

# Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 121

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## *Historical Information*



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



# **Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 121**

## **Command History**

NMCB 121 was the descendant of the 121st Naval Construction Battalion (NCB) of World War Two fame. The 121st NCB deployed to the South Pacific and the Marshall Islands early in 1944. Hopping from island to island, the pioneer Seabees removed artillery emplacements. During the heat of the fighting they served as ammunition and supply carriers.

The 121st went ashore with the Marines as they invaded Saipan and Tinian. They repaired a captured enemy airfield on Saipan while the fighting was still raging. The fighting on Tinian went much easier and work was begun immediately on several 500 foot wide by 8500 foot long runways for B-29 bombers. They also built control towers, taxiways, guard stands, aviation fuel pipelines, and a tank farm. The 121st NCB helped build the airstrips on Tinian from which B-29 bombers took off to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. The Battalion received the Presidential Unit Citation for its part in the Saipan and Tinian assaults.

On February 4, 1967, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 121 was officially re-commissioned in ceremonies at the Construction Battalion Center, Gulfport, Mississippi, with Commander Bobby Stultz as Commanding Officer. After the re-commissioning, the battalion settled down to handle the influx of men and mold them into a cohesive unit. Military training, technical schools, on-the-job training, and civic projects were begun and continued at a rapid pace to ready the battalion for its first deployment. In August of 1967, NMCB 121 deployed to Phu Bai, Republic of Vietnam to begin its mission of construction in support of U. S. and Allied Military Forces. Three detachments of Battalion personnel were sent to nearby areas to carry out assigned projects. The Tan My Detachment built 43 khuts as living quarters for officers and men ten miles East of Phu Bai. The Camp Evans Detachment built 90 huts and a chapel, and the Detail Tango Detachment constructed bunkers and gun pads for Army and Marine batteries off National Route #1,

5 miles North of Dong Ha. On November 13, the battalion was called upon to replace a bridge blown by the enemy. Within 14 1/2 hours the battalion had designed and built a suitable bridge, and traffic was resumed. The bridge was dubbed "Hasty Bridge." On January 3, the battalion began one of its biggest jobs - a Helicopter Maintenance Facility. Working around the clock, 24 hours a day in three eight-hour shifts, men of NMCB 121 completed the project in less than a month. The first deployment ended in April 1968. The battalion returned to Gulfport and enjoyed a six month homeport period in preparation for the second deployment.

In October 1968, the battalion arrived at Camp Wilkinson, Gia Le, Republic of Vietnam, to begin its second deployment since reactivation. Major projects included maintenance and preparing for paving 18 miles of National Route #1. A detachment of 100 men worked on this project, known as Detail Snoopy, and lived at Camp DeShurley. The battalion constructed a 300 KW power plant for the 8th Radio Research Field Station at Phu Bai, consisting of six 500 KW diesel generators and two switchgear units. On January 23, Commander Bobby Stultz was relieved as Commanding Officer by Commander Jack B. Moger in ceremonies at Camp Wilkinson. Projects continued at a steady pace and in March the battalion was called on to repair the Song Nong Railroad Bridge, badly damaged by an enemy explosion. A quick means of repair was needed since the bridge was a vital link in the Hue-DaNang railroad. It was decided to replace the damaged half with a timber trestle bridge. The work was accomplished in 14 days by men working round the clock. The battalion also maintained the Ammi Bridge at Nam Hoa, west of Hue with the 45th Engineer Group, and in late March replaced piles blown by an enemy placed underwater charge.

From February through May the battalion gave support to the 101st Airborne in the A Shau Valley for the building of a string of fire bases. Equipment, operators, mechanics, and supervisors were air-lifted from Camp Wilkinson to the sites. The battalion began six and completed two CH-47 hangars in the Phu Bai-Gia Le area, the first and largest wooden hangars of this type to be built in-country. NMCB 121 was tasked with repairing failed areas of M8-A1 matting of MAG-36 heavy

traffic and taxi lanes. A method was devised of rolling up long sections of the matting to repair the failures underneath, facilitating the work and saving considerable time and money.

On February 11, 1969, two seven-men "Mini Teams" departed Camp Wilkinson for the Mekong Delta to upgrade Vietnamese Navy Patrol Craft facilities. They remained there until the end of the deployment building housing and storage facilities.

The second deployment ended in June 1969 and the battalion returned to its homeport of Gulfport to begin training for its third deployment. On Sunday evening, 17 August 1969, Hurricane Camille struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The eye of Camille passed over the town of Pass Christian, Mississippi, a town neighboring the Gulfport Construction Battalion Center, completely destroying more than half the buildings in the town and heavily damaged every other building. More than one hundred twenty persons lost their lives in Pass Christian and surrounding Harrison County. Immediately following, the Commanding Officer, Construction Battalion Center/Commander TWENTIETH Naval Construction Regiment, was tasked by the Governor of Mississippi with disaster recovery operations for the area of the coast from Gulfport west to Bay St. Louis. The Regimental Commander assigned the responsibility for Pass Christian to U. S. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion ONE TWENTY-ONE.

Naval Mobile Construction Battalion ONE TWENTY-ONE immediately began moving men and equipment into the town. A Command Post, equipment staging area and evacuation staging areas were established. Since all essential utilities and civilian communications were destroyed, the Governor directed the evacuation of the town and declared Martial Law for the area.

For its outstanding work in carrying out disaster recovery operations in the aftermath of Hurricane Camille, NMCB 121 was awarded the Navy Unit Commendation in ceremonies October 31, 1969.

The third deployment began in November 1969 when the Battalion deployed to Camp Haskins South, DaNang. The Battalion quickly assumed work of three departing battalions,

NMCB 53, NMCB 4, and NMCB 8. NMCB 121 completed a major expansion of the MAG-16 facilities at Marble Mountain with the construction of rocket-proof aircraft shelters called "Wonder Arches".

A retrograde facility for the nearby Marine Force Logistics Command was undertaken. This facility provides a staging, packing, and shipping facility for equipment and supplies returning to the States.

Immediately upon arrival NMCB 121 was tasked to perform emergency repairs on National Route #1. Approximately 13 miles of road was rebuilt in record time with the help of NMCB's 1 and 74, and the 7th and 9th Marine Engineers.

The battalion carried out an extensive civic action program on its three deployments. A MEDCAP program treated thousands of Vietnamese people in villages surrounding the battalion's camps, construction materials have been provided to help villages build badly needed schools, and scholarships have been given needy children. In 1969, a two-man civic action team lived with the Army Advisory Team on isolated Vinh Loc Island for half the deployment, supervising the work of the villagers constructing two bridges, several miles of road, and a market place. The program proved highly successful. One man was assigned full time for eight months to the Phu Luong hospital construction job begun by NMCB 8. The building was essentially complete at the end of the deployment. The battalion provided English language teachers for six months of the deployment to a nearby Vietnamese grade school. In 1970, the battalion helped to modernize the National Police Academy of South Vietnam, outside of DaNang.

The battalion finished its third deployment in July 1970. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 121 closed out its history of service to the nation on August 31, 1970 when it was decommissioned.



U.S. NAVAL MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALION

ONE HUNDRED TWENTY ONE











