

## CHAPTER 1

# HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION OF THE SEABEES AND LAWS OF WAR

The Seabees are the Navy's construction forces; and few select teams, if any, enjoy a finer reputation among America's fighting men. During their short history, the Seabees have won fame, honor, and distinction as an organization that "Can Do," even when faced with practically insurmountable obstacles. A brief discussion on the history of the Seabees is given below.

### THE CIVIL ENGINEER CORPS

No discussion on the history of the Seabees is complete without first explaining the origin and purpose of the Civil Engineer Corps (CEC). The CEC is composed of dedicated staff corps officers who are specialists in the field of civil engineering. A CIVIL ENGINEER is a professional engineer who performs a variety of engineering work in planning, designing, and overseeing construction and maintenance of structures and facilities, such as roads, airports, bridges, harbors, pipelines, power plants, and water and sewage systems.

Civil engineers have been an integral part of the Navy since its very beginning. Our first "fleet" consisted of less than 10 ships. However, our forefathers realized that to survive as a nation, the United States must have a Navy powerful enough to counter the naval threat from pirates and other great powers, such as England, France, and Spain. To meet this threat, Congress authorized the hiring, purchasing, and building of several additional vessels. Suitable land for use as navy yards had to be located, surveyed, and purchased. Logically, civil engineers were delegated to perform these tasks.

By the time Thomas Jefferson became President, the Secretary of the Navy, Mr. Stoddert, had established six Navy Yards. All were managed by civil engineers, although they were not yet known as Civil Engineer Corps officers. In the following years, the number of ships increased sharply as well as the need for more dry docks and repair facilities. The United States was emerging as a great sea power and governmental functions were becoming more complex. As a result, on 31 August 1842, Congress established the "Bureau" system. The Bureau of Yards and Docks (BUDOCKS)—known now as the Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC)—was created, and

the chief of this bureau was a civil engineer. It was not until 25 years later, however, that the Civil Engineer Corps was officially named and authorized. At that time, the officers in the corps were the forerunners of the CEC officers who lead the variety of Seabee units today.

As naval technology advanced in the modern era, the navies of the world ranged far over the great oceans. Ships grew more and more dependent upon an ever-increasing chain of sophisticated shore bases for their support, both at home and abroad. The construction of these bases necessitated a new and large organization of seafaring fighter-builders.

Before 1941, the Civil Engineer Corps used private contractors to accomplish all overseas construction. The contractors, in turn, hired steelworkers, electricians, carpenters, draftsmen, and mechanics from private industry. However, the Navy realized that, in the event of war, civilian contractors and construction workers could not be used very well outside our own country. If they were attacked and attempted to defend themselves, these civilians could be regarded as guerrillas. Also, since most of them had never received any type of combat training, there was reason to believe that they could not adequately defend themselves, even if their lives depended on it. These fears soon became realities.

As World War II drew near, there was an urgent need for more overseas bases. Airfields and landing strips had to be rushed into existence on far away islands. Clearly, we needed a combat MILITARY ORGANIZATION trained to construct these advance bases. Even before the outbreak of hostilities, the Bureau of Yards and Docks had conceived the idea of naval construction battalions. The first construction units were organized early in January 1942. Highly skilled construction workers were recruited, and whole construction companies volunteered men and equipment.

### THE FIRST SEABEES

The name Seabees is derived from these first construction units, or construction battalions (CBS) as they were called. Officially, permission to use the name "Seabee" was granted on 5 March 1942. Each year March 5th is observed as the anniversary of the Seabees.

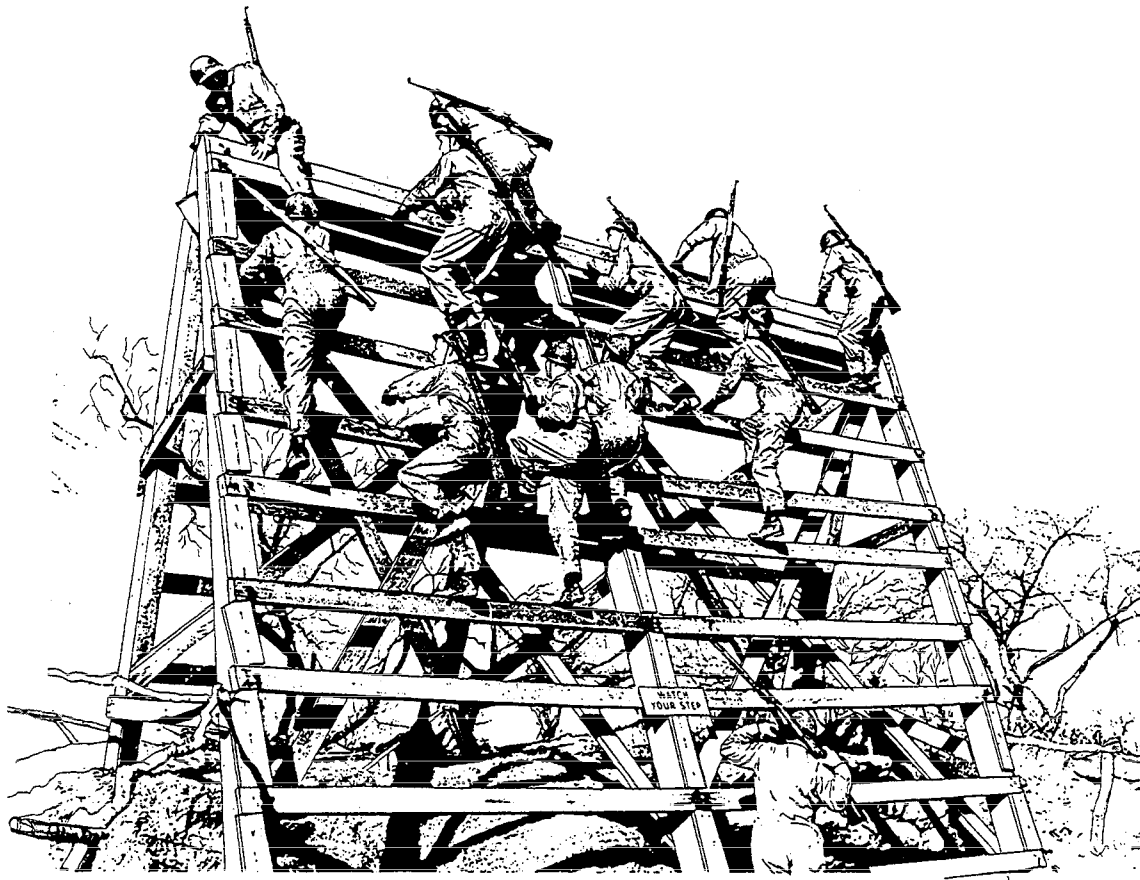


Figure 1-1.—Seabees going over one of the obstacle courses during combat training at Camp Endicott, Davisville, Rhode Island, during World War II.

Because of the urgent need for these men, the first Seabees had no time for military training. They were given medical shots, handed equipment, and sent off to pick up where the civilian contractors left off. One month after the first units were organized, Seabees were at work constructing roads on Bora Bora, one of the Society Islands, thousands of miles out in the Pacific Ocean.

Little time was given to training the next group of recruits, who were old hands in the construction trades, averaging 31 years of age. Since they were experienced in their respective skills, they needed and received mostly military training. Some additional instruction in technical matters peculiar to the Navy, such as pontoon assembly, was also given these men.

Throughout World War II the Seabees were without construction ratings as we know them now. They were given the most appropriate existing Regular Navy rating on the basis of their civilian vocation and experience; for example, an experienced steelworker or plumber who had achieved a position of responsibility—perhaps as a foreman or owner of a small business—was rated first class or chief Shipfitter. Seabees who held this and

other ratings, such as Boatswain's Mate, Machinist's Mate, and Electrician's Mate, were easily distinguished from those who held corresponding shipboard ratings by the Seabee insignia shoulder patch. This now famous insignia consists of a flying bee—fighting mad—with a “white hat” on his head, a spitting “tommy gun” in his front hands, a wrench in his middle hand, and a carpenter's hammer in his rear hand.

Soon the Seabees had grown enough to have their own stations, such as Camp Endicott, Camp Allen, and Camp Bradford. Camp Peary, near Williamsburg, Virginia, became the receiving and training station for the Seabees. At these camps, they learned such things as combat formations, combat signals, fire control, combat orders, first aid, use of various weapons, and military courtesy. Instruction was also given in trail cutting and jungle warfare.

After boot training, the new Seabees were assigned to construction battalions and advanced training began. They learned air raid protection, earthmoving, Quonset hut erection, and dry refrigeration. Crosscountry marches, sleeping in the open, obstacle courses (fig. 1-1), and simulated combat exercises toughened them up.

After this advanced training, battalions were ordered to an advanced base depot, such as Port Hueneme, California, or Davisville, Rhode Island, to await transportation overseas. Again, training continued while they were being outfitted with the tools, construction equipment, and materials needed to build advanced bases and facilities. In addition, they took on stores of ammunition, food, and medical supplies; in fact, everything necessary to make them self-sufficient.

By 1943, the training period for Seabees had expanded to about 3 months. However, in the spring of 1945, a major change in their training took place. Training of organized construction battalions was halted, and emphasis was placed on training individuals to replace the battle-weary veterans due for discharge or rotation back to the States. Even then, time did not permit extensive trade school training for the younger, unskilled Selective Service inductees. As a result, experienced personnel in the field had to augment meager stateside training with a lot of on-the-job training.

Seabees served with the assault forces in almost every major invasion in World War II, going ashore, in most cases, with or directly behind the first wave of troops. Such names as Guadalcanal, Los Negros, Tarawa, Munda, Saipan, Tinian, Attu, Iwo Jima, Guam, Samar, Okinawa, Salerno, Sicily, and Normandy will forever be associated with the Seabees, just as Montezuma and the Shores of Tripoli are symbolic of the traditions associated with the Marine Corps.

Looking back, some of the jobs accomplished by the Seabees in World War II seemed almost impossible. But they were done—efficiently, effectively, and quickly!

Undoubtedly, these accomplishments provided the basis for the Seabees' famous quotation:

“The difficult task we accomplish right away, the impossible may take a little longer!”

The Seabees' official motto is “Construimus-Batuimus.” Literally this means “We Build—We Fight.” Even engineers who were used to visualizing large construction projects were amazed at the Seabees' ability to improvise and build. In the first 2 years of the war, more than 300 advanced bases of various sizes and kinds were constructed by the Seabees.

In addition to earning the Navy's traditional “We'll done!” for construction work and defensive combat, the Seabees also earned well-deserved recognition in other capacities. The now famous Underwater Demolition

Teams (UDTs) were composed largely of Seabees. One large group of Seabees, called Naval Construction Battalions, Special, functioned as stevedores, loading and off-loading cargo ships. Other groups included automotive repair detachments, pontoon assembly detachments, pontoon operating battalions, and construction maintenance units. The latter maintained existing bases, releasing full battalions for building new ones.

## **POST WORLD WAR II SEABEES**

Since World War II, Seabees have participated in all kinds of training exercises. They have been part of the naval Antarctic expeditions, and they participated in the atomic bomb tests on the Pacific Islands. Seabees have engaged in constructing overseas bases, such as those at Subic Bay, Philippines, and the Marine Corps Air Facility at Futema, Okinawa. They have manned Arctic test stations, and they have been associated with resupply expeditions to Alaska.

## **SEABEES IN KOREA**

In Korea, the Seabees rose to the challenge of the Cold War in the tradition of their “Can Do” predecessors. At the Inchon landing in September 1950, Seabees positioned pontoon causeways within hours of the first beach assault under continuous enemy fire and in the face of enormous and strong tides.

In addition to amphibious operations, the Seabees were broken up into numerous detachments to service the K-fields of the various Marine air groups. Each airfield of the Marine air groups was designated with a “K” number, such as K-3 at Pohang, K-18 at Kimpo, Seoul, and K-2 at Teagan. As the war continued, the need arose for an advance airfield to retrieve damaged aircraft unable to reach home bases or carriers after raiding the North Korean interior.

The project was code named Operation “Crippled Chick,” and a detachment of Seabees was sent to Yo Do in the Bay of Wonson to build an airstrip. The Seabees were given 35 days to complete the job—the strip was ready in 16 days. While building the strip, the Seabees were under constant artillery bombardment from enemy forces on neighboring islands.

The rapid demobilization that followed World War II was not repeated after the signing of the Korean Armistice in July 1953. The Cold War had created a necessity to maintain military strength and preparedness. Crises in Berlin, Cuba, Africa, South

America, and especially in Southeast Asia kept the Seabees strong and active.

Just before the outbreak of the Korean War, a basic reorganization was substantially completed. Two distinct types of battalions were established to gain specialization and mobility. The amphibious construction battalions (PHIBCBs) are landing and docking units. The PHIBCBs have the mission of planning causeways, constructing pontoon docks, and performing other functions necessary for landing personnel and equipment in the shortest possible time. The naval mobile construction battalions (NMCBs) are responsible for land construction of a wide variety that includes military camps, roads, bridges, tank farms, airstrips, and docking facilities.

## **BETWEEN KOREA AND VIETNAM**

After the Korean War, the Seabees' efforts were directed toward more building and less fighting. Their peacetime achievements were no less impressive than their wartime achievements. In Okinawa, for example, the Seabees built a Marine Corps air facility using concrete precasting methods that drew the admiration of contractors throughout the Pacific area. At Holy Lock, Scotland, Seabees assembled a floating dry dock for the Polaris submarine facility. In far off Antarctica, a group of Seabees earned a round of tributes for their installation of the first nuclear reactor power plant at McMurdo Station, despite weather conditions that are laughingly called "summer" in the forbidding region. Elsewhere, while Ecuadorians were building a new naval academy, a small detachment of Seabees supervised and instructed them in modern construction methods.

By far the largest and most impressive peacetime project was the construction of Cubi Point Naval Air Station in the Philippines, the largest single construction job ever tackled by the Seabees. At Cubi, Seabees cut a mountain in half to make way for the nearly 2-mile-long runway, blasted coral, and filled in a section of Subic Bay that is almost a mile wide and nearly 2 miles long. The Seabees took nearly 5 years and 20 million man-hours to construct the air station and its adjacent aircraft carrier pier that is capable of docking the Navy's biggest aircraft carriers. The amount of coral and fill required for the job—some 20 million cubic yards—was equal to the task of building the Panama Canal.

During this period, Seabees could be found everywhere. They participated in building missile ranges both in the Atlantic and the Pacific and housing

complexes at naval bases and stations all over the world. During the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, Seabees hastily erected and helped man a strong defensive perimeter of fortifications at Guantanamo Bay.

Disaster relief became more than just another mission. When the island of Guam was devastated by Typhoon Karen in 1962, Seabees restored power and rebuilt damaged structures. Another team of Seabees helped the Chilean Navy repair the earthquake-damaged waterfront of their principal shipyard. Later in 1964, Seabees were on the scene restoring utilities and rebuilding roads in a matter of hours after Alaska was stricken by a devastating earthquake and tidal wave.

## **SEABEES IN VIETNAM**

In South Vietnam, the Seabees built and fought and established a new reputation for their deeds of construction while under fire. From the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in the north to the delta region in the south, they supported combat operations and sometimes fought side-by-side with the United States Marines and Army troops in guerrilla-infested areas.

The first full Seabee battalion arrived in Vietnam on 7 May 1965 to build an expeditionary airfield for the Marines at Chu Lai. Others soon followed. From 1965 until 1969, the Seabee commitment in Southeast Asia rapidly increased. This necessitated, first, the transfer of Atlantic Fleet battalions to the Pacific through a change of home port; then, the deployment to the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) of Atlantic Fleet NMCBs; and later the reactivation of nine additional battalions. This was culminated by the call to active duty of two Reserve NMCBs in May of 1968, bringing to 21 the number of battalions deploying to RVN. In addition, there were two amphibious construction battalions lending support to the RVN effort. In the same time period, a requirement for Seabees to support in-country activities, such as naval support activities at Da Nang and Saigon, two construction battalion maintenance units, two deployed naval construction regiments, and the deployed Third Naval Construction Brigade rapidly increased. To support these various requirements, the total Seabee community grew from 9,400 in mid-1965; to 14,000 in mid-1966; to 20,000 in mid-1967; to more than 29,000 in 1968 and 1969.

Seabee accomplishments in Vietnam were impressive, just as they were in World War II, Korea, and during peacetime. All 21 active battalions deployed to Vietnam—some several times—to build the roads, airfields, cantonments, warehouses, hospitals, storage

facilities, bunkers, and other facilities needed to continue the struggle. In accordance with the “mobile” concept of the Naval Construction Force, Seabee units supported Marine, Navy, Army, and Air Force operations at camps and landing zones throughout RVN and at such outposts as Con Thien, Khe Sanh, and Gio Linh.

For their efforts in Vietnam, Seabee units and individual Seabees received formal recognition in the form of numerous commendations and medals.

In Vietnam, a Seabee, CM3 Marvin E. Shields, a member of Seabee Team 1104, was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. This nation’s highest recognition was awarded to CM3 Shields for his heroic efforts in the defense of a Special Forces camp and Vietnamese District Headquarters at Dong Xoai.

When de-escalation of U.S. activity in Southeast Asia got under way, Seabee strength was once more reduced. By September 1970, NMCBs were down to the planned post-RVN level of 10 full-size battalions. Once more, Seabees were being called upon to undertake major peacetime projects that had been deferred or neglected because of wartime priorities.

## **POST VIETNAM**

Today’s Seabees are involved in new and far-reaching construction frontiers, the Indian Ocean, the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands, and on the ocean floor.

One of the major peacetime projects ever undertaken by the Seabees is the complete development, construction, and operation of the United States communications station on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. Construction was started in early 1971.

Prior to 1971, Diego Garcia was a jungle-covered atoll devoid of activity except for a small meteorological station and a copra plantation. Today, it is a busy naval support activity, all due to the largest peacetime construction effort ever accomplished by the Seabees. This tremendous effort ultimately involved some 14 naval construction force (NCF) commands, 17 battalion deployments, and over 60 individual detachment deployments. The Seabees completed over 200 Navy and Air Force projects, valued at over \$200 million.

NMCB 40, the first detachment of Seabees involved in this effort, was deployed by amphibious ship to Diego Garcia in March 1971. They landed on the beach and quickly cleared temporary camp areas. Next, they cleared 15 acres of jungle, which was later used for more

permanent structures. They also completed a 3,500-foot-long, C-130 capable airstrip and carved a 4-mile road network out of the jungle.

Those early years presented many challenges—remote location, difficult on-site conditions, adverse weather, extreme heat, material delivery delays, numerous design changes, and problems establishing a 13,000-mile logistic pipeline. Despite these hardships Seabees completed 85 percent of construction on nine major industrial and support buildings. They cleared 210 acres; and during the preparation of a permanent runway base, they removed 200,000 cubic yards of unsuitable material and placed 300,000 cubic yards of coral. All tested the Seabee “Can Do” motto.

Priorities and world situations changed however, and what had originally been a 3-year mission for the Seabees was extended. After building an austere communications station, the Seabees were now tasked with building Diego Garcia to provide broader support for U.S. ships and aircraft in the Indian Ocean.

By mid-1975, the Seabees completed an entire Naval Construction Force camp that included berthing, messing, shops, storage, utilities, and recreation facilities. Diego Garcia had become a minor naval activity with a permanent airfield; air operations buildings; navigational aides; additional communications facilities; harbor operation facilities; a large port with petroleum, oil, and lubricating (POL) facilities; telephone systems; water distribution; power and electrical distribution; sewage systems; five BEQs, three BOQs, public works facilities, administrative, and other support facilities.

Today, Diego Garcia encompasses a busy support facility with a communications station, a naval air facility, a major fuel storage facility, a permanent pier, and other support structures. Naval Support Facility, Diego Garcia, hosts over 15 tenant activities, including a weather service unit, a Navy broadcasting unit, and fleet air reconnaissance and patrol squadrons. The runway at Diego Garcia has been lengthened from 8,000 feet to 12,000 feet. The extension permits operation of larger cargo aircraft as well as high-performance, tactical aircraft under a variety of circumstances in the tropical climate. Other airfield improvements include additional parking aprons and arresting gear for emergency use and limited aircraft maintenance facilities.

At the time Chief of Civil Engineers and Commander, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Rear Admiral William M. Zobel praised the Seabee

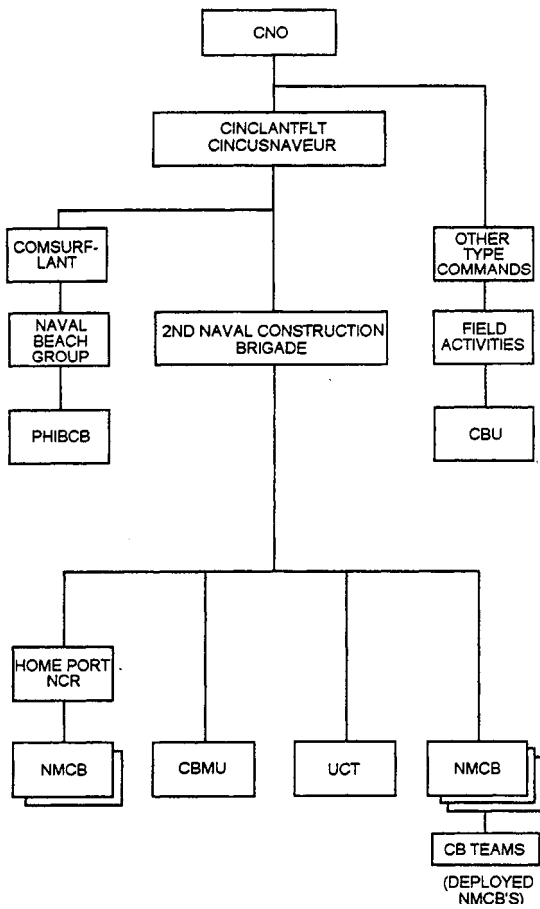


Figure 1-2.—Chain of command for LANTFLT NCF units.

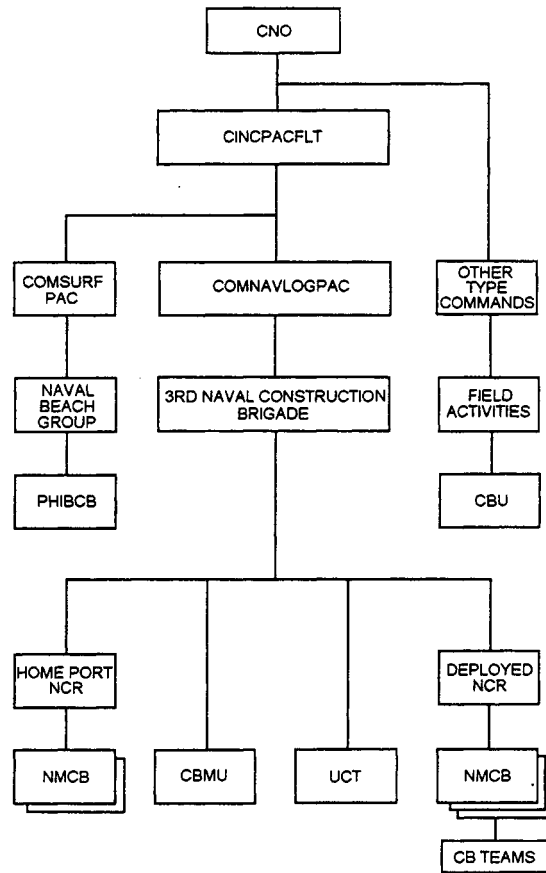


Figure 1-3.—Chain of command for PACFLT NCF units.

efforts on Diego Garcia and said, "With the departure of NMCB 62 from Diego Garcia on July 14, 1982, we closed another illustrious chapter in our Seabee history."

### UNITS OF THE NAVAL CONSTRUCTION FORCE

The Naval Construction Force (NCF) consists of commissioned units of the Navy operating forces that are under the control of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), as shown in figures 1-2 and 1-3. The CNO commissions naval construction force units, assigns them to the fleet, and approves their deployment. He also defines the general mission, approves personnel allowance lists, establishes detachment sites, and approves the NMCB table of allowance (TOA), except for small arms, weapons, and landing party equipment allowances, which are approved by the Chief of Naval Material.

The Commanders in Chief of the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets are charged with ensuring that NMCB deployments and assigned projects follow CNO policies. They exercise command or operational and administrative control of the units of the NCF assigned to their command. Command or operational control is the authority to assign tasks, to designate objectives, to give any specific directions necessary to accomplish the mission, and by a specified date, when required. Command control and operational control go together; if you have one, you automatically have the other.

Under the Commanders in Chief of the Fleets, various Type Commanders command all the ships or units of a certain type; for example, all surface units of the Pacific Fleet (COMNAVSURFPAC); the commander of the submarine forces in the Atlantic Fleet is COMSUBLANT.

Commander, Second Naval Construction Brigade (Norfolk) and Commander, Third Naval Construction

Brigade (Pearl Harbor) have been established as representatives of the Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet and the Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, respectively, to exercise command and administrative control over assigned NMCBs. Much of this control is exercised through the home port Naval Construction Regiment (NCR). The home port NCR performs the routine functions related to coordination of administration, training, project selection, and logistic support for assigned units. Logistic support by the home port NCR consists of planning and carrying out the movement of personnel and equipment, and furnishing of services, supplies, and materials.

When a battalion is deployed overseas, it is under the command and control of a separate NCF commander. Operational command of the NMCB is exercised, in all cases, through a designated NCF commander.

The Chief of Naval Operations may establish Naval Construction Regiments (NCRs) and Brigades (NCBs) to meet certain command requirements in particular geographic areas or situations. Operational regiments consist of two or more NMCBs under one commander; a brigade is made up of two or more regiments under one commander. The mission of the operational brigades and regiments is different from the mission of the home port regiments. Operational regiments and brigades are primary planning groups and exist as subdivisions of the military command, exercising the administrative and operational control to meet specific operational requirements. The home port regiments have broad administrative and logistic duties that are discussed in this chapter.

## **CONSTRUCTION BATTALION UNITS (CBUs)**

Construction Battalion Units (CBUs) are separate activities of the Naval Shore Establishment and are components of the Naval Construction Force. The CBU mission is to be prepared to mobilize either as contingency augment for active NMCBs or as Fleet Hospital public works support units; to conduct individual military and technical skill training essential to maintain the required readiness posture; and to perform construction assignments or other such functions as may be directed to further that intent.

## **CONSTRUCTION BATTALION MAINTENANCE UNITS (CBMUs)**

The Construction Battalion Maintenance Units (CBMUs) operate, maintain, and repair public works and utilities at an already established advance base or at a recently constructed base after the departure of the NMCB or NMCBs that built it. In addition, the CBMU maintains security against unfriendly acts and is capable of conducting its own defenses. The CBMU also provides limited construction support for the base, for civic action programs, and for self-help projects. It also participates in disaster recovery operations.

Functions usually performed by a CBMU are maintenance, repair, and minor construction of buildings and grounds, existing roads within the base, and waterfront and airfield facilities. The CBMU operates and maintains automotive, construction, weight-handling, and materials-handling equipment, except for equipment assigned to combat units.

## **AMPHIBIOUS CONSTRUCTION BATTALIONS (PHIBCBs)**

The Amphibious Construction Battalions (PHIBCBs) are commissioned naval units whose main function is to provide military and amphibious construction support to the armed forces in military operations. In addition to providing the means for moving troops and equipment from ship to shore, the PHIBCB may

1. install and operate tanker-to-shore bulk fuel delivery systems;
2. develop and improve beach facilities;
3. undertake special construction projects, especially those requiring surf, open sea, and heavy rigging experience, including work with pontoons and other floating equipment.

In some instances, there may be Underwater Demolition Team (UDT) personnel working to remove underwater obstacles that may jeopardize landing operations.

The PHIBCB is organized administratively into a headquarters company, an equipment company, two waterfront companies, and a single construction company. The size and composition of a PHIBCB is based on providing support for landing a reinforced infantry division over four battalion-size beaches,

normally considered to be 4400 meters wide. The PHIBCB is not intended for prolonged use in the field and is finished when the mission of the naval beach group is accomplished. This group assists the landing force in ship-to-shore movement by providing a uniform flow of material and services required by the landing force. To carry out this task, the PHIBCB provides causeway piers, barge units, fuel systems, and construction in support of the landing party.

At present there are two PHIBCBs: Amphibious Construction Battalion ONE, operating from Coronado, California, and Amphibious Construction Battalion TWO, operating from Little Creek, Virginia.

## **UNDERWATER CONSTRUCTION TEAMS (UCTs)**

The Underwater Construction Teams (UCTs) are specially trained units that construct, maintain, and repair underwater facilities. Each UCT is capable of performing underwater construction tasks and surveying the sea bottom to select the site for an underwater facility.

The two UCTs are assigned to the 31st NCR and the Third Naval Construction Brigade, home ported at Naval Construction Battalion Center (NCBC), Port Hueneme, California, and Naval Amphibious Base, Little Creek Virginia, respectively.

## **SEABEE TEAM (CIVIC ACTION TEAM)**

A Seabee team is a small, highly mobile, air transportable construction unit that can be tailored to accomplish a variety of construction tasks. The standard composition of a Seabee team is one CEC officer and 12 petty officers; however, when necessary, the standard personnel allowance can be increased to allow the undertaking of a specific deployment task. Although Seabee team allowances are normally associated with an NMCB, the responsibility for the operation of the team in a foreign country lies with the appropriate United States and host country agencies.

The tasks usually assigned to a team call for experience in operating equipment needed for the following tasks:

1. Constructing roads, dams, and bridges
2. Clearing forests and jungles to reclaim land for new hamlets, croplands, and refugee centers
3. Drilling water wells
4. Digging irrigation canals

5. Building schools, and erecting, repairing, and improving public buildings

Teams carry enough food, toolkits, and automotive and construction equipment to be Self-sufficient in the field while performing their construction tasks. Seabee teams also provide medical and dental care to the local villagers and conduct on-the-job training and classroom instruction for host country workmen.

These teams receive extensive training at their parent NMCBs' home port. After completion of this training, they may be deployed to any part of the world—generally to an underdeveloped area. These teams are actually the Seabees' "Peace Corps," and their work in Vietnam won the admiration of the Vietnamese. Seabee teams have also been deployed as engineers for the Army's Special Forces, technical instructors for the Agency for International Development, and construction advisors under various military assistance programs.

## **ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING THE NAVAL CONSTRUCTION FORCE**

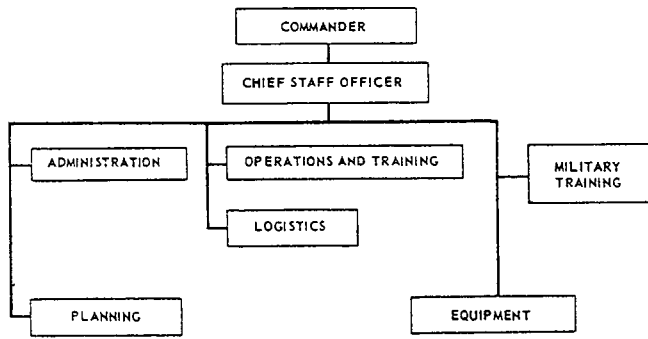
Many elements of the national defense organization provide support to the NCF, some directly and some indirectly. In this section we will cover only the Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC), Naval Construction Battalion Centers (NCBCs), home port Naval Construction Regiments (NCRs), and Naval Construction Force Support Units (NCFSUs).

### **NAVFAC**

NAVFAC provides support for the NCF in the general area of shore facilities and related material and equipment. The commander of NAVFAC serves as technical advisor to the CNO on all matters relating to the NCF and also as technical advisor to the Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP) on all matters pertaining to CEC officers and Seabee personnel.

### **NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION CENTERS (NCBCs)**

The Naval Construction battalion Centers (NCBCs) are permanent shore stations equipped and staffed to support the NCF. Each NCBC has a supply and fiscal department and a construction equipment department (CED) that furnishes depot level maintenance for units of automotive and construction equipment. This type of maintenance involves major overhaul, using facilities that are not readily available at the battalion level. Naval



**Figure 1-4.—Staff/function home port Naval Construction Regiment.**

Construction Training Centers (NCTCs) are tenant commands at the NCBCs and provide training schools for NMCB personnel. A tenant command is one that occupies buildings and uses facilities provided as direct support by the NCBC. The NCBC receives, preserves, stores, accounts for, and issues advanced base material and equipment. Newly commissioned NMCBs are usually outfitted at the NCBC, which also provides home port facilities. The NCBC is under the management and technical control of NAVFAC. At present there are two NCBCs: one at Port Hueneme, California, and one at Gulfport, Mississippi.

### HOME PORT NAVAL CONSTRUCTION REGIMENTS (NCRs)

Home port NCRs are located at both of the NCBCs. Under the direction of the Second NCB/Third NCB, the mission of the home port NCR is to ensure maximum effectiveness of all units of the NCR, while at home port, in achieving the highest possible state of readiness to meet their disaster recovery, contingency, and wartime missions of military construction support of the armed forces. As a secondary mission, the home port NCR acts as a receiving and separating activity for Seabee personnel.

The home port NCRs exercise operational control and, as specifically designated by the Second NCB/Third NCB, various elements of administrative control over all units of the NCF at the home port. The home port NCRs

- conduct and coordinate military, technical, and specialized training;
- administer the details of the automotive and equipment program;

- provide liaison with CBC on storage, preservation, and shipping of advance base and mobilization stocks;
- provide management guidance and evaluate the effectiveness of military, operational, and material readiness of all home port units of the NCFs;
- monitor personnel distribution among the NCF units;
- make recommendations to the Enlisted Personnel Distribution Office.

The basic organization and functions of a typical home port NCR's staff are shown in figure 1-4.

### NAVAL CONSTRUCTION FORCE SUPPORT UNITS (NCFSUs)

The Naval Construction Force Support Units (NCFSUs) provide logistical support for an NCR and other supported NCF units. NCFSU equipment is maintained both in the active force and in the Reserve (PWRMs). The NCFSUs

- perform inventory management of construction materials, including requisitioning, expediting, receipt, control, issue, delivery, and other supply support functions;
- maintain inventory control;
- operate and perform maintenance, repair, and upkeep of NCF auxiliary construction and transportation equipment;
- perform specialized repair and overhaul of equipment components (such as transmissions, electric motors, and fuel injectors) when conditions warrant a centralized operation;
- provide the operation and maintenance capability for plants, such as rock crushers and asphalt and concrete batch plants, large paving machines, long-haul transportation, and other equipment of this type.

### NAVAL MOBILE CONSTRUCTION BATTALIONS

The Naval Mobile Construction Battalions (NMCBs) are primarily designed for construction and military support operations to build advance base

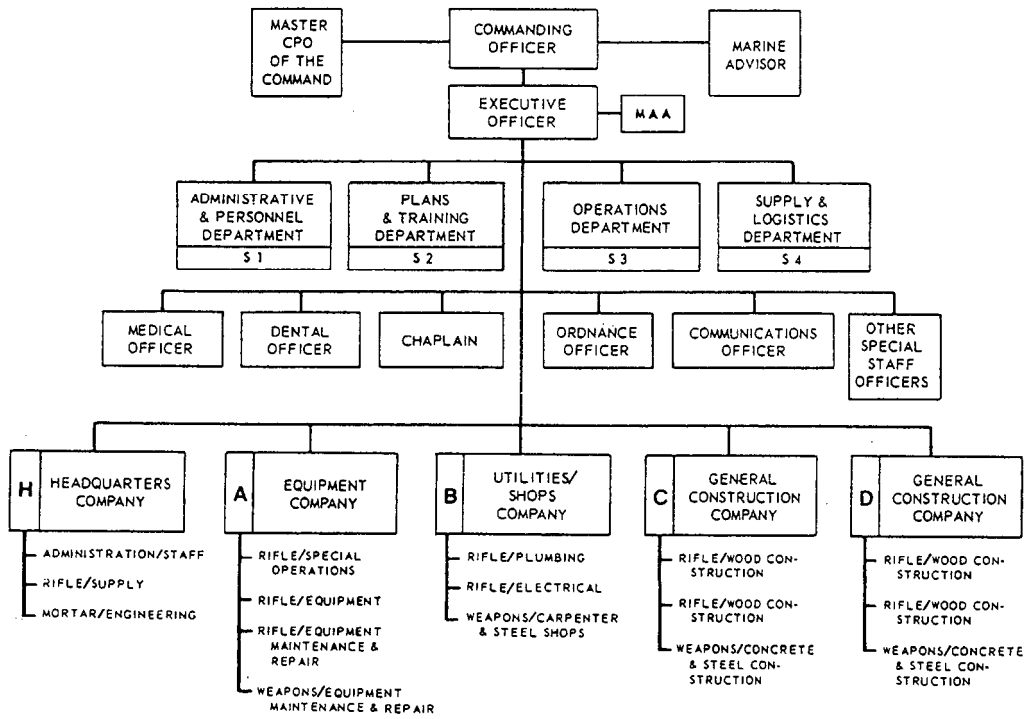


Figure 1-5.—The basic NMCB organization.

facilities in support of the armed forces. Figure 1-5 shows the basic NMCB organization. The function of an NMCB also includes projects of repair and operation of facilities and lines of communications during emergencies or under conditions that demand immediate action. When fully outfitted, NMCBs are self-sufficient units for 90 days and require

replenishment of consumable items only. They can defend themselves for a limited time; communicate internally; provide messing and billeting facilities; and perform the necessary administrative, personnel, medical, dental supply, and chaplain functions. The NMCBs also participate in disaster recovery operations during both natural and man-made disasters.

Each battalion subdivision has a construction and military support assignment, and every officer and enlisted man fills a construction and military billet. Command channels are the same for both construction and military support, permitting rapid transition from one to the other.

The battalion is organized into one headquarters and four construction/rifle companies: A, B, C, and D, as shown in figure 1-6.

The construction/rifle companies each have a weapons platoon containing M60 machine guns and lightweight antitank weapons.

The headquarters company has a weapons platoon containing the 60-mm mortars. (See fig. 1-7.) All platoons are organized into work squads that correspond to the weapons/rifle squad organization. Work crews and work squads of construction platoons are also trained as disaster control teams. Each battalion may organize the squads of each platoon to meet its particular

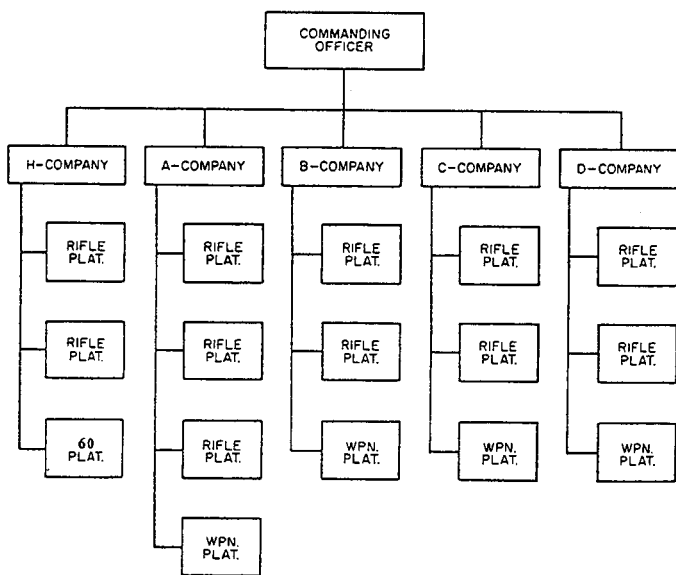


Figure 1-6.—The NMCB military organization.

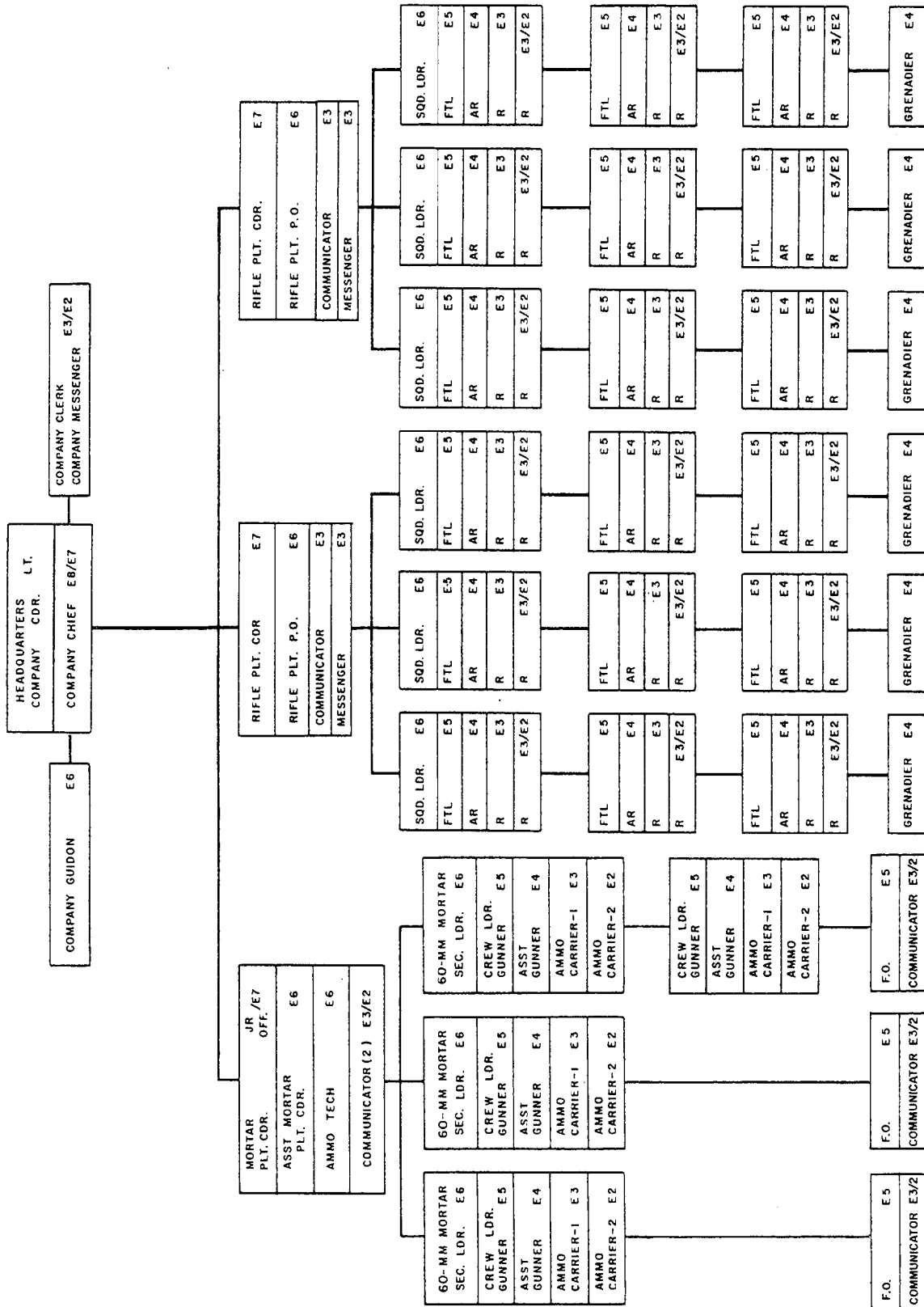


Figure 1-7.—Organization of military support in the headquarters company.

needs. The construction/military companies retain their normal letter designation, and the platoons retain their letter-number designation to facilitate reference, planning, and scheduling.

## **THE HEADQUARTERS COMPANY**

The headquarters company of a Seabee battalion serves as the military and administrative organization for the personnel assigned to the executive and special staffs of an NMCB. Headquarters company has the capability of providing defense in a combat situation as a company unit and, in addition, acts as a reserve force for the battalion. The headquarters company's staff, when participating in a defensive situation, consists of the company commander, platoon commanders, a company chief petty officer, and other administrative assistants as required to organize it into two rifle platoons and one weapons (mortar) platoon, as shown in figure 1-7.

### **Headquarters Company Commander**

Normally assigned to additional duty on the battalion staff, the headquarters company commander is responsible for the following:

1. Command of the company in all military formations and operations
2. Assignment of personnel on the watch, quarter, and station bill
3. Personnel muster
4. Supervision and coordination of military and leadership training
5. Administration and guidance in professional and technical training
6. Berthing, messing, mail distribution, and physical fitness
7. Division officer responsibilities, unless separate division officers are assigned

He is also responsible for the security and defense of the battalion's command post and acts as the reserve force commander for the battalion in the defense. He is armed with the .45-caliber pistol.

### **Platoon Commanders**

All personnel assigned to the battalion's executive and special staffs are administratively assigned to headquarters company. Therefore, the headquarters

platoon commanders are normally officers of the administration and personnel department, the operations department, and the supply and logistics department. However, most battalions generally use a chief petty officer (E-7) from each department to act in the capacity of platoon commander.

The platoon commander is responsible for training, discipline, control, and tactical deployment of his platoon. He carries out the orders of the company commander and controls his platoon through his squad leaders. In combat, the platoon commander positions himself where he can readily control his squad leaders. At the same time, he remains in contact with his company commander. He is generally linked with the company commander by radio and field telephone or both, and is armed with the service pistol.

### **Headquarters Company Chief Petty Officer**

The headquarters company chief petty officer can be a chief petty officer (E-7) or a senior chief petty officer (E-8), and serves as an assistant to the headquarters company commander in a staff capacity. The headquarters company CPO is directly responsible to the company commander for the administration and efficient operation of the company. He is also responsible for the discipline, training, and performance of the men assigned to the company and is armed with the service pistol.

## **THE RIFLE COMPANY HEADQUARTERS**

The company headquarters of a Seabee company consists of the company commander, an assistant company commander when assigned, the company chief, a company guidon, a company clerk a company messenger, and other administrative assistants as required. The company headquarters varies somewhat in each company, depending on its construction/combat missions. Figure 1-8 shows the organization of military support in the construction/rifle companies.

### **Rifle Company Commander**

The rifle company commander is usually a lieutenant in the Civil Engineer Corps who is responsible for commanding his company by following the policies of the commanding officer.

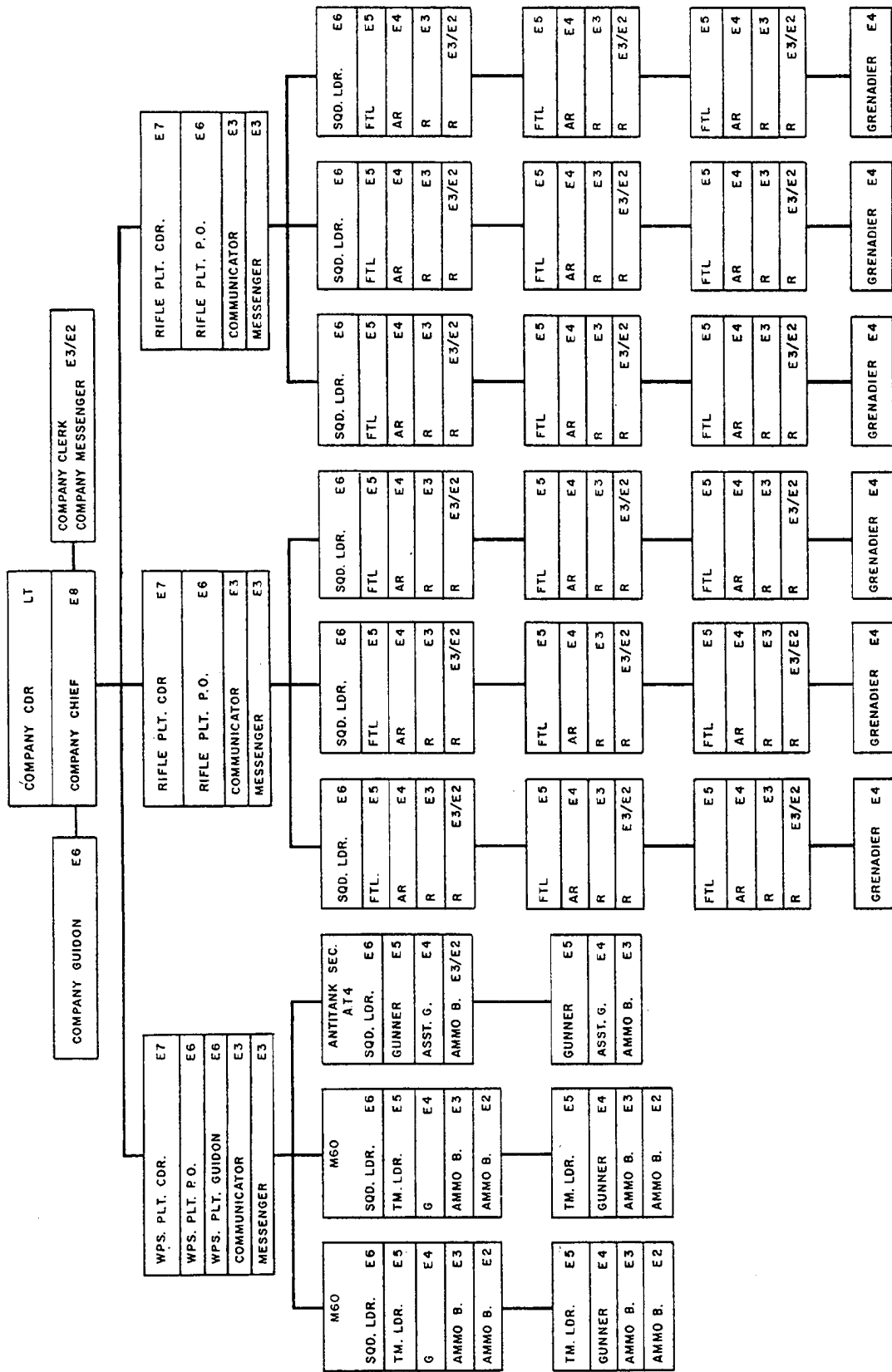


Figure 1-8.—Organization of military support in the construction rifle companies.

## **Assistant Rifle Company Commander**

The assistant rifle company commander, when assigned, may be a junior CEC officer or a senior enlisted man. He is normally placed in a position of line authority and responsibility between the company commander and the platoon commanders. As a personnel and material manager within the company, he concerns himself with executing and enforcing the policies of the company commander and the commanding officer. The assistant rifle company commander supervises the administration of the company; plans and gives technical support to the platoon commanders about their crew assignments, project planning and scheduling, safety, and training. He is armed with the service pistol.

## **Rifle Company Chief**

The rifle company chief is the senior enlisted man assigned to the company, usually a senior chief petty officer (E-8) or a master chief petty officer (E-9). He is the primary administrative assistant and technical advisor to the company commander. The rifle company chief is directly responsible to the company commander for the administration and efficient operation of the company and for the discipline, training, and the performance of the men assigned to the company. He is armed with the service pistol.

## **Rifle Company Guidon**

The rifle company guidon, generally a petty officer first class (E-6), acts as a construction expeditor and supply coordinator for the company. During combat, he is stationed near the company commander and is responsible for the distribution of ammunition to the platoon guides. He coordinates the ammunition counts following combat to ensure appropriate redistribution. He is armed with the service pistol.

## **Rifle Company Clerk**

The rifle company clerk is normally a constructionman (E-3) with clerical experience. His duties consist of preparing company memorandums, typing, filing, and many other administrative tasks. He is also the company mail orderly. During military operations, he becomes the company staff communicator and must be familiar with the operation and care of the company communications equipment. In addition, he is trained in proper procedures for

transmitting reports and messages. The rifle company clerk also may serve as guidon (company banner) bearer during parade formation. He is armed with the M16 service rifle.

## **Rifle Company Messenger**

Generally, a constructionman (E-3) is assigned to the company headquarters as a rifle company messenger. He primarily performs in this capacity only during military operations. For work purposes, he is assigned to a work crew/rifle fire team. Although he delivers most of his messages on foot, he is also trained in the operation of communications equipment so he can take over should the rifle company clerk become a casualty. When the company administrative tasks increase, as they do during home port training periods, the rifle company messenger may assist the rifle company clerk with his duties. He is armed with the service rifle.

## **THE RIFLE PLATOON HEADQUARTERS**

The maneuvering elements of a rifle company are the rifle platoons. A Seabee rifle platoon consists of a platoon headquarters and three or more rifle squads. Each rifle squad is composed of three or more work crew/rifle fire teams. The primary combat mission of the rifle company, as well as the rifle platoon, is to repel the enemy assault by fire and close combat.

Each rifle platoon headquarters consists of a platoon commander, platoon petty officer, platoon guide, communicator, and a messenger.

## **Rifle Platoon Commander**

The rifle platoon commander is generally a chief petty officer (E-7). Normally, he is the project supervisor. He is responsible for the training, discipline, control, and tactical deployment of his platoon. The rifle platoon commander carries out the orders of the company commander and controls his platoon through his squad leaders. In combat, the rifle platoon commander positions himself where he can readily control his squad leaders and, at the same time, remain in contact with his company commander. The rifle platoon commander is generally linked with the company commander by either radio or field telephone or both. He is armed with the service pistol.

### **Rifle Platoon Petty Officer**

The rifle platoon petty officer, generally a first class petty officer (E-6), is the next senior man in the platoon and is second in command. As such, he performs all duties assigned by the rifle platoon commander and stands ready to assume command in his absence. On the job, he will assist in project supervision. In combat, he assists in all aspects of supervision and control of the platoon. The rifle platoon petty officer positions himself where he can hear the commands of the rifle platoon commander but far enough away to avoid becoming a casualty should the rifle platoon commander be hit. The rifle platoon petty officer is also armed with the service pistol.

### **Rifle Platoon Guide**

The rifle platoon guide is generally a first class petty officer (E-6) who performs the administrative functions the rifle platoon commander may direct. He is directly responsible to the rifle platoon commander for the supply and timely resupply of the platoon in combat and often performs a similar task on the jobsite. He also maintains the platoon casualty record. While the platoon is moving in training or in combat operations, the rifle platoon guide helps prevent straggling. He is armed with the service rifle.

### **Rifle Platoon Communicator and Messenger**

These men are generally constructionmen (E-3); and during normal construction, they are assigned to work a crew/rifle fire team. The rifle platoon communicator and messenger, in combat, provide communications between the rifle company headquarters and the rifle platoon commander and also between the rifle platoon, its squads, and attached units. The rifle platoon communicator uses radio or telephone communication methods, while the rifle platoon messenger generally travels on foot. Both are armed with service rifles.

### **THE RIFLE SQUAD**

The Seabee rifle squad is composed of a squad leader, three fire teams and a grenadier. Ideally, the rifle squad will contain three fire teams of four men each, a grenadier, and the squad leader for a total of 14 men.

### **Squad Leader**

The squad leader is generally a first class petty officer (E-6). He carries out the orders of the platoon commander and is responsible to him for the discipline, appearance, training, control, and conduct of his squad at all times. He must pay particular attention to the care and maintenance of the weapons and equipment of the squad. In combat, he has the important responsibilities of fire discipline, fire control, and maneuvering his squad. He takes a position where he can best observe and control his squad and carry out the orders of the platoon commander. He controls his squad by voice and visual commands. The squad leader is primarily a leader; therefore, he only fires his own weapon in critical situations. He is armed with the service rifle.

### **Grenadier**

The grenadier, generally a third class petty officer (E-4), carries out the orders of the squad leader and is responsible to him for the effective care, maintenance, and employment of his weapon-the M203 grenade launcher. In combat, the grenadier always moves with or is close to the squad leader. Usually, another E-4 in the squad is trained to replace the grenadier should he become a casualty. On the jobsite, the grenadier has no special authority unless specifically designated.

### **THE RIFLE FIRE TEAM**

The rifle fire team is the basic combat unit of the rifle squad and is formed around the automatic rifle, which is an M16 service rifle, with the selector lever always turned to frilly automatic. The fire team normally consists of four men, although it may contain as few as three and as many as seven men. All members are armed with the M16 service rifle. The four basic members are the following:

1. Fire team leader
2. Automatic rifleman
3. Rifleman number 1
4. Rifleman number 2

### **Fire Team Leader**

The fire team leader, generally a second class petty officer (E-5), carries out the orders of his squad leader and is responsible to him for the effective employment of his fire team. His primary responsibility is to control his fire team in combat. In addition, he is responsible for

the care and condition of the weapons and equipment of the fire team. The fire team leader stations himself where he can best control the fire of the automatic rifles of the team. He usually controls his men through real and visual communications, since there are normally no radio or telephone communications below the platoon commander's level. Although he is armed with the service rifle, his primary duty as a leader comes first; and he serves as a rifleman only when absolutely necessary. The senior fire team leader serves as assistant squad leader and is prepared to take over the squad in the event that the squad leader becomes a casualty.

### **Automatic Rifleman**

The automatic rifleman, generally a third class petty officer (E-4), provides heavy firepower and is the backbone of the fire team. He is responsible to the fire team leader for the effective employment of his automatic rifle as well as its condition and care. The automatic rifleman acts as the fire team leader's assistant and takes over in his absence.

### **Rifleman Number 1**

Rifleman number 1, generally a constructionman (E-3), carries extra ammunition for the automatic rifleman. The automatic rifle must be kept in action at all times; if the automatic rifleman becomes a casualty, rifleman number 1 moves up and replaces him. In addition, rifleman number 1 is armed with the service rifle and acts as a rifleman and a scout. He assists rifleman number 2 in protecting the flank (exposed side) of the fire team.

### **Rifleman Number 2**

Rifleman number 2, a constructionman (E-3) or an apprentice (E-2), serves as a rifleman and protects the flank of the fire team. He is point man for all team formations and may also serve as a scout. If more than four men are assigned to the fire team, the additional men have the same general duties as rifleman number 2. All are armed with the service rifle.

## **FIRE SUPPORT ELEMENTS**

The fire support elements of the rifle companies are the weapons platoons, the 60-mm mortar platoon of the headquarters company, and the weapons platoons furnished by the construction/rifle companies. Their purpose is to provide the companies organic machine

gun and mortar fire support and an antitank defense with the antitank weapon (AT4).

## **THE WEAPONS PLATOONS**

Alfa, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta companies each have a weapons platoon composed of a platoon headquarters, two machine gun squads, and an antitank squad.

### **Weapons Platoon Headquarters**

The weapons platoon headquarters consists of the platoon commander, platoon petty officer, ammunition technician/guide, a communicator and a messenger.

**WEAPONS PLATOON COMMANDER.**— The weapons platoon commander is generally a chief petty officer (E-7). He is responsible for the training, combat efficiency, discipline, administration, and welfare of his platoon. He also sees to it that his platoon members proceed correctly when carrying out preventive maintenance on their weapons. The weapons platoon commander makes sure they use their weapons and equipment economically. All of his other responsibilities are similar to those discussed for the rifle platoon commander. He is armed with the service pistol.

**WEAPONS PLATOON PETTY OFFICER.**— The weapons platoon petty officer is usually a first class petty officer (E-6). His responsibilities and duties are identical to those of the rifle platoon petty officer. He is armed with the service pistol.

**AMMUNITION TECHNICIAN/GUIDE.**— The ammunition technician/guide is also a first class petty officer (E-6). He not only has the responsibility of supplying the platoon and keeping the casualty list but he also must be highly skilled in the operation and maintenance of the machine guns used by his platoon. He must be familiar with the many types of ammunition used by the machine guns, its safe use, and its effect upon the enemy. The ammunition technician/guide's other duties are similar to those of the rifle platoon guide. He is armed with the service rifle.

**COMMUNICATOR AND MESSENGER.**— The communicator and the messenger, both usually constructionmen (E-3), perform the same basic duties as their counterparts in the rifle platoon. They are armed with the service rifle.

## Machine Gun Squad

The machine gun squad consists of a machine gun squad leader and two four-man machine gun teams. They work together under the supervision of the crew/squad leader.

**MACHINE GUN SQUAD LEADER.**— The machine gun squad leader, generally a first class petty officer (E-6), has the same basic duties as the rifle squad leader. In addition, he selects and assigns exact positions and targets for his machine guns within the area designated by his platoon commander. The machine gun squad leader is armed with the service rifle and also carries binoculars and a compass.

**MACHINE GUN TEAM.**— The machine gun team consists of a team leader, a gunner, and two ammunition carriers. This team operates and services the machine gun.

**Machine Gun Team Leader.**— The machine gun team leader, generally a second class petty officer (E-5), is responsible to the squad leader for the effective employment (fire power) of the machine gun for his team. He carries and places the machine gun tripod for action. He also carries one bandolier (belt with pockets to carry machine gun ammunition). During combat, the machine gun team leader is responsible for changing the machine gun barrel, so he carries a kit that contains an extra gun barrel and a combination wrench. He is armed with a service pistol.

**Gunner.**— The gunner does the actual firing of the machine gun in combat as directed by the team leader. He carries the machine gun, one bandolier of machine gun ammunition, and is armed with a service pistol. Also, he must be able to maintain his machine gun. Generally, the gunner is a third class petty officer (E-4).

**Ammunition Carrier Number 1.**— The ammunition carrier number 1, generally a constructionman (E-3), acts as the supply man for the team. He carries one box of machine gun ammunition (200 rounds) and the spare barrel case with the traversing and elevating (T&E) mechanism. Ammunition carrier number 1 is armed with the service rifle. When not actually engaged in carrying machine gun ammunition, he protects the flank of the machine gun team.

**Ammunition Carrier Number 2.**— Ammunition carrier number 2, generally a construction apprentice (E-2), carries two boxes of machine gun ammunition (400 rounds). He is armed with the service rifle and also protects the machine gun team.

## Antitank (AT4) Squad

The antitank squad consists of two three-man teams whose principle mission is defense against armored vehicles (tanks).

**ANTITANK SQUAD LEADER.**— The antitank squad leader, generally a first class petty officer (E-6), has the same basic duties as any other squad leader. In addition, he selects and assigns the exact positions and targets for his antitank weapons within the areas defined by his platoon commander. He is armed with the service rifle, and he carries binoculars and a compass.

**ANTITANK TEAM.**— The antitank team consists of three men carrying five AT4s each. These men are also armed with service rifles.

## THE 60-MM MORTAR PLATOON

The NMCBs 60-mm mortar platoons can provide fire support during an assault or during defense. It is extremely effective in defending an established campsite against attacking ground forces and is often used to provide illumination during night operations. Since the mortar is a relatively heavy weapon, it is not often carried about during normal work operations. Permanent positions are generally set up in the base camp area near the battalion administrative area. As the major portion of the headquarters company personnel remain in camp during normal working hours, they are always available to man the mortars. This is the reason that the mortar platoon is normally assigned to headquarters company.

The standard mortar platoon consists of a platoon headquarters and four mortar squads of two crews each. At present, however, the NMCBs are only authorized four 60-mm mortars in the weapons allowance. Therefore, the mortar platoons of an NMCB at the present time have two squads of two crews each.

### Mortar Platoon Headquarters

The mortar platoon headquarters consists of the platoon commander, assistant platoon commander, ammunition technician, and a minimum of two communicators.

**MORTAR PLATOON COMMANDER.**— The mortar platoon commander may be either a junior officer or a chief petty officer (E-7), preferably from the engineering department. He has the same general duties as any other platoon commander. However, during actual combat operations, he takes up a position in the

fire direction center (FDC). The FDC can be a separate bunker, generally located in the battalion command post. In the FDC, he receives fire missions from his forward observers (FOs) or from other commands. He then plots the targets on the plotting board to check their accuracy and determine the exact coordinates. After receiving permission to fire from the commanding officer, he issues fire commands to his squad leaders. The platoon commander is armed with the service pistol.

**ASSISTANT MORTAR PLATOON COMMANDER.**— The assistant mortar platoon commander, normally a first class petty officer (E-6), must always be prepared to assume command of the platoon. During combat, he takes up a position in the alternate command post and stands ready to take command of the platoon should the battalion command post be destroyed. He is armed with the service pistol.

**MORTAR PLATOON AMMUNITION TECHNICIAN.**— The mortar platoon ammunition technician, usually a first class petty officer (E-6), has the same responsibilities of supply, weapons maintenance, and casualty reporting as the weapons platoon ammunition technician. He is armed with the service rifle.

**MORTAR PLATOON COMMUNICATORS.**— The mortar platoon communicators, generally constructionmen (E-3), are trained as a team and must be completely familiar with fire commands and procedures. Whenever possible, one communicator is stationed with each forward observer. He passes target information back to another communicator in the FDC by radio. After the fire missions are assigned by the platoon commander, the FDC communicator passes the proper fire commands to the respective squad leaders by field telephone. All communicators are armed with service rifles.

## Mortar Section

The mortar section consists of 11 men, a section leader, and 2 mortar crews of 4 men each, a forward observer, and a communicator.

**MORTAR SECTION LEADER.**— The mortar section leader is usually a first class petty officer (E-6). He is responsible to the platoon commander for the effective employment of his two gun crews. The section leader selects the exact position for placement of the mortar tubes. He supervises their placement and zeroing in. He is armed with the service rifle. The mortars are generally placed about 50 yards apart to help reduce casualties. The section leader normally takes up a position midway between and to the rear of the mortar

positions. If possible, he is connected by telephone to his mortar gun crews and to the platoon commander in the FDC.

**FORWARD OBSERVER.**— The forward observer is usually a second class petty officer (E-5). He is normally the second senior man in the mortar squad. He is the eyes of the mortar team and has the primary mission of locating suitable targets, and calling for and adjusting fire on these targets. He is armed with the service rifle.

**MORTAR GUN CREWS.**— Each mortar gun crew consists of four men. These men are called the crew leader/gunner, assistant gunner, ammunition carrier number 1, and ammunition carrier number 2.

**Crew Leader/Gunner.**— The crew leader/gunner, usually a second class petty officer (E-5), is responsible for the correct sighting of the weapon. He receives the target coordinates from the squad leader and makes the necessary safety checks and adjustment to the weapon. He is armed with the service pistol.

**Assistant Gunner.**— The assistant gunner, generally a third class petty officer (E-4), checks the mortar barrel for cleanliness, assists the gunner in positioning the barrel, and loads the weapon on command. The weapon automatically fires upon loading. He is also armed with the service pistol.

**Ammunition Carrier Number 1.**— Ammunition carrier number 1, generally a constructionman (E-3), prepares the ammunition for firing and passes it to the assistant gunner. In addition, he realigns the aiming stakes under the direction of the gunner. He is armed with the service rifle.

**Ammunition Carrier Number 2.**— Ammunition carrier number 2, also a nonrated man (E-3 or E-2) assists in placing the mortar and helps prepare the rounds for firing. He is also armed with the service rifle.

## LAWS OF WAR

The laws of armed conflict are the concern of every member of the armed forces: soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and yes, even Seabees. Because of the important sound of the term *laws of armed conflict*, you may think that only people, such as the Chief of Naval Operations, the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of Defense, and the President, concern themselves with the rules of war. While individuals such as these from many countries have, over the years, drafted the basic documents governing man's treatment of his fellowman

in wartime, the laws of armed conflict remain the direct concern of every serviceman.

The principles behind the laws of armed conflict can be stated in the following question: How should you, an individual Seabee, conduct yourself in wartime operations to accomplish your mission while still respecting the rights of civilians, your enemies, and your allies? This chapter provides you with some basic information on what to do and, just as important, what not to do in wartime situations.

## **WHY WE NEED LAWS IN WAR**

Unfortunately, war is as old as man himself. People cause wars; weapons do not. Man creates the weapons that are merely the instruments that a nation uses to carry out its war objectives. Genghis Khan, the ancient Asian warlord, killed or maimed a greater percentage of people than any other leader in history. He did it with bows and arrows and other similar primitive weapons. During Genghis Khan's era, there were no rules of war. Although man continues today to be the force behind the weapons, there exists now a certain orderliness to which people of most countries who find themselves on a battlefield subscribe.

The positive side of mankind has managed to improve the conditions under which war is conducted since the era of Genghis Khan. As newer weapons of warfare have made it easier for man to kill his fellowman, nations have sensed a need to eliminate unnecessary death, destruction, and suffering. This need has been reflected in the moral values of civilized man and also in his military policies.

Binding customs and formal laws of war, presented in the Geneva conventions and The Hague regulations, have evolved. They legally bind most nations to the practices set down at Geneva and The Hague. The United States has agreed to these rules. Any violation of them is the same as a violation of the laws of the United States itself. The United States has led the world in adopting rules for its military forces. These rules recognize that enemies are also human beings and that captured or detained people are entitled to retain their fundamental rights as humans regardless of their past conduct or beliefs. Every Seabee has the duty, therefore, to know and obey the laws of armed conflict.

History shows that discipline and high morale led our military forces to victory in battle after battle. These same characteristics apply to obedience to the laws of armed conflict. Although you will be in uniform and be an instrument of a nation state (the United States) in an

armed conflict, this does not give you license to do anything you wish to do. There are limits on what you can do when waging war, and those limits are established by the laws of armed conflict. This chapter explains what you can and cannot do.

## **GENERAL PRECEPTS OF THE LAWS OF ARMED CONFLICT**

When you enter into armed conflict in another country, you should be aware of many of the characteristics of the country. Knowledge of these characteristics will better prepare you to follow the tenets of the laws of armed conflict.

### **Geography**

A general understanding of the geography of a nation will help you to know where the population of the country is concentrated. That knowledge should prepare you to deal with civilians and the enemy as you encounter them. In addition, you should know the general area of the country in which you are operating and the nations that border it. This knowledge may help you in understanding any trends that may have an effect on carrying out the laws of armed conflict. You should know the capital city and the other major cities, the characteristics of the land (mountains, deserts, plains, etc.), and the climate. Knowledge of all these features will help you to deal with rules of war situations that might arise during your time in the country. You should receive information about the general characteristics of the geography of a nation as part of instructional briefings given in operational deployments.

### **People**

Knowledge of the people in a country can be invaluable to you in how to conduct yourself under the rules of war. Since nearly all offenses under the laws of armed conflict involve people, the more you know about the civilian populace of a country and of your enemy, the better off you will be. Know their ethnic backgrounds, their language, the educational level of the people, the important cultural characteristics (particularly if they are different than the culture of the United States), the religions of the country, and the social customs of the people.

Knowledge of the people is probably the most important thing for you to know about the country. Without it, you cannot begin to understand the way the people think and act. Accordingly, the chances of doing something in violation of the rules of war increase. If

the enemy and the people are one and the same, then the questions posed above will serve for both. If not, you need to ask the same questions about the enemy. You must know both the military and nonmilitary characteristics of the enemy.

## **History**

There is no need for you to know the long and detailed history of a country, except as it relates to why you are there. Historical circumstances involving politics, religion, or cultural values may have led to your being in the country. You need to have knowledge of, and be sensitive to, the historical circumstances dictating U.S. Armed Forces involvement in the country. Pay attention when you receive briefings on these matters. Read what you can find on the subject (newspapers, periodicals, etc.). Knowing the history of the country as it relates to your involvement may serve you well if a situation exists where you have to decide what action(s) to take in a wartime situation under the laws of armed conflict.

## **Economy**

Is the country poor or wealthy? Does it have wealth concentrated in a few people and enormous pockets of poverty among the general populace? You need answers to these questions because such conditions may contribute to the way you deal with the people and the enemy of the country. Current economic conditions are also important. (These conditions include growth, inflation, deflation, unemployment, poverty, etc.). Knowledge of the economic condition of a country can lead to an understanding of how the people and the enemy of the country might behave toward you. It might also assist you in preventing a violation of the rules of war.

## **Foreign Relations**

Knowing the alliances, Allies, traditional enemies (if any), and the role of the country in international organizations (for example, the United Nations) can provide you with an understanding of what to expect. Will the country comply with the laws of armed conflict that you fight under, or can you expect behavior contrary to your training?

## **Government**

Knowing something about the nature of the national government in a country may better prepare you to

understand the nature and conduct of your enemy as well as the civilian populace, Is the government of the country bound by the Geneva conventions and The Hague resolutions? Will the government prosecute you for a crime against civilians or against the enemy for a violation of the rules of war? Even if the government does not comply with the rules of war in any way, your obligation as a Seabee is to conduct yourself under the laws of armed conflict that you are taught.

## **RELATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES WITH THE COUNTRY**

The relations of the United States' with the country that you are entering may be good, bad, or somewhere between these two extremes. The government of the country may want the Seabees to be there, but some of its people may not. You may encounter situations or actions from the enemy, from the government, or from the general population that will try your patience. They may treat you as "Yankee, Go Home!" If so, you must maintain your self-control and not violate the principles you have learned under the laws of armed conflict. You should be familiar with our relations with the country you are entering. This knowledge can serve you well in preventing the creation of a situation where you might violate the rules of war.

Basically, what you have just read can be summed up in eight words: Know the country into which you are going. That is as important as knowing terrain features and enemy tactics.

Along with knowledge of the country in which you are operating, make sure you understand your mission fully. Because while conducting your mission, a situation may develop where you will have an opportunity to succeed or fail in your practice of the laws of armed conflict.

When you complete this chapter, you should have sufficient knowledge of what to do and what not to do under most combat situations. This knowledge protects you from violating the laws of armed conflict. When you encounter a situation where you are unsure of what action(s) to take in carrying out your mission, get clearance from the next higher authority before continuing. For example, when military action by you might endanger the lives of some local civilians and you are not sure how to proceed, be certain to get approval for your next action from the next higher authority.

## **YOUR CONDUCT UNDER THE LAWS OF ARMED CONFLICT**

The laws of armed conflict tell you what you can and cannot do in combat situations. With the training you receive, you will have the necessary discipline to do the right thing. But if you do not learn how to conduct yourself in combat, you will be punished for mistakes.

All persons in uniform, carrying a weapon or participating in any way in military operations or activities, are known as combatants. Under the laws of armed conflict, only combatants are considered proper targets and may be fired upon. All others are called noncombatants. Noncombatants include civilians, medical personnel, and chaplains. Knowing the difference between combatants and noncombatants in guerrilla war situations may sometimes be difficult and require great care. Humane treatment of noncombatants may help you in obtaining valuable intelligence to better pursue your mission. If you are in doubt about the differences between combatants and noncombatants, consult your superior before pursuing a course of action.

### **Enemy Combatants**

Never attack enemy soldiers who surrender or enemy soldiers who are captured, sick, or wounded. When you have prisoners of war (POWs), you should follow the six Ss: search, secure, silence, segregate, safeguard, and speed the prisoners to the rear. You must never kill, torture, or mistreat a prisoner because such actions are a violation of the law. Besides, prisoners may provide you with vital information about the enemy. Treating a prisoner badly also discourages other enemy soldiers from surrendering, and it strengthens their will to resist. But if you treat prisoners well, your fairness encourages the enemy to treat their prisoners (your buddies) well. Humane treatment of POWs is right, honorable, and required under the laws of armed conflict. Improper treatment of prisoners by you is punishable by court-martial.

Let enemy soldiers surrender. The enemy may use different signals to convey they are surrendering, but all of the signals should be noticeable. It is illegal to fire on an enemy that has thrown down their weapons and offered to surrender.

You should also provide medical care to the wounded whether friend or foe. You are required under the laws of armed conflict to provide the same medical care to the sick and wounded as you would provide for your own personnel.

When someone is captured, you may not be certain whether the person is an enemy. That determination is made by specifically trained personnel at a higher headquarters. You may question captives about military information of immediate value to your mission, but you may never use threats, torture, or other forms of coercion to obtain information.

You may not take personal property from a prisoner, except those items that are clearly of a military or intelligence value (weapons, maps, or military documents). You do this only after the prisoner has been secured, silenced, and segregated. You take nothing that is not of military value. Only an officer may take custody of the personal effects of a prisoner.

Captives may perform some types of work but the work must not relate to assisting your war effort. The acceptable work performed must be limited to allowing captives to dig foxholes or build bunkers only for their own protection. Under the laws of armed conflict, you may never use captives as a shield for your attack or defense against the enemy; to search for, clear, or place mines or booby traps; or to carry your ammunition or heavy gear.

Under the rules of armed conflict, you are not permitted to attack villages, towns, or cities. But you are allowed to engage the enemy that is in a village, town, or city and to destroy any equipment or supplies that the enemy has there when it is mission essential. In all cases, you must not create more destruction than is necessary to accomplish the mission. When using firepower in a populated area, you must attack only military targets.

You may not attack **PROTECTED PROPERTY**. While some protected property may mean little to you, the property in question maybe of cultural importance to the people of the country. Examples of protected property include buildings dedicated to religion, art, science, or charitable purposes; historical monuments; hospitals and places where the sick and wounded are collected and cared for; and schools and orphanages for children. When the enemy uses these places for refuge or for offensive purposes, your commander may order an attack. It is common sense to destroy no more than the minimum amount of protected property consistent with carrying out the mission. To do more may undermine your mission.

### **Civilians**

Earlier in this chapter, the reasons for knowing as much as possible about the country in which you are operating was discussed. Once there, you need to treat

civilians humanely and private property as though it were your own.

Do not violate the rights of civilians in war zones. When you know something about the culture and practices of the people, you should have little trouble recognizing the rights of civilians. Make sure civilians are protected from acts of violence, threats, and insults both from the enemy and from your fellow Seabees.

On occasion, it may be necessary to move or resettle civilians because such action is urgently required for military activities. Under no circumstance should you burn civilian property without approval of higher authority. Similarly, you should never steal from civilians. Failure to obey these rules is a violation of the laws of armed conflict and punishable by court-martial.

Under no circumstances should you fire upon medical personnel or equipment used for the welfare of the people or the enemy. Most medical personnel and facilities are marked with a red cross on a white background. However, a few countries use a different symbol. This is one of the reasons you should be familiar with the customs of the country in which you are operating. Similarly, never pose as a Red Cross representative when you are not. Your life may depend on proper use of the Red Cross symbol.

Parachutists are considered helpless until they reach the ground. Under the rules of war, you may not fire at parachutists while they are in the air. If they resist with weapons upon landing or do not surrender, you may fire at them. Paratroopers, on the other hand, are always considered combatants and may be fired on while they are still in the air.

Under the laws of armed conflict, you may not use poison or poisoned weapons. However, you may use nonpoisoning weapons to destroy the food and water of the enemy.

You may not alter weapons to cause unnecessary suffering by the enemy. You cannot use altered rounds to inflict greater destruction on the enemy. These alterations are forbidden under the laws of armed conflict.

## **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN RULES ARE VIOLATED**

You have been provided some basic rules to show what you can and cannot do in a wartime situation, as they relate to the laws of armed conflict. This section provides instructions on what action to take if the rules are violated by other personnel.

You must prevent violations of the laws of armed conflict by others because they are criminal acts. When you see a criminal act about to happen, you should try to prevent it by

- arguing against it.
- threatening to report the criminal act.
- repeating the orders of your superiors.
- stating your personal disagreement, or
- asking a senior individual present to intervene.

You should be able to do this when you are totally familiar with the country in which you are operating and are knowledgeable about the rules of war. In the event the criminal act immediately endangers your life or the lives of others, you may use the exact amount of force needed to prevent the crime, but do this only as a last resort. You should immediately report the criminal act through your chain of command. When the criminal act is committed or about to be committed by your immediate superior, report the act to his immediate superior. You are required to do this by the laws of armed conflict. Conversely, you are not required to commit a crime under the laws of conflict. If you are ordered to commit a crime under the rules of war, you must refuse to follow the order and report your refusal to the next higher authority. You can be prosecuted for carrying out an unlawful act under the laws of war, so you must know what is legal and act by following the rules of armed conflict.

## **CODE OF THE U.S. FIGHTING FORCE**

The Code was prescribed by the President of the United States in 1955 as a simple, written creed applying to all members of the armed forces of the United States. The words of the Code, presented in six articles, state the principles that Americans have honored in all the wars this country has fought since 1776.

The Code is not intended to provide guidance on every aspect of military life. For that purpose there are military regulations, rules of military courtesy, and established customs and traditions. The Code is in no way connected with the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). The UCMJ has punitive powers; the Code does not.

The six articles of the Code can be divided into three categories. Articles I and VI are general statements of dedication to country and freedom. Conduct on the

battlefield is the subject of Article II. Articles III, IV, and V concern conduct as a prisoner of war.

## Article I

- I am an American, fighting in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.

It is a long-standing tradition of American citizens to answer the call to arms willingly when the peace and security of this nation are threatened. Patrick Henry stated it best in the early days of our country when he said, “. . . give me liberty or give me death.” Nathan Hale, captured by the British during the revolutionary war and charged with spying, personified the spirit of an American fighting for freedom, when he spoke the immortal words, “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country,” just before his execution by hanging.

More recently, the threat to America has been less obvious as small countries, such as South Korea and South Vietnam, have borne the brunt of attacks by the enemy. Nevertheless, Americans have risen to the challenge and have proven their dedication and willingness to make the supreme sacrifice as much as in any of the wars in our history.

In June 1965, Construction Mechanic Third Class David G. Shields served with U.S. Navy Seabee Team 1104 at Dong Koai, supporting 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces. Although wounded when a reinforced Viet Cong regiment using a machine gun, heavy weapons, and small arms placed intensive fire on the unit, CM3 Shields continued to resupply his fellow Americans with needed ammunition to return the enemy fire for a period of approximately 3 hours. Wounded a second time during this attack, CM3 Shields assisted in carrying a more critically wounded man to safety. Then, he resumed firing at the enemy for 4 more hours. CM3 Shields unhesitatingly volunteered to accompany the commander and knock out an enemy machine gun emplacement that was endangering the lives of all personnel in the compound because of the accuracy of the enemy fire. Advancing toward the objective with a 3.5-inch rocket launcher, the two men succeeded in destroying the enemy machine gun emplacement, undoubtedly saving the lives of many of their fellow servicemen.

CM3 Shields fell mortally wounded by hostile fire while returning to his position. He was later awarded the Medal of Honor for his courageous actions. His bold

initiative and fearless devotion to duty are perfect examples of the meaning of the words of Article I of the Code.

## Article II

- I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command, I will never surrender the members of my command while they still have the means to resist.

This is an American tradition that dates back to the revolutionary war. An individual may never voluntarily surrender himself. If isolated and unable to fight the enemy, he is obligated to evade capture and rejoin friendly forces at the earliest possible time.

John Paul Jones always comes to mind when one reads Article II of the Code. In 1779 the captain of the *Bonhomme Richard* challenged two British ships of war, the *Serapis* and the *Countess of Scarborough*. Old, slow, and hopelessly outclassed the *Bonhomme Richard* was being badly battered, repeatedly set on fire, and rapidly falling with water when the captain of the *Serapis* called, “Do you ask for quarter?”

“I have not yet begun to fight,” replied John Paul Jones. Hours later, the *Serapis* struck her flag; and Jones and his crew boarded and captured the British ship as they watched their own ship sink

When a unit is involved, the officer in command may never surrender that unit to the enemy while it has the power to resist or evade. A unit that is cut off or surrounded must continue to fight until it is relieved by, or able to, rejoin friendly forces.

## Article III

- If I am captured, I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.

## Article IV

- If I become a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information or take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades. If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will obey the lawful orders of those appointed over me and will back them up in every way.

## Article V

- When questioned, should I become a prisoner of war, I am required to give name, rank, service number, and date of birth. I will evade answering further questions to the utmost of my ability. I will make no oral or written statements disloyal to my country and its Allies or harmful to their cause.

The misfortune of being captured by the enemy does not end a Seabee's usefulness to his country. His duty is to continue to resist the enemy by all possible means and to escape and assist others to escape. A Seabee may not accept parole from the enemy or special favors, such as more food, warm clothes, less physical restrictions, and so forth, in return for promises not to escape or for informing or providing information to the enemy.

Informing, or any other action endangering the well-being of a fellow prisoner, is forbidden. Prisoners of war must not help the enemy by identifying fellow prisoners who may have knowledge of particular value to the enemy and who may, therefore, be made to suffer brutal interrogation.

Strong leadership is essential to discipline. Organization, resistance, and even survival may be extremely difficult without discipline. Personal hygiene, sanitation, and care of the sick and wounded prisoners of war are an absolute "must." All United States officers and noncommissioned officers must continue to carry out their responsibilities and exercise their authority if captured.

The senior line officer or noncommissioned officer within a prisoner of war camp, or a group of prisoners, must assume command according to rank or date of rank, without regard to branch of service. He is the lawful superior of all lower ranking personnel.

If the senior officer or noncommissioned officer is incapacitated or unable to command for any reason, command must be assumed by the next senior man. This responsibility cannot be avoided.

## Article VI

- I will never forget that I am an American, fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.

Article VI and Article I of the Code are quite similar. The repeated words *I am an American, fighting for*

*freedom*, are perhaps the most important words of the Code, because they signify each American's faith and confidence in his God, his country, and his service. Since John Paul Jones made his defiant reply, "I have not yet begun to fight," to the present, Americans have traditionally fought the enemy wherever they were found and with whatever weapons were available. When captured, the American, fighting for freedom, has continued the battle in a new arena. When facing a Communist interrogator, they have been under fire just as though bullets and shell fragments were flying about them. Disarmed, the POW has fought back with mind and spirit, remaining faithful to their fellow POWs, yielding no military information, and resisting every attempt of indoctrination. Every Seabee has the responsibility to honor these traditions by carefully adhering to the meaning of each article of the Code. The many Americans who have accepted this responsibility are heroes in the finest sense of the word.

In February 1966, Lieutenant (jg) Dieter Dengler, USNR, was on a bombing mission over North Vietnam when his aircraft was badly damaged by ground fire. LTJG Dengler crash-landed his aircraft in nearby Laos and attempted to evade capture. After successfully evading the enemy for 1 day, he was captured and led to a village where he was interrogated and told to sign a Communist propaganda statement condemning the United States. LTJG Dengler's repeated refusal to give more than his name, rank, service number, date of birth, or to sign any statements, resulted in severe beatings. When he continued to refuse to answer questions, he was tied behind a water buffalo that dragged him through the brush. The interrogations and beatings continued for 3 days, but LTJG Dengler refused to give in. Later, he escaped from his guards but was recaptured and again severely beaten. After 6 months in captivity, LTJG Dengler successfully escaped, killing several enemy guards in the process. On the seventeenth day, a pilot who escaped with him was killed, and LTJG Dengler had to continue alone. Although suffering from malnutrition, jaundice, fatigue, and badly cut and swollen feet, LTJG Dengler refused to give up. Finally, on the twenty-second day after his escape, he managed to lay out a crude SOS on a bed of rocks and attract the attention of a United States Air Force aircraft. Later, a rescue helicopter plucked him to safety and ended his ordeal.

The stories of Americans, fighting for freedom, have steadfastly followed both the spirit and letter of Articles III, IV and V of the Code are numerous.

## **CONCLUSION**

We all recognize that full compliance with the laws of armed conflict is not always easy, especially in the

confusion and passion of battle. For instance, you might be extremely angry and upset because your unit has taken a lot of casualties from enemy booby traps or hit-and-run tactics. But you must NEVER engage in reprisals or acts of revenge that violate the laws of armed conflict.

