

Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 128

Historical Information



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



UNITED STATES NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION 128

United States Naval Construction Battalion 128 was originally activated at Camp Peary, Virginia, early in September 1943. On 9 September 1943, the battalion, numbering about 1,100 men, was transferred to Camp Endicott, Davisville, Rhode Island, for Advance Base training. The Officer in Charge until October 1943 was Lieutenant Commander Rupert A. Sterzik, CEC, USNR. On 19 October, the Battalion was transferred to Camp Parks, Pleasanton, California, for overseas assignment. However, its personnel shortly became part of the operating force at the United States Naval Construction Battalion Replacement and Recuperation Center at Camp Parks, and the Battalion was inactivated there on 31 January 1944.

The 128th Naval Construction Battalion (Pontoon) was activated again on 28 September 1944 at Camp Endicott with Lieutenant Commander Alexander C. Husband, CEC, USN, as Officer in Charge. In July and August of that year, Seabees, who previously had demonstrated the effectiveness of the "magic box" at Salerno, Anzio and Normandy, were arriving at Davisville. These were the pontoon veterans of United States Naval Construction Battalion Detachments 1006 and 1047. The greater portion of both units formed the nucleus of the 128th.

After a brief training period, the Battalion, comprising about 1,200 men, entrained in three echelons for the West Coast. On 27 and 28 October 1944, it arrived at Camp Parks, Pleasanton, California, for further training. On 25 November, the battalion boarded the USS Sibley for duty in the Pacific Ocean Area.

The Sibley reached Pearl Harbor, Territory of Hawaii, on 2 December. The Seabees of the Battalion disembarked, took up quarters at the Advance Base Receiving

Depot at Iroquois Point, and were assigned to the Thirty-sixth United States Naval Construction Regiment. At nearby Intrepid Point, where the battalion moved its headquarters in late January 1945, the Battalion assembled pontoon equipment in preparation for amphibious operations.

In December 1944, the Battalion formed into Pontoon Barge Platoons and Pontoon Causeway Platoons, and each platoon consisted of 1 officer and 22 enlisted men. Late in the month, the platoons began to depart for the Western Pacific. The platoons travelled singly aboard Tank Landing Ships, and during operations were attached to Commander, Amphibious Forces, United States Pacific Fleet. Other platoons followed at intervals through 4 March 1945, and by that date over 800 men were so engaged.

Aboard the LST's, the Seabees of the Battalion stood signal watches and pontoon causeway watches, and assisted in hauling, storing, and loading. The highly-specialized pontoon units spread out across the Pacific. In the Russell Islands, platoons practiced amphibious landings. Eleven LST's bearing 128th Seabees arrived in the Philippines for cargo operations in February and March of 1945. Seven of these departed after a month to take part in the pending invasion of Okinawa, while four plied among the Philippine Islands until July. In addition, platoons were at Guadalcanal, New Guinea, Tulagi, Ulithi, and Saipan.

While its personnel were engaged at these far-flung locations, the 128th, together with the forward echelon of the Third-sixth United States Naval Construction Regiment, arrived at Guam on 31 March 1945.

On Guam, the Battalion constructed a camp and a pontoon assembly yard, while at Leyte-Samar and other locations its LST-based pontoon crews were preparing for the invasion of Okinawa.

The invasion of Okinawa and other Ryukyu Islands, one of the major amphibious operations of the war, saw the reconvergence of several 128th platoons. Four days before D-day three causeway platoons of the 128th landed with a force of Marines in Kerama Retto, a small group of islands off Okinawa, and emplaced causeways while under air attack and sniper fire. The main force hit the western beaches of Okinawa on D-day, Easter Sunday, 1 April 1945, and 669 men of the Battalion took part in the assault. The 128th Seabees had the first causeways in the water by 0800 on D-day and beached several causeways by noon. Troops, ammunition, fuel, and cargo were landed by pontoon barges by the day after D-day. At Red Beach, a 1,425-foot floating pontoon pier was in operation by 3 April. In all, the platoons placed 28 sets of 2-section by 30-section pontoon causeways. More than 64,000 troops landed dry-shod, and over 110,000 tons of cargo were unloaded over these structures, which were used more extensively than in any previous Pacific operation.

At Ie Shima, 5 miles west of Okinawa, three platoon crews landed and encountered the most intensive beach resistance of the Ryukyu landings. Casualties did not deter the 128th Seabees from placing causeways to accelerate the invasion. Another dangerous job was the repair of battle damage to the ships screening the invading forces from the incursions of Kamikaze planes. At Kerama Retto, about 100 men of the 128th Seabees made on-the-spot repairs to ships under hazardous battle conditions.

Pontoon warping tugs assembled and manned by the battalion kept piers and causeways in place during a severe storm on 4 April. The tugs also cleared the beaches of scores of landing craft and barges beached by the storm tides.

The operational platoons returned to Guam from May through July where they were outfitted and redeployed to various locations. Five causeway platoons landed on Banika Island in the Russell Group of the British Solomon Islands on 24 July 1945. There they assembled 25 strings of 1-section by 30-section causeways and 40 sets of operational gear, most of which they then loaded aboard LST's. On 17 October 1945, these 128th Seabees assisted in the camp evacuation and final cleanup and returned to the 128th Battalion Headquarters on Guam. Other barge and causeway platoons travelled between the Marianas, Ryukyus, and the Philippines in July and August.

Pontoon operations continued after V-J Day. In September and October 1945, about 450 men of the battalion participated in the landing of occupation forces in Japan, Korea, and China. At Aomori, Japan, pontoon barges were used to assist the Army in unloading cargo. The 128th Seabees unloaded seven causeway sets at Yokohama and operated barges in Hokkaido. In Korea, they launched three causeways near Inchon.

At Shanghai, cheering throngs, firecrackers, and clashing cymbals attended the arrival of the Allied troops. On the Whangpoo River at Shanghai, Seabees of the 128th Battalion operated four pontoon barges and placed a pontoon causeway. They also placed a causeway at Tientsin, China.

The platoons deployed to Japan, Korea, and China returned to Guam in October 1945, where they were joined by the platoons just returned from Banika Island. The 128th Seabees prepared for redeployment home. In the organizational changes incidental to demobilization, the 128th Construction Battalion was shifted on 24 October from the Thirty-sixth to the Thirty-fifth Naval Construction Regiment. Battalion personnel were transferred to other units for return home. The Battalion was inactivated at Guam on 20 November 1945.

U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion One hundred twenty-eight
April 1967 - To date

- 1 Apr 67 U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion One hundred twenty-eight was established at the Naval Construction Battalion Center, Gulfport, Mississippi.
- 26 Oct 67 to
12 Jul 68 Headquarters for the battalion were at Camp Faulkner, Danang East, Vietnam. The battalion partially completed construction of Ammunition Supply Point One near Danang; constructed security towers, two-story barracks, administration buildings, and warehouses. They erected a water purification plant; built a 100-bed temporary hospital; built two 1,000 man cantonments; replaced water lines up Monkey Mountain; and, repaired a runway.
- 17 Jan 69 to
Aug 69 Battalion headquarters were at Camp Rhodes, Quang Tri Combat Base. The battalion straightened, widened, re-routed, elevated and maintained 12-miles of Route One. In addition, they took over, for maintenance and completion, other projects, including construction of a 1,000-man galley and a 500-man galley, aircraft parking aprons and hangars, a theater and chapel, and office buildings within the Combat Base. At other locations they constructed an ammunition supply point; built a water treatment and distribution facility; and, built hospital wards with covered walkways.
- Aug 69
To date The first two planes returning MCB One hundred twenty-eight personnel from Vietnam to Gulfport, Mississippi, had to be diverted because of typhoon Camille: one plane landed at Tampa, Florida, and the other landed at McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey. As the men of the battalion arrived at Gulfport, they assisted in search and recovery operations, evacuation of refugees, and cleared debris. The battalion has continued to do repair work at the Gulfport Center.

MCB One-hundred Twenty-eight (Gulfport)

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| Reestablished at Gulfport, Mississippi | 1 Apr 67 |
| Danang, Vietnam | Oct 67 - Jul 68 |
| Quang Tri, Vietnam | Jan 69 - Aug 69 |
| Disestablished | 17 Nov 69 |

MCB One-hundred Twenty-eight

Disestablished 17 Nov 69

128's World War II Heritage

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In late October 1945, the platoons deployed to Japan, Korea, and China returned to Guam where they were joined by platoons returning from other locations. The 128 Seabees prepared for redeployment home and were inactivated to other units for the stateside return. The Battalion was deactivated at Guam on 20 November 1945.





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U.S. NAVY MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALION ONE TWENTY EIGHT









