

# Seabees Give Army a Hand with Construction in A Shau Valley



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High in the hills of South Vietnam, approximately 40 miles west of Hue, Seabees are assisting the Army in a to attempt to stop the Viet Cong moving up and down Route No. 548. At Firebase Fury, artillery, radar, hastily built bunkers, men and supplies sit atop a mountain surrounded by dense jungle. Their mission is to support the Army's 101st Airborne infantry Division in a drive to stop Charlie in his own territory.

The initial move into the thickly wooded mountains began with explosives experts who dropped 10,000 lb. "Doisy cutter, bombs designed to detonate 15 ft. above ground level, to clear the jungle. Then chain saws were dropped into the rubble, and men went to work sawing away stubs, trees and what was left of the jungle to be cleared in and around the base site. With the jungle cleared, sky crane helicopters brought in heavy equipment to complete grading and leveling of the area. Since the only way into the mountains is by helicopter, landing pods were laid down and choppers were used to bring in supplies.

Six Seabees (Gary Halpain, James Holt, Leon Metcalf, Jerry Cupp, Allen King and Darrel Williams) from Naval Construction Battalions in the Northern I Corps are working with 326th Army Engineers at Fury.

Two men from each of the Naval Mobile Construction Battalions of NMCB 10, NMCB-40 and NMCB-121.

With the army moving into the A Shau Valley from one direction and the Marines from the other, the twin hills of Firebase Fury were selected for strategic fire support for airborne and infantry troops. Route No. 548 is used extensively by Charlie for moving supplies. The move into the valley was initiated primarily to see what the Army could find out, a source said. Ammo and artillery range from small arms to 155 mm guns, placed atop the hills overlooking the valley. Mortars have been brought in to harass and stop Charlie at his own game.

About 75 construction workers, including 25 equipment operators, Army men and a select six Seabees worked to complete facilities at Fury. It was an exhausting job, conditions were tough, but the feeling was summed simply, "The men are here because it's their duty-most of them would rather be out here doing this job instead of being back at their regular base for this is where the war is."