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### **3.8.1.1.3 How Some Veterans Have Proved That They Set Foot on Land in Vietnam**

Described below are true stories about veterans who were able to prove they set foot on land in Vietnam, even though that fact was not documented in their service records. The methods used by these veterans to prove such service can be replicated by veterans with similar experiences.

The first veteran served in the Navy with the Seabees during the Vietnam War. He testified that he was in Vietnam in April 1967. His DD-214 showed that he served with the U.S. Navy Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) Four, based in Port Hueneme, California, but there was no verification that he set foot in Vietnam in his service records. The first result of a "Google" search using the term "Seabees" yielded the official website of the Navy Seabees - [www.seabee.navy.mil](http://www.seabee.navy.mil). This website contains an index of the various Navy Mobil Construction Battalions, including NMCB Four. NMCB Four has its own section within the website, which includes a detailed history of the battalion. That history shows that NMCB Four conducted four tours during the Vietnam War, including one commencing in March 1967. This, in combination with the service records showing that the veteran was assigned to the battalion during the pertinent time period, verified the veteran's presence in Vietnam and satisfied the Vietnam service requirement.

The second veteran also served in the Navy. He was able to prove that before reporting onboard the U.S.S. *Intrepid*, an aircraft carrier that was stationed off the coast of Vietnam, the C-1A Trader airplane that transported him to the ship briefly landed in Vietnam. The veteran obtained a copy of his military service records, which included a copy of the orders transferring him to the ship. [810](#) The orders showed that he was to travel via aircraft from his original duty station in Japan to Subic Bay, Philippine Islands, and then to his ship. The veteran then obtained the *Intrepid's* decklogs and personnel reports for the month in which he arrived onboard. [811](#) These records documented the date he arrived onboard, the latitude and longitude of the ship, and that flight operations were conducted. The veteran then obtained a copy of the ship's cruisebook for the relevant period and found the names of the C-1A pilots. He contacted some of the pilots after finding their email addresses on the *Intrepid's* veterans association website. These pilots provided him with statements explaining that their planes regularly landed in Vietnam to refuel, especially when flying from Subic Bay. The veteran also determined, from sources including the C-1A's official flight manual, that its maximum range, due to fuel limitations, was 800 nautical miles. He then calculated the distance between Subic Bay and the location of the ship when he arrived onboard, and determined that it was greater than 800 nautical miles. [812](#) Since the C-1A was unable to fly directly to the aircraft carrier, logically, it would have had to land in Vietnam to refuel. Based on all of the above evidence, along with the veteran's statement recounting his memories of the trip and the brief stop in Vietnam, the VA found that he had set foot on land in Vietnam.

The third veteran was stationed at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippine Islands. On one occasion he was temporarily assigned to a squadron that was stationed in Vietnam. His service

records did not document this temporary assignment. However, while he was in Vietnam he had sent letters home to his fiancé using the free mail program available for service members in a combat zone. [813](#) In order to take advantage of this program, the sender was required to write his or her name, service number, paygrade, and complete military address in the upper left corner of the envelope. His fiancé had saved these letters. By comparing the identifying information on the envelope, including the squadron number, APO zip code, and postmark on the envelope, with the dates that squadron was stationed in Vietnam, the veteran was able to prove that he mailed the letter from Vietnam. Some letters may even refer to time spent in Vietnam, which would also help a veteran prove that he or she set foot in Vietnam.

#### **Footnotes**

[\[810\]](#). See Chapter 17.6.2 of this Manual for information about obtaining a veteran's military service records. See also The National Archives, *Military Service Records and Official Military Personnel Files (OMPFs, DD Form 214)*, <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/>.

[\[811\]](#). Vietnam era decklogs should be requested from the Modern Military Branch, National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740. For more information, see The Naval Historical Center, *Ships' Deck Logs; Research and Copying*, <http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq73-1.htm> and the National Archives website at <http://www.archives.gov/>.

[\[812\]](#). In addition to using nautical charts to plot the points and calculate the distance, several online tools are available to calculate the great-circle distance (the shortest distance over the earth's surface, taking into consideration the curvature of the planet) between two points on earth. See, e.g., Chris Michells, *Latitude/Longitude Distance Calculation*, <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~cvm/latlongdist.html>.

[\[813\]](#). See 39 U.S.C.S. 3401.

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