

# NMCB 4 AIR DET returns from Balikpapan 2006

By Lt. Carl Rhoads

NMCB 4 Public Affairs

Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 4 (NMCB 4), Air Detachment (AIR DET) returned to Camp Shields, Okinawa, Japan, March 11 after participating in BALIKATAN 2006. NMCB 4 deployed from its homeport in Port Hueneme, Calif., to Okinawa in December 2005 executing Seabee missions throughout the Pacific area of operations.

"It was a privilege to be a part of BALIKATAN 2006," commented Lt. April Lemons, AIR DET officer in charge. "It provided us with a great opportunity to practice our

skills and assist an area in need."

BALIKATAN 2006 was a joint exercise that included troops from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the U. S. Marines Corps and NMCB 4 Seabees. Although this was the 22nd annual BALIKATAN exercise, it was the first to fully coordinate the AFP with the U.S. military.

"I thoroughly enjoyed working side by side with the AFP," said Builder 3rd Class Matthew Schumacher. "They were some of the hardest working troops I have been around."

NMCB 4's part of the evolution included construction of a three room school house to enhance the learning environment for the area's youngsters. Though the construction was executed in February, the planning and preparation began long before. In January two personnel from the battalion traveled to the Philippine island of Sulu to lay the groundwork for what was to come. A native of the Philippines and current member of NMCB 4, Engineering Aid Chief (SCW) Jose Maria Collado spearheaded this advanced party.

"There was quite a bit of work to be done ahead of AIR DET's arrival," explained Collado. "It was important to coordinate with AFP engineers and arrange for building materials ahead of time."

By the time AIR DET hit the ground everything was in place. The AFP had the site ready, many of the materials were staged and the



Photo by BU3 Matthew Schumacher

**BUCN Ronald Showers and BU2(SCW) Jessica Lott have lunch with the local school children at the Tiptipon School Project, Sulu Island, Philippines.**

town's people were overjoyed to see them.

"We were greeted by cheering crowds everyday we went to work," exclaimed Construction Electrician 2nd Class (SCW) Leonardo Calderon. "And every night, no matter how late, they were there to tell us goodbye."

When the schools were completed and the Seabees prepared to leave the appreciation of those impacted was unmistakable. A hand written sign in the crowd said it all, "WE

WILL NEVER 4 GET U. MAY ALLAH PROTECT YOU ALWAYS."

As Seabees have done for generations, NMCB 4 AIR DET built more than schools during BALIKATAN 2006, they built bridges of understanding and acceptance.

"The fight for freedom goes beyond bombs and bullets," explained Lemons. "This is a text book case of winning hearts and minds through hard work and personal interaction."



Photo by BU3 Matthew Schumacher

**UT3 Josue Gonzales applies stucco to the bathroom wall at the Tiptipon School Project, Sulu Island, Philippines.**





FEB 25 2006







**M A B U H A Y**  
Corner Stone Laying and Ground Breaking Ceremony  
One (1) unit Three (3) Door classroom School Building  
Maimbung National High School, Brgy. Kardas, Maimbung, Sulu  
8:00 AM February 6, 2006

RP  
US  
PROJ

06/02/2006





Photo by J02(SW) Brian P. Miller, USN

Philippine Marines and U.S. Marines and sailors gather with villagers in the town of Tiptipon where they participated in medical, dental, and engineering projects.