

Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5

*Historical
Information*



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



Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5 Command History

Originally commissioned “The Fifth Naval Construction Battalion” in 1942 and decommissioned in 1945 after World War II, U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion FIVE was recommissioned on July 10, 1951. Since then, NMCB FIVE, the last battalion to serve in Vietnam and the first to travel to Thailand, has earned a reputation for meeting the challenges of any operation or contingency. The proud tradition that is reflected in the “Can Do” spirit of the Seabees is as much a part of “The Professionals” of FIVE today as it was with their predecessors in 1942. Over the years, the Seabees of NMCB FIVE have traveled thousands of miles from their homeport in Port Hueneme, California to all corners of the globe, putting their construction and military skills to work. The Seabees of FIVE have toiling knee-deep in the muddy jungles of Vietnam. They have worked in the freezing snows of Alaska, the blue waters of Hawaii, and as members of Civic Action Teams (CAT) on small South Pacific islands. They’ve battled killer typhoons on Guam and Okinawa, tackled mammoth tasks in the Philippines, struggled tirelessly in the steaming jungles of Thailand and provided key construction support to U.S. Marines and Allied Forces during Operations Desert Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom. FIVE’s Seabees have built airstrips, hospitals, bridges, roads, and have provided humanitarian and disaster recovery assistance in almost every part of the world.

After the conclusion of WWII, from 1965 to 1972, NMCB FIVE made six consecutive deployments to Vietnam. In 1972, the battalion moved its entire complement of troops and equipment to Thailand. This giant operation resulted in the erection of the Nam Phong Air Base complex for the U.S. Marines in record time. For their efforts in both Vietnam and Thailand during 1972, NMCB FIVE earned the Pacific Naval Construction Force “Best of Type” award. NMCB FIVE also received the 1972 Peltier Award from the Society of American Military Engineers as the most outstanding Seabee battalion in the country.

In 1979, NMCB FIVE deployed to Diego Garcia for the construction of this critical naval base in the middle of the Indian Ocean. For their activities, the men of FIVE were awarded the Navy Expeditionary Medal.

In April 1986, FIVE responded to an emergency contingency operation following the Libyan missile action directed at Lampedusa Island in the Mediterranean Sea. The Sigonella detail at the time deployed a special detail to the Coast Guard station on the island, completing emergency interim and permanent security improvements. In the Philippines, the detachments at Subic Bay and Capas-San Miguel also responded to contingencies. They accepted the challenge of operating critical base facilities including public works and transportation facilities, as well as the fire and police departments during a three-week strike by local employees.

In October 1989, the battalion deployed to Puerto Rico. NMCB FIVE assisted with Hurricane Hugo disaster recovery efforts at Charleston, SC, Antigua and Puerto Rico.

Seabees participating in the recovery effort earned the Humanitarian Service Medal, Meritorious Unit Commendation and Coast Guard Special Operation Service Ribbon. In addition, members of the Panama detail provided perimeter security for Rodman Naval Station during Operation Just Cause.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990 changed the battalion's plans for an Okinawa deployment. In late August, FIVE's Air Detachment deployed to NAS Jubal, Saudi Arabia. Over the next two months, the rest of the battalion's personnel and equipment would follow. NMCB FIVE provided critical construction support to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (IMEF) during both Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. January through March, 1991, saw the battalion split into two groups. About half remained at Jubal Naval Air Station to continue construction projects in that area while the other half, approximately 300 Seabees, re-deployed to Kuwait to provide construction support for the U.S. Marines liberating Kuwait from the Iraqi regime.

NMCB FIVE next deployed a CAT of 23 SEABEES to Thailand as part of the annual Cobra Gold Exercise. Their primary mission was the reconstruction of an elementary school near Bangkok. Another group of SEABEES from FIVE was sent to drought-stricken Truk Island in Micronesia to assist with disaster recovery for the island's inhabitants.

In an unprecedented deployment to the Caribbean theater beginning in March 1993, the Seabees of FIVE deployed to an astonishing 15 different locations. With the main body at Camp Moscrip in Puerto Rico, NMCB FIVE manned five permanent detail sites including NAB Little Creek, VA. and NAS Cecil Field, FL. The battalion also deployed seven DFT's to Belize, Colombia, Grenada, Maine, Trinidad, St. Kitts and El Salvador. Six of these DFT's operated in isolated high threat areas and provided vital construction of counter-narcotics facilities and much needed host nation projects.

In October 1993, while in homeport, NMCB FIVE provided disaster recovery relief in the aftermath of the Ventura County fires by assisting firefighters and building a "Bailey" bridge for the city of Malibu. Only a few months later, on January 11, 1994, "The Professionals" were called upon to provide assistance to the Southern California earthquake victims following the 8.6 trembler that devastated the area. A total of 32 water buffaloes, 2000-gallon tanks on trailers, were sent into the neighborhoods of Simi Valley to provide potable water to its residents.

In April 1994, NMCB FIVE made history once again with the arrival of the first female to serve with a Naval Mobile Construction Battalion- Builder Chief Petty Officer Cheryl D. Hundley.

In November 1997, NMCB FIVE deployed its main body to Puerto Rico and deployed detachments to Norfolk, Jacksonville, Guantanamo Bay, Andros and Vieques. A staff element was sent in support of US Support Group Haiti and was later followed by a DFT to Haiti.

NMCB FIVE metal was tested by tragedy when Alaska Airlines Flight 261 crashed off the coast of Port Hueneme, Calif. on January 31, 2000. Members of NMCB FIVE assisted federal, state and local authorities in the search and recovery of Alaska Airlines Flight 261. The Seabees removed debris and remains from the search and recovery vessels as they were brought in from sea. They also provided security for the areas surrounding the pier where authorities collected, stored and examined material collected from the operation. NMCB FIVE rearranged their normal 30-day homeport watch section to five sections to support a 24-hour manning of security and debris removal stations. NMCB FIVE's efforts resulted in the command receiving the U.S. Coast Guard's Unit Commendation Medal.

In the spring of 2000, NMCB FIVE deployed to Camp Moscrip, Naval Station Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico. When the battalion arrived, they once again were brought into the national limelight, with new attention focused on a small island off the coast of Puerto Rico, Vieques Island, and a project called Operation Eastern Access. The Navy was reopening a bombing range and it was up to the Seabees of NMCB FIVE to restore the area's infrastructure. True to the Seabee's "CAN DO" spirit, NMCB FIVE quickly began tasking that eventually led to the establishment of ground facilities in the area. The battalion coordinated efforts with Puerto Rican government officials, U.S. Marshals, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the U.S. Marine Corps and carried out contingency tasking, communications, lodging, and amphibious landings of personnel and equipment. Seabees also provided additional security for the bombing range while the fleet conducted live-fire exercises.

In September 2002, while on their European deployment, FIVE was once again called upon to provide construction support in the Southwest Asia region, this time in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Six C-5 Galaxy flights carried 125 Seabees and 354 short tons of TOA directly from Rota, Spain to Kuwait City International Airport making NMCB FIVE the first Seabee battalion in theater. The detachment's tasking included the construction of a 46,000 square foot concrete refueling apron and 120,000 square foot ammunition supply point at Ahmed Al Jaber Air Base. At Ali Al Salem Air Base, a 25,000 square foot ammunition supply point was constructed, over 750,000 square feet of area was prepared to receive AM2 matting and Camp Moreell, a 800-man tent camp was erected.

With the clock counting down to war, 32 Seabees, casually referred to as the "Dozer team," were tasked with creating entry lanes through the berm and ditch obstacles along the Iraq-Kuwait border. Just as the Dozer team was about to execute, the Kuwaiti government completed the mission.

On March 21, 2003, the members of NMCB-5's Seabee Engineering Reconnaissance Team (SERT) crossed from Kuwait into Iraq with Task Force Tarawa. Their mission to perform bridge surveys took them through An Nasiriyah and Qal'at Sukkar, to the outskirts of Ad Diwaniyah, about 100 miles southeast of Baghdad. The journey was one of successful small unit leadership, quick decision making, Seabee ingenuity, hidden rooftop snipers, skirmishes with the Fedayeen Sadaam and harsh living conditions.

NMCB FIVE was called into action again in support of the Global War on Terrorism during its 2005 deployment. Personnel from NMCB FIVE were integrated with reserve unit NMCB TWO SEVEN sending over 330 personnel to various locations throughout Southwest Asia. Majority of the work was in support of Special Operations Command with many sites being classified. Many FIVE personnel provided direct support to the Iraqi Army by constructing bases and facilities to support their ongoing struggle for stability.

The 2007 homeport period was extremely successful. Due to an NCF re-alignment of forces, NMCB FIVE prepared during the 2007 homeport to take on sole responsibility of the PACOM AOR during their 2007-08 deployment. NMCB FIVE was tasked with maintaining two TOAs at Okinawa and Guam, several closure sites, and details spread across the AOR. NMCB FIVE completed all necessary training and preparations to guarantee a fully combat ready Battalion for the 2007-08 deployment. Due to the efforts of every "Professional" in NMCB FIVE, the Battalion not only completed all required tasking, but greatly exceeded expectations.

U.S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion FIVE has earned a reputation for excellence and professionalism during the 54 years of its existence. They have earned the Battle "E" or Best of Type award 11 times, the Peltier Award 3 times and the Golden Anchor for retention excellence 6 times. The proud tradition that is represented by its "Can Do" spirit is as much a part of "The Professionals" of FIVE today as it was with their predecessors.





U.S. NAVAL MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALION FIVE

THE PROFESSIONALS











