



UNDERWATER WARRIORS

Elite teams cleared the way for amphibious landings across the Pacific Theater

Starting in August 1942 the U.S. military began creating specialized units of navy and army personnel trained in beach reconnaissance and obstacle demolition. Each unit, however, trained in uniquely different ways and operated independently.

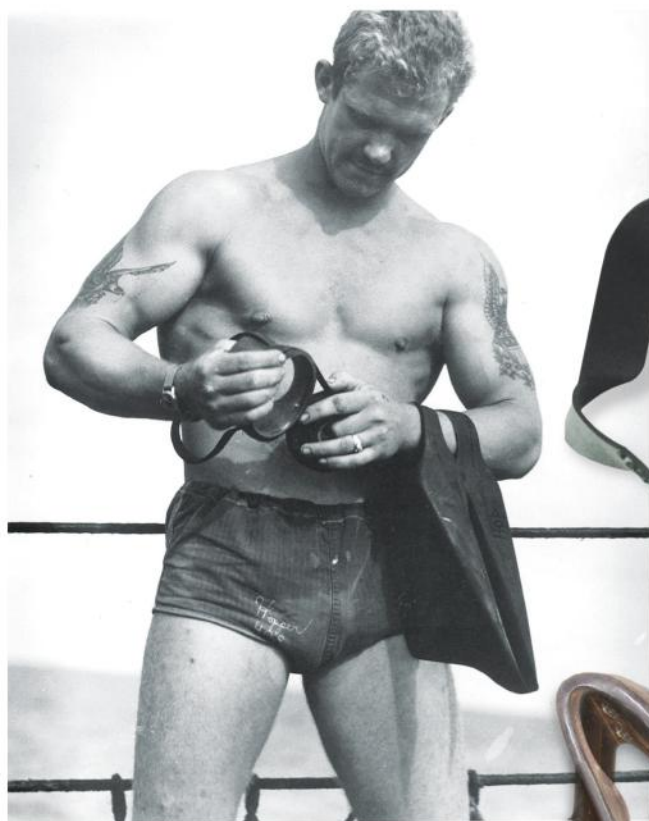
Following the Marines' costly beach landings at Tarawa in November 1943, Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, Commander of the 5th Amphibious Force, ordered the creation of a standardized training program with newly organized teams focused solely on reconnoitering enemy-held beaches and destroying their defensive obstacles—the Underwater Demolition Teams (UDTs). The first UDT

teams went into action in the Marshall Islands in January 1944, but the men's wet fatigues, boots, helmets, and life jackets hampered their movement. When one team was unable to paddle its rubber boat across a coral reef to its objective, the pair stripped down to their underwear, swam undetected to the objective, and successfully returned with crucial intelligence. Subsequent training emphasized combat swimming and reduced the men's reliance on equipment. Ultimately 34 UDTs were formed, and from June 1944 to August 1945 the web-footed "naked warriors," as they became known, participated in every major amphibious landing in the Pacific.



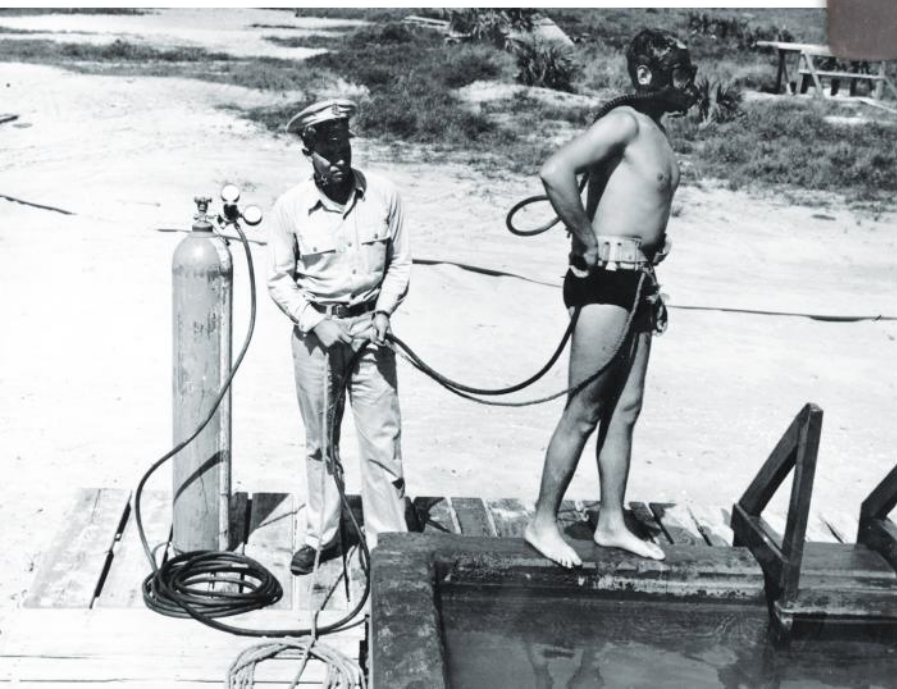
AGILE, EFFECTIVE, MOTIVATED

Gunner's Mate 1st Class S. C. Conrad prepares to dive on a reconnaissance mission near Balikpapan, Borneo. Underwater Demolition Teams (UDTs) underwent rigorous training that emphasized bold action using minimal equipment. The teams provided vital intelligence prior to the U.S. Army and Marine Corps' amphibious landings.



BARE MINIMUM

By mid-1944 UDT men trained in combat swimming wearing only trunks, a face mask (top, right) and rubber fins (right). One such "naked warrior" (above) checks his gear during operations at Balikpapan in July 1945. Generally, UDT members used air hoses and life-lines (below) only during training.





PROVING THEIR METTLE

UDTs pioneered the creation of specialized gear, including the pontoon craft (left) used to transport men and equipment behind a powered vessel. Once near their objective, men relied on their skills in the water. UDT swimmers (below) train to plant explosives on commonly encountered beach defenses.



CLEARING THE WAY

Navy Combat Demolition Unit personnel (below), many of whom were later reorganized into UDTs, tow an explosive-laden rubber boat to clear a channel of coral near Morotai, Maluku Islands, in 1944. UDTs often used explosives to clear man-made and natural obstacles. UDT 6 men (right) observe an explosion near Saipan in 1945.



ALL IN, ALL THE TIME

Exhausted UDT 10 men (left), their bodies still camouflaged with greasepaint, celebrate on the submarine *USS Burrfish* after conducting operations at Peleliu and the Yap Islands. UDT 10 was the only UDT team to operate from a submarine during the war. Two of the five men pictured were later killed in action.



FROGMAN

A UDT diver prepares to plant a satchel of explosives on an underwater obstacle. Tactics and equipment developed during the war—in training and in combat—heavily influenced future special warfare units, including the U.S. Navy's SEAL Teams.