

## U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

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### EUROPE'S WARRIOR TRANSITION UNITS TO RECEIVE NEW VANS DESIGNED TO TRANSPORT PATIENTS

By Christine June

U.S. Army Garrison Kaiserslautern Public Affairs Office

**KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany --** Fourteen Mercedes-Benz vans outfitted to accommodate wheelchairs are being distributed this month to Warrior Transition Units throughout Europe.



CHRISTINE JUNE

Gerhard Heil, U.S. Army Garrison Kaiserslautern transportation motor pool manager, tests the wheelchair ramp of one of the 14 vans that will go to each of the Warrior Transition Units in Europe at the Mercedes-Benz factory in Kaiserslautern.

WTUs are the centerpiece of a new military health care system -- the Army Medical Action Plan -- designed to focus on helping injured Soldiers prepare to return to duty or transition to civilian life. In 2007, the Europe Regional Medical Command established WTUs in Germany, Italy and Belgium, where the vehicles will be stationed.

“Mid-January -- that’s our goal to have all the vans out (to the WTUs),” said Tim Wood, the U.S. Army Garrison Kaiserslautern logistics director.

Each vehicle can accommodate four wheelchairs, with enough room for up to six patients and a medical escort.

Each van costs \$30,000 and an additional \$9,500 for installing a wheelchair lift, railing, flooring and securing system, said Gerhard Heil, the garrison’s transportation motor pool

manager, who was instrumental in procuring the vehicles for the Installation Management Command-Europe.

The outlay represents a total savings of \$120,000 as the Army is leasing and not buying the vehicles, said Heil, adding that the lease runs for a year, with an extension operation.

Leasing, explained Wood, offers time to ensure the vehicles meet unit transportation needs and to study the possibility of buying more vehicles in the future

The Landstuhl (Germany) Regional Medical Center logistics branch is scheduling times for each WTU to pick up the vans, which are located at the Kaiserslautern garrison's motor pool on Daenner Kaserne. The drivers will receive training that focuses mainly on the wheelchair mount and vehicle maintenance.

Originally, these were courier vans already fitted with features "ideally suited for transporting patients," said Wood. Additions include a high roof and aisle lighting that make it easier for medical escorts to check on patients, and an automatic doorstep and movement alarm when the side door is opened.

Other major features include "stand heat" that allows for continued warmth even when the vehicle is not running, and tinted windows for added force protection.



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