

ONTARIO CITY LIBRARY

JUL 1986

215 EAST G ST.

WITHDRAWN

---

# UNITED STATES NAVY AND MARINE CORPS BASES, DOMESTIC

---

PAOLO E. COLETTA, *Editor*  
K. Jack Bauer, *Associate Editor*



**Greenwood Press**

Westport, Connecticut • London, England

Mountains. Except for a swimming pool and golf course, the base has a full range of recreational facilities. There is a pool at El Toro, only seven miles to the southeast.

Men from Tustin have seen many faraway places. MAG-16, for example, was deployed to Japan between 1952 and 1960, then to Taiwan, Okinawa, and Thailand, and in 1965 to Vietnam, where it remained for five years, returning to Tustin in 1971. Since then it has trained and supported ground units at Camp Pendleton and assisted Reserve aviation units during their summer active duty periods. Sub Unit No. 2 of Marine Air Base Squadron 16, which provides ground support for MAG-16, was the first Marine Corps unit deployed to Vietnam, and remained there until 1971. The first and oldest tactical helicopter squadron in the Marine Corps is Medium-Helicopter Squadron 161. It was the first such squadron to prove itself in combat, which occurred in Korea. Following two tours in Vietnam, it returned to Tustin, but in 1980 was deployed to Okinawa. The histories of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadrons 163, 164, and 268 run quite parallel, as do those of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadrons 361, 363, 462, and 465, with most of these squadrons rotating between Tustin and Okinawa.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. C.E. Cannon, Chief Warrant Officer-4, U.S. Marine Corps, Community Relations Officer, Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro, to the writer, 28 Jan. 1983; "History of U.S. Naval Air Station Santa Ana, California" (Washington: Naval Historical Center, Operational Archives Branch).

B. *Post of the Corps* (Quantico, Va.: The Leatherneck Association, 1976); *Orange County Salutes the Marines* (San Diego: Marcoa Publishing Co., 1982).

#### TWENTYNINE PALMS, CALIF., MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER, 1952-

Twentynine Palms had served gold prospectors well before World War I. After the war many veterans obtained homesteads there because the environment prolonged the life of those who had been subjected to gas attacks. The site was used by the Army for training glider and tank crews in 1940 and for training fighter pilots in 1943. On 4 August 1944, the Navy commissioned an auxiliary air station there that specialized in training in bombing and strafing. From the end of 1945 to 1952, however, the site lay dormant.

In 20 August 1952 a Marine Corps Training Center was established at Twentynine Palms with 120 Marines on board. Its mission was "to provide personnel, material, and services for the maintenance and support of the Marine Corps forces assigned." Located in the southern Mojave Desert about fifty miles northeast of Palm Springs, it has been developed into the largest Marine Corps base in the world, with 932 square miles, or 600,000 acres—larger than three Quanticos. Much of the area remains as it has always been—rough desert with temperatures reaching up to 110°F in summer, (and up to 172°F on the airfield mats), with cold winters, and some rattlesnakes, gila monsters, and scorpions.

The current mission of the base is to serve as a training and impact area, with

emphasis on the latter. Here the Corps fires its big guns, including those of the First Field Artillery Group, homebased at Twentynine Palms. Involved are 155mm, 8-inch, and 175mm howitzers. Also tested are bombs and missiles. Army, Air Force, and Navy men use the various ranges to test their weapons, and during summer exercises Regulars and Reservists live at Exercise Support Base while they earn their designations as "desert rats." Force troops and the base are supported by the Seventh Engineer Battalion, about 200 Marines who can build anything anywhere. Repair to heavy weapons, including sophisticated aiming and calibrating devices, is the specialty of the Provisional Maintenance Co., while housekeeping is done by Headquarters and Service Battalion. Among the schools is the Redeye School, which trains Marine gunners to shoot the Redeye portable ground-to-air missile. The Marine Corps Communications and Electronics School, with an average enrollment of 1,600, trains almost all Marines in these fields in subjects ranging from basic electronics to how to operate a Tactical Air Control Center.

Given the isolated nature of the base—except for Palm Springs, it is three to five hours to Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and San Diego—recreational facilities abound. During 1974 a new \$800,000 gymnasium was commissioned. Special Services issues recreational equipment of all kinds. In addition to intramural sports there are outdoor tennis, handball, volleyball, and basketball courts and football and baseball fields. There are three swimming pools, a nine-hole golf course, horse stables, and various hobby shops. Nearby mountains attract those given to hiking and exploring and especially "rockhounds," that is, persons interested in stones. If one must visit a city, it is 150 miles to Los Angeles and 250 miles to Las Vegas.

Because of the summer temperatures, all Marines at Twentynine Palms live in air-conditioned, hotel-like accommodations, mostly two to four men to a room. New quarters for women Marines were opened in 1974. The Marine Exchange is one of the most complete in the world.

Twentynine Palms has its own Expeditionary Airfield. Completed in 1976, it can handle planes as large as the C-5A *Galaxy*, the largest transport aircraft in the American military inventory.

On 1 February 1957 the name of the installation was changed from Marine Corps Training Center to Marine Corps Base, and on 15 February 1979 to Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center. On 30 April 1980 the Combined Arms Command (a new name for the former "Palm Tree" exercises) was activated to provide a command headquarters for Fleet Marine Force (FMF) Pacific, units, and on 16 May it became the headquarters for the Seventh Marine Amphibious Brigade, which trains forces associated with the Near-Term Prepositioning Ships Program. Exercise Gallant Eagle 82 was the largest field exercise in the history of the Rapid Deployment Task Force, with good lessons learned because the climate and topography resembles that of Southwest Asia and the Persian Gulf. Involved were ninety amphibious assault vehicles (amtracs), fifty-three M60A1 tanks, seventy-two tube-launched missiles, and various rockets, mortars, and

howitzers. Of the grunts (Marine infantrymen) who participated, most came from the Seventh Marine Amphibious Unit, First Battalion, Fourth Marines.

The major subordinate units at Twentynine Palms are the Headquarters Company, First Field Artillery, Third Tank Battalion, First Battalion, Fourth Marines, a communications support company of the Ninth Communications Battalion, and the Thirteenth Counterintelligence Team. Frequently on board to use land or air space are Navy and Marine carrier and Air Force aircraft, landing teams, Marine artillery groups, and communications specialists. To support the 7,500 Marines stationed there with the ranges, equipment, and ammunition they need, especially for ten annual exercises involving up to 400 men and women, has called for a vigorous military construction program of more than \$23 million in FY81 and \$35 million in FY82. A new gun facility costing \$6.5 million will be completed in 1985, while a five-year program between FY82 and FY87, if approved, will cost an additional \$230 million. As of 11 October 1984, per the Headquarters Information Service, the appropriation had not been approved.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. Commandant 11th Naval District, "Command Histories," 3 September 1959, and supplements (Washington: Naval Historical Center, Operational Archives Branch). As of 11 October 1984, per the Headquarters Information Service, the appropriation had not been approved.

B. "Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School" (Washington: History & Museums Division, Headquarters, USMC, April 1971); *Welcome to Marine Corps Base Twentynine Palms, Calif.: The World's Largest* (Riverside, Calif.: Armed Services Press, 1973); "Quality Increase in the Corps," *MC News*, Release No. DLS-28-76 (Washington, Headquarters, USMC, 11 Feb. 1976). Steve Cooper, "6000 Troops Engaged in Mock War in Desert Near Twentynine Palms," *The Sun-Telegram*, San Bernardino, Calif., 19 July 1977; John Stevenson, "Ready Force Deploys in California Desert," *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, 26 Jan. 1981; "29 Palms—Growing and Changing," *Marine Corps Gazette*, June 1982, p. 7; "Center 26 Years Old: Many Changes since 1957," *Observation Post*, 29 Palms, MCAGCC, 28 Jan. 1983; Tom Bartlett, "Post of the Corps: Twentynine Palms," *Leatherneck* 66 (Feb. 1983):17-21.

## V

#### VERO BEACH, FLA., NAVAL AIR STATION, 1942-1947

Located about one mile northwest of the City of Vero Beach, Indian River County, Florida, on 2,493.24 acres, the Navy chose this site for a naval air station because its flat topography and excellent weather would speed the training of the thousands of pilots and aircrewmembers needed to fight World War II. Plans and specifications for it were provided by Roberts and Co. Associates and Florida Associates, while the construction work was accomplished by Hillyer and Lovan of Jacksonville. In fact, a construction contract was awarded on 6 June 1942, even before the Navy filed a "declaration of taking" for the land it needed. Lt. H. L. Hawarth, CEC (V) S, USNR, the officer in charge of construction, turned the station over to Adm. A. B. Cook, Chief of Naval Air Operational Training, at commissioning time, 24 November 1942. Cook in turn transferred it to the first commanding officer, Comdr. H. L. Young. In addition the Navy acquired land for a satellite field at Roseland and a boating facility at Fort Pierce, and three bombing and gunnery target areas. Lacking sufficient quarters for WAVES that came aboard, the Navy commandeered the Beachland Hotel and Sebastian Inn in Vero Beach itself.

Pilot training began on 1 February 1943 in scout bombers, and on 5 April for aircrewmembers, with the latter program continuing until 21 January 1944. Meanwhile, by mid-1943 runway extension was called for, and Marine Air Warning Squadron #13 reported for Air Control duty.

On 27 May 1944 agreement was reached on acquiring an auxiliary field at Witham Field, Stuart, Fla., and a number of British Royal Air Force officers came on board for scout bomber training on 5 July. On 22 December, however, training shifted to fighter craft under VF OTU (Operational Training Unit) #7 and to night fighter training under VF (N) OTU #1. With the pilot pipeline fairly well filled, VF training ceased on 9 September 1944 and VF OTU #7 was decommissioned.

NAS Vero Beach was as complete a naval air station as any built during the war. It had storage for 250,000 gallons of gasoline, a Marine Detachment, VSB