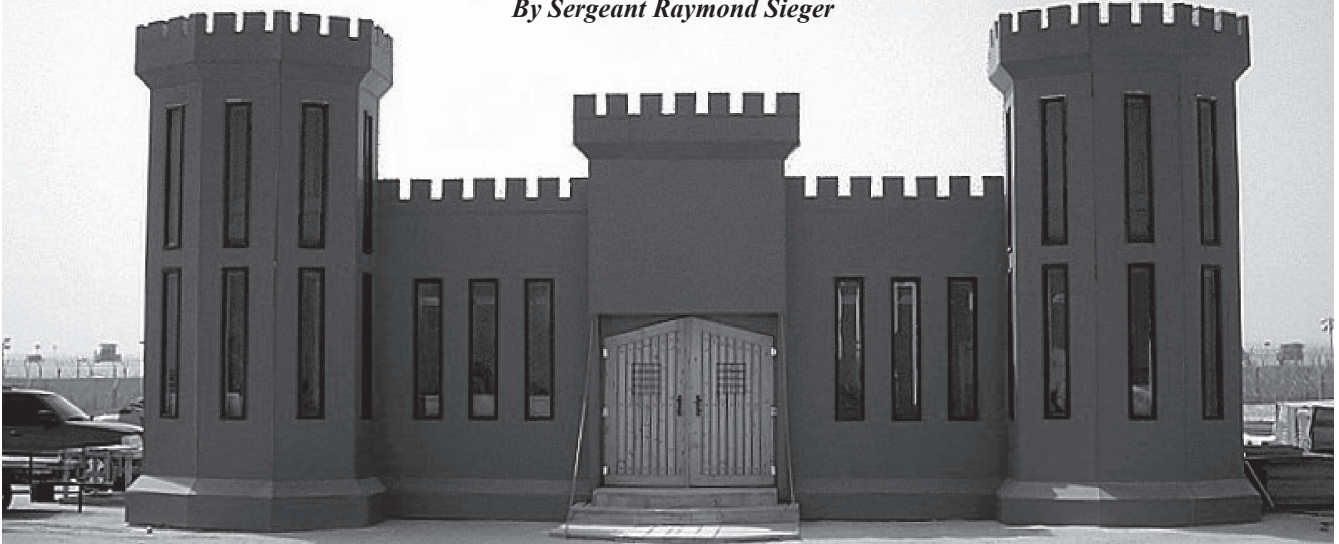


The Castle at Camp Bucca

By Sergeant Raymond Sieger




During their Operation Iraqi Freedom deployment at Camp Bucca, Iraq, engineer Soldiers of the 310th Military Police Battalion's repair and utility (R&U) section chose a unique way to honor their Army branch. They constructed a building with a façade in the form of the Army engineer castle as a way to honor Army engineers who had fallen in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Two weeks after arriving at Camp Bucca and setting up shop, Soldiers in the section learned that they needed to vacate the existing shop to make room for another arriving unit. With no other building available, they were told by the forward operations base (FOB) field engineering team that land would be set aside for them but that they would have to build their own shop. As one of the section's noncommissioned officers (NCOs) designed and drew up blueprints for the new building, other team members set out to build a temporary building to secure their equipment. This 500-square foot structure would also serve as a training tool to teach team members with other military occupational specialties the basic carpentry skills

they would need when it came time to build the much larger permanent structure.

In spare time outside the section's duties of building and maintaining the camp's theater internment facility, the Soldiers built the "Engineer Castle" in 19 days over the course of 3 months. Considering the quality and availability of lumber in Iraq and the size and complexity of the façade, the building was a monumental achievement for the section. In the end, it became a landmark on the FOB, even for approaching aircraft since it was directly in the flight path of incoming helicopters. With its detailed design and brilliant color, there was nothing like it in all of Iraq.

The towers on each side were intended as offices for the engineer officer and the NCO in charge, while the remainder of the building was to be used for shop and tool storage areas. In the rear was a covered saw deck for large projects. However, since the building was not considered an FOB asset, it was never included in the FOB power plan, and the original aims were never realized. Ironically, just 5 days before the 310th was due to redeploy to the states, the building burned to the ground when a generator placed close to the saw deck by the replacement unit caught fire. The building was to be dedicated with a memorial plaque donated by the vendor responsible for most of the materials used in the construction. The structure may be gone, but its memory and purpose will live forever in the hearts and minds of the Soldiers of the 310th Military Police Battalion and all those who served at Camp Bucca while the castle stood. 



The Castle gets a coat of red paint.

Sergeant Sieger was the R&U section leader while deployed with the 310th Military Police Battalion. He joined the Army in 1974 and left in 1987, when he enlisted in the Navy and served as a corpsman until 1994. He joined the Army Reserve in 2004 as an engineer. In his civilian job, he is a land acquisition project manager with a national home builder.