

# Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 74

---

## *Historical Information*



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



## **Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 74 Command History**

United States Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 74 was activated April 28, 1943, at the Naval Construction Training Center in Camp Perry, Williamsburg, VA. LCDR Fremont G. Elliot assumed command and led the battalion through most of World War II.

"Fearless 74" served its country well in the dangerous island-hopping campaign to reclaim Japanese-held territory in the South Pacific. Often landing with Marine Corps combat troops and operating under heavy enemy bombardment, the battalion constructed support facilities on Tarawa, Kwajalein and the Berlin Islands. For its outstanding achievements, NMCB 74 received the Navy Unit Commendation Medal before being inactivated Oct. 31, 1945, while in Okinawa.

Two decades later, the U.S. Navy called upon NMCB 74 again. The battalion was recommissioned Dec. 6, 1966, at the Naval Construction Battalion Center in Gulfport, MS, and adopted the motto "Does More." From 1967 to 1970, the battalion made four deployments to Vietnam. NMCB 74 served in various locations, including DaNang, Cam Lo, Dong Hoa, Quang Tri, Quang Nagi, Chau Doc and Bien Hoa. During this time, the battalion was involved in constructing numerous base camps, a 575,000 square foot airfield, a 102 acre heliport, three Army Special Forces camps and a 730 foot bridge. NMCB 74 received a second Navy Unit Commendation Medal following its first Vietnam deployment. On Aug. 17, 1969, just before the battalion was scheduled to return to Vietnam, Hurricane Camille struck the Gulf Coast. The battalion received its third Navy Unit Commendation Medal for recovery actions following the storm.

Following the Vietnam War, NMCB 74 continued to serve her country. The battalion participated in peacetime construction efforts around the globe, including deployments to Diego Garcia; Guam; Okinawa, Japan; Puerto Rico; Rota, Spain; and Sigonella, Sicily. In April 1986, the battalion was awarded the Coast Guard Unit Commendation Citation for supporting the construction of a new Loran C station in Guam during a nine-month deployment.

On Dec. 3, 1990 NMCB 74 was sent to the Persian Gulf in support of Operation Desert Shield/Storm. The battalion initially deployed to Suman Air Base, Bahrain, then redeployed in mid-December to Ra's Al Mish'ab in northeastern Saudi Arabia. Detail sites included Al Jubail, Al Kibirt, and Al Khafji in Saudi Arabia and Suman Air Base in Bahrain. Among the battalion's projects were the construction and maintenance of 30 miles of the 200-mile long main supply route, building one of the largest ammunition facilities in the world, a 1,500 foot stabilized soil runway for C-130 aircraft, two large camps for Marines, and support for NMCB 5 in building a 15,000-man camp known as "Wally World." The battalion's most notable achievement, however, was Bravo Company's construction of tank and artillery mock-ups in support of Task Force Troy, Commanding General Norman Schwarzkopf's successful decoy that was deployed to disguise the main thrust of the allied assault on Iraq.

During recent years, NMCB 74 has continued to live up to its superb reputation. The battalion received the Battle "E" award as Best of Type among Atlantic Fleet battalions in 1993 following an outstanding Okinawa deployment. In May 1994, while deployed to the Caribbean region, the battalion sent Air Detachments to Grand Turk Island and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to support the construction of migrant processing facilities. Once the mission in Grand Turk was complete, the first Air Det was transferred to Cuba, putting just over 200 of NMCB 74's finest in support of Joint Task Force 160. The battalion bore the brunt of constructing facilities to house 70,000 Cuban migrants. After returning to homeport in 1995, the battalion was selected to receive the Peltier Award, a highly prestigious honor given each year to the best active duty battalion among the eight mobile construction battalions.

In March 1998 the battalion readopted its original "Fearless" motto. In September 1998 the battalion provided cleanup assistance at the Naval Construction Battalion Center, Gulfport, MS, and throughout the Mississippi Gulf Coast due to damage caused by Hurricane Georges. Secretary of Defense William Cohen presented more than 200 members of the battalion the Humanitarian Service Medal.

Deployed to the Caribbean again in 1999, NMCB 74 assisted the Special Operations Command South (SOCSOUTH) in its relocation from Panama to Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. Buildings were constructed from the ground up and renovations made to already-existing facilities. The battalion also responded to the Kosovo refugee crisis, constructing shelter for 500 displaced civilians in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. For its efforts the battalion was again presented the Peltier Award as the best active duty battalion.

During its 2000 deployment to Okinawa, NMCB 74 sent a DFT to the Philippines and the Kingdom of Thailand as part of Cooperation and Readiness Afloat (CARAT) exercise 2000. The battalion also participated in recovery efforts after Typhoons Jelawat and Saomai on Okinawa, and set records for rock blasting as part of a joint construction operation on Annette Island, Alaska. In recognition of its superb construction efforts throughout the Pacific Rim, NMCB 74 was once again selected to receive the Battle "E" award, its fourth in eight years.

In 2001, NMCB 74 became the final battalion to deploy a mainbody to Camp Moscrip in Puerto Rico, with detail sites at Andros Island, Bahamas; Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; Jacksonville, Florida; New London, Connecticut; Norfolk, Virginia; and Vieques Island, Puerto Rico. The battalion also sent DFTs to Great Inagua Island, Bahamas; conception, Paraguay; and Salta, Argentina. The battalion completed substantial construction tasking throughout the Atlantic region and provided security support at Camp Garcia on Vieques in response to anti-Navy protests during several Composite Unit Training Exercises. On September 11, 2001, the United States was attacked by terrorists. Security measures were increased, and NMCB 74 was challenged with dispatching crew served weapons teams, constructing force protection barriers and establishing a Command Operations Center. While maintaining these measures, the battalion was simultaneously assigned to realign and consolidate Camp Moscrip facilities

and equipment in preparation for a new six-month deployed/ten-month homeport rotation cycle. By deployment's end all facilities were either reassigned to Naval Station Roosevelt Roads or reconfigured for Detachment spaces.

For the Fearless Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) SEVENTY-FOUR the 2002/2003 deployment was one of the most dynamic in the history of the battalion. The battalion deployed to Camp Covington, Guam 5 October 2002 initially deploying five details from the Caribbean to the Pacific as well as a Civic Actions Team to Palau. Shortly after deploying to Guam in early October, the battalion's Air Det Heavy redeployed to Ahmed Al Jaber Air Base in central Kuwait. The primary tasking was the construction of the F/A-18 Parking Apron and Taxiway project for the 3rd Marine Air Wing. The enormous 22-acre project had a mission critical, operational ready date of mid-January, 2003. Following the early November rollback of Details: Lemoore, San Diego and Hawaii, an additional 170 battalion personnel and equipment were redeployed from Guam to assist in completing the project. After the re-deployment of the Mainbody Super Typhoon Pongsona struck Guam providing the Seabees of the new Detail Guam a perfect opportunity to assist local commands and personnel. Just after Guam was back into shape the Battalion received the call once more to re-deploy their SLRP, AP, and OPP to Kuwait in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion SEVENTY-FOUR made significant and critical contributions to FIRST Marine Expeditionary Force's (I MEF) successful campaign to topple Saddam Hussein's regime and liberate the people of Iraq. The battalion: completed the largest, pre-hostilities construction project in the entire operational theater; played a defining role in shaping the Naval Construction Force's operational scheme of maneuver for contingency, non-standard bridging; and provided superb contingency engineering support to First Marine Division during the war, enhancing mobility for assault forces' logistics and constructing countless force protection and battle space sustainment improvement projects. On the 30th of May 2003 the battalion returned to a hero's welcome at homeport Gulfport Mississippi.

NMCB 74's 2004 deployment started in February with project sites across Europe. Details and DFT's, composed of 329 personnel, were located in Rota, Spain; Sigonella, Italy; Souda Bay, Greece; Slunj, Croatia; and Accra, Ghana. 335 personnel deployed to Kuwait and Iraq in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM II (OIF II). The Air Detachment and MPF Offload Team departed for Kuwait as the Advanced Party, the remaining personnel left from Rota in February. Detachment SWA then became the "main body" site and Rota a Detail site. DET SWA convoyed into Iraq, sending Details to Ar Ramadi, Al Asad, and Fallujah. By the end of April, the Detail sites of Ar Ramadi and Al Asad were turned over to RNMCB 14 and DET SWA was regrouped in Fallujah. In addition to earning 19,982 mandays of work in support of OIF II, NMCB 74 observed firsthand the importance of maintaining considerable Tactical Movement, Engineer Reconnaissance, and jobsite security capabilities. DET SWA built and fought alongside the Marine Corps, constructing bunkers, berms, and bypasses, and then shifted focus once again to perform clean-up operations. The Fearless Seabees completed several traditional contingency projects including the construction of a Thousand-Man Tent Camp for the Fallujah Brigade and a frontier outpost for the Iraqi Border Patrol. Seabees developed

and implemented the Iraqi Construction Apprentice Program and undertook a substantial project to build a Community Outreach Center for the Fallujah Liaison Team. Seabees further supported MEF operations by installing watchtowers along a main supply road, creating a bypass to a historically hostile supply route, repairing a bridge damaged by anti-Iraqi forces, and building a hardened bunker for the Marine Camp in Mahmudiyah. In the European theater, NMCB 74 Seabees provided top-notch support to CNE and encountered numerous challenges, providing an excellent environment to train and excel. Details and DFTs successfully completed over 14,000 mandays of construction. Detail Rota tasking included: restarting the Camp Mitchell Command and Control Facility, construction of the Marine Corps Security Force Obstacle Course, BOQ 39 Parking Lot, Hospital PEB, and Critical Maintenance Facility (Bldg 555) Renovation. Detail Sigonella completed the MWR Softball Lighting and Head Facility Renovation and started the NAS II Perimeter Security Fence. Detail Souda Bay finished the MOGAS Station and Emergency Generators Installation. DFT Croatia started and finished construction on Barracks #8 and #9, Latrine Facility, Waterline, and Training Range Road Repair. DFT Ghana started and completed construction on the K-Span Storage Facility, HAASTO Medical Facility, Aircraft Apron, Modular ISO Dormitories, and Shiite Neighborhood Pavilion. With another successful deployment under their belt, the Fearless Battalion returned home to Gulfport by the end of August.

NMCB-74 deployed to Camp Shields, Okinawa, Japan on 6 June 2005 and returned to homeport on 15 December 2005. The battalion initially deployed to nine locations in the Pacific theater and CONUS. In August 2005, the battalion was tasked with deploying to two additional sites. The first tasking was the deployment of an additional detail to Camp Pendleton, CA. The second was a Deployment for Training (DFT) to the Seychelles Islands, Africa.

Three months into the deployment, the Battalion was directly impacted by the affects of Hurricane Katrina. Numerous Battalion personnel experienced moderate to severe levels of property damage and loss. In response to this situation, the Battalion immediately re-deployed a small team of personnel back to Gulfport to assist Command family members with disaster relief. Invaluable services were provided in the form of property damage assessments, benefits and entitlements coordination and disbursement. The presence of this team greatly facilitated the Command's ability to rapidly account for all personnel including service members and dependents.

In October 2005, the Battalion was ordered to deploy a Heavy Air Detachment in support of Operation Lifeline; earthquake relief efforts in Pakistan. Project work began on 27 October 2005 and continued until 14 December 2005. Various types of humanitarian relief and disaster recovery related projects were completed. The Detachment was primarily tasked with the removal of earthquake related structural and geological debris at numerous school sites within the Muzaffarabad area. Additional support was provided in the form of tent camp latrine construction and installation, camp maintenance support for the Disaster Assistance Center Pakistan (DAC PAK) staff, the 212<sup>th</sup> M.A.S.H. and the 267<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster (Aircraft Refueling) Detachment, and shelter construction in the

“Adopt-a-Village” initiative. Advanced Based Functional Component (ABFC) projects included sea huts, shaving tables, heads, urine tubes, and tent decks.

By the end of deployment, the Fearless Seabees were assigned to a total of 13 different sites stretching from the west coast of the United States to Africa. Throughout the deployment, the men and women of NMCB-74 provided high quality, cost effective, and at times strategic construction and contingency support to both U.S. Pacific and Central Commands. Following the lead of Commander Mark Libonate, the Seabees of this Command demonstrated unparalleled levels of professionalism through every challenge they faced.

NMCB-74 has been selected "Best of Type" among the Atlantic Fleet battalions nine times during its history. It was awarded this honor under CDR Gordon W. Schley for fiscal year 1968, CDR James E. Bodamer in 1973, CDR Daniel B. Leonard in 1976, CDR Arthur W. Fort in 1978, CDR B. Daniel Neal in 1993, CDR Ronald W. Hertwig Jr. in 1994, CDR William M. Peacock III in 1999, CDR Francis P. Castaldo in 2000 and CDR Clifford M Maurer in 2003. The battalion also received the Society of American Military Engineers' Peltier Award, honoring the best active duty battalion, in 1978, 1994, 1999, and 2003. In 2003 the Battalion was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation.



RECOMMISSIONED  
3 DECEMBER 1966













