

BUILDING WHERE THE BUCCANEERS ROAMED

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An amalgamation of two Construction Engineering Flights (CEFs) from 19 Wing consisting of thirteen Air reservists from 192 CEF Aldergrove and four regular force Engr from 191 CEF Comox deployed to Jamaica, as part of Exercise Tropical Hammer 08-01. Living under canvas at Camp Alpha One, they travelled a short daily excursion to their work site, located on the Eastern end of the Kingston peninsula, co-located with the old Port Royal. Once known as “the richest and wickedest city on earth”, Port Royal was, centuries ago, a safe harbour for pirates, buccaneers and other plying their trade. Robust then, it is now quiet and picturesque.



The project assigned to the Flight was construction of accommodations and storage for the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) Coast Guard. Starting with the shells of Intermodal shipping containers (seacans), quarters were hammered out from this raw material. While this type of construction is rarely seen in North America, the challenges posed by this type of construction are interesting. Jamming together 120 feet of seacans, as a first challenge, doesn't mean that they will fit together perfectly. They are all slightly different and well weathered. For the Construction Techs it is a shim for the floors, a shim for the roof trusses, shim, shim, shim. The operative words in installing windows and doorframes into off level walls are the same as in laying concrete block – plumb, level, aligned.



A myriad of plate steel, angle iron and I-Beams were painstakingly welded into place. Some required anchoring to concrete with epoxy grout and threaded rebar.

The ability for the seacans to withstand hurricane force winds meant that the anchoring plan and welding needed close attention. Our own welder, Cpl David Low was truly the busiest person on site. We call him “The Critical Path”.

Walls and ceilings were attached using 60mm self-drilling screws through plywood and rigid Styrofoam insulation. Strapping, crown moulding and baseboard were fashioned from plywood.



Projects such as this add dimension to the CE Trades. It requires thinking to resolve problems by utilizing common engineering principles, improvisation and the ability to adapt to realities. Working with our Jamaican Defence Force counterparts also provided us with an excellent venue to exchange on our trades practices. Overall an outstanding and challenging venture in a beautiful Tropical Island.

