

## Navy Seabees Build School, Aged Home In Grenada

By Lt. j.g. Ligia Cohen, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command  
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GRENADA, West Indies (NNS) -- A U.S. Task Force of 45 Seabees, the U.S. Navy construction force, constructed new facilities for nearly 200 students and 10 senior citizens as part of the New Horizons exercise in Grenada. New Horizons is an engineering and medical assistance exercise under the executive responsibility of U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command.

The November exercise involved a 100-day deployment of Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 1 to the Eastern Caribbean island.

Their tasking includes the construction of a 45-foot-by-89-foot Royal Building System (RBS) aged home facility, a three-room school and a four-room school, in addition to a two-week medical outreach campaign/exercise conducted by personnel from the U.S. Air Force's 96th Medical Group.

New Horizons projects are designed to provide relevant training to deployed U.S. forces while improving relations between the United States and the host nation.

"We are here to provide humanitarian and civic assistance construction while fostering goodwill with Grenada and acting as Ambassadors for the U.S.," said New Horizons' Task Force Commander Lt. Anthony M. Conley, a native of Edgewood, Md. "This exercise will provide much needed facilities to the government of Grenada while providing valuable training for our troops."

The training benefits of the exercise equate to the Seabees' maintaining deployment readiness to remote areas with nearly 400 tons of equipment and materials.

"We loaded a barge in Gulfport with everything we needed: tool kits, 7-8-2 (personal combat) gear, construction equipment, trucks, forklifts and even a bulldozer," said Chief Utilitiesman (SCW) Michael Nasso, the task force's executive officer.

In addition, the projects provide the Seabees the opportunity to hone their construction skills with RBS -a new type of structure, which consists of interlocking modules that are filled with concrete.

"The RBS construction can be completed in one-third of the time it takes traditional brick and mortar; still, it is durable. It can resist hurricane-strength winds," said Nasso. "In total, the three projects provide approximately 150 hours of work experience to each task force member."

But the impact of these projects in the Grenada community can't be measured by any conventional standard. The 180 students attending kindergarten through third grades at the Grand Anse School will move from an old building where all the classes share the same room, only separated by thin dividers.

"The children will have a better learning environment, as they have their own classrooms," said school principal Monica Alexander. "Besides, since we will have more space, we will be able to increase our capacity - and our school will be consolidated, which is also beneficial for the teachers."

Since U.S. Air Force members built a seven-room building for the school during a New Horizons exercise conducted in 1999, the Grand Anse's student and teacher body had been split between two locations. The two new buildings constructed by NMCB-1 are adjacent to the facility built in 1999, creating a complete school complex.

A few miles from the new school, the new aged home is moving quickly toward completion. The aged home will house seven to 10 senior citizens.

"The new aged home will replace an old building with a leaking roof and rotting floors," said U.S. Army Master Sgt. Ursula Dees, Task Force Civil Affairs. "The Social Services Ministry is also looking at the possibility of increasing capacity at the new facility. There is a great need of adequate housing for senior citizens."

New Horizons Grenada constitutes the second engineering and civic assistance exercise under the responsibility of Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command during this calendar year. As part of New Horizons Dominican Republic, NMCB-133 built four schoolhouses.