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Double Deuce

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SuperFex Issue

deployed

IN THIS ISSUE:

-MOCC

-Cafe del Seabee

-ON POINT



From the top: Q&A with CMDCM Gilbert Jordan

DD: Why is the intense level of training during the FEX so important?

The training we're going through right now is to ensure we're prepared for deployment. More importantly, it's to ensure that each individual member of NMCB 22 is prepared to go into Southwest Asia. I don't want anyone to go overseas without having the knowledge they need to safeguard themselves and the Seabee beside them as well as taking care of the battalion as a whole.

DD: Our families are worried that we're going through quite a bit. Is there anything you can say to them?

The time away (at Fort Hunter Liggett) is also giving us an opportunity to adjust; to be away and not have any communication with the family. For



Is it challenging? Yes. But, again, this is to prepare us for what's ahead. Each day is going to be challenging. It may be hot. It may be very cold. It may be raining, drizzling. Gear's going to get very heavy, but by the time we get over there, we will have developed some muscles we typically didn't have (chuckles).

DD: You have a great deal of confidence in the battalion as well as our leadership.

Very much so and with each day, you can tell hearts and minds are set. They're prepared to go forward and that's comforting. I can't say anything more for the leadership we have – an opportunity to deploy with the best Captain I've ever met is not only an honor but a privilege.

some members who are used to communicating with their families every day it's very challenging. But, by the time we get through with this, they'll understand they'll not be able to call home every day. So, there's that personal adjustment that we have to go through.

CAPT Steven L. Young
CEC, USNR
Commanding Officer

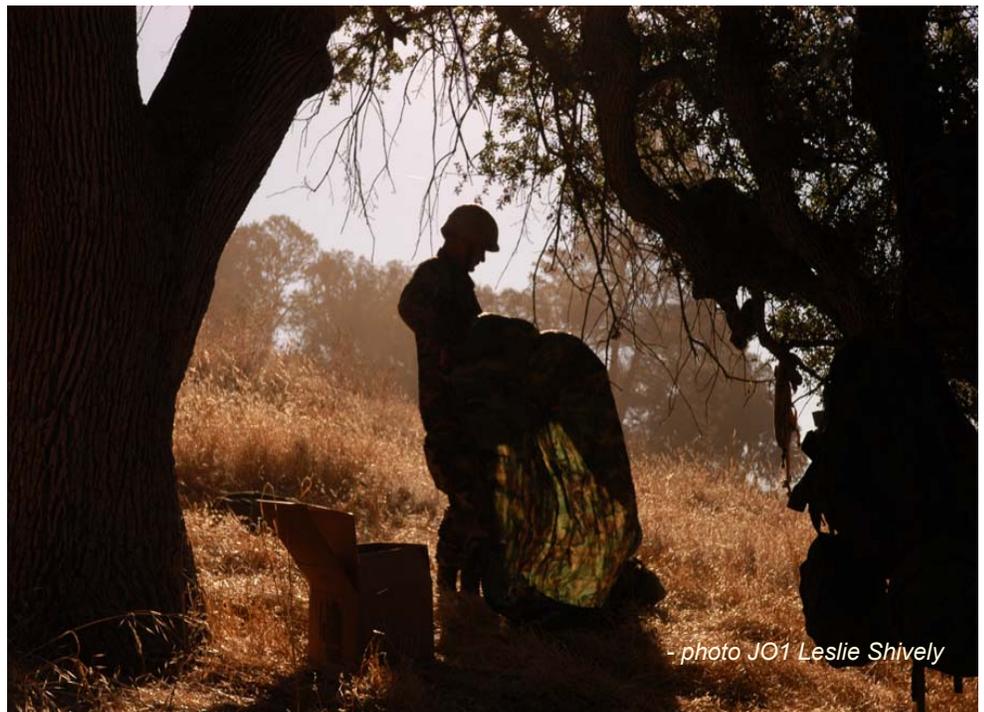
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- photo JO1 Leslie Shively

FEX: training forward for deployment

- story and photos JO1 Leslie Shively

Early morning sunlight scrapes across the hills and valleys of the arid landscape of Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., where amid the twitter of birds and insects, the sounds of hammering, sawing and gruff voices shouting orders and instructions, mingle.

Here, in the field, over 500 Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Twenty-two (NMCB 22) camped and prepared defensive positions: dug fox holes, built an observation tower, laid out concertina wire and repelled aggressors under simulated battlefield conditions giving them hand-on experience in war time situations.

Normally a 10-day evolution at the culmination of a four year training cycle for reservists, this year's field exercise or FEX, Operation Bearing Duel, was much different for NMCB 22. Several extra days were added and training scenarios were revamped to more closely align with the battalion's mission during deployment according to LCDR Anthony Spinler, NMCB 22's operations officer.

He said the focus of the FEX centered on convoy missions moving from the original base of operations more quickly and establishing forward project sites at a faster pace, with more emphasis on tactical movement and security rather than the

traditional type of FEX where a complex Logistics Support Area or LSA was set up, fortified and defended first.

"The new format established a simpler LSA, then deployment with a number of movements to project sites and a new FOB (Forward Operating Base) to move the unit more often) getting movement concepts which is more important in the common operations we are experiencing in Iraq and other places (in the Middle East)."

He explained this new format was aimed at more well-rounded training in both project construction and defensive posture and that NMCB 22 was the first battalion to complete this new training scenario. He also feels NMCB 22's experience with this FEX is an important tool to plan future training for other battalions.

Completed projects included a rapid runway repair, a Bailey bridge construction, a water purification project and restoring some area roads. Fort Hunter Liggett suffered a large brush fire during FEX that delayed bridge construction and threatened the FOB so much that it was moved.

The schedule changes and extra move posed a major challenge to Seabee crews.

"We had probably twice to four times the amount of movement you normally had in a FEX," Spinler said, emphasizing that the

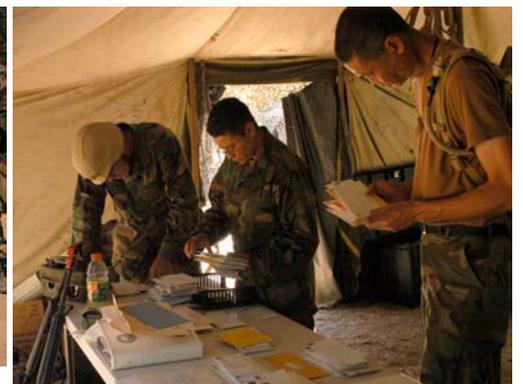
FOB was particularly impacted. "We had to leave the area that was in the fire zone. In six hours we established a new FOB. There was no time to plan, no time to lay out sectors, determine runoff water or do a convoy plan. That's a hard change to react to allowing the exercise and training to continue."

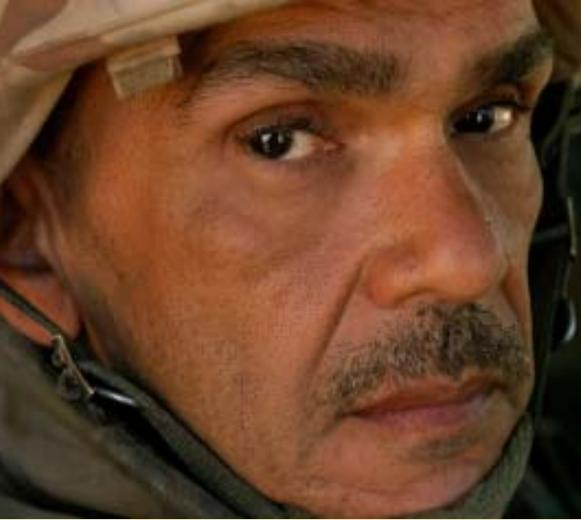
During the FEX other departments trained hard as well as the projects crews. Tactical Movement Teams moved materials and equipment between sites on roads with simulated improvised explosive devices or IEDs and provided security for the LSA and FOBs

The medical department staged Operation Bigshot, a mass casualty drill that exercised skills and response times for the hospital corpsman and newly trained combat lifesavers, a group of volunteers who assist corpsmen with basic life saving.

Spinler said NMCB 22 achieved two major accomplishments during FEX: four hundred plus people, some brand new to the military and to the Seabees, were trained and completed the exercise successfully plus the battalion was mobilized at the same time.

"We had people fly in country seven days after FEX," Spinler said.





Seabee Sonnet

Seabee stands for the truth and freedom to which we are all entitled.

We are the brave and the strong that help those who cannot help themselves.

Although courage is what we thrive upon, "Can Do" is what we live by.



We take pride in putting on this uniform, for without people like us, would there be a land of the free and a home of the brave?

Seabees not only build or rebuild we also restructure lives.



Thriving on the initiative of our superiors, we understand even the lowest ranks are part of our organization.

We are close knit, just as any family should be.



*Knowing our task we have said
farewell for now to our family and
friends, and ask of them one simple
but powerful request:*

*Pray for us, and those who will be
fighting next to us.*

*God willing we will return home
safe to you, and if it is not planned
in our lives to return, please do not
think we have perished in vain.*

*For this is what we do, not only as a
job, but also as a passion for the
country we believe in.*

After all we are United States Navy Seabees!

- EO3 April L. Cannon



Mounting out: packing tons of gear in mere hours. Can Seabees do it?

A Seabee battalion numbers anywhere from 500 to 700 people, but a smaller Air Detachment or Air Det of 89 to 125 personnel is available to “mount out” for quick response to mission tasking.

Mounting out includes a complete inventory, cleaning and packing of Civil Engineering Support Equipment (CESE) and supplies for shipping anywhere in the world within 48 hours.

CESE includes transport and construction vehicles, heavy equipment, wood and other building materials, tools and supplies such as oil and other items necessary to carry out project missions as well as maintain and repair gear.

Dubbed Meathook, the mount out exercise is done typically once or twice a year. This year, NMCB 22 staged a Meathook with the Air Det at Port Hueneme, Calif., in conjunction with FEX and for deployment to Iraq.

The Air Det is completely self-sufficient and must have all of the equipment for all of the personnel to complete the mission properly.

“We provide our own security, our own equipment operators, culinary specialists, communications people and builders who will build the operations tower and the bunkers,” said Builder 1st Class Nicholas Ramirez, an Air Det member who was participating in the exercise.

An Air Det will often be tasked with the same types of construction projects a battalion is given and must also defend

themselves, so communication is paramount.

“Without communication there is no way to complete that mission. We can’t communicate from job sites or ensure security is provided.



Builder Constructionman Raymond Howard scrubs dirt, grime and grease from under the wheel wells of a five ton stake truck. Howard is participating in a mount out exercise and preparing for deployment. The mount out exercise trains Seabees to properly prepare and pack all vehicles and equipment for shipment to projects.

We have all of our own signals and call signs – different smokes we use and all that has to be integrated. Everybody needs to know what’s going on,” Ramirez said.

A large part of Meathook is vehicle wash-down. CESE is shipped aboard U.S. Air Force aircraft and must pass a stringent inspection.

“If the plane hits turbulence, little pieces of rock or gravel that could be lying in the back of the bed (of a truck) may end up flying around,” explained Builder 2nd Class Gregory Winters, “and could get as fast as a piece of shrapnel.”

“That includes under the wheel wells, chassis, trailers; inside or on the lights, the radiator – everything,” said Equipment Operator 3rd Class Wayne Johnson, stationed at the wash rack.

“You have to make sure every pebble and blob of grease is off,” agreed Builder 3rd Class Rudolph Robles, also at the wash rack, who explained the biggest challenge was the clock. “We have to get

everything in, get it cleaned, get all of the detail work done and be able to rotate through in time.”

Detail work? After a thorough cleaning the Alpha Shop inspects the vehicles, looking for oil or fuel leaks and tightening all nuts and bolts. Windshields and lights are polished too.

Timing is crucial during Meathook. Each 15 minutes has the weight of an

hour and attention to detail is extremely important.

“All of your equipment – your beans, bullets, band aids, trucks and personal gear has to be in place in order for this to work. It’s quite involved – there’s a lot,” said Builder 1st Class David Woodham, leading petty officer for the exercise.

He said organization was the most challenging part of Meathook.

“The main thing is getting all the information together, especially in the execution and logistics areas and making sure all of that equipment is ready to go. All of this has to be done in 48 hours – you have from 0630 in two days to accomplish it all,” he said, emphasizing, “It DOES happen! There is no failure here – it’s a can do!”

Cafe Del Seabee serves over a thousand daily

The scent of spicy, grilled chicken wafted across camp at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., and a legion of tired, dust caked and sun burnt Seabees rushed to get a taste of their first hot meal in many days, thankful that the seemingly endless MRE's were put aside for a time.

The line grew fast and all went smoothly at first. Then, in an instant, serving halted, but the line kept growing.

"As we were cooking the chicken, which takes the longest, the oven went out," explained Chief Shipserviceman Jimmie Woods, in charge of the galley, who smiled, remembering the moment.

Lighting ovens in a field galley can be hazardous if not done properly.

"The M2 burners are run on gasoline," explained Culinary Specialist 1st Class Robert Vergason, adding each is equivalent to six sticks of dynamite. He said those handling the ovens go through special training on lighting and using the burners.

Galley staff fired the oven back up and though the line was long, each Seabee ate a hot, hearty meal.

"Mission one is to make sure everybody eats and they get good food," said Culinary Specialist 2nd Class Virgil Allen Dalley, galley manager.

A cranky oven was not the only problem galley staffers tackled while getting the galley up and running. Equipment glitches occurred often, initially. Woods explained that one of the freezers stopped working that first day and the previous morning powering up coffee pots caused electrical circuits to break.

"At one point we lost power to the whole kitchen. But we got that one worked out too," Woods said, joking it usually doesn't take



NMCB -22's galley crew poses for a photo on the last day of the FEX, just before the dining tent is dismantled.

Seabees long to fix things, especially when the problem involves home cooked meals.

Beyond tending the ovens, setting up and running a galley providing piping hot meals twice a day to over 500 people in the field involves a tremendous amount of planning and execution.

First comes setting down the floors and raising both the dining and galley tents, then offloading ovens and kitchen gear, which took 12-14 hours and 36 people. The next day galley staffers spent arranging the gear and cleaning.

"You constantly clean, especially when you are out in the field, it's amazing," said Woods, who had never been in charge of a field galley before.

Stores arrived and the galley is in business. Cooks unpacked and placed food on hot grills and greased pans, boiled water and cut vegetables moving around each other as if following a preset choreography.

"Galley operations are a carefully orchestrated symphony. Timing is everything. You have several members dancing around each other based on their responsibilities - you

have some at the burners, some at the prep tables, some with the fresh fruits and vegetables. But they handle it well, without injury," said LCDR Dana Bracy, officer in charge of the supply department.

"Safety is always first in whatever we do - it's hot stuff back there," Bracy continued. He also explained that the galley crew's output has to match the influx of the crowd and they must be just as ready to serve the first customer as well as the very last.

"It is like a dance back there in the galley and it seems like you have to be really focused on what you're doing, even though you're working humongously long hours in a dangerous environment," agreed Culinary Specialist 2nd

Class Kimberly Escusa.

Communication is important in the galley, and there is a spoken and unspoken language.

"There are galley manners and there are real world manners,"

Dalley explained. "Nobody takes offense if you tell me to get out of the way because you're carrying a hot pot of water or grease. There's no running in the galley, but you walk real fast to get to where ever you're going to put that pot down."

The menu is set via formulas using age, demographics, time of the year, time of the day, type of meal and item popularity and although 500 people are being served not all items

require 500 portions.

"Liver and spinach, for some reason, just doesn't sell," Dalley said. "Everything's set up for 100 portions, so you figure out how many people you're going to feed, which is a guessing game, you're always practicing progressive cooking.



CS3 Jennifer York warms her hands in the rising steam from the washing and sanitizing station behind the galley early in the morning after the breakfast rush has subsided.



SK3 Amanda Hernandez ladles hash brown potatoes into a container to carry into the serving line for breakfast.

ON POINT: Images from the front lines



- photos by
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