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Click Here for Part 1.

MCH: A big development that came down a few weeks back was that the Army would be transferring 10 of its lodging operations to Actus Lend Lease come August 15. With this going on, there was talk of Fort Lee, Va., developing a 1,000-room lodge. With everything going down with privatization — I know it was on hold for a while — where do you see Army Lodging going forward now that this privatization seems to be going forward?

Nerger: We've seen a radical transformation and improvement of our family housing; it has succeeded beyond our dreams. I used to have something to do with running the Army family housing program, and there was absolutely no way we could have ever done what we've done in the last couple of years without privatizing it. So we're taking that business model and applying it toward our lodging facilities, and we're moving forward.

Now, we're not going to be able to move forward as aggressively, as quickly as we would like because of the economic situation we find ourselves in. It's a tougher borrowing market for developers. It's going to force us to go a little bit slower. We may have to downscale our privatization scope — not the program itself, but maybe the scope. We won't do as much as quickly. We've got to recapitalize, and need about a billion dollars worth of investment. We just don't have that in the budget.

The Privatization of Army Lodging (PAL) program was conceived on the heels of the Residential Communities Initiative (RCI). There's no doubt in my mind it's going to improve the standards of transient lodging, improve the quality at a reasonable price and ultimately help IMCOM. IMCOM is about providing common, predictable standards across all of our garrisons: instead of doing things a couple of dozen different ways, we're acting in an enterprise way. This privatization of lodging will help us to do that.

MCH: Do you see any disadvantages to privatizing Army Lodging?

Nerger: Personally, I do not. We haven't completed one yet, so we're going to have to learn as we go, just as we did with RCI. But if it's anything at all

like RCI, I predict it will probably, ultimately — looking back five years from now — have exceeded our expectations.

MCH: Describe the relationship between IMCOM and the PAL program.

Nerger: Well, the PAL program is led by the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Installations & Environment (ASA-I&E). They also led the initial family housing privatization effort, and we are executing it. And FMWRC is in full support.

MCH: Last year there was a worldwide inspection of the barracks and \$250 million was reprogrammed to cover repairs on eight installations. Can you just provide an update on the construction of the replacement barracks for the soldiers?

Nerger: I'll be happy to, because this is just one of those things that I'm absolutely passionate about. In an earlier position, I had a lot to do with helping to shape the initial capital reinvestment in our barracks. It's a 10- to 15-year campaign to improve single-soldier housing.

As Lt. Gen. Robert Wilson, USA, our commanding general, has described it: "Our barracks are our pacing item." What that means is: barracks are a primary measure of our success in IMCOM. If we only had a dollar to spend, the dollar you would spend is on soldier living, soldier quality of life.

I wish I could say we're 100 percent complete, but we're close. We're probably at the 80 percent mark for upgrading our barracks to the new one-plus-one or approximate standard, and at this rate we should hit the 100 percent mark in a couple of short years. This effort is for the permanent party soldiers, the soldiers who are permanently assigned to a unit at one of our posts. The next effort encompasses our training barracks.

A year ago, before I came to IMCOM, I was at the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). We run basic trainees through those barracks



Nerger pointed out that soldiers and families are sacrificing greatly today, and IMCOM owes them "our best support." (PHOTO BY TIM HIPPS, FMWRC PUBLIC AFFAIRS)

rapidly, and they're used hard. They need attention, too. Now soldiers may be in those barracks only 10 weeks, but what we need is safe and sanitary, not to the standards of our permanent party barracks. That will be the second phase of our barracks campaign.

MCH: What is IMCOM's role in joint basing? How will joint basing impact quality-of-life programs?

Nerger: It's somewhat ironic that the command managing the Army's installations will be on an Air Force base when we're all said and done. Two of our region headquarters — our Northeast Region, currently at Fort Monroe, Va., and the Southeast Region, currently at Fort McPherson, Ga. — are relocating to Fort Eustis, Va., which will be a sub post of Langley AFB, Va. So, we have a huge stake in ensuring that this joint basing construct works.

What we need to remember is why we're doing it in the first place. While it was codified in legislation as a result of the BRAC act, there's been talk of this for



years. Why is it you have multiple installations, different service installations, in a geographical area, yet everyone's running them individually? One would think that if you ran them together in some shape or form, you can get synergy, efficiency — and that's exactly what we expect to get.

There's a senior-level board run by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, with Lt. Gen. Wilson, as our lead on that board, working the planning to ensure that we set ourselves up for success. Probably one of the biggest concerns is that our great Army civilians are going to start drawing a paycheck from the Air Force. Their concern is: "Well, I've been Army my entire career, I'm not so sure about being an Air Force civilian." The last time I checked, it's the greatest Air Force in the world, just like we're the greatest Army in the world. They'll overcome

MCH: *Have there been any other concerns that have come up besides Army civilians' getting Air Force paychecks, in regard to joint basing?*

Nerger: There are issues being worked. I don't have any specific or anecdotal concerns other than we're just trying to master each other's culture. Although the Army Family Covenant was instituted by the Army, there's not an equivalent program in the Air Force. We're going to ensure the Army Family Covenant persists and continues when we move onto the joint base. There are discussions involving Army standards vs. Air Force standards. But if you've been on an Air Force post lately, they do a pretty good job investing in the quality of their infrastructure and quality of their programs. I don't think we're going to be disserved in the least.

forts underway at other Army locations as well: Fort Lewis, Wash.; Fort Sam Houston; and Fort Carson, Colo., perhaps some others. We do have a role at the garrison in terms of master planning where this complex is going to be. So the garrison was in full support. We're an enthusiastic supporter of this and take great pride that AAFES chose us to launch this very first one.

MCH: *What are some of the other quality-of-life initiatives — covering fitness, childcare, recreation, food service — that the Army introduced or will introduce in the upcoming fiscal year?*

Nerger: I think it's probably better to say that we're focusing on improving the programs that we've begun, rather than launching a whole suite of new initiatives. But there are a couple of emphasis areas that I would draw attention to.

For example, just following the news these days, you've seen and heard about an increase in the number of suicides among our soldiers. You've seen an increase in substance abuse. IMCOM has a role to play, along with the medical service providers in the Army, on prevention, on education, on training and providing facilities. So, we are focusing our efforts on that. Those statistics are a definite sign that the Army continues to be under significant stress. Our soldiers are under stress from the deployments, so we're going to place a lot of energy on that.

Safety is another area. We've seen a higher level of accident rates, especially on motorcycles and sport bikes, and we've got training programs at all of our garrisons that we are continuing, ensuring that soldiers are prepared when they buy and ride those bikes. Our soldier-family assistance centers — we've got several dozen across the Army today — these are our one-stop-shop centers for soldiers transitioning out of the Army. We've stood those up, we've manned them — extraordinarily successful.

The U.S. Army Medical Command (MEDCOM) is depending greatly on us to provide strong support, and so we'll be focusing on that.

We're building additional childcare centers across the Army, and we're quite proud, by the way, that all of our childcare centers are 100 percent accredited.



IMCOM-Europe Region Director Diana Devens reads to children (three to five years old) while visiting a child development center at USAG Vicenza, Italy. (PHOTO BY LAURA KREIDER)

MCH: *The groundbreaking for the lifestyle center at Fort Bliss, Texas, took place on July 17. What is IMCOM's role in these lifestyle centers?*

Nerger: FMWRC is certainly coordinating with the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) on this particular initiative.

We're quite frankly excited by it. IMCOM can't do it all. It takes a partnership among all the service providers — in the Army, in DoD. It includes AAFES, which is sponsoring this particular lifestyle center. I understand there are ef-

that cultural hurdle and recognize that whether they're getting a paycheck from the Air Force or the Army, they are still there to provide support to the soldiers and families. It's sort of a Brave New Era for us. I'm pretty confident that with the high-level attention, the senior-level focus, we're going to set ourselves up for success.



That's unprecedented. So, we're going to stay focused on that.

Lastly, there is a tremendous amount of construction and facility improvement that's going on. Some of the facilities are associated with the base closure implementation. Some of that is associated with growing the Army larger, so we're building up places like Fort Bliss. Some of that is associated with the economic stimulus undertaking by this administration — the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. There are quality-of-life projects contained among the billion and a half dollars worth of projects that are being invested in our garrisons over the next year. There's a lot going on, and it's all good as far as we're concerned.

GRF: *In Government Recreation & Fitness, we just did an article on Fort Bragg, N.C., recently opening a human performance center. It's an MWR facility, but is going to be used mainly in the beginning to train soldiers. Basically, it's a great facility. It brought in a lot of experts to teach facility operators and the people who run the program how to create combat athletes in a sense. So, the facility is going to be used mainly by soldiers, although we know in the future it will be available to other people — families, for instance. Now, is this something that you hear about? Do you get any information on new facilities such as this and the impact that they could have throughout the Army?*

Nerger: I have heard about it. I have not yet had the opportunity to see it firsthand. But that's something we're going to keep an eye on and look at possibly exporting or replicating elsewhere in the Army. Fort Bragg is the first one. I guess you would call it performance training, performance enhancement. It is something that makes sense to export, we will look for opportunities to do that. But we are not yet anywhere near being able to make that determination.

GRF: *As an MWR facility, it's a tough balance to strike — to have facilities that are available to families and also facilities that are specifically training soldiers for the mission. Is this an area that you're concerned about, providing enough opportunities for family members — for instance, even spouses of*

those who are deployed—to give them a facility that they feel comfortable in? We know that's part of the Family Covenant, providing support for families and spouses.

Nerger: Absolutely. We've got multiple needs we're trying to address here. As far as fitness is concerned, clearly the soldier is No. 1, because fitness is tied with the mission and the readiness of soldiers. But fitness centers also provide a great recreational outlet and venue for spouses and family members.

We're trying to ensure there are facilities that are more friendly for spouses with appropriate equipment and so on. In fact, you'll see some of those residentially oriented fitness centers in our housing community. Most of our new privatized housing includes community centers, and they often include small fitness facilities. Family members, especially spouses, feel more comfortable going to those residential, family-oriented fitness facilities than, let's say, the traditional soldier gymnasiums.

GRF: *Who would be running these facilities?*

Nerger: Those particular facilities are actually run as part of the housing community. What we're learning is those particular fitness centers, while they may not have the full range of what you might find in a soldier physical fitness center — there's not a basketball court, for example — but it's one or two rooms. Maybe there's a room in there for aerobic training and another room with fitness equipment. While it's open to soldiers, we're finding that spouses tend to use those more frequently than the fitness centers.

GRF: *So, in terms of purchasing the fitness equipment, the contract for that would be with the housing?*

Nerger: Yes, that would be paid for out of the housing contract.

GRF: *That's separate from any type of single-source procurement that you do for the fitness centers?*

Nerger: Yes, that would be separate from procurement of appropriated-fund (APF) fitness equipment or facilities.

GRF: *In regard to child care, I know you mentioned a lot is going to be done in that area. Are you satisfied with what the plan is for the next few years in terms of what's going to be built and the additional support that's going to be provided?*

Nerger: Yes. When the Secretary launched the Army Family Covenant and earmarked a billion dollars additional in the way of resources towards these programs, a significant amount of those resources went towards building new child-care centers, because they are among the biggest need we have. We do need more facilities. 72 brand-new childcare centers are being built. We're excited about that.

MCH: *Please talk about the big IMCOM transformation that's ongoing. It's a big transformation taking place on the headquarters and regional level. Why are you doing it, how will it benefit IMCOM and the soldiers and families going forward?*

Nerger: Let me talk about what I see as the benefit. First of all, IMCOM — and before that IMA — we've been changing since we began. This is really the next step of our evolution — or, as I like to term it, revolution. The entire focus of the transformation shifts where work is being performed today. Elevating a fair amount of it from our regions scattered around the world to the corporate headquarters that we are establishing at Fort Sam Houston.

What that's going to allow us to do, we believe, is improve the regions' focus on supporting garrisons and their customers and improve their focus on supporting the senior commanders without having to worry about the full range of headquarters staff work: resource management, human resources, logistics, planning and so on.

Most of the functional work will be done at the headquarters at Fort Sam, and what that will allow us to do is to start operating more like an enterprise. Today we have a headquarters and seven subordinate regions, while we are all part of the same organization. This is a large organization, with over 110,000 individuals, including contract employees, 111 installations — and that's growing, so this is a large organization.



When the Army created IMA and now IMCOM, they created us to sort of operate as an enterprise. This transformation is going to help allow us to do it. It's something that we always thought — or that the shapers of IMA and IMCOM always thought — we would have to get to at some point. And that's what our regions do, where they do it and how they do it. All of this is being enabled by the BRAC move.

BRAC is directing this headquarters along with its major subordinate commands, FMWRC and the Army Environmental Command (AEC), moving out to Fort Sam Houston. We're also moving a couple of the region headquarters under BRAC as well. When we use the term "enterprise," what it allows us to do is have a system-wide perspective not only by the leaders, but also by all the folks who are working at the headquarters.

Individuals who used to be focused about just what was going on in garrisons in the Far East will be working alongside colleagues who are supporting and servicing garrisons around the world. We think that's a good idea. This command was born out of innovation. We're just not going to stop changing.

No one should be surprised by what we're doing, but they should be reassured that, this change, which is a significant one for our people and our command, is going to be relatively transparent to the soldiers and families who are depending upon our services at garrisons. We're all about trying to maximize getting the most of the resources that Congress appropriates for us, and we need to be absolutely aggressive about this as we move towards perhaps even more challenging years resource-wise. We owe it to our Army to make the best use of our resources, and this will help us do it. We'll be more efficient; and yes, we will grow smaller a little bit, but we're actually growing greater capability and centralizing capability in a way we have never seen in this command heretofore.

MCH: Explain the roles that Functional Support Teams (FSTs) and Region Installation Support teams (RISTs) will

play, and what impact they will have at each region.

Nerger: The region will have an organization of about 60 individuals or so. Most of those individuals will be organized in what we term a RIST — a Region Installation Support Team — that will be about four, five, six individuals in a variety of disciplines. This is an interdisciplinary approach, and they will be

albeit from a distance. But we know we can operate from a distance because, quite frankly, everyone in the Army is already doing that and everyone in the private sector is already doing that.

MCH: The RISTs themselves — to whom do they report?

Nerger: They report to the region director.



U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. George William Casey, USA, signs the Army Family Covenant at Camp Humphreys, Korea. (PHOTO BY FAY CONROY, EUSA)

given anywhere from five to seven garrisons to serve, support, advocate for, troubleshoot, solve problems, travel, work with them on the ground as issues come up. It's modeled after what you typically find in the corporate section.

The region office is there for a reason: to stay close to the customer. That's what those RIST organizations will do. There are a handful of other individuals who do operational work and some other things, but for all intents and purposes, they are there to solve garrison problems at the lowest possible level.

Now, the FSTs will be located for the most part back at Fort Sam Houston, and everyone will have reach-back capability to draw upon the support of those functional offices. Those are our expert logisticians, our expert human relations folks, our expert training folks and our expert financial managers. Everyone will be able to reach back and get that kind of support,

MCH: And the region director reports to headquarters?

Nerger: Right.

MCH: And the FST reports to ... ?

Nerger: The FST reports to the senior functional staff at the headquarters. But quite frankly, they work for the region director, in so many words. Their job is to stay focused on the geographic region, although they do report to the functional director at the headquarters.