



News Release

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Groundbreaking Ceremony Marks New Medical Center

By Chuck Roberts
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LANDSTUHL REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER, Germany – The last time ground was broken for a major military medical center in Europe was 1951 when Germany and other nations were still recovering from the devastation of World War II.

About 63 years later and eight miles away, Lt. Gen. Donald Campbell Jr. performed the same rite of passage alongside U.S. and German dignitaries to signify construction of the Rhine Ordnance Barracks Medical Center scheduled to replace the U.S. Army's Landstuhl Regional Medical Center (LRMC) and the Ramstein Air Base Clinic.

Although current hostilities in Afghanistan are more than 3,000 miles away, the Commanding General for U.S. Army Europe noted that the site of the Oct. 24, 2014, ground breaking ceremony remains vital.

“This important location in Germany is, and has been, a strategic lifesaving place for the United States. The last 13-plus years of conflict have validated and proven the vital need for world-class military medical care in this region of the world,” Campbell said before a crowd of approximately 150 U.S. and Host Nation guests.

Those sentiments were echoed by Dr. Karen Guice, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

“This new hospital and clinics will continue to provide a place of healing for our warriors wounded in battle -continuing 60 years of service and commitment into the future,” said Guice, noting that the new medical center will be the largest and most sophisticated military system outside the United States and an “unmatched medical asset for our military.”

Equally important to unmatched structural sophistication, said Guice, will be the continued selfless service by doctors, nurses, medics, technicians, administrators and support staff who will be the “heart and soul” of the new facility and “turn bricks and mortar, stones and steel into a place where patients will be cared for, treated and supported ... a place where care is safe. A place where quality is high. A place of pride, of service, of hope. A new beginning for an ongoing history of excellence.”

More than 72,000 U.S. servicemembers and civilians aeromedically evacuated from Afghanistan and Iraq have landed the past 13 years at Ramstein Air Base which is adjacent to the site of the new medical center. From there, patients are loaded onto an ambulance bus and depart the installation for an approximate 30-minute ride to LRMC.

When the Rhine Ordnance Barracks Medical Center is open for business, those same patients will land at Ramstein and travel only about 15 minutes to the new medical center without ever leaving the secure confines of a U.S. military installation.

In the meantime, world-class healthcare will still be offered at LRMC and Ramstein where approximately 600,000 patients are treated annually. LRMC is the largest U.S. hospital outside the United States and serves the needs of beneficiaries in U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command and the western U.S. Pacific Command areas of responsibility. The Ramstein Air Base Clinic is the largest Air Force clinic outside the continental United States.

However, both healthcare facilities are beyond their intended services lives. LRMC was built as a semi-permanent hospital in 1953 and is one of the oldest inpatient facilities in the DoD inventory.

Fundamental building layouts and infrastructure cannot be modified through repair and severely limit the fielding of up-to-date medical and building technologies needed to meet current standards.

“The facilities are aging and becoming outdated, thus the need for modernizing our current capability, replacing Landstuhl Regional Medical Center and the Ramstein Clinic with a single, more cost-effective solution that will continue to provide world-class medical care for our servicemembers wounded in combat, along with their families and retirees stationed here in Germany and throughout Europe,” said Campbell.

The \$990 million Rhine Ordnance Barracks Medical Center will include nine operating rooms, 68 beds and 120 examination rooms, and will include a surge capacity that will allow it to rapidly expand to 93 beds. The hospital design complies with stringent German environmental quality requirements.

Instrumental in every step of the process toward the new medical center has been the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). From conceptual planning and design until construction is complete, USACE will continue to play a key role, one of those being its working hand-in-hand with its German partners.

“Many may not know that the German Government is the lead agency for most aspects of the planning, design and construction which truly makes this a world-class facility through our professional and vital partnership,” said Campbell. “As stated before, much hard work and great work through teamwork has gotten us to this point and those efforts will continue to be the foundation of success in the way ahead as this great facility develops.”

“The earth that will be turned today and the construction of the medical center are only possible through the partnership and support of not only the German construction agencies, but as well the federal, the state, and the local communities and officials representing them,” said Lloyd Caldwell, the USACE Director of Military Programs. “They are all stakeholders in this project.”

The next phase for construction of the site will be mass grading scheduled to begin in February and last for about one year. The new medical center is projected to be operational in 2022.

Caption:

Senior U.S. military leaders, German dignitaries and former wounded U.S. servicemembers turn the first shovels of earth Oct. 24, 2014, to mark the start of construction of the Rhine Ordnance Barracks Medical Center Replacement that will replace Landstuhl Regional Medical Center and the Ramstein Air Base Clinic. (U.S. Army Photo/Sgt. Daniel Cole)