

SEABEE COURIER

www.cnic.navy.mil/gulfport
QUICK EDITION

Vol. 2 No. 31

Naval Construction Battalion Center, Gulfport, Mississippi

Sept 16, 2019

NMCB-1 flies first UAS in Naval Construction Force history

By MC1 Caine Storino Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 1

For the first time in the history of the Naval Construction Force (NCF), an Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) was used in a Seabee operational exercise to gather imagery and data for a simulated airfield damage assessment Aug. 7, 2019.

Intelligence Specialist 1st Class John Tallaksen, from Winder, Georgia, and Information Systems Technician 2nd Class Andrew Cleary, from Ramsey, New Jersey, both assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 1, piloted the SkyRaider R80D UAS during the battalion's Field Training Exercise (FTX) at Camp Shelby, Mississippi.

"We're the first Seabee battalion to utilize this technology and show its capabilities," said Tallaksen.

"It's humbling and I think it really signifies our mot-to of 'The First and the Finest.'"

NCF leadership has emphasized UAS technologies due to its relevance in Seabee operations.

"[Naval Construction Group 2] wanted to see the effectiveness of UAS for Seabees in the field," said Tallaksen.

"Cleary and I were selected to become among the first UAS pilots in the Seabees."

To test the battalion's UAS capabilities, a scenario was developed for NMCB-1's FTX where a road was damaged by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device. Normally, Battlefield Damage Assessment

(BDA) is a capability of the Seabees where units analyze damage and then make repairs. In the scenario, the same methods were applied, only this time using a UAS to help assess damage.

"The intent was to prove the concept that BDA can be done with UAS," said Tallaksen. "We can measure craters, assess needed materials for damage repair, and call [Explosive Ordnance Disposal] all because of UAS."

This first UAS flight was a success; the UAS operated effectively and the scenario was a great learning experience for the pilots.

"I had a blast piloting the UAS," said Cleary. "It's cool being one of the first pilots in the Seabees. I want to fly it again soon."

"It's so cool to fly these things," said Tallaksen. "It can be nerve-wracking at first because you're flying an expensive piece of equipment, but you get used to it."

Ensign Adam Goldsmith, assigned to NCG-2, oversaw the development of the UAS program and trained NMCB-1 personnel on pilot qualifications and UAS operations. After seeing the system's first flight, he believes it's ready to use in regular Seabee operations.

"This system allows the NCF to pursue new tactics, techniques and procedures that will heighten force protection and improve the speed and quality of construction projects," said Goldsmith. "The UAS program is a great example of how the



Intelligence Specialist 1st Class John Tallaksen, from Winder, Georgia, assigned to Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 1, pilots a SkyRaider R80D Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) during the battalion's field training exercise at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, Aug. 7, 2019. This is the first time UAS technology has been utilized in the Naval Construction Force, and NMCB-1 has the first certified UAS pilots in the Seabees. NMCB-1 is homeported in Gulfport, Mississippi, to prepare and execute a comprehensive unit-level training plan in order to meet future mission requirements. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Caine Storino)

NCF is able to adapt to a changing technological environment and remain innovative."

After the successful piloting from NMCB-1, the future of UAS in the Seabees is bright. A variety of applications

are currently being explored.

To learn more about NMCB-1 and their impacts around the world, visit <https://www.facebook.com/NMCB-ONE-The-First-and-The-Finest-124282507598400/>

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Emergency Preparedness: The importance of saving for disaster

By MC3 Kohen Gillis
NCBC Public Affairs

Editor's note: This story is the first of a four-part series highlighting the importance of being prepared for an emergency.

On Aug. 24, 2019, a meteorological pattern called a tropical wave in the Central Atlantic Ocean developed into what would grow to be the eventual Category 5 Hurricane Dorian that would cause more than \$7 billion in damage and the direct cause of 46 people losing their lives.

Although several factors led to Dorian's delayed landfall on the United States, many residents in the storm's path found themselves unprepared and thus suffered more once the storm affected their area.

Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS), as of Sept. 4, 2019, assisted 1,244 clients for a total of \$738,975 as a direct response to Hur-

ricane Dorian.

"Single service members and those with families need to be prepared whether they chose to stay in a safe place or to evacuate," said Alice Huffman, director of Gulfport's NMCRS.

The costs associated with evacuation are not cheap. According to a study conducted by the University of Texas at Austin, over 25 percent of Americans who earn more than \$150,000 annually and almost 45 percent of people who earn between \$100,000 and \$150,000 also have less than \$1,000 in savings.

"Don't dismiss any possibility; be prepared now," said Huffman. "From a financial education perspective, set money aside each month in your budget for the hurricane season. It happens every year."

In addition to financial assistance, NMCRS also provides financial education and other programs that support service members when needs occur

such as classes designed for assisting budgeting for new babies, thrift stores and education assistance.

Gulfport's NMCRS has a history of assisting those in need dating back all the way to 1969 when Hurricane Camille impacted the Gulf Coast, just three years after the establishment of the office.

Nearly \$45,000 was distributed to 472 families assigned to the Gulfport Seabee Center. Many servicemembers found themselves destitute with almost all their belongings destroyed, according to the Oct. 10th 1969 Seabee Courier. The thrift shop was giving away clothing items, and the average payout from the relief society was \$250 for food or evacuation funds.

"It is who we are and what we do," said Huffman. "Whether it's a hurricane, wildfire, earthquake, flood or other natural disaster, we'll be there."

Commissary officer hits 20-year mark at NCBC Gulfport

By Ryan Labadens
NCBC Public Affairs

Life in the military is often filled with change and transition, so it can be rare to find someone who's been in the same place, in the same position for more than 20 years. Walter Taylor, the commissary officer here at Naval Construction Battalion Center (NCBC) Gulfport, has been doing his part to sell groceries at the NCBC Commissary for 20 years now – and has loved every minute of it.

Taylor, originally from just outside of San Antonio, Texas, has been exposed to the military all his life. While he never joined the military himself, he's had several family members who served throughout the years, so he's always enjoyed being around the military community.

"I grew up military," said Taylor. "My dad and my step-dad were both in the Air Force and my two brothers joined the Navy, and as for me, I got into this [working at military commissaries] about a year after high school and have been doing it ever since."

At first, Taylor was going to college and working at a fast-food restaurant when he found out about an untrained workforce program offered by the federal government at the time. He applied and was accepted for a position in the deep freezer section of the Air Force Commissary Service at Randolph Air Force Base (AFB), Texas, in March 1980.

He worked his way up through various positions over the years, eventually transferring to the commissary at Keesler AFB, Miss., in 1987 and advancing to the store manager job there in 1996. He moved into the commissary officer slot at NCBC Gulfport on July 9, 1999.

One thing Taylor has always been grateful for throughout his career is the training opportunities he's had that have allowed him to move forward in his profession. He also was thankful for having supervisors who helped mentor and train him all those years, which is something he has always tried to do for the people who work for him.



"My greatest pride is seeing my people excel," said Taylor. "I've had several people move on to higher management jobs and become commissary officers, and others who moved on to higher management or headquarters positions, so it's good to see them move forward in their careers."

Following up on that, when asked what he enjoys most about having worked at the NCBC commissary, and in the grocery-selling business itself all these years, Taylor's reply was unhesitating: the people.

"I've had many opportunities to leave the store, but interacting with the customers and the people that I work with is something that I really enjoy," said Taylor. "I don't think I'd get the same satisfaction doing anything else."



Service members participate in the 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb Challenge Sept. 11, 2019, at Naval Construction Battalion Center (NCBC) Gulfport, Miss. Military members climbed four flights of steps 13 times to replicate the distance firefighters and other emergency responders would have had to travel up the flights of steps in the World Trade Center in New York. 9/11 stair climbs are held across the nation to honor and remember the New York firefighters who died during the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center Sept. 11, 2001. (U.S. Navy photos by Ryan Labadens)

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