

# 71<sup>st</sup> Naval Construction Battalion

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*Historical  
Information*



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



71st C.B.

NCTC - Norfolk - Magruder - Davisville  
ABD - Davisville - Hueneme  
Ready Date - 8 Jun'43  
Left ABD - 8 Sep'43  
Location - Bougainville Manus Pityilu-Is. Guadalcanal, Okinawa

Activated 28 April 1943

LOG

- 4-23-43 - 71st CB transferred from Magruder to Davisville on 28 Apr'43. (Budocks ltr to CNO 23 Apr'43)
- 7- 1-43 - 71st CB is at Camp Parks.
- 9-20-43 - Departed Hueneme 8 Sep'43. (WSJ)
- 1-29-44 - 1 Dec'43 report of 71st CB - Departed Hueneme 7 Sep'43 arriving Guadalcanal 5 Oct'43; arrived Bougainville early part of Nov'43.
- 2-17-44 - 1 Jan'44 report of 71st CB - Division of strength: 970 men at Bougainville, 48 men at Guadalcanal, 8 men at Detached NAEU #7 Boat Pool (Guadalcanal).
- 3-25-44 - 1 Feb'44 report of 71st CB - operating at Bougainville.
- 4-11-44 - 1 Mar'44 report of 71st CB - operating at Bougainville.
- 5-18-44 - 71st CB is located at Manus. (AES 5/16/44)
- 6-22-44 - 1 May'44 report of 71st CB - Left Bougainville on 25 Mar'44 and landed at their new base (Manus) 23 Apr'44.
- 6-26-44 - 71st CB is located at Pityilu, Admiralty Is. as of 31 May'44. (Comservfor7flt Sec. ltr A-9 over Ser. BP-001407 to Dirpadocks dtd 8 Jun'44)

71st C.B.

- 8- 9-44 - 1 Jul'44 report of 71st CB - operating at Pityilu Air Base in Admiralty Is.
- 8-25-44 - 71st CB located at Manus - Arrived Guadalcanal Oct'43
  - " Bougainville Nov'43
  - " Manus Apr'44
- (Data of SoPac as of 7/1/44)
- 8-29-44 - Scheduled return date of 71st CB to U.S. Changed to 15 Nov'44. (Com7flt sec. disp 210103 NCR 951 to Cincpac dtd 21 Aug'44)
- 9- 7-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of 71st CB - operating at Manus (Pityilu and LosNegros)
- 10-18-44 - 1 Aug'44 report of 71st CB - operating at Manus. Report endorsed by 2nd Reg.
- 10-24-44 - 1 Sep'44 report of 71st CB - operating at Manus.
- 10-24-44 - 71st CB is located at Pityilu Is. - expected to be released 15 Nov'44 to return to Sopac. (Comservfor7flt monthly report for Aug'44 to Budocks Ser. BP001315 Sec. dtd 12 Sep'44).
- 11-8-44 - 71st CB is located at Los Negros and under the 2nd Reg. It is estimated that the 71st CB can be released on 15 Nov'44 for return to the SoPac area. (Comservfor7flt Sec. ltr A9-4 over Ser BP-001882 to Budocks dtd 12 Oct'44 monthly report for Sep'44)
- 11-29-44 - 71st CB located at Manus. (Comserv7flt Sec. Disp. to CNO 150153 NCR 18921 dtd 24 Nov'44)
- 11-30-44 - 1 Oct'44 report of 71st CB - operating at Los Negros. Maintenance of Airbase, Pityilu Is. turned over to the 140th CB. Estimated date of completion of present assignment is 1 Nov'44. Report endorsed by 2nd Regiment.
- 12-2-44 - 1 Oct'44 report of 2nd Reg. - 71st CB moving to 11th CB Camp at Lombrum Pt., Manus
- 12-6-44 - 71st CB ordered to report to CNB Guadalcanal for staging and outfitting and further report to the 3rd PhibCorps for temporary addtl duty. (Comsopac Sec. Disp. to Com7flt and CNE Manus 010516 dtd 1 Dec'44)

- 12-12-44 - The following CB's requested to receive instructions in the use of Bailey and Treadway Bridges: 27th, 58th, 71st, 130th, and 145th. (Cincpoa Sec. Disp. to CNO, Comsopac and Comservpac 072356 dtd 8 Dec'44)
- 12-28-44 - The 71st CB is located at Los Negros. It is estimated that this batt will be released early in Nov'44 for return to the Sopac area. (Comserfor7flt Sec. report for Oct'44 dtd 20 Nov'44).
- 1-3-44 - Regiment "C" is comprised of the 58th, 71st, 130th and 145th CB's assigned temp duty with MarCorps. (Cincpoa Sec. disp to Comsopac 240131 dtd 24 Dec'44).
- 1-12-45 - The 71st CB is no longer located at Manus. (Comser7flt Sec. disp to CNO 231053 dtd 5 Jan'45).
- 1-13-45 - The 58th and 71st CBs are at Guadalcanal - to substitute for the 37th and 27th respectively. (Comservpac Sec Disp to AdCominpac 110201 dtd 11 Jan'45)
- 1-15-45 - The 71st CB located at Guadalcanal. (CNE Guadalcanal Sec Disp to Comseronsopac 022325 dtd 13 Jan'45)
- 1-30-45 -- The 71st CB assigned to the 44th Reg. (ComGen 3rd Phib Corps to Cincpoa, CNO and 10th Army 090556Z dtd 18 Jan'45).
- 1-30-45 -- The 71st CB is located at Guadalcanal. (CNE Guadalcanal Sec. disp to Comseronsopac 152102 dtd 26 Jan'45).
- 2- 9-45 - 1 Jan'45 report of the 71st CB - located at Guadalcahal.
- 8 Dec'44 - Main part of Batt, 30 off. and 1095 men, embarked on ship at Los Neg
- 9 Dec'44 - Weighed anchor for Guadalcanal, arriving there on 12 Dec'44.
- 11 Dec'44 - Det. of 2 off. and 75 men left Admiralties and arr'd Guadalcanal on 15 Dec'44.
- 15 Dec'44 - Det. of 1 off. and 6 men left Admiralties and arr'd Guadalcanal on 22 Dec'44.

Location - Guadalcanal, Okinawa                      71st CB

- 2-12-45 - 1 Dec'44 report of the 2nd Reg. - The 71st CB was detached from the 2nd Reg. on 2 Dec'44 with orders to proceed to Noumea for restaging. Approx 100 men who were assigned to the Repair Unit, Manus were returned to the Batt on 18 Nov'44
- 2-15-45 -- The 71st CB is located at Guadalcanal. (CNE Guadalcanal Sec. disp to Comseronsopac 010255 dtd 9 Feb'45).
- 3-20-45 - 1 Feb'45 report of the 71st CB - located at Guadalcanal. Report end. by 44th Reg
- 3-27-45 - 1 Mar'45 report of the 71st CB - located at Guadalcanal. Batt expecting to move immediately with assault gear and 850 personnel. The rear echelon will be left at the present location to bring up add'l equip. when shipping is available.
- 4-3-45 --- 9 officer and 582 men departed Guadalcanal 28 Feb'45. 14 officers and 255 men<sup>(ro</sup> departed Guadalcanal 5<sup>div</sup> Mar'45. 3 men left 9 Mar'45. A rear echelon of 6 off. and 252 men remains at Guadalcanal. (71st CB ltr to Buyers dtd 17 Mar'45).
- 4-20-45 - 1 Apr'45 report of 71st CB - No info re location. on 28 Feb'45 9 officers & 582 men, on 5 Mar'45 14 officers & 255 men & on 9 Mar'45 7 men departed ~~71st CB~~ on assault echelon. Anticipating forward movemnt of 3 officers & 150 men to forward area immdtl & remaining echelon to be moved when shipping available. (Routed via OinC 44th Reg & CO NB Guadalcanal)
- 5- 1-45 - 71st CB located at Okinawa with ComGenPhibs. (Dirpacdocks P Sec Rep of 1 Apr'45)
- 5- 8-45 - The 71st CB is shown located at Okinawa, assigned temp duty with 3rd Amph Corps on the Dirpacdocks S.F. Sec Rep of 15 Apr'45.
- 5-15-45 - 1 May'45 report of the 71st CB - located at Okinawa. Rear echelon of 6 off. and 252 men at Guadalcanal. Landings made on Okinawa as follows:
- 2 Apr'45 - 9 off. and 576 men.
- 4 Apr'45 - 2 men
- 6 Apr'45 - 5 men
- 7 Apr'45 - 14 off and 249 men (Arr'd 2 April but did not land until 7 Apr)
- Report routed via the 44th Reg. and 10th Brg.

Location - ~~Guadalcanal~~, Okinawa      71st C.B.

- 5-24-45 - 1 May'45 report of the 44th Reg. - The 71st CB and 11th (Sp) with attached Base Cos are still on temp duty with the III Amph Corps as of 30 Apr'45.
- 6-19-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of 71st CB - located at Okinawa. 2nd Echelon consisting of 3 officers & 150 men disembarked at the forward area hdqtrs on 1 May'45. Report routed via 44th Reg & 10th Brig.
- 6-21-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of the 44th Reg.- The 71st CB administratively attached to the Reg is still on temp duty with the III Amph Corps.
- 6-25-45 - 1 Jun'45 report of 71st CB (Item 4 Sec routing) - The 2nd echelon of the 71st CB, consisting of 3 off. and 150 men, embarked at Guadalcanal 3 April and debarked at Okinawa 1 May'45. 3rd echelon, 1 off. and 53 men, embarked at Guadalcanal 6 May and it is anticipated that this ech will arrive within a few days. The 4th ech, 2 off. and 47 men, embarked at Guadalcanal 16 May and is expected to arrive at Okinawa 20 June. All personnel have now left the rear area.
- 7-18-45 - 1 Jul'45 report of the 71st CB - located at Okinawa. The 3rd echelon, consisting of 1 off. and 53 men, disembarked at Okinawa on 17 June. The 4th echelon, 2 off. and 47 men, embarked at Guadalcanal on 19 May and it is expected that it will arrive shortly after 1 Jul'45. Batt was detached from the III Amph Corps 28 June and attached to the IsCom same date. Report via 44th Reg and 10th Brg.
- 7-23-45 - The 71st CB assigned to the 10th Brg and 43rd Reg effective 10 July. (CCT APO 331 sec report on assignment of CB units ser 897 dtd 10 July)
- 8-14-45 - 1 Aug'45 report of the 71st CB - located at Okinawa. The rear Echelon consisting of 1 officer and 47 men departed from the rear area 19 May'45 and arrived at Okinawa on 12 Jul'45 bringing the total strength to 25 officers and 1015 men. The arrival of this echelon completes all echelon movements to the forward area.

Location - Okinawa

71st CB

- 8-4-45      71st CB was detached from the 44th Reg. by order of the CCT, APO 331 & reported to the 43rd Reg on 1 July'45. Their rear echelon consisting of 1 off & 47 men departed from the rear area on 19 May'45 & arrived this base on 12 July'45. (43rd Reg sec monthly report for July'45, supplement to).
- 11-1-45 - CNOB, Okinawa requests authority to inactivate 71st CB. (CNOB, Okinawa conf disp 261516 Oct'45 to Comservpac).
- 11-13-45 - The following construction units are transferred from the 43rd Reg. to the 10th Brig. effective as of 17 Oct'45:-71st, 82nd & 130th CBs. (CNCT, Okinawa conf ltr ser 0632 dtd 18 Oct'45 to CinC, 10th Brig).
- 11-19-45 - Comservpac approves inactivation of 71st CB. Advise Comservpac when inactivation is completed. (Comservpac ltr ser 5722 dtd 5 Nov'45 to CNOB, Okinawa).
- 11-27-45 - 1 Nov'45 report of 71st CB - located at Okinawa. Report via 44th Reg. & 10th Brg
- 1-11-46 - Inactivation of 71st CB was completed on 15 Dec'45. (CNCT, Okinawa ltr ser 5802 dtd 15 Dec'45 to Comservpac).

INACTIVATED

Date	Organization	Location	Reference	Notes
6/13/44	-	Bougainville	-	Left U.S. Sept. 1943.
6/12/44	-	Los Negros	Burke CB report 1 May	
7/19	-	Manus	CB report 1 July	
7/25	-	Manus	com 7 de jet sec disp. 200215 July	Date release Manus Oct 1.
9/14	-	Manus	com 7 de jet sec disp. Aug 210103.	Date release Manus revised - Nov 15.
			Aug - 260515 sent	Senders Mar 10.
11/22	-	Pityulu Is.	CB report 1 November	edit Burke note (11/30) - avoid Senders as of 1 Jan with Manus for training.
11/25	-	Manus	Com 7 de jet sec act disp Nov 150133.	

12/9	-	(Suadal)	Comlobac sec 010516 frc.	proceed & report Suadal for staging and further report Senders Com 7 de 3rd Phil Corps.
12/26	-		Cinipon sec 240131 dec.	with Com 7 Regt "C" avoid Senders Mar Corps - later report to Com 7 de Unit 99.3.5.
1/9	-		Com 7 de jet sec act disp dec. 231053.	delete (DOTI.)
4/15	-	Suadal (Bony) near Suadal	CNB Suadal sec act disp Jan 022325.	added. (Feb. disp. still there. 152230)
1/18	-		CG 11/Phil Corps	HHCh Regt. SIC 0905867
2/10	-		Comlobac sec 012142 Feb.	modify 010516 Dec. - Report to Oline HHCh Regt for duty

2/25 - edit Burke note - with Manus

ON BOARD

<u>DATE</u>	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>MEN</u>	<u>AUTHORITY</u>
30 Jun'44	30	996	Recap.
1 Aug'44	30		MoR
1 Sep'44	29	983	MoR
30 Sep'44		1007	Recap
1 Oct'44	29	1007	MoR
1 Nov'44	32	1230	MoR
1 Dec'44	34	1229	MoR
1 Jan'45	34	1157	MoR
1 Feb'45	34	1113	MoR
1 Mar'45	29	1095	MoR
1 Apr'45	29	1089	MoR
1 May'45		1078	BNP625
1 Jun'45	30	1062	BNP625 & R
1 Jul'45	27	1018	BNP625 & R
1 Aug'45	27	962	BNP625 & R
1 Sept'45		843	BNP625
1 Oct'45	21	717	BNP625 & R
1 Nov'45	21	476	BNP625 & R

71st Construction Battalion (INACTIVATED)

## HISTORY OF THE SEVENTY-FIRST U.S. NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

The first 71st Naval Construction Battalion was activated on April 28, 1943, at the U.S. Naval Construction Training Center, Camp Peary, Williamsburg, Virginia. The majority of the men assigned to the 71st battalion had undergone basic training in Williamsburg. Other Seabees who were later assigned to the battalion received their basic training at Camp Allen, Norfolk, Virginia; Camp Bradford, Little Creek, Virginia; and Camp Endicott, Davisville, Rhode Island. Two previous groups of Seabees had been designated to be commissioned as the 71st Naval Construction Battalion; however, the men in these groups were reassigned to other units before being actually commissioned.

The battalion departed Camp Peary by train for Camp Endicott, arriving there on April 29, 1943. The unit stayed at Camp Endicott for six weeks of combat training and advanced schooling. On May 8, a dress review was held on the parade grounds at Camp Endicott, and the unit was presented its colors. While the battalion was training at Davisville, a group of 140 men from the 71st reportedly smashed all records existing at that time for assembling an aeroplane catapulting mechanism at the Charlestown, Rhode Island ~~Island~~ Airport.

The 71st departed Davisville by train on June 23 for Camp Parks, Pleasanton, California, arriving there on June 29. The battalion's stay at Camp Parks was brief, and the men received routine training while at Camp Parks. A small detachment of men from the 71st assisted in salvage operations of a grounded drydock at Bolinas Bay, north of San Francisco; and they were commended for their work. The battalion's next move was

to Camp Rousseau, Port Hueneme, California. Infantry gear had been issued to all hands at Camp Parks, and the men received final outfitting and pre-embarkation training at Camp Rousseau. The unit arrived at Port Hueneme on July 10, 1943.

While at Camp Rousseau, LST (tank landing ship) loading and unloading and invasion and beachhead tactics were practiced extensively at nearby Point Mugu; and further technical training was received. Men from the battalion assisted in fighting a forest fire in the Fillmore, California, area; and a detail of men were furnished to enlarge the facilities of the Hollywood Guild Canteen.

The 71st Battalion boarded the troop transport ship SS Young America on September 7, 1943, and sailed from the United States for their **first** overseas deployment site. On September 15, the ship crossed the equator, and **all** pollywogs (men who **have never** crossed the equator) became shellbacks (men who have crossed the equator and suffered through the shipboard initiation). The group of pollywogs who **were** initiated also included the battalion's commanding officer.

On September 19, the Young America anchored in the landlocked harbor of Tutuila, ~~British~~ **American** Samoa, just off the island city of Pago Pago. No one went ashore; and two days later the ship **depa**rted with a destroyer escort steaming in-company.

On September 23, the Young America crossed the International Date Line (according to naval tradition, the ship entered the August Domain of the Golden Dragons, thereby becoming members of their Order, and qualified to learn all the Ancient Mysteries of the East).



The ship's next stop was at Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides Islands on September 26. The Young America anchored in the harbor for almost a week, and again no one was permitted to go ashore because of the busy activity on the American base there.

At noon on October 3, 1943, the ship left Espiritu Santo harbor and headed on a course south for four hours. The ship met a convoy and swung to a northwesterly course joining it.

On October 5, 1943, at 4 p.m. the ship dropped anchor off Kokombona Beach, Guadalcanal, British Solomon Islands. The men from ~~the~~ **battalion** were taken ashore at Maggot Beach by waiting LCM's (~~infantry motor~~ <sup>medium</sup> landing craft). Within a few days, equipment came ashore from a freighter; and a camp had ~~been~~ established. Six days after the arrival of the **battalion** at Guadalcanal, Commander Austin Brockenbrough, Jr., commanding officer of the 71st Battalion, with two other **officers** and 73 enlisted **men**, boarded the USS George Clymer for pre-invasion maneuvers. Sixteen days later the Clymer returned to Guadalcanal to pick up one additional officer and 114 enlisted men from the **battalion**.

Bougainville is the **largest** of the Solomon **Islands**. It is 110 miles long and 30 miles wide, with a land area of 3,500 square miles. The American-occupied zone during the 71st deployment there was less than one percent of this total **area**. This was the area in which the 71st Seabees made their first debut into the war effort.

On November 1, 1943, Bougainville was invaded. Landing with the Third Marine Division at Empress Augusta Bay near Cape Torokina at 7 a.m. were detachments from the 25th, 53rd, 71st and 75th Naval Construction Battalions. The principal facilities to be built were airfields, first **a** fighter strip at Torokina and immediately thereafter a

bomber strip and a fighter strip at Piva nearby. Much of the construction had to be carried out under fire, but by early December the Torokina strip was complete, and work had begun on the Piva field. By early January 1944, both the bomber and fighter strips were in operation.

Fourteen men from the 71st landed with the initial wave of Marines to establish dispersal areas and erect beach markers. The landings were made under constant enemy gun and mortar fire on the ground and bombing and strafing from the air. Commander Austin Brockenbrough, commanding officer of the 71st, was designated Commander of the Shore Party, which consisted of the detachment of men from the 71st supplemented by contingents from the 53rd Construction Battalion and the Marine Corps.

Immediately after the initial landing, the 71st began unloading two transports. Due to shallow water, the LST's were unable to approach nearer than 75 feet to the beach. Portable ramps of sufficient dimensions and strength to accommodate all heavy equipment were constructed to overcome this difficulty. Bulldozers, the first equipment landed, were used at once to make roads, clear dump areas, and move supplies. Unloading of the ships continued through the second day under occasional bombing and constant fire from enemy pill boxes, <sup>and</sup> anti-aircraft and machine gun emplacements in the beachhead area.

Original plans called for development of Bougainville as an advance base from which aerial attacks against the Japanese-held islands New Ireland and New Britain could easily be carried out. The plans called for the initial installation of a small fighter strip to provide air cover while the larger bomber field was being built. The construction of the fighter strip was assigned to the 71st Battalion. All aviation facilities at Torokina were

built by the 71st Battalion, with minor assistance from a detachment of the 53rd Construction Battalion and from a Marine labor party of 100 men.

Surveys for the strip were started on D-day-plus-2 under continued enemy action. Survey parties often found themselves ahead of the established front lines and were subjected to sniper fire. The second echelon of the battalion arrived on D-day-plus-5, and the third on D-day-plus-10. When the fourth echelon arrived on D-day-plus-16, the Japanese launched a surprise attack to welcome them. At 3 a.m. a convoy of eight LST's (tank landing ships) and their escorts were attacked as they approached Empress Augusta Bay. Three of the attackers were shot down, but at the cost of one ADT (auxiliary ship), the McKean. At 9 o'clock that morning, the new arrivals were subjected to another bombing attack, but near misses on the beach and in the water were the extent of the second attack. During this attack, one man from the 71st, a previous arrival, was blown from his beachside foxhole by an explosion, but escaped with a few powder burns, abrasions, and a moderate case of shock. He was returned to duty a few days later. Work proceeded on clearing the jungle, and by D-day-plus-20, fifty percent of the area had been cleared and stripped, and grading advanced sufficiently to start laying pierced-plank matting.

By D-day-plus-23, sufficient matting <sup>had</sup> been laid on the 40-foot-wide taxiway at Torokina <sup>for</sup> Navy SBD-165 (submarine search aircraft) to make an emergency landing because of a broken oil line. An electrician from the 71st assisted the pilot and ground crew in making the necessary repairs and adjustments before the craft could fly again. From this time on, emergency landings were made at the field during construction.

On D-day-plus-24, -26, and -29, the **battalion** was mustered under **arms** because the entire island of **Bougainville** was alerted against an **enemy attack**. During this time the entire battalion manned **beach defense positions** of **Torokina** on D-day-plus-24 and -26 as a precaution against threatened **Japanese counter-attacks**. The 71st **camp** was shelled during this alert, and one **death** resulted.

On **December 10, 1943**, the **airfield** was **operationally complete**. The **first** group of **Corsairs** landed **as scheduled**, and **C-47 transport planes** started their **ferry service** to and from the rear **areas**. Other **planes** soon **followed**, and the final **completion** of the field was carried out while it was **in** full **operation** and, in **fact**, operating at a **capacity** beyond what was originally **planned**. **Facilities** were also **constructed** by the 71st for the **Royal New Zealand Air Force** **fighter** wing.

The **Japanese** had **four airfields** in **range** of the **American beachhead**. Two on **Bougainville** -- another on **Buka Island**, and a fourth at **Ballale Island** in the **Shortland group**. All **fields** had been rendered **inoperative** prior to the **invasion**, but were later **partially** repaired by the enemy and used for **night raids** during the first three and a half months of **Allied** occupation.

On **December 16, 1943**, construction of **taxiways** and **hardstands** for the **Piva** bomber field were **started**. Approximately at this **same time**, laying out and clearing of a new **campsite** got **underway**. The **Piva** job included **two taxiways**; **37 hardstands**; a **shop area**; **taxiway extensions**; a **parking area**; **covered storage facilities**; **seven nose**

hangars; and numerous living quarters. A PT-boat base and boat pool were set up on Puruata Island by the 75th Battalion, assisted by the 71st and 77th Battalions.

When the Piva Field was completed, Navy dive bombers, Corsair fighters, and SCAT facilities were based there.

On December 17 a Corsair landed unusually close to the edge of the Torokina runway. Its wingtip struck the operator of a 71st grader working on the shoulder of the strip, throwing him from the machine and killing him. Torokina field became the base for the 68th U.S. Army fighter group.

On December 24, the island was shaken at dawn by an earthquake. Lesser tremors continued throughout that day and the weeks following. During the next two months action on Bougainville quieted down, and air raids gradually became less frequent.

On February 28, 1944, a communication was received from the Army Commanding General in the area. Intelligence sources reported that the Japanese were preparing to attack Allied defense lines, and all Seabee units were to be assigned battle stations. On March 5, battle positions were assigned in the Torokina area. The following night the 400 volunteers from the 71st started erecting beach defenses. The positions were manned nightly by this group until the battalion was secured for embarkation.

The Japanese opened their counter-offensive with a shelling at 5:30 a.m. on March 8, 1944. The beach watch was prepared for any contingency; and the other men of the battalion were dug in at the campsite a few hundred yards behind the front lines awaiting the call to man defense positions. The airfields and artillery installations were prime tar-

gets of the enemy, and many of the large planes were temporarily withdrawn from the airfields on the island.

By March 1944 most jobs assigned to the 71st had been completed; but uncompleted work continued in spite of intensified enemy action. During this action in March, the 71st sawmill operated continuously, in spite of the fact that it was located in the line of fire of Japanese artillery and bombings directed at the airfields. The mill produced in excess of 465,000 board feet of cut lumber from December 20, 1943, to March 18, 1944.

On March 25, 1944, the battalion once again put to sea and headed for its next deployment site of the war.

The troop transport ship SS Poelau Laut, manned by a Dutch crew, was transportation for the 71st Battalion from Bougainville to their next deployment site. The ship made a stop in the Russell Islands long enough to pick up the 58th Construction Battalion, <sup>which</sup> ~~who~~ had just returned from a rest period in New Zealand.

The ship headed southeast after leaving the Russell Islands and made a stopover at Guadalcanal to pick up the rear echelon of the 71st, which consisted of two officers and twenty-five enlisted men who had remained at Guadalcanal during the Bougainville campaign.

The ship left Guadalcanal on a short trip to the island of Tulagi and layed at anchor while taking on fresh water. The Poelau Laut returned to Guadalcanal to pick up rations, and later returned to Tulagi for more water. With the ship literally loaded with supplies, water, and Seabees, it headed out into the vast Pacific for Island X, the 71st's next construction site.

Enroute the ship sailed through the Coral Sea, the Solomon Sea, and made a stop in Milne Bay, where it dropped anchor and loaded supplies for a week. The ship also made a stop in the bar harbor of Finckhafen, New Guinea, to pick up a pilot for the trip through Dampier Strait, which separated the islands of New Britain and New Guinea.

The SS Poelau Laut neared the scattered islands of the Admiralty Group during early April 1944 after almost a full month with the 71st Battalion aboard.

On April 17, 1944, the ship sailed into Seeadler Harbor and dropped anchor. The 58th Battalion was the first to leave the ship. They were put ashore at Los Negros. Two days later on April 19, a reconnaissance party from the 71st was landed on the small island of Pityilu, the location of the battalion's next job. The group consisted of three officers, four chief petty officers, and sixteen enlisted men. The Poelau Laut rode at anchor off the island of Manus, the largest of the Admiralties. A week after arriving in the Admiralties, the ship got underway and sailed the few remaining miles to Pityilu Island. On April 24, 1944, the 71st Battalion was landed on the beaches of this island by waiting LCM's (<sup>medium</sup> ~~medium~~ landing craft).

The 71st reconnaissance party, which had gone ashore on D-day-plus-2, was made up of men from the battalion's Engineering Department. The Allied landing on Pityilu which preceded their coming was met with very little resistance. The reconnaissance party made the preliminary survey for the airstrip to be constructed on Pityilu and also selected a suitable camp area for the battalion. Part of the Army's First Cavalry Division was still on the island when the reconnaissance party landed.

Pityilu is one of the smallest islands of the Admiralty Group. It is approximately five thousand yards long and from one hundred and fifty to three hundred yards in width. The highest point on Pityilu is approximately fourteen feet above sea level.

From April 24 to May 5, the various departmental crews were busy building a permanent camp. On May 5 the last of the heavy equipment for the 71st was brought ashore. Thirty-five days were given to complete an airfield for the Naval Air Corps; and it was completed within the allotted time. The completed runway on Pityilu was 4,500 feet long and later extended to 5,500 feet. The strip was 300 feet wide, and a 60-foot-wide taxiway connected the runway with the service area. It was constructed this wide to avoid congestion. Construction started on May 5, 1944, and the strip was officially completed on June 10, 1944. "C" Company from the 58th Construction Battalion, including three officers, joined the 71st in erecting quonset huts for the aviation personnel who were to maintain the planes at the strip on Pityilu. When the job was completed, the detachment from the 58th Battalion returned to their camp on Los Negros.

On June 26, 1944, the battalion began construction of a Fleet Recreation Center, which included baseball diamonds, basketball courts, handball courts, horse-shoe centers, bathing pavillion with lockers and showers, a shark-proof swimming pool, boxing rings, a bandstand and stage (Bob Hope and his troupe did a show at this recreation center), and an enlisted men's club large enough to hold two hundred men. In addition, living quarters were built to house the men who would maintain the recreation center.



The 71st was also assigned many jobs throughout the neighboring islands in the Admiralties. Groups of experts were sent out on special jobs on five islands. At Ndrillo a galley and mess hall, a signal tower to control all traffic in the harbor, and a camp were constructed. In addition to roads constructed by men of the 71st, a generator shed, a laundry, a recreation building, retail store and ship's store, sanitary facilities, a dispensary and a post office and administration building were constructed. The construction crew worked and lived on Ndrillo Island from June 26, until the end of September 1944.

On August 24 another crew departed for Onetra Island, where they constructed a laundry for the 250 men stationed there.

The third crew from the 71st was sent to the neighboring island of Harengan. They cleared and graded many acres of jungle and erected a complete camp for the 75-man crew which was to operate a radar station at the top of the island's only peak. The project took 33 days to complete.

Another group of men were sent to the island of Koruni, where they were engaged in constructing an additional fleet recreation center, which included an LST (tank landing ship) ramp. Construction began September 9 and was concluded on October 3, 1944. Many of the facilities at this new recreation center were the same as those constructed earlier at Pityilu. The new center was constructed primarily to relieve congestion at the recreation center on Pityilu.

On the island of Jauwie, a crew of five men working with a clamshell and bulldozer cleared the beach approaches so that LST's (tank landing ships) would no longer have any

difficulties in approaching beach markers. The job was completed within **five** days.

During **September** 1944 two shipfitters who had spent quite some time on a **ten-million-dollar** floating drydock returned to Pityilu. The drydock, anchored in Seeadler Harbor, was one of the **largest** of its kind in the **Western Pacific**. It could easily berth the huge battle-ships operating in that area.

In mid-**September** the maintenance of the airfield on Pityilu and other installations was turned over to the **140th Naval Construction Battalion**. The **71st** received orders to move to **Los Negros**, where they relieved the **11th Naval Construction Battalion** of its duties. The first group from the **battalion** made the move to **Los Negros** on **June 23, 1944**. **Small detachments** of the **battalion** moved from Pityilu throughout **September and October** until the **entire 71st had relocated on Los Negros by mid-October** at a location known as **White Beacon "H", Lombrum Point**.

During **mid-October**, 250 men from the **11th Construction Battalion** were transferred to the **71st**. The size of the **71st** was increased so much that a new company, "**E**" Company, was created.

Construction on **Los Negros** consisted of work in the following projects . . . .  
coconut trees were cut by lumber crews of the **71st** and were used in building foundations and retaining walls. The sawmill crew set up shop in the ship-repair area and worked on cutting plank boards and timber for bridge construction and for buildings.

Other projects assigned to the **71st at Los Negros** included: **Pontoon Assembly Depot** facilities construction; **warehouses** and shop construction; **laying 3,600 square yards** of

concrete pavement for a crane-way; and construction of a camp for <sup>the</sup> Pontoon Assembly maintenance crew, which included facilities and living quarters for 550 men.

A coral-surfaced road running from Lombrum Point to Loniu passage, which was four miles long and 30 feet wide, was constructed by the 71st with assistance from the 11th Construction Battalion. This project also included the 365-foot-long by 30-foot-wide Lolach Bridge. Another coral-surfaced primary road also four miles long was completed by the 71st. This roadway connected construction work of the 58th and 46th Construction Battalions.

In the Seaplane Base construction project, an entire camp for men who would man this unit was constructed. Also, damage done to a landing ramp by tropical storms was repaired.

A garage and transportation area for the Landing Craft and Ship Repair Base on Los Negros was completed by the 71st. Improvements were also made on warehouses at this base. A complete 1,000-man camp for men of the Landing-Craft and Ship Repair Unit was another project completed by the 71st at Los Negros.

Construction of an oxygen plant and an acetylene plant, which included a 15,000-gallon water-storage tank and a fuel-storage tank, was begun by the 71st and later taken over by the 58th Construction Battalion. This project included constructing complete camp facilities for 250 men.

Construction of the Southwest Pacific Area Prisoner Confinement and Detention Camp, with complete camp facilities for 250 men who would be the permanent maintenance

force for the detention camp, and complete facilities for housing and feeding prisoners were assigned to and completed by the 71st Construction Battalion.

Stringing base telephone system service lines, constructing a fire station, <sup>and</sup> completing a recreation facility at Lombrum Point were also projects completed by the 71st. The Ship-Repair Industrial Area, with heavy machine shops, warehouses, engine overhaul shops, metal storage shops, and cable-crossing markers placed at Bear Point and Lombrum Point, were also among the projects finished by the 71st on Los Negros.

The 71st completed the Lombrum Point water-distribution-system facility. Four tanks were erected; a pump house with four pumps, aeration tower and 5,300 feet of connecting pipeline for distribution was installed. An earth-fill dam with a concrete core wall and a diked section with a concrete spillway were part of the water-distribution system project.

Projects the 71st assisted in on Los Negros until September 23, 1944, included ammunition storage facilities, a seawall, a fully completed dispensary . . . construction in all these projects was shared jointly by the 11th and 71st Battalions. The 71st assisted the 58th Battalion in a major tank-farm project. Men from the 71st completed erection of two 310,000-barrel capacity storage tanks before leaving this project.

On December 8, 1944, the 71st embarked on the troop transport ship USS C. G. Morton, after spending almost eight months in the Admiralty Islands. The ship departed the next day, setting its course for Guadalcanal.

On December 12, 1944, the Morton arrived at Guadalcanal. The ship docked at Kukum. Trucks were waiting on the pier when the ship arrived, and the 71st was transported to a campsite on a grove near Koli Field, adjoining the camp of the Third Amphibious Corps. The First Marine Division set up camp on the other side of the grove.

During the deployment at Guadalcanal, little work of any major importance was requested of the 71st. Most of the time was spent in practice on the rifle range. Gunners were drilled on the use of the machine gun, <sup>the</sup> submachine gun, and the BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) to gain as much experience as possible on each weapon before the invasion of Okinawa, which no one in the battalion knew about at that time. After practice on the rifle range, different groups of men went on training tours constructing what was known as the Balesuma River Bridge and later dubbed with the name of Bailey Bridge.

The first echelon of the battalion left Guadalcanal on February 28, 1945, joining the Third Amphibious Corps aboard the USS Dickman. They shoved off to receive further training before the invasion of Okinawa. During the following weeks, succeeding echelons of the 71st went aboard LST's, joining forces later with the first echelon.

The invasion of Okinawa began on April 1, 1945, Easter Sunday morning. Landing barges, which had circled restlessly behind a curtain of smoke and the distant boom of the heavy naval guns, flashed across the line to the beach at 8:30 a.m. The battle for Okinawa was on.

The 71st Battalion had been aboard the USS Dickman for thirty days waiting for the invasion of this island.

The task of base development was delegated to the Island Commander, Okinawa, under whose control were Army Engineers and Navy Construction Battalions. The Island Commander placed all construction troops in Task Unit 99.3.5. The Commander Construction Troops was assigned the mission of planning all base development and all engineering construction on Okinawa. Construction troops on Okinawa at this time consisted of three naval construction brigades and one Army Engineer construction group. Some units went ashore as combat engineers with the assault troops, and others sailed in follow-up shipping echelons. All construction units were brought forward as soon as the shipping priorities would permit.

The 44th Naval Construction Regiment, which included three construction battalions, was landed on D-Day with the assault troops. In addition to the regular battalions, the 130th Pontoon Battalion and the 11th Special Battalion went in with the assault.

During the combat period construction troop units landed with the assault troops served as combat engineers and support of the ground troops by rehabilitating and improving native roads and bridges and clearing enemy mines. They located, developed, and operated a water supply system for all units and cleared, repaired, and extended abandoned enemy airfields for early use by our fighter planes. They installed communications facilities; provided engineering assistance for combat and garrison troops; and they began the development of the permanent facilities for support of future operations against the enemy. These activities were carried on night and day in spite of enemy sniper activity, artillery fire, and air attacks, until the island was declared secured.

Perimeter defense positions established soon after D-day were manned by construction troops. In addition, construction units were assigned to defend sectors of the various area-defense commanders.

The original plan of operations called for construction troops to be landed on D-day-plus-3, but the negligible resistance on the beaches speeded up the assault. D-day for most of the Seabees was April 2, 1945; and the first groups of the 71st Battalion were put ashore at Blue Beach.

From Blue Beach the battalion marched five miles, carrying the equipment necessary for existence on their backs, to a former Japanese airfield, Yontan, and prepared a bivouac area. Within a few hundred yards of the camp area were a number of Japanese planes. Among these was a fighter model which had never been captured intact by the Allies. It was parked on a handstand without a scratch on it. A guard was placed on it so that it could be returned to the United States for study by aeronautical experts.

Enemy planes made their first appearance at 3:20 a.m. on April 6. No bombs were dropped in the vicinity of the camp. However, later in the day planes made a strafing run on the camp, setting afire and completely destroying the Japanese plane which had never been captured intact. Despite the air raids, one LST (tank landing ship) was unloaded and another one was started. One carpenter crew previously assigned to the battalion worked at the III Corps Construction Projects, and another began work on the III Corps Medical Battalion Hospital.

On April 8 grading started on Route #1 from Yamada to Onna, the main road which led north on Okinawa along the side of the island facing the China Sea. The next day the

first part of the battalion moved further north to a more suitable camp area, following the Marines of the III Corps and keeping the roads open.

By April 29 the battalion road responsibility extended from Yamada to Nago, a distance of more than 20 miles. The road was an old Japanese road which followed the coastline as much as possible along the China Sea. It was narrow because the only vehicles that used the road were narrow-beamed Japanese trucks.

A piper cub strip on Onna was begun on April 16. By April 20 enough of the strip had been completed to enable the first plane to land. The strip, 1,000 feet long and 130 feet wide, with all necessary accessories, was finished April 24. In September a C-47 transport plane made an emergency landing on the cub strip, and to enable it to take off again an extra 150 feet were added to the runway in less than 24 hours.

On April 26 improvement was started on Route #6 crossing the isthmus near the middle of the island at its narrowest point from the village of Nakadomari to Hizonna, a distance of three miles. The road was widened for two lane traffic, and a new section was built to straighten the route. The part of Route #6 on the China Sea slope was surfaced with coral, sand, and gravel; and the part of Route #6 on the Pacific slope was surfaced with decomposed limestone. The road project was cancelled May 10; and the men were assigned to higher priority work nearer the combat zone, when only 0.5 miles was left to be surfaced.

On May 6 the main part of the battalion moved south with the III Amphibious Corps and established Camp #2 west of the junction of Routes #1 and #32 on Route #32. Two



nights prior to May 6, the Japanese attempted a landing on the beach below this campsite. During May, Camp #2 was constantly under enemy artillery fire. One night a cache of oil drums was hit by artillery fire, but they did not explode or burn. Two men were wounded by sniper fire. At the same time Camp #1 was beginning to have difficulties. On several occasions Japanese ambushed vehicles and smaller campsites within a few miles of the 71st former camp.

The improvement of Route #1 was started by a battalion of Marine Engineers, but was taken over by the 71st on May 7 before much work had been done. Widening was started so the road could accommodate two-lane traffic. Convoy traffic over Route #1 to the combat area was extremely heavy and interfered greatly with the progress on road work. However, the road was kept in passable condition, and a large section was surfaced with coral by the time the first heavy rains started on May 16. The battalion was engaged mainly with rehabilitation work and keeping the roads open for the flow of supplies to the forward areas. Heavy rains on 25 and 26 May brought all road improvement work to a standstill.

On May 30 conditions had not improved, and road work went on a 24-hour basis. Prior to May 30, night lighting was not permitted in the combat area because of enemy artillery fire and air attacks. Due to the emergency field lighting was authorized, and Marine Police were assigned to outpost sentry duty at construction operations and isolated equipment.

All of the battalion's manpower was engaged in work on Route #1 in order to keep it open to traffic. On June 2 all traffic was stopped for a 24-hour period to give road

gangs time to rehabilitate the roads as much as possible. The heavy rains had turned sections of the road into several feet of mud. On one section of Route #1, the equivalent of 8-foot thickness of rubble from bombed out buildings was dumped on the road to stabilize it enough for traffic to pass over.

The rear echelon of the 71st, consisting of three men, moved to Camp Barrett, the headquarters of the Sixth Marine Division on Guadalcanal, and remained there until further orders brought them to Okinawa to join the main body of the battalion. It was their duty to remain behind and send up much needed supplies, and to keep up personnel and pay records for the entire battalion. On May 19, 1945, the rear echelon of the 71st went aboard the USS Naos for transportation to Okinawa to rejoin the battalion.

On June 10 in order to keep pace with the forward movement of the combat zone, the 71st was assigned road responsibility in a more forward area, and the forward camp, Camp #3, was established at the junction of Routes #5 and #44. Camp #3 had a nightly show of fireworks. Japanese were infiltrating through the lines carrying demolition charges. From dusk to dawn the tracers careened over and through Camp #3.

On the next assignment 0.7 miles of Route #7 and 0.5 miles of Route #44 were paved with concrete, but the concrete was badly broken up by bombing and shelling. The balance of the roads were the usual narrow dirt roads without the benefit of a durable surface. Pot holes and muddy stretches of these roads were filled with rubble from the bombing and shelling of the buildings in Naha, Okinawa. Widening to accommodate two-lane traffic was started as soon as all roads were made passable.

Due to the fact that all work on these roads had to be done without interrupting the heavy flow of traffic carrying ammunition and supplies to the front and casualties to the rear, considerable difficulty was experienced by the 71st in the road improvement projects. During the last 10 days of May 1945, over 14 inches of rain fell, and 1.26 inches more during the first seven days of June. The constant flow of traffic coupled with heavy rains created mud conditions which taxed the entire engineering resources of the battalion.

On May 19 and 21 two attempts were made by Japanese who had infiltrated American lines to blow up two separate bridges. On May 19 a single-span concrete bridge had explosives skillfully placed; but the failure of the entire demolition charge to go off minimized the damage, and the bridge was quickly repaired. On May 21 during daylight, in an area alerted by previous attempts, another attempt was made by the Japanese to blow up a second bridge. Again the failure of the entire charge to go off prevented serious damage. This bridge had previously been strengthened with an A-frame support, which was knocked out by the blast. The supports were replaced soon after the blast. Most of the attempts to blow up bridges were made on bridges located along Route #1 north of Onna.

Construction of buildings consisted entirely of camp and hospital facilities, and buildings of a temporary nature which were typical of forward areas where camp locations were frequently changed. Due to the scarcity of lumber in the forward area, practically all the lumber used in the construction of buildings was salvaged from wrecked native buildings. Most of this lumber was of odd sizes and had to be cut into usable sizes by hand saws.

Organized enemy resistance ceased on Okinawa by the end of June 1945.

Attention was turned to the home islands of Japan. With the capture and development of the airfields on Okinawa, land-based planes were brought within easy range of the Japanese-occupied China coast and Korea, as well as the home islands of Kyushu, Shikoku, and even Honshu. Bombing from bases in the Marianas were intensified; and the fleet, with far-ranging air attacks and direct bombardment of the Japanese shores, completed the isolation of the home islands.

These operations, together with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the almost simultaneous entry of Russia into the Pacific war, with the resulting attack on Japanese forces in Manchuria and Korea, left Japan with the choice of surrender or annihilation.

On July 1, 1945, work was again started on the northern end of Route #1, from Yamada to Atsutabarū. The assignment called for construction of a standard two-lane highway. Traffic was to be maintained on the road during construction. Realignment was started on all sections which included bad curves and poorly placed bridges. The road was straightened and new bridges constructed where necessary.

The East runway of Yontan airfield was added to the 71st schedule on July 15. The runway was 7,000 feet long with coral surfacing one foot thick and 100 feet wide. Cross-overs and warm up aprons were provided. The estimated dirt which was moved on this project was 135,000 cubic yards, and emplacement of limestone surfacing was 1,000,000 square feet. Work was held up considerably during the period of July 19 to July 31 because of heavy rains. The rainfall during this period reached 8.20 inches. On

July 27 the first plane landed on the East runway. The project was finished at 6 a.m., August 17, 1945. Construction of a headquarters camp was started on July 24. The work order specified nine standard semi-tropical quonset huts. Two of these were to be quarters for Generals MacArthur and Kinney. Construction was also started on the headquarters camp water system.

Ground was broken and foundation forms were set for a concrete-pipe plant at Anfusu on July 30. The plant consisted of a cement warehouse; machine and working shed; generator plant; tool shed and work shop; elevated cement-loading platform; a 5,000-gallon water-storage tank with accompanying tower; concrete curing slabs; concrete runway; steel storage area; shipping and pipe storage areas; and a framed hut office with access roads. The plant supplied concrete pipe to naval and Army construction units on Okinawa.

On August 5 the headquarters camp was completed, and on August 6 maintenance and improvements of Route #1 from Atsutabarū to Chuda was begun. On August 16 construction on the concrete-pipe plant was finished, and from August 18 to 31 1,402 feet of pipe was produced at the plant.

On August 14 Japan announced her acceptance of the Potsdam Proclamation, the terms of which were complete disarmament and surrender of all Japanese military forces and equipment. The "cease-firing" order took effect the next day.

By August 17 the 71st road construction responsibility extended from Nakadomari to Chuda. The order called for a standard two-lane highway, eliminating all blind curves

of the previous roadway and straightening where possible. The job required a tremendous amount of dirt-moving. Enough fill was required in some sections of the roadway to bring the level up as much as 60 feet. Traffic was extremely heavy during all construction.

The formal surrender of the Japanese Imperial Government, the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters, and all Japanese and Japanese-controlled armed forces wherever located was signed on board the battleship USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945.

September 7, 1945, marked the second year the 71st Construction Battalion had been deployed outside of the United States. Work on Okinawa was greatly curtailed with the spreading demobilization of American armed forces after the Japanese surrender in the Pacific. The 71st U.S. Naval Construction Battalion was inactivated in December 1945.

The Secretary of the Navy in a citation signed on March 8, 1946, awarded the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon to the 71st Battalion. The citation read in part, "For exceptionally meritorious service in support of military operations of the III Amphibious Corps against enemy Japanese forces in the Ryukyu Islands from April 1 to June 27, 1945. Employed essentially on combat engineering missions throughout the Okinawa Campaign, the 71st Naval Construction Battalion was responsible for the improvement and maintenance of thirty-eight miles of narrow, native roads vital to the uninterrupted movement into forward areas of combat supplies and divisions during a period of extremely heavy rainfall. Carrying out a large proportion of this military engineering task in the hours of darkness and during frequent blackouts imposed by enemy air attacks."

## 71<sup>ST</sup> Naval Construction Battalion

### Chronology

- 28 Apr 1943 U.S. Naval Construction Battalion 71 was activated at the U.S. Naval Construction Training Center, Williamsburg, Virginia, with Commander Austin Brockenbrough, CEC, USN, as Officer in Charge. The battalion departed the same day for the U.S. Naval Construction Training Center at Davisville, Rhode Island.
- 29 Apr 1943 The battalion arrived at Davisville for technical and combat training.
- 23 Jun 1943 The battalion departed the U.S. Naval Construction Training Center, Davisville, in three sections for Camp Parks, Shoemaker, California.
- 29 Jun 1943 The battalion arrived at Camp Parks and began staging and training for overseas deployment.
- 09 Jul 1943 First complements of the battalion, 28 officers and 959 men, left Camp Parks.
- 10 Jul 1943 First complement arrived at Camp Rousseau, Port Hueneme, California, for final outfitting and training.
- 14 Jul 1943 Second complement, 1 officer and 99 men left Camp Parks.
- 15 Jul 1943 Second complement arrived at Port Hueneme, California.
- 07 Sept 1943 The battalion embarked on USS Young America for overseas duty.
- 19 Sept 1943 The battalion stopped at Tutuila, American Samoa; did not disembark.
- 21 Sept 1943 The ship sailed for Espiritu Santo in New Hebrides.
- 26 Sept 1943 The USS Young America with the 71<sup>st</sup> Battalion aboard arrived at Espiritu Santo.
- 03 Oct 1943 The USS Young America left Espiritu Santo to join a convoy.
- 05 Oct 1943 The battalion arrived at Kokombona Beach on Guadalcanal and disembarked the same evening. They set up camp.
- 12 Oct-26 Nov 1943 The battalion departed Guadalcanal in five echelons headed for Bougainville.
- 01 Nov 1943 The first echelon landed on D-day with elements of the Third Marine Division. Fourteen men landed with the first wave to establish dispersal areas and erect beach markers.
- 28 Nov 1943 The fifth echelon landed on Bougainville. The battalion was engaged in building two airfields, ammunition and fuel dumps and other facilities.
- 25 Mar 1944 Naval Construction Battalion 71 boarded the Dutch-manned ship Poelau Laut and sailed for the Admiralty Islands.
- 17 Apr 1944 The battalion arrived at Los Negros, Admiralty Islands, and sent a surveying party to Pityilu Island.

- 19 Apr 1944 The surveying party landed on Pityilu Island and began work on a site for an airfield.
- 24 Apr 1944 The main body of the battalion arrived at Pityilu and began work on a camp.
- 05 May 1944 The battalion's heavy equipment arrived and work began on the airfield. The battalion worked on auxiliary buildings, a Fleet Recreation Center, a landing dock and other facilities. While in the Admiralties the battalion sent five detachments to neighboring islands for miscellaneous jobs.
- 08 Dec 1944 The main body of the battalion embarked on the USCG General Morton for Guadalcanal, followed several days later by a second echelon.
- 28 Dec 1944 The entire battalion was on Guadalcanal undergoing combat training.
- 25 Feb 1945 The battalion's first echelon boarded the USS Dickman with the Third Marine Amphibious Corps for deployment to Okinawa. In the following weeks three other echelons left Guadalcanal.
- 01 Apr 1945 The entire 71<sup>st</sup> Seabee Battalion was on ships before the beaches of Okinawa.
- 02 Apr 1945 The 71<sup>st</sup> Battalion landed at Okinawa. They were assigned to the Forty-third Construction Regiment and the Tenth Construction Brigade.
- 03 Apr 1945 The battalion began working on its assignments: a temporary camp, roads, bridges, a concrete-pipe plant, an airfield and other facilities. For its actions between 1 April and 27 June 1944 the 71<sup>st</sup> Naval Construction Battalion was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation by Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal.
- 22 May 1945 Commander J. F. Cunniff, CEC, USN, became the Officer in Charge of the 71<sup>st</sup> Battalion.
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- 1 Apr 45      The entire 71st Seabee Battalion was on ships before  
the beaches of Okinawa.

- 2 Apr 45      The 71st Battalion landed at Okinawa. They were assigned to the Forty-third Construction Regiment and the Tenth Construction Brigade.
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USNR



ALL OVER THE WORLD



4TH CONSTRUCTION BRIGADE  
OFFICIAL U.S. NAVY PHOTOGRAPH









