

MRICD breaks ground on new building

Story by

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Photo by CARY SISOLAK, MRICD

Lieutenant Gen. Eric B. Schoomaker, Army Surgeon General and commander of the U.S. Army Medical Command, left, receives a U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense construction helmet from Staff Sgt. Jeromy Moorehead.

The U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense held a groundbreaking ceremony for its new replacement facility at the Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground Sept. 15. Hosted by Maj. Gen. James K. Gilman, commander of the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command, MRICD's parent organization, the ceremony included a keynote address by Lt. Gen. Eric B. Schoomaker, commanding general of the U.S. Army Medical Command and the Army Surgeon General. "This new state-of-the art laboratory is going to be home to some of our nation's leading experts and the world's leading experts, as they continue this all important work in research, education and developing and sharing knowledge that is going to mitigate the effects of chemical weapons," said Schoomaker as he addressed the crowd of 400 public officials, Army and recapitalization project representatives and employees. "The lessons that are found here and are shared from this lab are going to make the world safer for not only its warriors but for America's citizens and for the global human Family."

Among the APG officials participating in the ceremony were Richard Decker, technical director of the Edgewood Chemical Biological Center, who was representing the installation commander, Maj. Gen. Paul S. Izzo, and Col. Orlando Ortiz, the APG garrison and deputy installation commander. Turhan Robinson, Maryland's civilian aide to the secretary of the Army, and Brig. Gen. Timothy K. Adams, commander, U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine and a former commander of MRICD, were among the guests. Harford County Executive David Craig attended the groundbreaking, along with county council members Dion Guthrie, Mary Ann Lisant, James V. McMahan Jr. and Chad Shrodes. Representatives from the offices of Sens. Barbara A. Mikulski and Benjamin L. Cardin and Reps. Dutch Ruppersberger and Roscoe Bartlett also attended, as did state Sen. Barry Glassman and Asuntha Chiang-Smith, executive director for Governor Martin O'Malley's BRAC sub-cabinet. Budgeted at more than \$300 million and scheduled for completion in 2013, the new 526,000-square-foot facility will consolidate numerous dispersed structures into a single modern, energy efficient building with a central utility plant. Additionally, the improved research laboratories and training facilities will be able to accommodate 395 employees.

"The design of the new ICD will enhance communications, collaborations and cooperation," Gilman said. "It will provide collaborative space that is flexible and adaptable to future research priorities and technologies." These design factors will be important for recruiting and retaining quality employees to carry out the institute's mission, Gilman pointed out.

"It is the people inside, not the building itself, who have carried on the work of the ICD for so many years," Gilman said. "Simply put, ICD is great people doing the research necessary to protect us from attacks that many prefer not to even think about. It is appropriate that they will soon have a place to work that matches their level of service and dedication to a tough and too often thankless mission."

For Col. Harry F. Slife, MRICD's commander, the day was "truly awe inspiring" and "a great day in MRICD's history."

"I think an even better day for the beneficiaries of what we do," Slife said. "I am confident that as exceptional as the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense has been in delivering products to the Warfighter, our best days are ahead of us."

MRICD is the Department of Defense lead laboratory for research to identify new or improved medical countermeasures against chemical warfare agents and for training DoD and other health care professionals in the medical management of chemical warfare agent casualties.