



Vietnam War Special Operation Forces and Warfare Training on U.S. Military Installations Historic Context Subtheme

Project # 16-518

Background:

The Vietnam War was like no other previously fought by the U.S. Military. The enemy was adept in guerilla-style operations and specialized teams of soldiers were required to fight this enemy. This led the United States (U.S.) military into unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency, psychological warfare, and riverine warfare. New training camps and schools were established at Department of Defense (DoD) installations to develop, test, and train in these specialized operations.



Navy River Patrol Boats on the Long Tau River. 1967
Source: Photo K-40166, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Records Group (RG) 428: General Records of the Navy

The expansion of Special Operations during the war was the result of political and organizational support in the United States. President John F. Kennedy was a strong proponent of Special Operations Forces. The topography and decentralized nature of the conflict in Vietnam stimulated the development of Special Operations. Conventional warfare was considerably less effective in Vietnam than in previous wars. Also, the integration of new technology, such as rotary wing aircraft, facilitated the effective use of unconventional warfare.

Objective:

The involvement of the United States in the Vietnam conflict required the construction of large numbers of training and support facilities. Many of these facilities will become 50-years old in the next few years, which will then require evaluation of the historical significance under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). This project provides a historic context and building typology for facilities constructed on DoD installations within the U.S. specifically to support special warfare and operations during the Vietnam War, 1962-1975.

Summary of Approach:

The process included a literature review, investigation of primary and secondary sources for context, site visits to select installations, and report development. Researchers accessed primary and secondary sources at the National Archives and Records Administration, military libraries and museums, university libraries, and other sources. DoD installation staff provided additional information and documentaiton.

Benefit:

The reports provide cultural resource managers and professionals with a standardized approach to identify property types, determine historical significance of associated properties, and assess integrity, thereby greatly increasing efficiency and cost-savings in compliance and management.

Accomplishments:

The report provides context and typology for Vietnam War (1962–1975) special warfare-related resources on DoD installations in the United States. The reports also include specific example of installations that conducted these training missions during the war.

The reports can be used to develop installation-specific contexts to support the identification and evaluation of Vietnam War special warfare facilities on those installations.



Ranger Training, Fort Benning
Source: <http://www.fortbenningphotos.com/>

Contact Information:

Jayne Aaron
Architectural Historian
EA Engineering, Science and Technology, Inc., PBC
Greenwood Village, CO
(303) 590-8280
jaaron@eaest.com

