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## ***Engineers Visit Historic Religious Structures***

*By John Connor  
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**TALLIL, Iraq** - A group of Gulf Region South district personnel took advantage of the Labor Day holiday to visit two structures closely intertwined with the history of religion.

The group, led by the GRS Commander Col. Stephen Hill, toured the Ziggurat and the site of the ancient city of Ur.

The Ziggurat is an imposing structure that dominates the landscape and according to Dhia, a local tour guide, was used to "worship the moon." The structures' steps climb steeply upwards toward the sky. The top is a wide flat surface.



*Some scholars say this archway within the ancient city of Ur is the oldest one in the world. (USACE photo by John Connor)*



*Gulf Region South district employees take advantage of the Labor Day holiday and tour the Ziggurat and ancient city of Ur. (USACE photo by John Connor)*

"Building the Ziggurat must have been quite an engineering feat," Hill said.

The city of Ur is said to be the former home of the Prophet Abraham, a revered figure in many of the world's religions – Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

The site was first settled by the ancient Sumerians before the year 4,000 B.C., according to some scholars. The Sumerians developed iconographic writing and the wheel.



Gulf Region South District Commander Col. Stephen Hill prepares to lead a group of engineers to the top of the Ziggurat in Tallil, Iraq. (USACE photo by John Connor)

Ur, a signature spot in the cradle of civilization, first was excavated in the 1850s and further extensive excavation work was done in the 1920s. The ancient city was located near a plentiful water supply and fertile lands.

The city of Ur was surrounded by a wall and surviving structures include the oldest known archway in the world. It has remnants of a royal palace and tombs as well as the home of Abraham, a dwelling with 27 rooms.

"It's amazing. Really, thinking about digging this out," said Ronald Niemi, military construction program manager, GRS. From an engineering perspective "somebody has got to haul all the dirt."

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