

Lone Star Battalion mobilized and ready to deploy - Texas Seabees answer the call

Story and photos by JO1 Leslie A. Shively

PORT HUENEME, Calif. – Close to 500 Reserve Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Twenty-Two (NMCB 22) with detachments across Texas and in Oklahoma mobilized and are now preparing for deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in September. NMCB 22 is training at the Naval Base Ventura County.

Seabees are the Navy's construction force and will be working for the II Marine Expeditionary Force (II MEF). Tasking will include building schools, bridges, roads and other infrastructure such as a city's utilities system as well as providing security detachments for equipment and supply convoys overseas.

Mobilization transitions Reservists into active duty where overseas or assignment-specific gear is issued and medical and dental visits qualify members for duty. After a week long in-processing period is of preparation for includes rigorous military skills and Military strategies are and through hands-on combat maneuvers, medicine and chemical, weapons defense. in a two-week field

Adjunct classes such operations certification Martial Arts are offered deployment meetings and planning sessions are on going. Although the days are long and the workload is tremendous, NMCB 22 members have an overwhelmingly positive attitude toward their duties and deployment.

"We're going over there to help rebuild and get the civilian population on their feet which is something the U.S. has always done," said Legalman 1st Class Denise LaCaze, who is part



HM3 Rusty Smith, far left, YN2 Dinah Goodman and YN2 Carlos Vega execute a "Dress right, dress" movement in formation as they muster for a three and one half mile march around the Port Hueneme, Calif. during the mobilization phase of NMCB 22's deployment to Iraq.



Irene Maddox, left and Sarah Gourley wish EO1 Tim Malinovsky and the rest of the Seabees of NMCB 22 success while on deployment during a surprise visit to the battalion's mobilization staging area.

finished; an intense regiment deployment follows which physical training, a review of weapons qualifications. taught both in the classroom exercises in areas such as patrols, riot control, field biological and radiological NMCB 22 is also participating exercise, Operation Bearing deployment.

as communications and radio or an additional class in during evening hours and

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From the top: Q&A with Capt. Steven Young

DD: What is the battalion's assignment overseas and what is your mission as commander?

Skipper: We're attempting to build infrastructure so the Iraqi government can stand on their own two feet and we can send our troops home. I'm really pleased that it's a construction mission – that's what we're very good at, so I'm really excited. My mission is real simple: we're going to do it better than anybody's done it before and we're going to bring everybody home safe.

DD: Why is it important that the battalion involved?

Skipper: That's why we've trained all these years. How many years have we gone to the Reserve Center – how many birthdays have we missed or Mother's Days, Father's Days, anniversaries – whatever, we've been training just for this moment. That's why morale is so high, in my opinion because we're finally getting to contribute after all of the years of training and wondering if we're ever going to get out shot. This is our shot, that's why everybody's excited and working really hard and we're going to do well.

DD: How does training fit into our mission?

Skipper: Training is always important whether we're stepping off or not. A reserve battalion is required to have the same readiness capabilities as an active battalion, but one of

our challenges is having an opportunity to train for only 36 days out of the year. One of my goals was to increase the skills level of each individual Seabee. The response was very good and this year alone we probably used over 3000 man hours of ADT and obtained almost 30 NECs this year. Last year we had a little over 2000. Normally a battalion will get roughly between 400-700 man hours.

DD: What are some of the challenges facing our battalion as we mobilize and deploy?

Skipper: We've got to put aside our civilian jobs, put aside our worries about our families and we've got to focus on the training and the mission ahead. We have to have situational awareness and have to be focused on our mission. We have to paying attention to our surroundings to make sure we bring everybody back home.

DD: How does FEX increase our deployment readiness?

Skipper: From my perspective, the FEX is an opportunity to get our squads, fire teams and platoons together then select the right leadership at the E5 and E6 levels. The FEX gives us that arduous environment that challenges leadership abilities, challenges sleep deprivation – to really see what we can do when the situation gets stressful. The FEX is a challenge for any battalion let alone a reserve battalion.

DD: How does FEX training fit in to what we're going to be doing overseas?

Skipper: We're going to be very heavily tasked from a construction perspective. FEX will help us with situational awareness, working together and with a small unit leadership perspective because we're working with the squads and the fire teams that we're going to deploy with. We'll be able to know where our strengths and weaknesses are so we can do what we need to do when we get over there.

DD: On a personal note?

Skipper: NMCB 22 has a special place in my heart, they're like my family. I had a seven or eight year break in service and I came back into the Navy as a Civil Engineer Corps officer and received my commission as an Ensign in March '84 and my first job was with NMCB 22. I stayed for almost ten years. The battalion is special to me because I have known many of these guys for years. I know their capabilities, their talents plus I grew up with the people that were mobilized in '69 with Admiral Dunlap. As kind of a side note, Admiral Dunlap found out we were going to be mobilized and called me on a Sunday during drill weekend offering words of encouragement and some advice. He said the battalion will never cease to amaze you. He was so right. These guys are great.

CAPT Steven L. Young
CEC, USNR
Commanding Officer

LCDR Michelle Breaux
CEC, USNR
Executive Officer

CMDCM(SCW) Gilbert Jordan
USNR, Command Master Chief

LT William Stewart
USNR, Public Affairs Officer

JO1 Leslie A. Shively
USNR, Editor-in-Chief/Graphic Design



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NMCB 22 mobilized

of NMCB 22's administrative staff. "It's important. America has always helped others to find freedom and have a voice."

"We're establishing freedom in a place and for a people who never experienced it before," concurs Lt. William Stewart, NMCB 22's chaplain. He said he also felt deployment was key to maintaining the freedom Americans have been blessed with for such a long time.

"We've got a heck of a mission," explains Capt. Steven Young, NMCB 22's commanding officer. "I'm really pleased that we'll be doing construction because that's what we're

very good at." Excited about deploying, Young explains this is the opportunity Reservists train to accomplish. "How many years have we gone to the Reserve Center and how many birthdays, Mother's Days, Father's Days or anniversaries have we missed? After all of these years of training and wondering if we will ever get our chance. Now we are finally going to contribute."

A contingent of 129 Seabees from NMCB 22 was mobilized for deployment during Operation Noble Eagle in 2003 and the Battalion also served during 1968 and 1969 in Vietnam.

The Seabee Chaplain's Diddy

Chaplain William Stewart

Well I had a dream just the other night (echo)
A very good dream but it gave me a fright (echo)
Well I went to heaven and what did I see (echo)
The Seabee Chaplain a smilin' at me (echo, then refrain)

On the next cloud over, what did I see
If it wasn't the Master Chief a grinnin' at me
He said hey there Seabee what do you think?
I said PT in Heaven, doesn't this stink! . . .

Well the chaplain smiled and said to me
Come along and you will see
We walked on over to the next cloud
And there was the Skipper standing proud . . .

Well the chaplain and Skipper walked me around
And what I saw nearly took me down
A million Seabees were smilin' at me
And they were a shoutin' can't you see . . .

Then the Lord Himself came on out
And all the Seabees began to shout
We are here cause we love you God
People too, and we began to nod . . .

Well the Lord and I ran every single day
And as we did, I could hear Him say
Seabee you know why you're here
When you run with me there'll be no fear . . .

When I woke up I was full of pride
I knew right then I could never hide
Seabee 22's the place to be
Now all you Seabees sing with me . . .

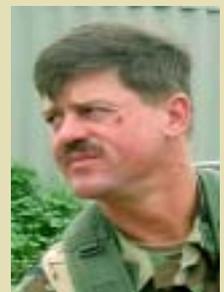
Refrain

Singin' ol' right left
Lefty right left
Your ol' right a left
I love to double time
Cause I do it all the time

Optional Refrain

One mile, feelin' good
Two miles, feelin' better
Three miles, half-way there
Four miles, feelin' great
Five miles, all the way





NMCB 22 SOY believes in taking care of his people

Chosen as NMCB 22's Sailor of the Year, Equipment Operator 1st Class Samuel Byington believes the honor really belongs to his people.

"Oklahoma City got me the Sailor of the Year. I didn't do it, they did," he said adding the Seabees in his unit spent a lot of personal time completing training such as the four-day chemical, biological and radiological weapons defense class, acquiring Navy Enlisted Classifications and qualifying for the Seabee Combat Warfare (SCW) designation.

Byington also acknowledged his success is due to teamwork and explained that he and Equipment Operator 1st Class Tim Malinovsky assisted 28 people to qualify for their SCW since Sept., raising the battalion level up over 12 percent.

The battalion's annual Sailor of the Year program recognizes an individual's outstanding leadership among the enlisted ranks. Candidates are chosen and packages submitted to battalion headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas, from of each of the 10 detachments. The Sailor of the Year is decided on by a Chief's board.



"I look for a person that is engaged with the battalion, a person that works issues on personal time and always finishes – you give them a task and they finish and one that works well with people," said Senior Chief Builder Clarence Denis, who emphasized

taking care of fellow sailors, especially subordinates, was the most important management quality.

"I believe in taking care of the junior troops, which means making sure they get paid right or finding the answers if it is not being done," agreed Byington. "I don't give up until I get the answers they need."

Prior to joining the battalion, Byington spent several years on active duty as an aircrewman. With the reserve Seabees since 1992, his 13-year affiliation is a family affair. An uncle, Charles Ridgway, was an electrician with Naval Air Station, North Island, Calif. during the Vietnam era.

First activated with Augment Five in 2001, Byington spent seven and a half months in Okinawa and then Guam. In 2003, he was with the Air Detachment for two months in Port Hueneme, Calif. This latest mobilization will support Operation Enduring Freedom and he said he is looking forward to this third deployment.

"We're helping the people of Iraq become a democratic country," he said. What's special about the Seabees is that they're always willing to lend a hand to others in all walks of life."

Chaplain's Inspirations

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. - I Thess 5:11

Seabees, look at that patch you are wearing. What does it mean to you and who are you? Be proud ... we build!

Jesus left there and went to his home town, accompanied by his disciples and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What is this wisdom that has been given him that he even does miracles? Isn't this the carpenter?" - Mark 6:1-6a

Never underestimate the power of the builder! Remember, Jesus was a carpenter. He build more than just buildings ... He built lives. Be proud you are a Seabee!

I CAN DO all things through Him who gives me strength. - Philippians 4:13

The Apostle Paul must have had Seabee blood running through his veins because he had that "Can Do" spirit! You and I too, can do everything with our Lord's help and strength. We are Seabees!

Reflections - a look from the inside

IT2 Chen Wai Wong

August 17, 2005

It is a cool and cloudy night. I sit on watch, thinking about the events that have brought me here. It has been a long road traveled in a short time, about 16 days, and yet there is still a lot more ground to cover before this journey is over.

It all started with that phone call from my Reserve Center in Fort Worth, Texas, back in July on my way to work. I was recalled to active duty which is funny, since I've never been on active duty, only reserve for the past eight years and the following three weeks were absolute chaos.

Those moments flash in my mind:

Get a check list ready; notify my employer; get a power of attorney and will drafted and notarized ... try not to stay too late at work so I can get home early and spend more time with my pregnant wife and two daughters ... give my girls enough hugs every night because I know I will not be able to for another year ...

I remember going over my mental check list for work, making sure I have all of my projects documented and ready to be handed over. Everything seems to be going well until I am called again by the military to let me know that I will be on duty a little sooner, about a week ahead.

Now, it's pedal to the metal time and all of the tasks on my list are accomplished in high gear.

Finally, my last day at work comes. It's a bittersweet occasion as I pack up my office. I am touched by the support that I receive from my colleagues! So many people stop by my office and shake my hand; give me hugs.

My department, Human Resources, takes me and my family out for a good-bye lunch. I go home and then back to the office at 9 p.m. and leave at 3 a.m. the following morning. I have finally completed my turnover.

Three days before leaving, I report to the Reserve Center. All three days are spent running around, stocking up on baby wipes, q-tips and all the other little necessities I will need on my long journey. I will be in different climates: first in mild, sunny Calif., and then to the desert: Iraq.

I also buy additional t-shirts, socks and underwear for those long sweaty days in the field. I start to pay more attention to the news about events occurring overseas – I will be there soon.

My wife Janine and I go over everything once more as we have each night over the past few weeks. She has supported me so well through the initial phase and remained strong although I could see and feel her stress. She cried every night at first, but less as time went on. I know she is hurting.

My daughters are cuddlier and my youngest starts to say "I love you papa" more than before.

I start packing. The hallway looks like a disaster relief staging area. I call CE2 Grant Wallace to ask about a piece of gear. He has been with the Seabees quite some time and I treasure his input.

"Travel as light as you can," he advises. "There will be a chance to get anything you want or need once we are over there.

- to be continued

CM3 Roland Sobrepena's POLTRYISMS

Why did the chicken cross the road?

Skipper: Was he wearing his battle rattle?

XO: Was his chin strap on? 50 PUSH UPS NOW!!!

S1: He had to file a report!

S2: He crossed at a 50 degree angle at rate of 15 strides per second!

The S3's in unison: Did he have a FRAG order?

S4: I don't know but he ran off and didn't sign for it!

Chaplain: Crossing the road means he's finding his higher self'

Alpha Dawgs: We were using him as a ground guide, sir!

Bravo: He was the messenger sir?

Charlie: He couldn't cross the road, so we build him a bridge!

Delta: We gave him a jump start to get his day going!

Sierra: Was his battle buddy with him?

Comms: Did he secure his radio?

Doc: Was he hydrating?

ON POINT: Why is this an important mission for both NMCB 22 and America?



BU3 Kenneth Reeves

Iraq? Those people need a lot of help, they've been suffering for a long time and it's a good opportunity for us and for them. I believed that after 9/11 we were going to need a lot of people for the service and at my age, this was a last opportunity for me to serve the country. (Ed.'s note: the average age for battalion members is 42 years)

E03 Richard Curry

We're defending our country, going after terrorism where it lurks and getting rid of evil.



CM3 Peter Contreras

This will be my second tour over there and I've actually seen the good that we do - something the media never focuses on. A case in point is where, up north, Saddam's engineers drained the marsh land and starved the people in the south. We broke that canal and freed the flow of water. They're farming now where 10 years ago they weren't.

CMCN Jose Sanchez

It's important to support everyone over there and help them out any way we can. It's also a mission for me, to find more discipline in my life.



E01 Ruben Martinez

I was going to retire this year but I felt it wasn't time for me to leave yet. If I can have some impact on even one person to see that there is hope for a new life, my mission will be accomplished.

E03 Matthew Allen Stephens

It's important that we let them have the freedom they deserve and need just like Americans have - the right to vote, the right to religion, the right to a normal and happy life. I think everyone should support that idea, I do. It won't hurt any of us to go over there for six or eight months and do the best that we can do to help those people.

