



Ground 'broken' for Army Reserve Center at Letterkenny Army Depot

By MARCUS RAUHUT Staff writer

Ground was ceremonially broken Tuesday for a new Army Reserve Center on Letterkenny Army Depot.

The new center, scheduled to be completed in August 2010, will provide space for 300 reservists to train.

Maj. Gen. William Monk III, commanding general of the 99th Regional Support Command at Fort Dix, N.J., said Army Reserve Centers in Chambersburg, Gettysburg and Greencastle will be consolidated into the new facility at Letterkenny.

He said the three centers were overcrowded and outdated; some have not been renovated in 40 years.

"This will modernize equipment to meet the 21st century threats," Monk said. "Given our current and projected needs, our soldiers must remain ready."

Back from a recent trip to Afghanistan, U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster, R-Hollidaysburg, echoed Monk.

"We've got to make sure we provide the military with the best training and best equipment

possible, and Letterkenny does both," he said.

Col. Steven Shapiro, commander of Letterkenny Army Depot, understands how critical training can be for reservists. When he was assigned as the G3 for the 3rd Corps Support Command in Balad, Iraq, about 10,000 of the 20,000 troops were either from the reserves or National Guard.

He said locating the center on the depot will give reservists "real-world training."

More than 500 acres will be available for field training. Reservists can also train in Letterkenny shops.

"You can come here and do what you would do in combat," Shapiro said.

Work had actually started on the reserve center in the spring. Lobar Construction of Dillsburg was awarded the \$14.6 million contract.

Walls of the buildings are already beginning to take shape.

"We were very anxious," company President L. Richard Eichelberger Jr. said. "We didn't want to wait for a groundbreaking (ceremony). We wanted to get a head start."

The center will increase the military's presence at the base. Letterkenny currently has 82 uniformed personnel on depot.

The U.S. Army Reserve Center, an Area Maintenance Support Activity, and

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Organizational Maintenance Shop include administrative areas, classrooms, assembly hall, arms vault, kitchen, equipment storage areas, physical training rooms and maintenance facilities on 7 1/2 acres.

The units that will benefit from the project are the Headquarters Element, Army Reserve Defense Information Systems Agency; the 52nd Military History Detachment; 630th Detachment 1 and the 811th Platoon AMMO, 316th ESC; 200th MP Command and the 99th RSC AMSA 113.

Between government employees, contractors and tenants, Letterkenny employs about 3,400. About 30 people will be employed at the reserve center.

In addition to providing more modern facilities, the Army said consolidating the centers will save money.

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