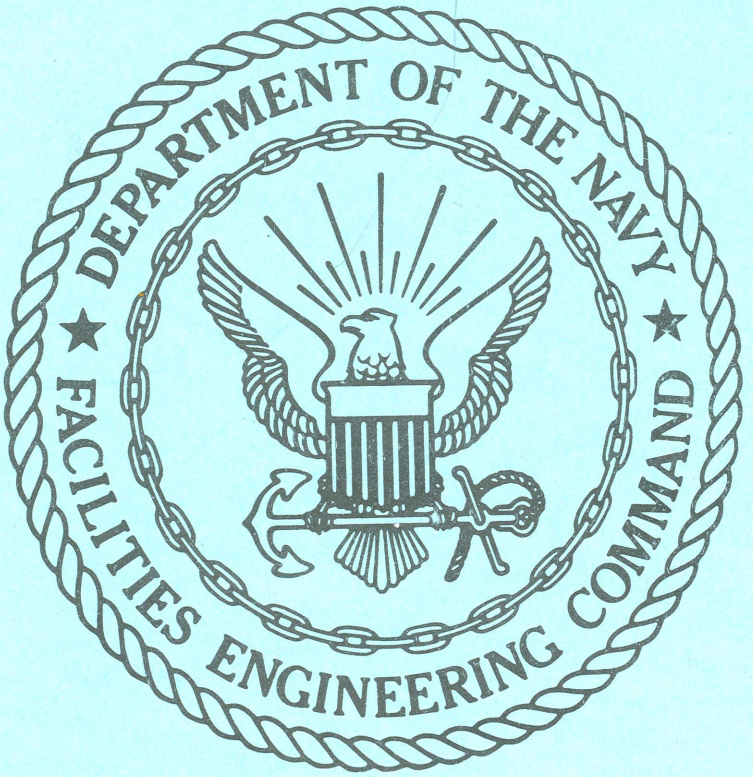
COMMAND HISTORY

1965-1974



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CHAPTER I

OVERVIEW

The period 1965-1974 was one of intense activity for the Naval Facilities Engineering Command as a whole. The single most important cause of this activity was the war in Vietnam. While in 1965, the Command was only just beginning to respond to the new challenge of Vietnam, it had by 1968 successfully made the transition from a peacetime to a wartime footing. By 1970 the war was beginning to wind down and in 1972 the Command began the shift back to peacetime operations.

During the Vietnam War, the Naval Facilities Engineering Command had been assigned the role of contract construction agent for all Southeast Asia. In this capacity it was responsible not only for Navy construction needs but also for all construction projects required by other military services and government agencies. As the government's contract construction agent, the Command was responsible for dealing with the private contractors who performed the greater part of the construction accomplished during the war in Southeast Asia. Although United States participation in the Vietnamese conflict largely preoccupied the Command during the ten years under consideration, it continued to meet its responsibilities, both old and new, in areas unrelated to the war.

Two new areas of concern for the Command were environmental protection and energy conservation. In the late 1960s intense national concern over the effects of pollution on the environment led to the enactment of several laws to control pollution. Although not the worst pollutor, the Department of Defense acted immediately to obey the new legislation by establishing environmental protection programs. The Command was assigned responsibility for the Navy's program. The Arab-Israeli War of 1973 and the subsequent oil embargo focused public and government attention on the need to conserve energy -- particularly energy derived from petroleum products. As a result, the Command was made responsible for energy conservation throughout the naval shore establishment.

New legislation in the field of both environmental protection and energy conservation meant profound changes for all the military services. It should be noted, however, that while government activities were generally less at fault than the organizations in the private sector (the Navy had already, prior to the new legislation, taken steps to combat pollution and conserve energy resources), they were also highly visible and consequently highly vulnerable to criticism.

The Command's mission expanded into many other new areas during the 1965-1974 time frame. These areas included the management of non-technical collateral equipment, programming responsibility for family housing and land transportation, coordination of all disaster control programs for shore activities, and responsibility

for technical review of the Navy's urgent minor construction and emergency construction programs. In addition, military construction programming and budgetary responsibilities were assigned to the Command. Many of these functions gradually increased in scope during the decade under study.

The one major reduction in responsibility came in 1967 when maintenance management of real property was deleted from the Command's mission. The Command had originally acquired this responsibility in 1963 with the advent of the Single Executive Concept. The subsequent mission change was aimed at conforming with the new concept of a unilinear Navy and adapting the Command's activity to the requirements of the Department of Defense's Resource Management System.

During the period under consideration, there were no real fundamental changes in the Command's organizational structure. Even the Navy Department reorganization of 1966, which transformed the Navy's organization from a bilinear to a unilinear system, had a significant impact only in the area of maintenance management. One cosmetic change wrought by the reorganization was the name change from Bureau of Yards and Docks to Naval Facilities Engineering Command, reflecting its new status as one of the systems commands. Most changes during this period were evolutionary in nature and occurred in response to specific internally or externally generated needs.

Not only did the Command's organization remain relatively unchanged during the period under consideration, but the administrative

process by which the Command controlled its manifold responsibilities also remained relatively stable.

During the second half of the 1960s, the Command consolidated its many automatic data processing systems into a single system, the Navy Facilities System. The Facilities System was organized in such a way to provide an interfaced data base for all aspects of the facilities business. These data systems were described functionally in terms of three processes - requirements, acquisitions, utilization - and three major subsystems - real property, utilities and civil engineer support. Beginning on 20 August 1969, the Naval Facilities System was physically housed in the Facilities Systems Office located at the Naval Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, California.

During the period 1965-74, the Command's Research and Development program was primarily affected by the following: the Vietnam War, interest in deep ocean environments, changes in the United States Flag Merchant Fleet and Department of Defense Sealift postures, the environment and energy conservation, the physical security of continental United States Military installations, détente and force level reductions, declining defense budgets, and the civilian challenge to the relevance of military research and development.

During much of the ten year period the Command's research and development efforts were directed to a large extent toward solving Vietnam related problems. Nevertheless, research and development was not done totally to meet Vietnam war needs. In the 1970s, it

was directed toward meeting Marine Corps amphibious landing and over-the-beach supply requirements. To facilitate shipping, work was also done in the area of modular containerization.

As the Command was responsible for coordinating the development of a Navy-wide environmental data base program, much research and development effort was expended in the area of pollution abatement, especially in regard to the naval shore establishment. Efforts continued to expand in this area during the 1970s.

The years 1965-1974 formed an extremely creative period for the Navy in the whole field of facilities planning and programming. The Naval Facilities Engineering Command took a strong lead in this development, emerging at the end of the period with greatly enhanced responsibilities and capabilities. In 1967, Shore Facilities Planning became a separate program as a result of the Command being given increased responsibilities in the planning area. Although the Command had long participated in the planning stages of the Shore Facilities Planning and Programming System, previously its more limited shore facilities planning responsibilities had been executed under the auspices of the Assistant Commander for Planning and Design.

Those military construction programming functions that the Command performed prior to 1967 were done by the Construction Program. In 1967, the Chief of Naval Operations transferred most of the responsibility for military construction programming and budgeting to the Naval Facilities Engineering Command while retaining only a few functions

at OP-44. This functional transfer effectively consolidated within the Command all master planning, engineering, military construction, programming and budgeting. The Command created two new programs to execute these new functions: Shore Facilities Planning and Military Construction Programming.

During the years since 1967, the Command's responsibilities in the area of military construction programming steadily increased as the office of the Chief of Naval Operations continued to reduce its direct participation in military construction programming. Major areas of military construction programming emphasis were: environmental quality and protection, shipyard modernization, the Cold Iron Program, Naval Air Rework Facility Modernization, Trident, the Accelerated Medical Construction Program, and energy conservation.

Command Headquarters was also active in the area of engineering and design, although its role was primarily one of management; the Engineering Field Divisions were responsible for actual execution. Despite this, however, a limited number of projects were designed at Command Headquarters. From 1965 through 1974, much of the Command's Engineering and Design work concentrated on carrying out routine, long-standing functions. There were no dramatic changes during this period, although the Vietnam War did make special demands upon the program.

The Command's Construction Program was engaged in a wide variety of activity during the years 1965-1974. Probably more so than for any other program, Vietnam dominated the Construction

Program's activity from 1965 through 1972. The Vietnam construction effort was enormous; military construction expenditures alone amounted to $1.8 billion. Additional millions, all under the cognizance of the Command, were spent in Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos during this same period. Most of this effort went toward building the jet-capable airfields, huge supply depots, and base complexes necessary for the support of United States and allied forces in Vietnam. Elaborate road networks were also constructed in both Vietnam and Thailand.

Although Vietnam construction dwarfed the Command's construction efforts elsewhere, other work was no less significant. The Command executed construction projects throughout the world via its Engineering Field Divisions and Officers in Charge of Construction. The Command built Navy facilities in such widely separated locations as Europe, Australia and Antarctica. Numerous projects were also executed in the continental United States. Major construction projects included the Naval Communications Station on Diego Garcia, the Naval Academy Modernization Program, Trident, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Services, the Hospital Modernization Program, the Naval War College Redevelopment Program, the very low frequency communications stations at Northwest Cape, Australia and Annapolis, Maryland, the Naval Training Center at Orlando, Florida, and the new Naval Home at Gulfport, Mississippi, to name but a few.

Command Operations and Maintenance Program activity from 1965 through 1974 was characterized by innovations and achievement. Like the other programs, Operations and Maintenance had to deal with the tremendous demands of the Vietnam War which put a heavy strain on the program, especially in the maintenance area. The drastic funding cutbacks which followed the end of the war made it impossible for the program to stabilize itself and reduce the large maintenance backlog that had grown during the Vietnam era. It has only been since 1973 that the program began to recover from the trauma of Vietnam and to forge ahead. For Operations and Maintenance the greatest organizational innovation of the period was the Single Executive Concept which was in effect between 1963 and 1967. Under this concept, the Naval Facilities Engineering Command served as the Navy's single executive for facilities management. As mentioned above, this responsibility was discontinued as a result of the Navy's 1967 change from a bilinear to a unilinear organization.

The Real Estate Program's activity remained fairly constant during the years under consideration, although the organizational structure underwent many small changes as well as one large reorganization in 1973. In that year, the Real Estate Program and the Shore Facilities Planning Program were combined into a single joint activity. Real estate acquisition activities during the years 1965-1974 were directed toward keeping abreast of rapidly changing real estate requirements. Two legislative measures,

the National Environmental Protection Act of 1969 and Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970, greatly affected real estate policies and procedures. During the period in question, property acquisition reached a wartime peak in 1969 when 109,010 acres were acquired at a cost $15.4 million. This was followed by a decline until 1973, when the second highest level of acquisition was recorded, 23,681 acres at a cost of $21,000. Real Estate also executed the Command's Real Property Disposal Program. Property disposal was especially accelerated following the promulgation of Executive Order 11508 on 10 February 1970. This Executive Order called for the identification and disposal of all unneeded federal real estate.

The Military Readiness Program, like the Construction Program, was largely preoccupied with the demands of the Vietnam War during the greater part of the period under consideration. The program's primary mission during these years was the personnel and logistical support of Naval Construction Force efforts in Vietnam. The rapid expansion of this force from ten understrength Mobile Construction Battalions in 1965 to twenty-one wartime strength Mobile Construction Battalions in 1969 presented the program with a mighty challenge. This challenge was equaled only by that of Vietnam environment which presented numerous logistic and material problems for the program to solve. The Military Readiness Program responded quickly and effectively to the problems of the Vietnam conflict and provided efficient support to the Naval Construction Force units

involved there. The impressive accomplishments of the Seabees in Vietnam were in no small measure due to this performance.

With the end of American military activity in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, Military Readiness faced new challenges in other parts of the world. Although Seabee strength was drastically reduced following the war, Seabee activity intensified as projects deferred by the Vietnam War were finally carried out. In the 1970s, Military Readiness supported Seabees at work in the Indian Ocean, the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, Europe, and on the ocean floor.

From its establishment in 1968 at the Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, the Civil Engineer Support Office was of great importance to the Command in its execution of Military Readiness Program responsibilities. In effect, Civil Engineer Support was the action component of the Military Readiness Program. From 1968 onward, the Command delegated most Naval Construction Force and material management functions to the Civil Engineer Support Office. These functional transfers made the new office one of the Command's fastest growing organizations during the last few years. This rapid growth resulted in several reorganizations of the office between 1968 and 1974. Civil Engineer Support executed innumerable support functions for the Naval Construction Force. It developed and evaluated Seabee training programs, developed equipment requirements, and followed through on the design and procurement of new equipment types.

Working in concert, the above programs and support functions, performed the mission of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command in an exemplary fashion during the ten years under consideration