

# **MCBONE Takes to the Field**

**By: CM2 (SCW) Gregory Heidler**

NMCB ONE conducted a deployment field exercise (FEX) that took place on the Orote point airfield and surrounding jungle on Commander Naval Forces Marianas Operations Base in Guam. Seabee battalions take part in FEX to fine-tune their military readiness skills, and prove their ability to perform their mission readiness if called upon in a contingency. The battalion trains to defend their camp against enemy attack, disperse protesters, conduct security patrols, practice intruder-in-camp drills, as well as plan and execute tactical convoys. “FEX is a useful tool that lets the battalion prepare itself for a contingency,” stated Construction Mechanic Construction man Shane Vanwittenburg.

A detachment of fifty Marines was sent from Okinawa to help train the Seabees with the various scenarios. The Marines also taught the battalion their procedures to conduct patrols, convoys, and weapons drills. During the exercise, observers (personnel designated with white tape on their hats to signal that they do not participate in the scenarios), affectionately referred to by battalion personnel as “white bands”, evaluate the Seabees’ ability to adapt, control, and respond to the different situations. Another tool the Marines brought with them is experience, having just come from Operation “ENDURING FREEDOM” in Iraq.

Members from NMCB ONE’s Alfa and Charlie Companies moved in first in order to conduct a security sweep of the area before the remainder of the battalion could

move in safely. At 0600 members of the Alfa Company sweep team conducted security drills from the Gab-Gab beach entrance (also on COMNAVMAR Guam), and moved in to the airfield from the North. After securing the area, the main element of the battalion moved in to set up camp, which consisted of running communication wire, stringing Constantine protection wire, and erecting command post tents. For five days, the Seabees manned fighting positions, ate Meals-Ready-to-Eat or MRE's (fully cooked meals in individual vacuum sealed pouches) and took baby wipe showers. They slept in shelter-half tents and dealt with Guam's torrential rain and scorching heat. "I saw banana spiders in the area as big as my hand!" said CM3 Roger Sadler after crawling through the dense jungle, while running communication wire from one fighting position to the next.

When the exercise ended, the battalion received overall good reports from all of the evaluators. The battalion played out every scenario and either overcame or solved it, but definitely learned from it. At the end of FEX, a Marine stated, "the Seabees surprised me with their ability and motivation. Now I see where they get the "CAN-DO" motto."