

TINIAN SERT MISSION

By LT Contreras and LT Lemonds NMCB ONE

“The First and The Finest” Seabee Engineer Reconnaissance Team (SERT) of NMCB ONE recently completed a successful mission to the island of Tinian. The mission started with close coordination between NMCB ONE and the professionals at HC-5, a helo squadron, stationed at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam. Drawing from the concept of a special-forces mission, the Team went into an isolation phase three days prior to lift off from Guam. By eating, sleeping, and breathing their mission, they sealed their success through studying, planning, and rehearsing. Each SERT member stated the isolation was key, and prior to the next mission they said a longer isolation period would significantly enhance the mission’s outcome.

The mission consisted of gathering technical engineering data and then transmitting this via high frequency (HF) over a field antenna back to Guam. Given the amount of personnel and equipment needed for the mission, the Team was split between two CH-60 helicopters. Upon arriving on Tinian, the Team quickly set up the Liaison Officer Element Cell (otherwise known as the LNO Cell) and established communications with the Home Base cell, 180-miles away at Camp Covington on Naval Station, Guam. While the LNO Cell was setting up, a seven Seabee reconnaissance element set off to survey the Tinian Weapons Range Facility and three aircraft landing strips, which were used extensively during World War II. During the reconnaissance, the Team executed patrol maneuvers, noise discipline, patrol-to-LNO cell communications and overall team coordination. This is the Team’s first executed mission. ET3 Ashe, the teams’ Communications Specialist stated, “ I was not surprised by the Team’s success due to the level of commitment and training put forth by everyone.”

The primary mission of SERT is to collect construction engineering-oriented information such as the design and tasking of construction projects, which provides direct support for other NMCBs, the NCR, MAGTF and their supporting units. The reconnaissance isn’t always conducted in friendly environments. SERT was used extensively in Operation “IRAQI FREEDOM” in order to collect information about the construction and repair requirements of certain areas of operation. SERT collects data on terrain features, roads, bridges and suitable locations for encampments. Due to the diverse mission requirements, SERT members are trained in all facets

of construction as well as combat. They are required to provide their own defense if a hostile situation arises.

The Tinian mission was truly a success in that they proved their ability to collect the necessary data AND transmit that data in the form of pictures and text back to home base. In contingency operations, this data would be received by engineers allowing them to immediately analyze the data and make real time, educated plans on how to repair damaged roads, bridges or other unstable structures.

The Commanding Officer of NMCB ONE, CDR John J. Heinzl, preaches; “Shoot, Move, Communicate, Build”, these key words fully describe a SERT mission. The Seabee Engineer Reconnaissance Team will continue to seek training opportunities that will improve their ability to operate as a cohesive unit. Their training enhances their effectiveness and war fighting capability, the overall capability of the Battalion, and the Naval Construction Force.

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