



The Army Engineer Diver

By Captain James Kisiel and Master Sergeant Marcus King

Yes, the Army has divers. Unlike the combat diver additional skill identifier held by soldiers in the Special Forces, engineers have military occupational specialty (MOS) 00B divers. A part of career management field 51, MOS 00B is a low-density MOS. The rank structure for this MOS ranges from private to master sergeant. However, since there is a constant need for new divers in the field, specialists and below may qualify for reclassification into MOS 00B.

Department of the Army Pamphlet 611-21, *Military Occupation Classification and Structure*, and Army Regulation 611-75, *Management of Army Divers*, list the requirements for diver application. The training required to become a diver is very demanding but also very rewarding. Phase One is a nine-day course taught at Fort Leonard Wood (see Engineer Update, page 48). Phase Two is a 26-week course taught by a multiservice

instruction team at the Naval Diving and Salvage Training Center, Panama City, Florida.

Capabilities

Dive teams are a critical asset to commanders. Both Force XXI and Army After Next units will have to cross rivers and overcome the problems that involve rivers in areas of operation. Engineer divers can conduct waterway reconnaissance, which will save time for bridging units and prevent damage to their limited assets. Divers can provide nearshore and farshore topographic and hydrographic reports, measure and plot river depths to reveal the true channel, and measure possible nearshore and farshore exits. Maneuver commanders must know if bridges will support maneuver-force traffic. Divers can make this determination quickly, allowing the force to keep its momentum.

In addition to security and river-crossing missions, divers can dismantle or create waterborne obstacles, which makes them a countermobility and mobility asset down to the task-force level. Divers can emplace precision demolition charges to deny the enemy access to key structures and facilities, such as bridges and dams, and stop his momentum. Divers also can emplace and remove mines in shallow-river mining operations.

Dive Teams

The Engineer Regiment has four light dive teams (each with 22 soldiers) and two heavy dive teams (each with 25 soldiers). The light teams are stationed at Fort Eustis, Virginia, along with one heavy team. The other heavy team is stationed in Hawaii. The teams at Fort Eustis are configured by FORSCOM as a provisional company.

Light Dive Teams

Engineer light dive teams support the scuba and surface-supplied-air diving (helmet diving with air hoses from the surface to the diver) requirements of maneuver commanders. Light teams emplace and reduce underwater obstacles and minefields; repair damaged bridges, locks, dams, pipelines, canals, and levees; and construct underwater bridge structures, obstacles, and floating barriers. Some of these capabilities are required in humanitarian-assistance operations but, inevitably, most will be required in any theater during war.

Light dive teams have nonarmored vehicles and are highly mobile. They can conduct many missions without external aid but depend on support from other units, such as scouts and mechanized-engineer and combat-support-equipment companies, to perform construction and salvage missions.

Heavy Dive Teams

Engineer heavy dive teams support the scuba and surface-supplied-air diving requirements of commanders in charge of ports, harbors, and coastal zones. These teams enable commanders to construct port and logistics-over-the-shore structures and facilities as well as floating barriers. Heavy teams also can repair damaged piers, docks, wharfs, seawalls, and breakwaters; clear and mark inland navigational waterways; and collect underwater terrain and structure information.

Heavy dive teams also have nonarmored vehicles and are mobile. They can conduct many missions without external aid but depend on support from other units, such as engineer-port-construction and combat-support-equipment companies, to perform construction and salvage missions.



An Army diver descends into a partially sunken wreck.

The primary differences between the construction and salvage capabilities of light and heavy dive teams are the focus and the command-and-control assets. Heavy teams have additional specialized equipment and focus on construction and heavy salvage in ports and harbors. More experienced senior leaders of heavy teams are used extensively to plan and manage theater diving missions.

Protecting the Force

Dive teams have been a part of numerous operations but often are overlooked because of their size and relative obscurity. The performance of divers during their deployments to *Operation Desert Storm* and *Operation Restore Democracy* are two prime examples of how they have protected the force. In *Operation Desert Storm*, dive teams provided waterborne security for ports in Kuwait and Europe. They conducted hull surveys on cargo ships and barges to ensure that vessels were not mined. These surveys were critical because of the nature of the explosive cargo on many of the vessels. Similarly, in *Operation Restore Democracy*, dive teams provided waterborne security for Army vessels that entered unsecured ports in Haiti.

Engineer light and heavy dive teams are critical assets to the Engineer Regiment. These teams assist maneuver and port commanders in a variety of missions that focus on the onward movement and protection of U.S. forces. Water does not have to be an obstacle or a security threat to our soldiers. Enlist the help of engineer divers, and command the water space! 

Captain Kisiel formerly commanded the Engineer Dive Company at Fort Eustis, Virginia.

Master Sergeant King is the Senior Career Management NCO, CMF 51, for the Engineer Personnel Proponency Office, U.S. Army Engineer School. He was previously the first sergeant of the 518th Engineer Company, Fort Kobbe, Panama.