.

When the second convoy arrived with the rest of the troops, the companies fell in on the defense, finalized sections of fire, placed aiming and limiting stakes, completed range cards and began entrenching. Within 48 hours of arrival, fighting positions were concealed and hardened with overhead covers. Triple-strand protective wire encircled a 1500-meter perimeter.

The camps comprised of Month’s up-front planning had paid off as the battalion worked with necessarily intense focus. It was critical for the success of the exercise to brief information down to the most junior troops, who had to understand the mission and expectations.

If we learned anything during OIF, it was that to move faster, we must travel lighter. Initially in OIF, we didn’t take such Seabee mainstays as General Purpose Machine Guns or even galleys—we were as high-speed and low-drag as possible.

As missions evolved and we became more mobile, we pulled such needed facilities, tools and equipment from the rear area in Kuwait. The new Seabee generic code meant that those lessons and practice their combat.

By restructuring the NCF’s training DNA to underscore mobility, Seabees will become a more adaptive and capable force, better equipped to operate and expand and they will be more fully integrated into the Marine Corps’ scheme of maneuver.

The largely new and revised training template offers robust opportunity to exercise leadership at all levels of command, both in general and especially at the small-unit level where the rubber meets the road.

The global battlefield continues to change—and so is the Naval Construction Force training that must reflect and instill those lessons. Our combat construction “genetic code” is evolving. No matter what comes the Seabees’ way, they will be relevant, responsive and ready.

**OIF: Groundwork for Change**

In January 2003, NMCB 4 and an augment air detachment from NMCB 25 deployed to Kuwait in a series of movements, culminating with the arrival March 15, 2003, of a main party of 295 people. The battalion assembled at Logistics Support Area (LSA) Fox in the open desert and began an accelerated process of Receipt, Staging, Onward movement and Integration (RSOI).

Purpose: To provide the process of receiving a unit’s personnel and equipment at seaports and airports, reorganizing people into cohesive units, moving them forward to tactical assembly areas and integrating them into command and control and logistics structures.

To support IME war plans, NMCB 4 and the air detachment were divided into two task-organized groups. A command element of 336 personnel would join Task Force Mike, with a near identical command element from NMCB 74. A rear echelon of 300 battalion personnel would join Task Force Charlie (TFC-RE). The command element was largely made up of Seabees such as steelworkers, builders, equipment operators and construction mechanics—skills necessary to build bridges and main supply routes. The organization was purposely light on support personnel.

The rear-area TFC-RE would provide logistics sustainment to forward operating units in Iraq from Camp 93, a logistics support area in Kuwait. At the onset of hostilities, Task Force Mike moved quickly through the 1st Marine Division’s southern Iraq, building bridges, improving main and alternate supply routes and providing other engineering support. In its five-week advance to Baghdad, the command element moved its camp eight times. Orders would come in the middle of the night and require a mount-out within hours of notification.

At the same time, the TFC-RE conducted resupply missions from Kuwait, logging more than 49,000 convey miles in the campaign.

When major hostilities were declared over in April 2003, the NMCB 4 command element established a base camp at Abu Diwaniyah and supported civil-military projects at numerous sites throughout the city.

The battalion’s post-war experience once again stretched its logistics capabilities.

As soon as we set camp, the battalion got orders to establish additional detail sites in the towns of An Najaf and Karbala to support construction and civil-military missions that continued through the end of July 2003.

While the battalion had settled into camps at each of its detail sites, effective employment demanded extensive convoy operations.

From Kuwait, supplies flowed into the desert and began an accelerated movement, culminating with the arrival of 25 deployed to Kuwait in a series of logistics structures.

Seabees gave equal effort to defensive and offensive structures. In its five-month deployment, the battalion conducted 11 construction projects at numerous sites, building bridges, roads, and shower facilities. The unit normally remained in place for the duration of the exercise, following our discussions, we worked with 31SRG to develop a new
Journalist 2nd Class Barbara Silkwood (above), a Seabee attached to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 40, emerges from muddy water into razor and barbed wire after going under a log obstacle in the endurance course at the Jungle Warfare Training Center on Camp Gonsalves, Okinawa. Far left, Marines and Bees negotiate a rope bridge, and left, Equipment Operator 3rd Class Jordan Mann low-crawls through a pond. The challenging training evolutions are a component of the 3.4-mile obstacle course, part of a week-long jungle skills training class.

U.S. NAVY PHOTOGRAPHS BY PH3 JOHN P. CURTIS

Adventure, Seabee-style
In Haiti, Navy Seabees and other U.S. military members of Task Force New Horizons (TFNH) delivered more than 9,000 pounds of humanitarian supplies from the U.S. Navy’s Project Handclasp to eight schools, two orphanages and a hospital April 15.


The donations included hygiene and medical products, books, clothes and toys, and were transported from the Project Handclasp warehouses in San Diego across the United States on a C-130 from Fleet Logistic Support Squadron (VR) 55, Point Mugu, Calif. In Mayport, Fla., Commander, Task Force (TF) 43 arranged for further transfer to Port-au-Prince and then to Gonaives.

“The staff worked hard to unload two 40-foot containers and sort through the materials,” said Capt. Doug Taylor, commanding TFNH. “This will help people here a bunch.”

The needs in Haiti were and remain great. The schools were devastated during last year’s hurricane; the parents cannot afford to pay tuition; and the teachers have not received a salary for months, but they are still there trying to make it through with the children.

In the makeshift classrooms, the students and teachers overcame language barriers to show their gratitude with handshakes, smiles and hugs.

New Horizons Haiti is one of the four humanitarian and civic assistance exercises sponsored this year by U.S. Southern Command in Central America and the Caribbean. As part of TFNH, a combined task force deployed to build three schools, drill three potable water wells and provide free medical attention through three Medical Readiness Training Exercises.
Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 1 completed a potentially life-saving project at Fallujah Surgical Company in Fallujah, Iraq, April 17.

The project is a brand new triage and receiving canopy, which augments the triage tents that had been used.

“It’s a timber and aluminum triage canopy to provide shelter to patients waiting to get into Fallujah Surgical,” said Chief Builder (SCW) Rob Morrison, a native of Clove, S.C., “and also to provide lighting at night.”

The canopy will be able to comfortably accommodate up to 10 patients at a time.

“We’ll be able to line up 10 stretchers, five on each side,” said Dr. (CDR) Carol Blackwood, a triage specialist at Fallujah Surgical. “Before, they would have been in the gravel or falling off the entry way.”

Eight Seabees from several construction rates were put to work on the construction.

“We had steelworkers prefab the reinforcing steel that goes in the concrete and also the corrugated sheet steel that will go on the roof,” Morrison said. “We had construction electricians do the wiring and switches and lighting, and utilitians capped off and rerouted the storm drain. Then we have the meat and potatoes of the project—builders—because this project is mostly timber and concrete and that’s the main part of their rate.”

The new structure was designed to allow emergency vehicles to back up to the opening for unloading patients for triage in a safe environment.

“This will provide more protection for patients during triage,” said Blackwood. “We’ve had incidences with our own staff tripping over stuff. The extra room the canopy provides will also give patients protection from the heat by keeping them in the shade.”

The Seabees constructing the triage canopy noted differences between normal operations during peacetime and operations in a combat zone.

“When we deploy to other places, we’ll work on a project the whole six months we’re there,” said Builder 2nd Class (SCW) Nick Hoffman, the triage canopy project supervisor and native of Decatur, Ala. “Out here is more fast-paced than normal peacetime projects.”

Security issues keep the Bees in camp, for the most part, working on such projects as camp maintenance and force protection. Because of that, the Seabees here were grateful for the opportunity to build a facility that permits health care providers to work in a more controlled environment during the critical time that is triage.

“It’s for a real good command,” Morrison said. “They’re providing triage to troops throughout the theater. We’re glad to do whatever we can to help them.”
A tiny and fairly flat coral island 75 miles north of Guam, Tinian is about the same size and shape as Manhattan. As soon as U.S. forces captured it in August 1944, Seabees created a system of roads in the same grid pattern as Manhattan. In addition to the airfields, Bees put up Quonset huts and a wide variety of service buildings—including the shop in which the first atomic bombs were assembled. Every airstrip was completed on time and none required more than 53 days to build. Not long after the arrival of Air Force B-29s, a special command established between Seabees and Airmen. Many Seabee battalions would adopt an aircraft by officially painting their logo and name on the B-29’s nose. The quality of life for the crew of the plane then would improve considerably—because the Seabees provided the crews of their Superfortresses with better Quonset huts, washing machines, better mattresses, ice cream, cold beer and other comforts of life. Camps on Tinian were constructed to house up to 50,000 U.S. troops, about 1.2 million pounds of crops were produced, all of which were consumed on the island. By August 1945, a year after construction started, Tinian was the largest airbase in the world and accommodated nearly 450 B-29s.

Arrival of USS Indianapolis (CA-35) on July 26, 1945, marked the delivery of the radioactive components for one of the new and highly secret atomic bombs. The ship anchored 1,000 yards off the shore of Tinian and Seabees of the GNCB helped with the unloading of the components of the secret weapons.

The Seabees stored the elements in a shed they built and organized a detachment to guard the shed and its mysterious contents. Atomic scientists assembled the weapon in the shed with several Seabees assisting. **Puzzle No. 1: The Troops Bug Out**

“Tack your bags, shipmates!” CMS Thomas Alva Jones said to his roommate, EO3 Clarence ‘Corky’ Watson. “We just got orders to Iraq.”

This time it wasn’t Corky. Oh, he looked forward to the deployment and to helping some people because that’s what Seabees did, and his girlfriend had just dumped him anyway and a change of venue was welcome. But only the week before, he had acquired the chipped and smoking 1974 Corvette sports car that had quickly spawned his new nickname, bestowed on him by the grinning CMDCM himself in a morning muster.

The two petty officers, and several more from units belonging to the FIRSTNC, would load up eight MTVK cargo trucks and common Seabee tools, such as a hammer, shovel, wrench— even MOPP gear against an unexpected chemical threat—and head out to OIF in less than two weeks.

Other units of the Seabee division were already deployed to OIF, mostly vets in Afghanistan/Northern Iraq with State Department activities. Still more Bees were out on humanitarian missions to other supporting missions in South Asia.

Corky Watson hated to leave his beloved sports car home in South Carolina with his family. He had been born in Cody, Wyoming, but had grown up in Spartanburg and called South Carolina home. And if his car was going to be gone, he wanted to be there too. Stuffing tirelessly through a clipboard of message traffic, Wat rotated not an announcement that recipients of the prestigious Como and Stethem awards had been selected. Is your name on the list of the selection? Was Watson, though, he didn’t know either of the award winners—and none of it had anything to do with his car. **What’s the drill on this deployment?**
S

Since I assumed command of the First Naval Construction Division last November, I have been consistently amazed at the phenomenal amount of work that Seabees are performing around the world. I take great pride in the fact that the day-to-day work of the U.S. Navy goes relentless forward like an unstoppable force of nature. No matter what challenges we have been given, you have handled them with skill and professionalism. But, sometimes we get so busy working on current tasks that we fail to appreciate the magnitude of what has been done. So, I wanted to highlight some of the things that have been accomplished in this short amount of time.

When I first arrived at the Division, Seabees from NMCB 1 and NMCB 74, supported by 20th SRG and CBC Gulfport, had just completed disaster recovery efforts in the wake of Hurricane Ivan. Deploying literally at Naval Air Station Pensacola in the wake of the storm, Seabees from NMCB 1 and NMCB 74, as well as assigned to Special Operating Forces. They completed numerous projects throughout the theater. Members of NMCB 74 were also called upon to operate Camp Morell in Kuwait, providing critical logistic support and training to personnel for forward deployed personnel.

Seabees supported everything from the major counter-insurgency victory and seizure of Fallujah to the free elections of January 2005. Seabees, very ably led by the 1 MEF Engineer Group, can be very proud to have played an instrumental role in our nation’s fight in the global war on terrorism and the shaping of Iraq’s fledgling democracy.

Seabees have also been involved in a variety of exercises that test our skills and demonstrate our commitment to peace. NMCB 133 demonstrated its bridging and engineering capabilities during the Korean Incremental Training Program and conducted vital operational tests of matting material. These two joint-multinational events demonstrated crucial capabilities and will contribute to the continuation of peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Members of NMCB 4 also demonstrated forward Naval presence with a highly successful deployment supporting Exercise Adriatic PHIBLEX in Albania. They constructed four kilometers of roadway, a barracks facility and a new military training range latrine facility. They also renovated a local schoolhouse and erected a new playground that will support more than 750 local school children.

Some of these exercises involve doing things in new and different ways. Seabees from NMCB 1 headed to Haiti aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Saipan (LHA 2) in support of Exercise New Horizons 2005 in Haiti. Seabees joined other U.S. military forces to provide much-needed humanitarian assistance, including building schools and drilling water wells.

We also need to remember the importance of work done at the main-body sites and major deployment sites. NMCB 7 continued working on projects in Guam, such as the Support Equipment Garage, Sumay Cove head facility and exterior lighting, as well as other projects in Hawaii, San Diego and Bahrain.

NMCB 4 worked on projects such as the hospital PEB and Shoreline Gap in Rota; naval air station fence line project in Sigonella; and the aircraft maintenance hangar renovation in Souda Bay. NMCB 133 completed numerous construction projects on Okinawa, which included the dental building renovation and security-army upgrades.

Details deployed throughout the Pacific to Atsugi, Fuji, Sasebo, Iwakuni, Pohang, Chinhae, Diego Garcia and San Clemente Island have been expertly accomplished their important missions. And, we don’t forget that so much effort goes into getting the Seabees everything they need to do their jobs. The work that has been done by military and civilian personnel at the Regiments, Seabee Readiness Groups and at the Division has been absolutely essential.

Homeport training in Gulfport and Port Hueneme and the readiness training performed regularly by our Reserve has ensured that Seabees are ready anytime, anywhere.

Seabees are truly ambassadors of goodwill around the world. They reinforce America’s ties with other nations and have a positive impact on world events. In the five months that I have been in this job, I have witnessed your dedication, your compassion — and your unyielding commitment to get the job done. I am constantly amazed … and because of what I’ve seen so far, I am extremely optimistic about the months and years ahead.

I look forward to each new Seabee day.
Public works Seabees here in Keflavík received an emergency trouble call on a Thursday morning that the Navy Lodge and the fuel station had lost power. At the time of the incident, the temp ranged from 26 F to 30 F; the wind chill was between 10 F and 15 F; the wind speed was from 30 to 41 mph with gurts up to 50 mph. We responded to find that the fuse inside a transformer had blown. The blown fuse was replaced and that one blew as well. We immediately brought out a generator to provide power to the affected facilities until we could find a permanent solution to the problem. When we investigated the first transformer’s trouble, we found it had shorted between the primary windings and was a complete loss. It definitely had to be replaced, cold or no cold.

A transformer was located on base that would work—but it was being used to power the street lights. We scheduled the power outage for the Lodge and fuel station for Saturday afternoon to have the least amount of impact on the base, and Friday morning we removed the transformer that was used for street lights and replaced it. We also made all the necessary preparations for the Saturday outage at the Navy Lodge and fuel station by placing back-up generators for mission-critical buildings.

For good measure, we had our Transportation Seabees plow an access road through two feet of drifted snow to the location of the blown transformer.

At 1200 Saturday, everything was in place and the power turned off so work could begin replacing the transformer. It took several hours of tedious work in the cold to prepare everything for the transplant. Then, during the middle of the operation, a piece of snow removal equipment knocked down a light pole on base. Several members of the electrical division left our site and responded to remove downed pole.

Despite the sudden reduction in our work crew, the new transformer was placed, all the connections were made, and power was restored as planned at about 1900. Just a normal PW Bee day.

All in an Icelandic day’s work
KOGGALA, Sri Lanka—Sri Lankan workers, U.S. Marines, and Seabees assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalions 7 and 40 survey the site of a schoolhouse destroyed Dec. 26, 2004, by a Southeast Asia tsunami that was triggered by a gigantic offshore undersea earthquake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale.

More than 13,000 Sailors, Marines, Airmen, Soldiers and Coast Guardsmen comprised Combined Support Force 536, America’s joint-service “rapid deployment force” of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Working with international militaries and non-governmental organizations, U.S. troops and tons of heavy equipment supported the relief effort as part of Operation Unified Assistance.  ©