Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 6

Historical Information

"Construimus, Batuimus"
"We Build, We Fight"

NAVAL HISTORY & HERITAGE COMMAND

To September 1964

Past History of Mobile Construction Battalion Six

From the shores of Guadacanal to Okinawa and Cuba to Vietnam, U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Six has upheld the Seabees motto of, "Can Do". The first Seabee Battalion to work under actual combat conditions was Naval Construction Battalion Six. This unit went ashore on Guadacanal in 1942 under the comman of Commander Joseph P. Blundon. From August 7 to December 9, 1942, MCB SIX fought with and built reinforced positions for the First Marine Division. During this period, the men of NCB SIX worked as Combat Engineers, Aviation Engineers and Construction Engineers 24 hours a day.

For their heroic efforts under fire, the Battalion earned the Presidential Unit Citation. After building and fighting on Guadalcanal, Espiritu Santo, Tulagi, Auckland, Noumea and Okinawa, NCB SIX was decommissioned in October of 1945.

RECOMMISSIONED

Six years later, on May 3, 1951, two days after orders were issued for reactivation of NCB, SIX, now redesignated MCB SIX, CDR R. D. Pinkerton, CEC, USN, assumed command in Norfolk, Va. The NCB Battalions were renamed in 1949 by order of CNO (Chief of Naval Operations). On that date in 1951, MCB SIX became the only Seabee Battalion in Commission entitled to display the Presidential Unit Citation.

1951-1953

The first assignment given Mobile Construction Battalion Six, was the construction of various projects at the Naval Station, Bermuda. Upon arrival in Bermuda, MCB-6 relieved MCB-4. MCB-6 completed the construction duty in two months and headed for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The Battalion arrived on July 6, 1951.

While in Cuba, MCB-6 built a complete Seabee Camp at Leeward Point. MCB-6 returned to the Davisville CB Center in December of 1951.

In March of 1952, MCB-6 departed for construction duties at Argentia, Newfoundland and remained in Newfoundland until August of that same year when they returned to Davisville.

In October of 1952, MCB-6 returned to Cuba and built both an Officer and Enlisted mens berthing facilities.

After a short return to the U.S. in April, MCB-6 deployed to French Morroco. The Battalion arrived on June 3 and later that month CDR P. J. Simmons, CEC, USN, relieved CDR Pinkerton.

1953-1956

From 1953 until 1956, MCB-6 built a variety of projects in Puerto Rico, Cuba, San Salvador, Grand Turks, Nova Scotia, Bermuda, Nantucket, Cape Hatteras and Antigua. In November of 1953 after finishing several of these projects throughout the Atlantic and Caribbean areas, SIX returned home.

On February 8, 1954, MCB-6 commissioned its first detachment named "DOG". This unit went to San Juan in April of 1954 and the main body returned to Cuba for the third time in three years. The Battalion commissioned its second detachment dubbed "EASY", while in Cuba. This party went to San Salvador. Less than three weeks later on June 5, 1954, MCB-6 commissioned another detachment for duty in Grand Turks. This detachment was designated detachment "FOX". After arriving back in Davisville in July, 1954, MCB-6 commissioned its fourth detachment and received a new Commanding Officer. After commissioning detachment "GEORGE" and "HOW" in Davisville for duty in Bermuda and Nova Scotia respectively CDR C. Jaquess, CEC, USNR, relieved CDR Simmons in October. Only three of the original seven detachments were in commission by September. Detachments "ITEM" and "JIG", were working in Nantucket, Mass. and Cape Hatteras, North Carolina respectively. MCB-6 next deployment was to Antigua where the Battalion remained from October 1955 to July 1956. MCB-6 returned to Cuba in 1956 arriving there on October 3. On October 27, 1956 Commander V. M. Tregonis, CEC, USN, relieved CDR Jaquess.

MCB-6 had hardly returned to the States when the Battalion was again in Cuba. While deployed in Cuba, MCB-6 was awarded the title, "Best of the Atlantic Fleet Seabees". This title was earned through the hard work and sacrifices of the officers and men of the battalion.

After leaving detachment "OSCAR" behind, MCB-6 left Cuba for the U.S. in January, arriving in Davisville on January 17, 1958. Before leaving for duty at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico on May 15, 1958, MCB-6 Commissioned and sent to Barbados T.W.I., detachment "PAPA", it's 9th detachment. Detachment "PAPA" rejoined the main body in Puerto Rico. On December 7, 1958, LCDR L.E. Stiffler who had relieved CDR V. M. Tregonis in Puerto Rico on November 22, 1958, was relieved by CDR L. W. Graves. After returning to Davisville in December of 1958 MCB-6 prepared for duty in Rota, Spain. On January 5, 1959, detachment "ROMEO" the Battalion's 10th unit, left for construction duties in Spain. When the main body arrived four months later, the advance party had built more than 50 Quonset huts, several buildings and other projects. Six, upon arrival, became the first Seabee Battalion to be on duty at Europe's newest base, Rota. Prior to arriving in Rota, MCB-6 had completed combat training at Camp LeJeune earning for the unit another first as the only MCB unit to under-go extensive military training. After arriving in Rota, MCB-6 once again resumed their building duties and constructed a school, gymnasium, library, E.M. Club, Service Station, Dry Cleaning plant and many more projects. In January 1960, the Battalion left Rota for the States. In February of that same year, LCDR O. R. Butterfield, CEC, USN relieved CDR Graves as Commanding Officer of MCB-6. Later that year, MCB-6 tacked on another first by becoming the only Seabee command to be located in the States with two detachments deployed. On December 11, 1960, MCB-6 again earned honors by becoming the first MCB Battalion to attend classes in disaster recovery.

1961-1962

On February 27, 1961, LCDR Charles W. Calhoun relieved LCDR Butterfield. Later that year, the unit deployed to Argentia and re-roofed the 10 story BOQ, repaired and replaced lighting fixtures in the station hospital and among a host of other duties, worked on a seaplane ramp. In August 1961, MCB-6 went to Bermuda and performed various repair duties at the Naval Station.

The Battalion returned to Davisville on December 15, 1961. In early March 1962, the Battalion again went to Camp LeJeune for military training. In May of that year, the unit deployed to Roosevelt Roads to build a crash facility, several small buildings and three and one half miles of road-work.

MCB-6 deployed to Greece in late 1962. On Sunday, March 24, 1963 now under the command of LCDR R. J. Biederman, MCB-6 embarked on a series of "People to People" activities in Southern Europe. While there, the battalion saved a church from burning. Possessing the only fire-fighting equipment within 20 miles, the Battalion's "firefighters" quickly brought the blaze under control.

During the 1962-63 deployment to Greece, MCB-6 built under the name, Project Judy, a completely new Naval Communications Station. Despite the wind, rain and freezing cold along with various other delays, MCB-6 completed the facility on time.

1964-1965

On February 18, 1964, MCB-6 returned to Rota, Spain. While there, the Battalion built an extension to the Library, and several other projects. Also while in Rota, the unit received a new Commanding Officer when LCDR Henry A. Tombari relieved LCDR Biederman on May 27, 1964.

Leaving a detachment of 65 men in Rota to finish transferring equipment and materials to MCB-8, MCB-6 returned to Davisville to prepare for duty at the Antarctic.

To end of 1962

SAGA OF SIX

The orders were issued: "On or about 1 May report to Norfolk, Virginia, to assist in the formation of *U. S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion No. Six.*" Seven officers and about six hundred men, mostly reserves, but with a hard core of regulars, reported for the commissioning at 1300 on 3 May 1951. The next day, the Battalion embarked for Bermuda and four weeks of rough military training, aboard the *USS Navaroo.* May 8th saw the companies formed along the pier, and the Battalion marched off to the strains of "Song of the Seabees" played by *MCB Six's* own band, and with each man having a copy of the newspaper that would in seven months win the award for the best paper in the overseas edition of the Armed Forces Press Service, "THE *MCB SIX* LOG."

LT Daskalakis and his detachment of Marines assisted CDR Pinkerton's new "Seabees" in training which covered about everything in the Landing Party Manual with heavy emphasis on weapons. Everyone took a turn at squeezing the trigger of the machine guns, BAR's, tommies, and carbines, and the men were trained well in maneuvering and tactics for small units.

The unit was well on the way to becoming a highly efficient organization; from commander to apprentice, *MCB Six* could do the job, any job.

As Seabees will, all hands that could find a job aboard the *Navarro,* this time taking CDR Pinkerton's men to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, went to work assisting the ship's company. The gunners helped repair the 20mm batteries, the electricians worked on the fans and ventilators; as fast as the ship's First Lieutenant requested men, the volunteers appeared. The hours flew by with evening band concerts and movies, and a "happy hour" was put on by the crew and Seabees.

The *Navarro* tied up on 9 July at Gitmo, with the Executive Officer LCDR Wimer, CEC, USNR, and his advanced party, waiting on the pier. They had set up the compound and made all the arrangements to house and feed the Battalion.

Though the projects were spread out over most of the base, *MCB Six* was so well organized that work would be carried out extremely efficiently. Although scheduled to stay only five months, a huge program was laid out for completion during that time.

The first and foremost project was the paving of Wharf "Baker," which required removing some 76,000 square feet of old paving and repaving it with a concrete apron eight inches thick. Working conditions were such that it was necessary to pour all the concrete at night, since the heat of the Cuban sun would dry it before it had a chance to set.

Another major project, the Sherman Avenue bypass, a short cut-off past the main thoroughfare which eliminated much congestion during the rush hours and saved time to and from the Air Station, entailed the moving of over 20,000 cubic yards of earth and slicing away a large chunk of mountain.

Though working long hours under disagreeable conditions, the equipment operators were never heard to complain and would often be seen working overtime or on their days off. The pride of their craft was evident in the manner in which the older men trained the younger ones to be as conscientious as themselves. These practices have always been continued in *MCB Six.*

On 6 December, the Battalion embarked on the *USNS General Goethals* for a luxury cruise to CBC, Davisville, Rhode Island, arriving there on 11 December, and after becoming temporarily established ashore, the majority of men took a well-earned Christmas leave. By 15 January, all personnel had returned and preparations for the next operation were begun. While at Davisville, many replacements and transfers were accorded. Among them was CDR Wimer, XO, who was replaced by LCDR H. L. Murphy.

The Battalion, reformed and retooled, set sail for Argentia, Newfoundland, on 9 March 1952, aboard the *USS Benewah,* an APB that was to be *Six's* home for the next five months.

On 17 August 1952, *Mobile Construction Battalion Six* completed their deployment in Argentia, and boarded the *USS Kent* for their return voyage to Davisville, Rhode Island. The Battalion arrived in Davisville on 22 August 1952. The two-party leave period was used while the Battalion was in the States in order to allow the men to go on leave, and at the same time, send others to schools in Newport, Rhode Island. By 5 October 1952, all hands were back aboard, making ready for their next deployment to Cuba. On 10 October the Battalion went aboard the *MSTS Muir* and sailed for Guantanamo Bay, arriving there on 15 October 1952. The Battalion immediately moved into barracks at Leeward Point, where they stayed until 3 April 1953. *Six* had many jobs (as usual) on this deployment, some of them were: completing the runway lighting, extending the boundary road, drilling for water, building a new sickbay, and construction of living quarters for the Naval Aid Station.

The Battalion returned to the States shortly after Easter 1953, for leave and recreation. The Battalion, as always, was very busy making ready for their next deployment.

When 23 May 1953 rolled around, *Six* climbed

aboard the *USS Sanborne* and set sail for Port Lyautey, French Morocco. They arrived on 2 June, and commenced work shortly afterward on many various projects. Some of the jobs included the finishing of a new gymnasium, construction of a new out-door movie, remodeling of a large airplane hangar, maintenance work on the dependents' housing, and the building of a new LST ramp. In June of 1953, CDR P. J. Simmons, CEC, USN, replaced CDR Pinkerton as Commanding Officer.

Early in November, *MCB Six* left Port Lyautey for Davisville, arriving on 15 November. Plans were put into effect for *Six* to be split into nine detachments. The Battalion pulled up stakes on 8 February 1954, and departed for Cuba, where the plan was to take shape. *Six* arrived in sunny Cuba on 13 February 1954. As final plans were being put together for the detachments, *MCB Six* aided *MCB Eight*, who was deployed in Cuba at that time, on the construction of the dependents' housing project.

Detachment "Dog" was the first of the detachments to be commissioned with R. F. Reynolds, CWO, as its officer-in-charge. "Dog" left Cuba on 16 April 1954, on *LST 988*, arriving in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on 18 April. The detachment remained there until November of 1954, before returning to Davisville, Rhode Island.

The second of the detachments, "Easy," was commissioned on 7 May 1954, and departed aboard the *LST 988* for San Salvadore in the Bahama Islands on 21 May. Ensign C. Matthews, CEC, was officer-in-charge, and WO W. Monnier, assistant officer-in-charge. Detachment "Easy" returned to Davisville the following year on 27 August.

The big day for Detachment "Fox" came on 5 June 1954, in Cuba, where the detachment was commissioned in a short and colorful ceremony, headed by CDR P. J. Simmons, commanding officer. CDR Simmons read the orders which officially commissioned Detachment "Fox" with LTJG C. W. Harman as officer-in-charge and CHELEC R. P. Wittenberg as assistant officer-in-charge. Detachment "Fox" composed of 148 men, departed on the *LST 533* on 14 June 1954, for Grand Turk. The Detachment was officially decommissioned in July 1955, at Davisville.

In July of 1954, *MCB Six* returned to Davisville from Cuba, and made the necessary arrangements for the commissioning of Detachment "George" which was commissioned on 9 July 1954. The new detachment was led by LT J. Morgan, CEC, and had ENS A. L. Brown, CEC, as assistant officer-in-charge. Detachment "George" departed for Nova Scotia, where they stayed until August of 1955, at which time they were decommissioned.

On 3 September 1954, Detachment "How," the fifth detachment, was commissioned with LT A. E. Hackett, CEC, as officer-in-charge and ENS J. A. Tiso, CEC, assistant officer-in-charge. The 140 man detachment departed Davisville on 14 September 1954, aboard the *LST 532*. They spent eight months on tropical Bermuda before returning on the *LST 344*, to be decommissioned in June of '55.

October 27, 1954, *MCB Six* for the second time in its history, held a change of command ceremony with LCDR R. C. Jaquess, CEC, USNR, assuming command from CDR P. J. Simmons, CEC, USN.

Three months passed before the next detachment was commissioned. On 21 January 1955, the new commanding officer of *MCB Six*, LCDR Jaquess, read the official orders commissioning detachment "Item." LTJG J. A. Lane, CEC, USNR, then read his orders which gave him the helm as officer-in-charge. Detachment "Item" was sent to Nantucket, Mass., and was engaged in constructing naval facilities.

The commissioning of Detachment "Jig" came on 20 April 1955, with LTJG H. N. Wehke, CEC, USNR, as OinC and ENS W. A. Baker, CEC, USNR, assistant Officer-in-Charge. *MCB Six's* commanding officer, LCDR R. C. Jaquess read the orders forming the 140 man Detachment. Detachment "Jig" was sent to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, to build a facility there.

Detachment "Love" was commissioned on 11 July 1955; her officer-in-charge was ENS S. T. Wilkoz. Detachment "Love" departed Davisville in July of 1955, and was deployed to Cape May, New Jersey. The Detachment returned to Davisville a few months later (in October) and was decommissioned.

In September of 1955, with Detachment "Item," "Jig" and "Love" still operating, the main body of the Battalion prepared to take on another job in Antigua, B.W.I. The Battalion left Davisville in three lifts, with the first lift leaving on 21 September, and arriving in Antigua on the 29th, after stopping for a short while on Grand Turk to unload materials there. Lift Two departed Davisville on the 29th of September, arriving at Antigua on 8 October. The third lift left on 15 October, arriving on the 23rd.

The first lift had a hard, but important job to do when they arrived. They had to put several reefers in operation so that the frozen food could be stored. Other important jobs were the tent camp area, and the boundary fence. Two old buildings were located on the camp site; they were an old salt water pump house, and one wing of an old army hospital. The utilities included a sewer system, a salt water system, and part of a fresh water system.

These two buildings proved to be a big help in the early days of the deployment. Without too much work, the old hospital wing was turned into a temporary galley, mess hall, and personnel office. Later, the old army hospital wing was remodeled and served as a galley, mess hall, personnel office, offices for the commanding officer and executive officer, beer hall, ship's store, post office, and galley issue room.

Off hours were spent on the many white beaches of the island, recreation parties, movies, sports, writing

letters, studying, and patronizing the Seabee beer hall.

Shortly before returning to the States, in July of 1956, Detachment "Kilo" was commissioned.

During an informal ceremony on 18 September 1956, in Davisville, Rhode Island, Detachment "Lima" was commissioned with LT G. A. Anderson, CEC, USN as OinC and LTJG F. M. Kresser, CEC, USNR, as assistant OinC. The detachment of 200 men departed the following day for Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, where they stayed for six months before returning to the main body of *MCB Six* in Davisville, in March of 1957. "Lima" had many jobs to perform while deployed in Puerto Rico, but the most important was the renovation of the dependent housing for the expanding naval base there. Their high moral and "Can Do" spirit was shown in many ways during their stay. One of the biggest factors behind this tiny group was their newspaper, the "Detachment Lima Limb."

MCB Six moved out of Davisville for sunny Cuba for the fourth time, on 28 September 1956, on the *LST 1163*. The Battalion arrived on 3 October, and quickly went to work unloading and moving into the CB camp area on mainside. The Battalion was loaded down with many jobs and some of these were: raising the athletic field, relocating and building a new road section to eliminate serious driving hazards, and the largest of the projects, construction of 88 married enlisted quarters and 25 officers quarters at Leeward Point. This job alone was too large for the Battalion to complete on this cruise, as no adequate housing was available for the Battalion at Leeward Point.

Shortly after the Battalion arrived in Gitmo, the command of *MCB Six* changed hands when CDR V. M. Tregonis, CEC, USN, relieved LCDR R. C. Jaquess, in a very impressive ceremony. October 27, 1956, marked the fourth time the command had changed hands.

Before the Battalion left Cuba for Davisville, Detachment "Mike" was commissioned and sent to Bermuda.

MCB Six departed for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, again in June of 1957, commencing its fifth deployment there. Upon arrival of *Six*, Detachment "Mike" was decommissioned. While deployed in Cuba, *Six* was awarded the "Best of the Atlantic Fleet Seabees." This was a title well-earned through the co-operation and hard work of all the officers and men of *MCB Six*.

January 13, 1958, found the "Best" was on its way back to the States again. Before the Battalion left Cuba, Detachment "Oscar" was commissioned and remained behind. *Six* arrived in Davisville 17 January 1958; Detachment "Quebec" was commissioned and was sent to Argentia, Newfoundland, on 30 April 1958. Detachment "Quebec" became the seventeenth detachment to be commissioned. Before *MCB Six* left on 15 May 1958, for a deployment at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, Detachment "Papa" was commissioned and sent to Barbados, T.W.I.

MCB Six left Roosevelt Roads for the States on 7 December 1958, with seven years of successful and prosperous cruises behind it. On 15 December 1958, LCDR L. E. Stiffler, who relieved CDR V. M. Tregonis in Puerto Rico on 22 November 1958, as Commanding Officer, was relieved of command by CDR L. W. Graves, CEC, USN. Upon arrival in Davisville in December of 1958, *Six* began preparing for its deployment to Rota, Spain, and on 5 January 1959, it commissioned Detachment "Romeo" which was sent in advance to construct the Battalion's camp and begin the initial phases of construction. In the four months prior to the Battalion's arrival at Rota, the Detachment built a camp of over 50 Quonset huts, a number of buildings, and several material compounds. *Six* was the first Construction Battalion to be deployed to Europe's newest base.

While the Detachment was engaged in construction at Rota, the Battalion, on 29 February, was airlifted to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, to become the first Battalion on either coast to undergo intensive military training under Marine supervision. The course of instruction lasted six weeks with the Seabees giving up their tools for weapons and learning the techniques of their Marine tutors. The Battalion returned to Davisville on 10 April 1959.

Detachment "Sierra" was commissioned 5 May 1959, and sent to Bermuda to accomplish rehabilitation there, including completely reconditioning the married enlisted quarters on the Naval Station. After the leave and training period in Davisville, the Battalion went to Rota to begin construction of a number of projects including a school addition, gymnasium, library, hobby shop, EM club, vehicle shed, service station, dry cleaning plant, and others. In January of 1960, the Battalion departed Rota, leaving a rear echelon to complete the gymnasium.

In February of 1960, LCDR O. R. Butterfield, CEC, USN, relieved CDR L. W. Graves, as commanding officer. In April, *Six* became the first Mobile Construction Battalion to locate its command stateside and deploy two detachments. Detachment "Uniform" departed for Argentia to repair the Catholic Chapel, construct a pump-house on Gull Pond, erect Butler buildings for supply, replace decking on the Sierra-Tango pier, and repair the roof of one of the hangars. Detachment "Tango" departed for Bermuda for construction of a country store, Navy Exchange, an avionics shop, a married enlisted men's quarters and a warehouse. While in Bermuda, repairs were made to a research tower, called Argus Island, 30 miles off the coast. *Six* returned to Davisville, 11 December 1960, attended military training, and was the first Mobile Construction Battalion to attend classes in disaster control.

On the 27th of February 1961, LCDR C. W.

Calhoun, CEC, USN, assumed command from LT H. M. Barber, who resumed his duties as XO. On the 19th of April, *Six* began its dual deployment by departing for Argentia. In Argentia, *Six* re-roofed the ten-story BOQ, worked on a seaplane ramp, installed an intercommunication system and lighting fixtures in the station hospital, repaired the station laundry, replaced steam and condensate lines in the administration building, as well as other projects.

In mid-August of 1961, *Six* deployed from Argentia to Bermuda, for work at the Naval Station, including the construction of a community center, repairs to the hangar, and renovations to the EM club. *Six* returned to Davisville for a leave and training period on 15 December 1961.

On 1 March 1962, the Battalion departed for Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for six weeks of military training. The training included everything in the Marine Corps' repertoire and then some. The first five weeks were devoted to class room instruction, infiltration tactics, and actual use of weapons. The final week was given to a field problem with the Marine adversaries throwing everything they had, from frontal attacks to night infiltrations. *Six* came through with shining colors. The Battalion returned to Davisville on 13 April.

Then on 13 June, the Battalion debarked from Davisville, with *MCB Four* (on their way to Cuba) aboard the *USS Suffolk County*, and arrived at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, on 20 June, after a two-day liberty stop at St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands. After taking only a couple of days to set up, *Six* went into action.

The largest and most important project was the Aircraft Fire and Crash Facility. This project consisted of constructing a reinforced concrete building with approximately 5,500 square feet of floor space, windows, doors, and electrical and plumbing installation. Other projects included, construction of 600 linear feet of 6 inch asbestos waterline, repair of 7,700 linear feet of road to the observation post on Culebra Island including construction of culverts and headwalls, replacement of a wooden switching frame and pole line, rehabilitation of warehouse "519" which involved removing the existing timber trusses and corrugated roofing, replacing it with pre-cast, pre-stressed concrete beams and a double-tee roof with built up roofing, and construction of a 7,360 square yard parking lot. Other projects were: building an aircraft battery shop, a ground support equipment building with 2,900 square feet of floor area, erection of a MAUW storage building, rehabilitation of the twenty-eight buildings in the CB Camp area, and construction of four ammunition magazines. Finally, the rehabilitation of the nurses' quarters consisted of taking the old facility and completely remodeling and renovating the structure, replacing the old sheet metal roof and wooden purlins with new 2 x 6 purlins and corrugated transite roofing, removing fiber board sheathing in the walls and ceilings and replacing it with new gypsum board, replacement of existing wooden jalousies with new aluminum windows, replacement of plumbing and wiring, and interior and exterior painting.

On 26 September, ninety-five officers and men from the Battalion left for Camp Garcia on Vieques Island for five days of intensive Marine instruction on the .30 caliber machine gun, 81mm mortar, 106 recoiless rifle and 3.5 rocket launcher. The group consisted mostly of men who had not been to Camp Lejeune the previous spring.

On 15 October, the end of *MCB Six's* deployment at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, was close at hand and about 90 per cent of the assigned projects were complete. Meanwhile the Cuban Crisis was rapidly reaching its apex. The United States was gathering information concerning a sharp build-up of troops and newly constructed missile site. A constant surveillance was being maintained by using high altitude photographic equipment. Then the mock invasion by Marines of Vieques Island, Puerto Rico, was cancelled. The President of the United States brought the nation up to date on the Cuban Issue.

MCB Six was alerted shortly thereafter. Two twelve-hour shifts were organized to complete the four ammunition magazines that were assigned to us to finish before our departure. Remaining materials for the unfinished projects were gathered and signed over to the station's Public Works Department, which would execute the completion. Appropriate material was procured to enable the Battalion to execute any orders received. This would mean that *MCB Six* could be in any assault wave ready to carry out the completion of an airfield, water purification plant, communications network, or to dig in and defend.

Six sailed from Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, on 3 November, joining "B" Company of the 8th Marine Engineers aboard the *USS Terribone Parish.* On 7 November, the Battalion landed at Moorehead City, North Carolina, and went to Camp Lejeune about forty miles away. The Battalion exchanged their old M-1 rifles, .30 caliber machine guns, BAR's, and outdated mortars for the new M-14 rifles, M60 machine guns, and Mark 29 81mm mortars. For the remainder of the three week stay, the men fired the new weapons and studied combat engineering techniques. Eighty-five per cent of the new men qualified, boosting the Battalion's mark to 91.6 per cent, with one officer and fifteen enlisted men qualifying as expert rifleman. The engineering techniques learned included SATS installations, communications, waterproofing, fording, water purification and distribution, and bridge construction.

On the 30th of November, 280 very happy Seabees left Camp Lejeune and returned to Davisville, for a well-deserved rest. One half of the Battalion immediately pushed off on leave, and the remaining half set up shop, went to school, and helped prepare for the forthcoming deployment to Greece: Project JUDY.

To February 1967

LOG: 2 YEAR HISTORY

Fiscal year 1966-1967 proved to be the most outstanding for MCB-6 since its recommissioning in 1951. With Detachment Victor at Argentia and the remaining personnel in various schools, MCB-6 started to grow in August 1965. Within a month the unit had increased to more than 350 men.

In September, a detachment of 200 men left its home at Davisville for a month of intensive military training at Camp LeJeune, the Marine Corps Base in North Carolina. While at LeJeune, the unit learned various offensive and defensive combat methods including perimeter defense, patrolling, live firing, ""booby trap"" tactics and other advance combat techniques.

After returning to Davisville in October, MCB-6 started to prepare for a ""split assignment"". Normally the unit deployed to the Antarctic, but this time it would be different. On October 18, the ""ICE" Detachment, Det. Whiskey, composed of 100 men, left for a normal tour of duty and the main body of more than 350 men prepared for duty at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. MCB-6 arrived in GITMO on November 9, 1965.

Immediately after arriving, MCB-6 assumed the duties of constructing facilities and maintaining an active defense perimeter of the base. The unit worked day and night for the next two and one-half months and during that period, set many individual construction records. One of the projects was the construction of housing for the Cuban and other non American workers who live on the base. MCB-6 returned to a joyous welcome at Davisville, January 15, 1966. The unit had accomplished in about two months an amount of work intended for a 120 day period.

In February, the "ICE" detachment, after building several projects vital to the American scientific effort at the Antarctic, rejoined the main body at Davisville in March. Nor more than 600 strong, MCB-6 returned to Camp LeJeune for its second—month of military training. The course this time was more intensive and included various facets of guerilla warfare and tactics used by the Viet Cong.

In May the unit officially learned of its assignment to Vietnam. The advance party left during the first part of May. Within the next three weeks, the entire Battalion of more than 500 men had been airlifted direct from the Quonset Point Naval Air Station, in Rhode Island, to South Vietnam. The move was completed on May 24th.

Since arriving on duty at Da Nang in South Vietnam, the Battalion has again made its presence known by setting several construction records. One of them, was the construction of a 314 ft. pier which was started by MCB-8. The pier helped base the U.S.'s shipping problem in South Vietnam.

Despite the civil disturbances in Da Nang, MCB-6 worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week and completed the pier almost two weeks ahead of schedule, on June 20. The unit's performance attracted the praise of area commanders.

In the first month of its deployment, MCB-6 topped all other Seabee units in South Vietnam in terms of productive manpower. MCB-6 also initiated an effective Civic Action" program. One of the projects gained the interest of the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Forces Pacific, who visited the site of a well that was constructed by MCB-6 for the people of SON THOY, a nearby village.

On July 5, Commander James C. Day, Jr. relieved Lieutenant Commander Henry A. Tombari, as Commanding Officer of MCB-6

Later in the month, MCB-6 began a $10 million improvement program for Camp Tien Sha, the Naval Support Activity, Da Nang. Among the projects were; Post Office, laundry, soda fountain, 1,000 man galley, cobbler and tailor shop, numerous storage buildings and a Chapel. The new facilities either replaced or were the first of their type to service some 5,000 Navy Personnel at Tien Sha.

On July 23, the Viet Cong mortared the area near the MCB-6 camp. The unit received several rounds of small arms fire in the camp, but, there were no injuries due to the enemy action. However, the nearby activities of Marine Air Group 16 and the Naval Support Activity's hospital, did suffer light casualties.

One of the MCB-6 bunkers was commended for sighting the Viet Cong mortar flashes and opening fire. Their actions were believed to have averted the VC from inflicting heavier casualties on units in the Marble Mountain area of Vietnam

The following months of August, September and October 1966 were busy ones for the men of MCB-6. In the ensuing period, the unit completed construction of one of the largest "cold storage" facilities in the world. The "big freezer" as it is called, equalled 30,000 standard refrigerators. The "cold" units were mounted on pads and represented 356,000 cubic feet of cold storage space.

The new Prisoner of War camp facilities were constructed for the Republic of Vietnam. Completion of this project on schedule, drew the praise of area Commanders. Five members of MCB-6 were formally cited for their performance in connection with the construction of the prisoner detention area during dedication ceremonies held in November. The Commanding Officer and four other MCB-6 Officers and men were awarded the Vietnamese Medal of Honor for their accomplishments.

Also during this period, the unit hosted a number of USO shows. In addition members of the Battalion witnessed a performance by renowned comedienne, Miss Martha Raye. Miss Raye was presented an honorary Seabee plaque during her visit to the camp.

MCB-6 also received a new Executive Officer. CDR William J. Burns Jr., relieved LCDR W.R. Ledder in October. As the year drew to a close, MCB-6'-s civic action program reached a high point. A Christmas Party was held in December for some 400 children in the village of Son Thuy and an orphanage near DaNang. In addition, some 20 member of the Orphanage who were convent students, visited the MCB-6 camp on Christmas Day for dinner.

1967 began as 1966 faded into the past with MCB-6 looking back on a wonderful year. During the past year while on duty in Vietnam, the unit had built some 600 "tinned huts", enough to house some 6,000 Marines who had been sleeping on the ground and under leaky tents. In early January, the advance party of Mobile Construction Battalion 133 arrived at Camp Faulkner and MCB-6 began full scale preparations to return to its homeport at Davisville, R.I. The advance party of MCB-6 left for the homeport on January 8, 1967. MCB-6 returned the following month after some eight months in Vietnam.

MCB 6

VIETNAM 1967-1968 . .
A SUMMARY OF THE DEPLOYMENT

The following pages tell the story of our battalion's eight-month deployment to the Republic of Vietnam. Much that is shown is typical of the difficulties faced and goals achieved by all Seabee battalions in this war-torn country. Much of it is unique to MCB-6. All of it, we hope, will help you remember in years to come the events -- pleasant and unpleasant -- that made up this deployment.

The story begins, not in Vietnam, but in Rhode Island. It begins with many weeks of training -- techincal and military -- that prepared us to fulfill our mission in Vietnam. Our first RVN deployment had taught us that we must be able to build with steady efficiency and to fight whenever necessary. Thanks to our training, we were able to do both.

Beginning in August, 1967, Six's new home was Camp Miller near Chu Lai. There were many jobs waiting for us when we relieved MCB-8 at Camp Miller.

The largest of the initial assignments was the reconstruction of a 26-mile section of Route 1, the allied supply line that stretches from Saigon to Dong Ha. Six was assigned the section linking Quang Ngai with Chu Lai.

To supply the materials needed for the Route 1 job, we took on operation of a rock crusher and quarry and soon the Seabees of Six had the operation running at peak efficiency. After having produced an estimated 125,000 cubic yards of assorted size rock, Six turned over the crusher operation to a civilian contractor in December.

Meanwhile, Six's detail of about 50 men at Tam Ky was busy. They built steel frame cantonments to house an entire battalion of Vietnamese Army forces. Just as the project was nearing completion, however, a Viet Cong attack resulted in the partial destruction of the cantonments.

More fortunate was an addition to the Tam Ky Provincial Hospital built for the U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The work of Six's Seabees was hampered only by monsoon rains and the resulting mud. Construction, using Vietnamese brick and some local workers, went along as scheduled, however.

Another top-priority hospital, for the Army's 274th Medical Battalion, was built as a joint project of MCB-40 and MCB-6. Our hand in the construction consisted mostly of barracks and storage facilities.

Much of Six's construction, such as the Army hospital, was in the immediate Chu Lai area. The largest of the projects was the Chu Lai Power Distribution System. When completed, this ambitious project will have yielded more than 900 steel-reinforced concrete power poles and sufficient electric power for a city of 40,000 people.

There were many important projects around Chu Lai. One was the construction of three oil storage tanks for the Naval Support Activities Detachment. Also, additions and improvements were made to the Chu Lai USO. An engine repair shop and a library were built for Marine Air Group 36.

The work was not accomplished without interference. Bridge 13, one of our major projects on Route 1, was destroyed by the VC only two days before it was to be opened. VC satchel charges also destroyed a large crane being used on the Bridge 13 project. Not discouraged by these setbacks, the men of Six repaired the damage and opened Bridge 13 to traffic, still ahead of schedule.

Sniper fire was a common occurence at the rock quarry and Viet Cong attacks at Tam Ky hampered construction. In one offensive the enemy tried to overrun the Tam Ky Provincial Headquarters, a portion of which was defended by Delta Company builders. When the battle ended the Viet Cong had suffered a major defeat at the hands of the Seabee and Army defenders, leaving over 500 dead. The Seabees had accounted for 46 and destroyed a recoiless rifle position. The U. S. Army Commander at Tam Ky later said MCB-6 personnel performed "up to the standards of an experienced combat unit and were a credit to the entire Seabee organization."

In all, our second RVN deployment was a fruitful one. Our major projects were an ammunition supply point and open storage pads for the Army's Americal Division, the Chu Lai Electrical Distribution System, the Tam Ky and Chu Lai hospitals, petroleum storage tanks, quarry/crusher operations, reconstruction of Route 1 and prefabricated steel buildings in the Chu Lai area.

In our eight months at Chu Lai, we poured enough concrete to build a sidewalk from Davisville to Boston, drove our equipment more than 1 million miles, moved more than 300,000 cubic yards of earth -- enough to build a dam across the Mississippi River -- and built enough storage space for 40,000 automobiles. The value of construction materials used -- $2,445,912 -- would pay the President's salary for a quarter of a century.

WE WERE READY!

MCB-6 IN 1968-69:

This book tells the story of MCB-6 in 1968-69 — a "different" year in many ways. For instance, our homeport was longer than usual and our deployment was shorter. We were the Atlantic Alert Battalion for nearly 14 months, ready to move ourselves and all our equipment wherever in the world we were needed on 48 hours notice. And our deployment site was not Vietnam; it was Puerto Rico, where we were the first Seabee battalion in the Caribbean since 1965.

The story begins in April, 1968, when we returned from a successful deployment at Chu Lai, Republic of Vietnam. After a well-earned leave period, the battalion assumed the role of Atlantic Alert Battalion — a job we were to keep longer than we expected. In the early months of our homeport period we were scheduled to return to Vietnam, so we took in new personnel to replace men leaving the battalion and keep our strength up. Our military and technical training were geared for another RVN deployment. There were the usual rumors of different deployment sites, but it was not until late August that changes in work requirements, combined with a desire to return a battalion to work in the Atlantic, made the rumors fact and made MCB-6 the new pioneers in the Caribbean. Changes were made to bring the battalion's size down to peacetime level and to prepare the men for our continuing Alert status in Puerto Rico.

When we deployed in mid-December we had spent more than eight months in homeport, at least two months longer than usual. But the extra time had been spent preparing for a task different than that faced by any other re-deploying battalion. We were to construct, from the ground up, a modern Alert camp for future battalions deploying to Roosevelt Roads.

Our home in Puerto Rico was Camp Stinger, a collection of 105 Marine field tents assembled by our advance party, where we lived while building the Alert camp near Roosevelt Roads' Public Works Department.

Most of our energies were devoted to building the new Camp Stinger but we had time for many other jobs as well. At Roosevelt Roads we worked to improve the station's rifle range, construct two high-explosive magazines, install a power line, speed work on a Fleet Recreation Area, repair roads and do other work on a "fill-in" basis. On the coast at Salinas we repaired an airstrip.

On nearby islands, our details did weapons range work and improved pier and airfield facilities. At Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, SIX's detail of about 40 men constructed sidewalks and roads, repaired piers and expanded sewer and electrical systems. On the island of Andros in the Bahamas, one of our details resurfaced an airstrip.

But construction was not our sole purpose in Puerto Rico. An active military training program kept us ready for anything required of the Alert Battalion. Every man in SIX fired for qualification with the M-14 rifle and familiarization firing was held with all the other weapons Seabees use. In addition, we received regular lectures (with practical application) on combat techniques.

In off-duty hours, many SIXers volunteered to help with Civic Action projects. We provided a Santa for a Christmas parade in the nearby village of Ceiba; we helped paint a church in San Juan; we repaired a church and added rooms to a Sunday School in Ceiba; we improved a village plaza in Dagauo and renovated an old building to provide a kindergarten in Fajardo. Wherever we went, there was work to be done — and we did it.

Work continued smoothly when Cdr. Hugh A. Crisp relieved Cdr. Robert D. Keegan as Commanding Officer in mid-deployment. Proof of our overall readiness came near deployment's end when we received a score of "high excellent" on our deployment admin inspection. Two practice mount-outs were held during the inspection to see if we were ready to move on 48 hours notice as required. We were.

MCB-6 returned to Davisville in late May, 1969, after a six-month deployment. Though our deployment was shorter than usual we left substantial proof of our abilities throughout the Caribbean. The Seabees of MCB-6, first in the Caribbean in three years, re-established the Alert Battalion system and returned the "Can Do" spirit to the Atlantic.

U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Six

1951 - To date

15 Apr 51	U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Six was officially established at U.S. Naval Yards and Docks Supply Depot, Davisville, Rhode Island, and temporarily shore-based there.
3 May 51	The men and officers of the battalion assembled at Norfolk, Virginia, were presented with the battalion flag and passed in review.
4 May 51	The battalion sailed from Norfolk, Virginia, Naval Base, for military training at the Naval Station, Bermuda, British West Indies. While there, the battalion reconstructed a baseball field, then departed on July 6.
9 Jul 51 to 6 Dec 51	The battalion was at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The Seabees constructed a Seabee Camp at Leeward Point and repaved a wharf and constructed a by-pass road at the Naval Air Station.
13 Mar 52 to 19 Aug 52	The battalion was at Naval Station, Argentia, Newfoundland. It constructed aircraft runways and taxiways, transit sheds, an air transport building, jet fuel tanks, shops, and operated a rock crushing plant.
15 Oct 52 to 3 Apr 53	The battalion was at Guantanamo Bay. It constructed enlisted men's barracks and officer's quarters, extended the boundry road, and completed runway lighting at the Naval Air Station.
2 Jun to 2 Nov 53	At Port Layautey, French Morocco, the battalion finished constructing a new gymnasium, and constructed an outdoor

movie theatre and a new LST ramp, remodeled an airplane hangar, and performed maintenance on dependent housing.

13 Feb to 29 Jun 54	The battalion was at Guantanamo Bay. There it completed a dependents housing project in cooperation with Mobile Construction Battalion Eight. Five detachments were formed for service at San Juan, Puerto Rico; San Salvador; Grand Turk Island in the British West Indies; Nova Scotia; and Bermuda. These lasted variously through med-1955.
29 Sep 55 to 26 Jul 56	At Antigua in the British West Indies, the battalion put refrigeration units into operation, constructed a tent camp area and a boundry fence, and remodeled two buildings.
3 Oct 56 to 13 Mar 57	The battalion was at Guantanamo Bay raising the athletic field, relocating a section of road, and constructing quarters for married enlisted men and officers at Leeward Point.
21 Jun 57 to 24 Jan 58	At Guantanamo Bay, the battalion completed housing units for married personnel at the Naval Air Station and relocated the Northeast road gate into Guantanamo City.
22 May - 7 Dec 58	The main body of the battalion was at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. For a time during this period, Detachment Quebec was at Argentia, Newfoundland and Detachment Papa was at Barbados in the British West Indies. The main body was engaged in constructing an advanced underwater building and a 1,000,000-gallon fuel tank.
18 May 59 to 15 Jan 60	The battalion was at Rota, Spain. Constructed an addition to a school, a gymnasium, library, hobby shop, enlisted men's club, chief petty officer's club,

vehicle shed, service station, and dry cleaning plant.

21 Apr - 11 Dec 60	The battalion command remained in Davisville and Detachment Tango was sent to Bermuda to construct a country store, Navy Exchange, avionics shop, Marine enlisted men's quarters and a warehouse. They also repaired a research tower at Argus Island, 30 miles off the coast of Bermuda.
21	MCB-6's Detachment Uniform went to Argentia to repair the chapel, construct a pump house, erect Butler buildings for supplies, replace pier decking and repair a hangar roof.
22 Apr - 18 Aug 61	At Argentia the battalion re-roofed a 10-story bachelor officer's quarters, worked on a seaplane ramp, installed intercom and lighting fixtures at the station hospital, repaired the station laundry, and replaced steam system lines in the administration building.
23 Aug - 15 Dec 61	The battalion arrived at Bermuda Naval Station from Argentia to construct a community center, repair a hangar, renovate an enlisted men's club, and repair salt water lines.
20 Jun - 3 Nov 62	At Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, the battalion constructed an Aircraft and Fire Crash facility, install 600 feet of 6-inch waterline, repair a 7700-foot road to an observation post on Culebra Island, and rehabilitated a warehouse.
27 Feb 63 to 19 Oct 63	At Marathon, Greece, the battalion worked on Project Judy; a communications facility requiring construction of over

100 major antennas, 11 buildings, and complete road and utility systems.

18 Feb 0 17 Jul 64	The battalion served at Rota, Spain; Sigonella, Italy; and Marathon, Greece. The battalion constructed an Information and Education facility, a perimeter road, and a library extension at Rota. A fire and crash equipment garage, a paint and tire shop and warehouse wiring at Sigonella. It completed items for Project Judy at Marathon.
5 Nov 64 to 5 Mar 65	At Antarctica, the battalion modernized facilities at McMurdo Station, constructed a VLR research station at Byrd, rebuilt a balloon inflation building at South Pole station and miscellaneous jobs at Hallett, Eights, and Palmer station.
9 Nov 65 to 15 Jan 66	At Guantanamo, the battalion constructed a housing project for Cubans and other non-U.S. citizens employed on the base.
24 May 66 to 11 Feb 67	At DaNang, Vietnam, the battalion completed a pier, made improvements at Camp Tien Sha, a new prisoner of war compound for the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, constructed 356,000 cubic feet of cold storage facilities, and erected 600 tinned huts for a 6,000-man Marine encampment.
3 Aug 67 to 13 Apr 68	The battalion was at Chu Lai, Republic of Vietnam. There it constructed a 26-mile section of Route One and built a cantonment for the Army of the Republic of Vietnam forces and a provincial hospital at Tam Ky, a hospital
9 Dec 68 to 27 May 69	The battalion served at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. There it built a camp for the Seabee alert battalion,

enlarged the rifle range of the Naval Station, worked on mosquito control, installed a power feeder line, built a parking lot, did road repairs, and erected an armament assembly building and portable line operations buildings.

A 30-man detail went to Guantanamo and worked on water tanks, power lines and piers.

17 Nov 1969 Disestablished

U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Six

Commanding Officers

Commander Richard D. Pinkerton, CEC, USN	3 May 51 - 11 Jun 53
Commander Paul J. Simmons, CEC, USN	11 Jun 53 - 27 Oct 54
Commander Ronald C. Jacquess, CEC, USN	27 Oct 54 - 27 Oct 56
Commander Verne M. Tregonis, CEC, USN	27 Oct 58 - 22 Nov 58
Lieutenant Commander Lloyd E. Stiffler, CEC, USN	22 Nov 58 - 15 Dec 58
Commander Lenson W. Graves, CEC, USN	15 Dec 58 - 19 Feb 60
Lieutenant Commander Ossian R. Butterfield, CEC, USN	19 Feb 60 - 27 Feb 61
Lieutenant Commander Charles W. Calhoun, CEC, USN	27 Feb 61 - 24 Mar 63
Lieutenant Commander Richard J. Biederman, CEC, USN	24 Mar 63 - 27 May 64
Lieutenant Commander Henry A. Tombari, CEC, USN	27 May 64 - 5 Jul 66
Commander James C. Day, Jr., CEC, USN	5 Jul 66 - 17 Mar 67
Commander Robert D. Keegan, CEC, USN	17 Mar 67 - 28 Feb 69
Commander Hugh A. Crisp, CEC, USN	28 Feb 69 - To date

Awards

Navy Unit Commendation (As part of the Thirtieth Naval Construction Regiment)	Vietnam

U.S. NAVAL MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALION
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US NAVAL MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALION
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