



• Alexandria, Va.

SEABEES IN THE BRINEY

In the mid 1960's, concomitant with increased demands for resources to support a growing population, came a new national policy encouraging technology development towards economic utilization of marine resources. The U. S. Navy has since been instrumental in expanding man's ability to work effectively under water. To ensure effective utilization of this developing technology, the 31st Naval Construction Regiment developed a basic training course in underwater construction for divers of the Naval Construction Force (NCF). It provides instruction in the use and maintenance of the specialized tools and equipment and training in the techniques used in building and maintaining fixed ocean structures.

The course includes instruction in: diving equipment operation, maintenance, and safety; diving operations; underwater site surveying; underwater construction blasting; and underwater construction operations.

For example, the underwater construction blasting instruction familiarizes the trainee with rock drilling and blasting equipment and materials necessary for underwater site preparation (e. g. excavation and rubble removal). It includes a week of instruction at San Nicolas Island, Calif., where

trainees plan, place and detonate explosives underwater.

Classroom and in-harbor instruction also includes proficiency training in the use and maintenance of diving equipment such as the KMB-9 diver mask, the unisuit and wireless diver communication systems, and a variety of hand and power tools utilized in underwater construction.

Finally, the trainees, as a unit, perform a complete facilities construction project, such as installing and stabilizing an inshore submarine cable or pipeline and/or emplacing a diver habitat-control center. The project simulates an actual requirement and involves site survey and selection, construction procedure planning, mobilization, facility assembly and installation, final inspection testing and facility recovery.

This 10-week course is a significant milestone in developing the skills essential to the NCF in fulfilling its responsibilities for all military-executed underseas facility construction. Since the initial pilot course commenced in the spring of 1973, 35 divers from UCT-1, UCT-2 and the Civil Engineering Laboratory have successfully completed the course and received the Underwater Constructor designation, signifying their capability in the construction of fixed ocean facilities.

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