

Reserve Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 21

Historical Information



*“Construimus, Batuimus”
“We Build, We Fight”*



Reserve Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 21 Command History

U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion TWENTY-ONE (NMCB21) was commissioned in 1962 at the Willow Grove Naval Air Station northwest of Philadelphia. The "Blackjack" Battalion was formed from Seabee units within the Fourth Naval District. The Battalion's first commanding officer was Commander J. Schuyler. With its flag now at the Readiness Support Site (RSS) on board Naval Air Engineering Station (NAES) Lakehurst, New Jersey, today's NMCB21 is comprised of Seabees from eight Navy Operational Support Centers located in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania.

The history of NMCB21 is partly the history of the former NMCB13 that was decommissioned in 1995 at Camp Smith, New York. A large number of the Seabees that comprised NMCB13 transferred to NMCB21 when the former battalion was decommissioned. Seabee battalions designated by the numbers 13 and 21 have a tradition of working together which dates back to World War II when construction battalions 13 and 21 worked side by side on Okinawa.

NMCB21's RSS was established at Lakehurst in 1971. The RSS compound includes administrative offices, a warehouse, a vehicle maintenance shop, and a training building. Improvements to the RSS are ongoing and provide a source of meaningful work for the Seabees who perform monthly training drills at Lakehurst. Fort Dix, adjacent to NAES Lakehurst, provides military training areas and weapon ranges for the Battalion.

A source of great pride for NMCB21 is a larger than life Bee sculpture mounted inside the front gate of the RSS. Patterned after the famous Seabee logo, the NMCB21 Bee is the product of Seabee veteran Steelworker Chief Ernie Cotilus. "Ernie's Bee" is one of just a few similar Seabee sculptures around the World. Chief Cotilus fabricated the Bee at his home. He then transported individual sections of the Bee to Lakehurst where it was assembled on its support pedestal.

In July 1972, U.S. Navy forces from the Forth Naval District mobilized in response to the Tropical Storm Agnes flood disaster in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania. Detachments from nine active and reserve Seabee battalions, including NMCB21, participated in the "Power to the People" program to restore electric power to over 16,000 homes.

Following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, NMCB21 participated in the Partnership Peace program in the late 1990's. The Battalion deployed several detachments to Bulgaria, Latvia and Macedonia to repair schools, hospitals and other public facilities in partnership with forces from the Eastern European countries.

Following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, members of the Battalion mobilized to New York City with the New York Naval Militia to participate in recovery and security efforts. Other members of the Battalion volunteered for active duty to guard Navy installations throughout the United States. Many members of NMCB21 volunteer as members of the

New York Naval Militia, the naval component of the New York State Military Forces under the command of the Adjutant General of New York.

In 2003, NMCB21 mobilized 250 personnel in two Air Detachments to support Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. One Air Detachment deployed to Kuwait and participated in the invasion of Iraq. The other Air Detachment deployed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and Andros Island, Bahamas to provide construction support to Navy installations.

In 2005 and 2006, NMCB21 mobilized 300 personnel in two Air Detachments and various smaller groups to further support Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. The Air Detachments supported active component Seabee battalions in Kuwait. In 2006, a group of NMCB21 Seabees went forward into Afghanistan to perform repairs to a critical runway. Other members of the Battalion supported U.S. Army and Marine Corps operations in Iraq and Djibouti.

The operational capabilities of the "Blackjack" Battalion are clearly evident through its continuing record of successful mission execution throughout the World. NMCB21 has done and Can Do!



**NO
LOGO
AVAILABLE**



**NO
PHOTOS
AVAILABLE**