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Captain's Corner



CDR R.K. MILLER

Rumors have always interested me. By judicious listening around Camp Haskins North, you can find out all kinds of things about what the future holds for MCB-53. I regret that none of these stories are true. We will be leaving RVN in early November and not before. Our advance party will leave here in early October. If, by some remote chance, these plans change you will be among the first to know. In the meantime, pay no attention to the wishful thinking about our early return to Davisville.

As of the time of this writing, our deployment has three months to go. We still have some very important projects to complete. The bridge at Lang Co is going very well. It's a typical Seabee job, requiring both brain and brawn. The scheduling of the replacement bridge is extremely critical and it has been set up so that we will never be more than seven days away from re-opening the bridge for traffic by using a combination of the old and new bridge. The hangers at 58TC are finally out of the ground, and we're pleased to be back working for our good neighbors at Red Beach. We are also working on FLC again on a critical facility for the 1st Force Service Regiment.

Even though there is still a lot of work to be done here before we get home, we have already started the advance planning for our Davisville deployment. More about that in the next issue.



RADM E.P. Bonner (second from left), Commander NSA Da Nang, talks with LT J.B. Green, Officer-in-Charge of MCB-53's Lang Co bridge project. Looking on are CAPT J. E. Powell (left), Commander 30th NCR, and CDR R.K. Miller (third from left).

COVER SHOT: CE2 Lyle Forsythe (top left), CE3 Harold Buxton (top right) and CE1N William Vankirk (bottom right) make the necessary preparations for installing a transformer bank at Freedom Hill.

AWARDS CEREMONIES

A total of 28 MCB-53 Seabees received awards or medals in two awards ceremonies held at Camp Haskins North on June 8 and July 13, 1969.

The Meritorious Unit Commendation was awarded to LT Joseph B. Green of Darien, Connecticut, "for meritorious service from 1 May 1964 to 1 March 1967 in the operation, modification, and support of the Nuclear Power Plant...at McMurdo Station, Antarctica. During this period, the Navy Nuclear Power Unit effected extensive plant modifications, plant redesign work, and changes in operation procedures...."



UT2 P.D. Mazeika--Letter of Appreciation for work done on Data Processing Building at FLC. The award was presented by CAPT C.G. Miller, CBPAC Chief Staff Officer, who was visiting the battalion at the time.



CE3 J.A. Fogle--Letter of Appreciation for Liberty Bridge lighting project

BU2 D.L. Littlefield
--Vietnamese Cross
of Gallantry



CM3 C.P. Ladrillono--First Good Conduct Award

Presented the COMSUBLANT commendation was GM3 Robert F. Bardecki from New Haven, Michigan, for services rendered while serving aboard the USS Simon Lake. "As supporting tender for the nine Polaris submarines attached to Submarine Squadron Fourteen, USS Simon Lake.. has distinguished herself by the timely completion of sixty Fleet Ballistic Missile submarine refits resulting in the on-schedule deployment of all supported submarines throughout a two year period."

BU2 Dana L. Littlefield from Centerville, Massachusetts, was awarded the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry for "his courage and technical knowledge displayed in building and defending the Ammi Pontoon Bridge over the Perfume River at Nam Hoa."

Good Conduct Awards for "fidelity, zeal, and obedience" were received by BUCS Jack E. Burgess, his fourth award; EOC David L. DeLong, his third award; BML Robert Malkowski, his fourth award; SK2 Richard E. Lee, his third award; DT1 Larry E. McCullough, his second award; CML Patrick R. Vaughan, his first award, EO2 Donald L. Peters, his first award; and CM3 C.P. Ladrillono, his first award.





CE2 R.D. Tansley--
May's Petty Officer
of the Month



GM3 R.F. Bardecki--COMSUBLANT
Unit Commendation



CMCN J.A. Sanborn--
May's Seabee of the
Month



SM1 R. Malkowski--
Fourth Good Conduct
Award

April and May also brought two Seabee of the Month awards and one Petty Officer of the Month award. April's Seabee of the Month was CMCN J.A. Sanborn from Salem, Massachusetts, for his "tireless efforts and high quality work." The Petty Officer of the Month for May was CE2 R.D. Tansley from Saginaw, Michigan, for his "superior performance and leadership." Petty Officer Tansley was in charge of the Bravo Company Electric Shop.

"For his untiring efforts and hard work in becoming a

competent MRS (scraper) operator," EOCN R.A. Gray from Bessier City, Louisiana, was named May's Seabee of the Month.

A letter of appreciation was awarded to EO2 J.M. Goodknight from Jacksonville, Florida, for his work while on temporary duty at the U.S. Naval Air Station at Patuxent River, Maryland.

Letters of appreciation were also awarded to CE2 J.S. Scruggs, CE2 G.W. Burch, CE3 E.R. Diez, and CE3 J.A. Fogle for work they did on the lighting project at the Liberty Bridge.

Ten MCB-53 Seabees also received letters of appreciation from BGEN J.A. Feeley, Commanding General of the Force Logistics Command, for their persistence and ingenuity in building the new Data Processing Center at FLC.

They are EO2 J.E. Hardigree from Bethlehem, Georgia; EOC R.H. McKenzie from Quonset Point, Rhode Island; CEC J.H. Cerminaro from Carbondale, Pennsylvania; CE1 B.E. Brooks from Dillwyn, Virginia; UT1 J.A. Kelley from Elwood, New Jersey; UT2 P.D. Mazeika from Worcester, Massachusetts; CE2 G.T. Welles from Mount Top, Pennsylvania; BUL W.S. Kelley from Winchester, Pennsylvania; and BUL R.E. Ousley from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

FINISHING UP AT FREEDOM HILL



Two builders nail plywood sheets to a 2" X 4" lattice work in the bowling alley while another crew member checks the fit of an air conditioning duct. The entire ceiling was hung from purlins in the Butler building structure.

Although their patience and ingenuity were often heavily taxed, a crew of 65 men from MCB-53 finished the reconstruction of a 20 lane bowling alley and a Red Cross Center at Freedom Hill on July 12, six weeks after beginning the job. The buildings were part of the Freedom Hill complex near DaNang that received the brunt of an ammo dump explosion late in April.

Perhaps the most taxing of the buildings was the bowling alley--a structure made by joining three Butler buildings. Because the crews wanted to save as much of the old structure as possible, they found themselves doing more patching than building, at least during the early part of reconstruction. A crew of steel-

workers under SW2 M.E. Anderson often had to move in a crane to hold up part of the roof while the men removed a twisted structural member from the side and bolted a new one into place.

Before they were through the men had replaced 10% of all structural members, 80% of the bents supporting the roof, 90% of the purlins and 100% of the tin roofing and siding.

As soon as the steelworkers were far enough along, BU1 L.W. Garden and his crew began the second stage of reconstruction. They were required to install a massive drop ceiling that covered an area of 14,000 square feet. For this special job the men ran metal rods down from the purlins and then attached a 2" X 4"

lattice work. Quarter inch plywood sheets were nailed to the lattice work to provide backing for the acoustical tile.

Finding the right building materials also plagued the men. When no acoustical tile could be obtained in the DaNang area, for instance, EOC J.H. Lewis, the MLO expeditor, flew down to Saigon, loaded the tile onto a plane and accompanied it back to DaNang--all in the same day.

Likewise, when the proper ridge capping for the buildings could not be found, the crews had to improvise by bending sheet metal acquired from the 3rd Naval Construction Brigade yard. And they had to do a little more hunting when they discovered that some of the new structural members were twisted from all the handling and that some of the tin roofing had the wrong number of corrugations per foot. But patience and a



A crew of builders ease a truss into place on one of the Red Cross buildings.

A Bravo Company crew wraps insulation around a huge air conditioning duct in the bowling alley.



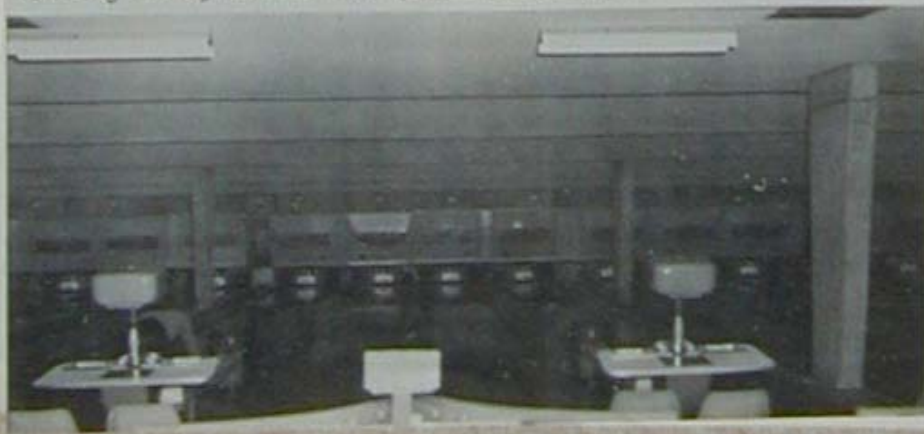


Squinting to avoid flying paint, a Red Cross worker adds a feminine touch to a wall in one of the Red Cross buildings.

well stocked brigade yard prevailed.

The elephant hut and frame building that made up the Red Cross Center provided fewer difficulties but were challenging nonetheless. The buildings were damaged so severely that MCB-53 crews under BUI R.E. Ousley just tore them down and started all over. On the old foundations they erected two frame buildings--a 40' X 80' recreation hall and a 40' X 100' office building with a music room and facilities for serving coffee and donuts.

With it's sparking new ceiling in place the air conditioned bowling alley awaits its first customers.



COL W. Biehl, Jr. (standing, left) Special Services Officer for III MAF, presents a certificate of appreciation to CDR R.K. Miller (standing, right), Commanding Officer of MCB-53, for the battalion's "outstanding reconstruction of the Freedom Hill complex." The certificate was issued by LT GEN H. Nickerson, Jr. (seated immediately behind CDR Miller)

Through MCB-53's efforts, read the citation, "the reconstruction proceeded at a rapid pace and the complex was reopened in far less time than originally thought possible." The citation

also praised the men for their "enthusiasm and dedication of purpose" adding that their work "reflected great credit on MCB-53's professional abilities. During the ceremony RADM J.G. Dillon, Commander 3rd NCB (seated in the second row behind COL Biehl), commented that MCB-53 was given the unique task of "reconstructing three buildings around an air conditioning system." Also at the ceremony was RADM E.P. Bonner (to LT GEN Nickerson's left in second row), Commander NSA DaNang. MAJ GEN Simpson, Commanding General 1st MAR DIV, is on the far right.



Although the crew had little trouble obtaining plywood and 2" X 4"s for the two buildings, they did run into a snag in repairing the ceramic tile floors. Falling debris had shattered many of the old tiles, and military sources could come up with nothing to match. But finally UT2 L.L. Beckett, an assistant MLO expeditor, discovered a Vietnamese source that could supply the men with the 200 red and 150 green tiles that they needed.

When most of the construction was finished, some of the girls that work at the Red Cross Center decided it was their turn to play Sea-

bee. On their own they worked out a color scheme, procured some paint and began painting their two buildings. Seabee observers described both the girls and their color scheme as "interesting."



Crew leader BUI R.E. Ousley draws a bead on a 2" X 4" in the Red Cross building while other members of his crew work in the background.

GETTING SHORT!

No reveille was sounded on this morning as the men of MCB-53 celebrated the battalion's recommissioning and mid-deployment on June 30. There also wasn't any of the usual "Hey bud, wake up or you'll miss muster" and the radios weren't blaring "Goooooooooooooood Morrrrrning Vietnam!"

At 10:00 A.M. the beach was opened and swimming was permitted in the DaNang Bay. A nicer day there hasn't been as the sun was shining and the bay was as calm as could be.

At 2:00 P.M. the Enlisted Men's Club was packed as "The Girls and Boys," a Special Services show, entertained the men of MCB-53. Without a doubt the best show the battalion has had to date, "The Girls and Boys" had that little some-

thing extra going for them besides their fine musical talents. That little something extra being a beautiful Korean dancer by the name of Gigi.

During the EM Club's operation, door prizes that averaged around \$25 apiece were distributed to MCB-53 personnel every fifteen minutes.

Once the show was over an outdoor cookout got underway and steaks were cooked over an open grill. There was also plenty of spare ribs, chicken, potato salad, and cole slaw on hand.

After eating, the men drifted off in different directions as a very enjoyable and relaxing day passed the boards. Tomorrow would bring another day of hard work, but it would also bring them another day closer to returning home.



A game of water football relieved these MCB-53 Seabees of whatever energy they had built up during their day off.



The EM Club just prior to the show "The Girls and Boys"



Enjoying the show and regre MCB-53 sitting on the Acey-Duce



"The Girls and Boys" let sounds during the show in MCB-



The EM Club just prior to the start of the Special Services show "The Girls and Boys"



Enjoying the show and refreshments are these men from MCB-53 sitting on the Acey-Ducey side of the EM Club.



"The Girls and Boys" let loose on some good American sounds during the show in MCB-53's EM Club.



Gigi "just doing her thing!"



The cookout as seen from one of the security bunkers.



Steaks are passed out as the cookout gets underway.



There was also a variety of other delicious treats for the men's choosing.



The asphalt plant in operation.

Vinh Dai

PAVING

THE



E02 Richard Reda pulls the lever that releases the asphalt into dump trucks below.

MCB-53's detachment to Vinh Dai is turning out close to 140 tons of asphaltic concrete per hour since the construction of an asphalt plant at their camp. It took 11 men, consisting of 3 UTs and 8 EOs, two weeks to put the plant together. "It was like a giant crossword puzzle," said UT2 Harry Doyle, "we had all the pieces and all we had to do was put them into place."

When operating, the plant receives three types of aggregates (coarse, intermediate, and fine) through its cold bin feeders. The aggregate is then sent through different gates into the cold elevator. The cold elevator carries it into the dryer, which removes all moisture and heats it to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. It is then passed on to the hot elevator which in turn takes the aggregate to the vibrating screen. This screen sorts the three types of aggregate into four types and

rejects all oversized material. The material now consists of fine aggregate, coarse aggregate, coarse sand, and fine sand.

The four separate aggregates are transferred from the vibrating screen into their own bins before passing into the calibrated gates. These gates meter the different aggregates into the exact amounts necessary. Then they are sent through another hot elevator on to the mixer. The mixer adds the liquid asphalt to the aggregates. With this entire procedure completed, the asphaltic concrete is dropped into dump trucks and carried to the paving crew.

E01 George Tallman, who is in charge of the 11 man asphalt plant crew, in commenting on the construction of the plant itself said, "For never having had any experience of this type, they did a terrific job."



E03 Michael Fennema (left) and EOCN Dennis Casick steady an asphalt barrel before putting it in the plant's melter.



Posing beside the asphalt plant they helped to assemble are (l-r) UT2 H.J. Doyle, UT2 F. Greb Jr., and UT2 L.R. Jackson.



E01 N.R. Tardiff reads one of the many gauges at the Vinh Dai asphalt plant.

WAY

"LAOS OR BUST"

The paving crew, under J. D. Loughridge, is scheduled to reach Vandergrift, a huge Marine installation approximately 20 miles west southwest of Dong Ha, before MCB-53 returns to the Continental United States. As of 21 July, they had paved from a mile outside of Dong Ha to bridge 9-12, which is approximately six miles from their objective. They are also scheduled to pave a two-mile stretch around the Dong Ha Combat Base.

Making the travelling faster and more comfortable are not the only reasons these Seabees are grinding out mile after mile of paved road. Unlike the dirt road, the asphaltic concrete makes it very difficult for "Charlie" to plant his mines and have them go unnoticed.



The asphalt plant crew (back row, l-r) E03 Richard Bachelder, UT2 F. Greb Jr., CE2 R.D. Tansley, EOCN Dennis Casick, E01 George Tallman, E02 C.H. Hutton; (front row, l-r) E03 Michael Fennema, E03 Steve Hathcock, E03 Philip Cote, a civilian engineer, E02 N.R. Tardiff, E02 Richard Reda.

Civic Action at Mai Loc

"TASTE BUDS" AID INNOCULATION

A "sweet tooth" helped to inoculate over 2,000 Montagnard villagers recently for smallpox at Mai Loc, a village located 9 miles from the Demilitarized Zone in South Vietnam.

After the first half hour had passed and only a few of the Montagnards had received their shots, it was apparent that the main job was going to be getting recipients of the vaccine, not the actual inoculation itself. This problem had been anticipated by the MED-CAP team and a large store of candy was set aside with the sole purpose of coaxing the villagers into receiving their shots. Fortunately the sweet tooth overcame the fear and the project was completed in the allotted time.



Their curiosity getting the better of them, these Montagnard women and children leave their huts to watch the MED-CAP team as it sets up for the inoculation.



Returning after a morning in the fields, this Montagnard woman carries the load of wood she chopped.

The combined effort of USN MCB-53, USN MCB-8, 58 Army Transportation Company, the 80th Army General Support Group, and the Christian Missionary Alliance made the project possible. Working through their Civic Action Programs, the Chaplains from the respective units gathered approximately 6,000 pounds of materials to be distributed at Mai Loc, as well as the vaccine that was to be used.

On the morning of July 2, 1969, two trucks departed MCB-53's Camp Haskins North in DaNang loaded with Civic Action materials. Seven hours and 120 miles later they arrived at the Special Forces camp at Mai Loc and arrangements were made for the following morning when two helicopters would arrive carrying the MED-CAP team. The team consisted of

one missionary, four Chaplains, one Dentist, one Vietnamese nurse, and eight Hospital Corpsmen.

Little time was wasted on the morning the helicopters arrived at the small dirt airfield adjacent to the Special Forces camp. The trucks picked up the team and brought them to the village that was just below the airfield and facilities were set up for a mass inoculation. The village's only school house was chosen as the center of operation. Montagnards of all ages gathered around the school but only a few were receiving shots. Most were just curious as to what was going on and not too enthused with the idea of having their arms pierced by a little needle. Soon the candy was brought out and, although it may appear



LT R.W. Butlin (left), MCB-53's dentist, inoculates a small boy for smallpox as LT I. O. Cartee (center), MCB-53's Chaplain, and DTI L. E. McCullough look on.

a little underhanded, if one desired candy he had to receive his shot first.

Le Thi Phuong Dung, a Vietnamese nurse with the Special Forces, and Nguyen Thi Thanh Van, a Vietnamese nurse with MCB-53's Civic Action Program, aided in interpreting as well as administering shots. Both were very helpful in persuading the children, who were all for receiving the candy, to participate in the rest of the program.

While the inoculation was in progress, the trucks were unloaded and approximately 1500 pounds of toys, 2000 pounds of cement, 1400 pounds of miscellaneous building materials, and 100 pounds of clothing were distributed.

As the MED-CAP came to a close, the trucks returned to the Special Forces camp and the team was airlifted back to DaNang. The trucks then went on to Vinh Dai where they spent the night before returning to DaNang the next day.

When LT Ira O. Cartee from Augusta, Georgia, the Chaplain in charge of MCB-53's Civic Action Program, was asked if he was satisfied with what was accomplished at Mai Loc he said, "It's a good start and I'm very pleased with the way



Stopping to see what's going on, these Montagnard women are on their way to the fields to gather wood.

things turned out, but I hope we will have the opportunity to return to Mai Loc again in the near future for there is still a lot of work to be done. Their medical needs are many, and such a ministry of concern is bound to help them in every way. It gives one a good feeling to know that he has done something in a concrete way to help another human being. All those who took part in our mission to Mai Loc have a great deal to be proud of."



Van, MCB-53's Vietnamese nurse, vaccinates a pipe-smoking woman for smallpox.



And here we have "Sargeant Rock's first platoon" prior to returning to DaNang. Actually it's the Civic Action team.

the security force

HOLDING DOWN THE FORT

Though often inconspicuous, the MCB-53 security force, directed by ENS John Heinstadt, has one of the most vital jobs in the battalion--keeping Charlie and his little annoyances outside the barbed wire.

To do this the battalion maintains a full time force of 71 men at its two main camps. Thirty-nine men supply the watchful eyes for the six main bunkers, the mortar pit and the listening post at Camp Haskins North. And at Vinh Dai, the battalion's rock crusher site just south of the DMZ, 32 men under the supervision of platoon leader BU2 R.D. Samson keep watch from the camp's tower and six bunkers. Both the Camp Haskins and the Vinh Dai units are equipped to direct artillery and air strikes as well as call in MEDEVACS.

Sleeping is a rather broken affair for the men. Two men in each bunker remain awake while the other two take their turn at sleeping. Just to make sure no one dozes BU1 R.T. Flockton and UT1 J.E. Daniels, who alternate as Sergeant of the Guard, and EA2 A. G. Berube and UT2 F.P. Pappas, who alternate as Corporal of the Guard, make frequent bunker checks from the Command Post.

At 0730 the men muster at

the S-2 office and are assigned to various jobs around the camp for the morning. Any sleep the men missed is picked up in the afternoon.

Security also briefs all convoys leaving the DaNang area. All persons riding in the trucks are required to wear flak jackets and helmets and carry two bandoliers of M-16 ammunition. In addition, the trucks must be properly sandbagged, carry extra gasoline and water and have an adequate supply of red pop flares. If possible, a radio is also taken along.

The battalion has a high degree of military experience this year because of a small turnover in personnel from last deployment. Last year MCB-53 weathered the Tet Offensive, and, from its main camp in East DaNang, ran convoys in support of detachments at Hoi An, Nam Hoa, Dong Ha and Ca Lu.

But maintaining security is not the only job the men do. Since most of the men on the force have Seabee rates, ENS Heinstadt tries to give them as much construction experience as possible. Presently the men are repairing and reinforcing the perimeter wire along the beach. But they have worked on such construction pro-



EACN E.J. "Butch" Green from Portland, Maine, answers a bunker check from the Command Post during a daytime watch at Bunker 5.

jects as the rebuilding of Camp Monahan, a Marine camp leveled by an ammo dump explosion. Security crews built several Southeast Asia huts as well as aided the salvage crews in clearing the wreckage.

In addition, the men of the security force have built a pistol range next to the beach, where GY/SGT A. Carrasco, USMC, the battalion military advisor, instructs the men and supervises practice sessions.

Presently, two engineering aids on the force, EA3 R.J. Steele and EACN C.W. Gullickson, are cooperating with the Chaplain's Civic Action Assistant in working out plans for a pig farm in the village of Hoa Khanh. When the plans are complete, security builders will work with the Vietnamese laborers in the actual construction of the farm. The farm is expected to boost the local economy considerably since pork is one of the staple meats in Vietnam.



It's the Fourth of July every night for the mortar crew. Holding illumination mortars are BU2 R. H. Boudreau (kneeling, left) from Leominster, Massachusetts, EOCN W. Manley (standing) from Cincinnati, Ohio, and Sn J. F. Coates from Streator, Ill. CN M.W. Thompson was absent when the picture was taken.

Still smiling after a night on the perimeter, the Camp Haskins North Security force poses for a picture after the morning muster.





BUCN J.K. Pilkington (standing) and BU3 N.L. Stants set up a radio patch with an operator in the United States.

It's the man from MARS

Lonely for someone back home? See the man from MARS. With luck he can have you talking with the person you miss in a matter of minutes.

The MARS man for MCB-53 Seabees is RM2 Jack L. Meyer and he really isn't from another planet. He's in charge of the Military Affiliate Radio System station and has three assistants to help him in his main job of transmitting short wave phone calls to the United States.

To do this the station establishes a radio "patch" with one of three ham stations in the United States, and the stateside operator arranges a telephone hookup

with the person being called. The lonely serviceman is allowed to talk for three to five minutes and only has to pay the phone charges.

Of course, with all those people listening in, the caller tends to be a little self-conscious, says Petty Officer Meyer, but after a few calls he begins to lose his inhibitions.

Arranging short wave phone calls is not all that the station does. It also sends MARS-GRAMS--similar to telegrams--free of charge. Though there is no specific word limit, the messages are generally kept short.

An especially important function of the station is

backing up other means of communication in times of emergency or overload. As a rule this only occurs in times of heavy activity in the area, and so far this deployment the station has not been needed for that purpose.

Though the MARS station is located in MCB-53's camp and is operated mainly by MCB-53 personnel, it is also open for use by men from MCB-8, 30th NCR, and 3rd NCB on a first come first serve basis. The phone hookups are made three times a day. In the early morning the MARS man connects with a Davisville operator, in the afternoon with a Hawaii operator and at night with a California operator.

Petty Officer Meyer says the station makes about 350 patches a month, though certain weather conditions often lower the number. Exceptionally high heat and humidity create a lot of static electricity in the air which then "builds up on the antenna and discharges into the radio," says Petty Officer Meyer.

The three operators in addition to Petty Officer Meyer are BUCN J.K. Pilkington, BU3 N.L. Stants and CM3 Bill Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald is from MCB-8.



EO3 P.A. Watson calls home from the sound proof room at the MARS station.

VISITORS AT SOC TRANG



VADM E.R. Zumwalt, Jr. (middle), Commander Naval Forces Vietnam, and RADM J.G. Dillon (left), Commander 3rd Naval Construction Brigade, listen as BU2 F.W. McCoy from Grand Junction, Colorado, explains one of Seabee Team 5301's projects. The photograph was taken during VADM Zumwalt's recent visit to the team site at Soc Trang.

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