

Air Traffic Controllers

# Sky High

in new air tower

Airfield was used as a German training facility during World War II, also served as the staging area for all troops arriving in Germany in the 1950s

By Lou Fioto  
North Atlantic Division

The Coleman Army Airfield, a nearly 70-year-old military facility in Mannheim, Germany, received a new \$1.35 million Air Traffic Control Tower (ATCT) in November, as part of a reconstruction that began in 2002 that includes a new runway.

Chief Warrant Officer Norbert Violette, airfield manager and a 21-year Army aviation veteran, said the new tower provides a number of benefits. The new tower is significantly higher and in better position on



Photo by Brian H. Temple

Coleman Army Airfield's new air traffic control tower provides aviators and air traffic controllers a safe and more effective approach to landings at the Mannheim, Germany base. This \$1.35 million project managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Europe District was completed in November 2003.



Photo by Brian H. Temple

**Fritz Kroesen, a Europe District project engineer, performs a quality check on the tower's windows. Kroesen completed one of his last walk through inspections as the primary project engineer before he relocated to Europe District's Israel program. Johnathan Carr, project engineer, completed the project and delivered it to the aviators.**

the airfield, he said, which gives the ATC personnel an enhanced view of aviation operations and approaches. A good ATCT mitigates a huge volume of unforeseen hazards, he added.

"It includes an elevator ... the only one in USAREUR," he said. "Two floors are dedicated to precision ATC instruments. These rooms lend themselves to upgrades and future equipment installations, with regards to communication and power requirements. The entire building has central air conditioning, especially critical to sensitive computerized systems, such as radar, and it's not bad for the folks working the facility either."

Violette said that hoist provisions are built into the design. "This means an 'I-Beam has been pre-mounted that is suitable to put a hoist on. A near impossible thing to do after-the-fact," he said. A hoist would be useful when moving or using cumbersome equipment, Violette said, but project funds were not available to

further develop the idea and meet the stringent regulatory guidelines for an actual hoist.

"The whole tower is pretty easy on the eye," Violette added, "with its copper façade and super

modern Zeptor tower cab (Zeptor, a European company providing 'ready made, fit to size' aerodrome equipment). This tower may very well become the standard for Army airfields worldwide. In fact, the best part of the tower design is the ability to upgrade it from the antenna mounts, all the way to the communications and tower distribution system in the foundation."

The new facility was designed to support the local aviation regiment, but the airfield has been important to

the Mannheim community for years. It hosted a Luftwaffe squadron, was a training facility for German pilots and their allies during World War II, and also served as the staging area for all troops arriving in Germany in the 1950s.



Courtesy photo

**View of an air traffic radar scope**

# New facility



Fritz Kroesen

Photo by Brian H. Temple

The facility, according to Dirk Schulz, the airfield's historian, was renamed in 1951 to commemorate Lt. Col. Wilson Coleman, who was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for single-handedly halting an enemy column during WWII. The airfield had more takeoffs and landings in the 1980's than any other Army airfield in Germany, Schulz said.

The airfield has maintained its prominence too. It hosts the only helicopter aviation intermediate maintenance facility in Europe, and is home to H-60

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**The airfield hosts the only helicopter aviation maintenance facility in Europe, and is home to H-60 Blackhawk helicopters from the 1214th Aviation Regiment. Fixed winged, C-130 Hercules aircraft also use the runway weekly.**

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Blackhawk Helicopters for the 1-214th Aviation Regiment. Fixed winged, C-130 aircraft also use the runway weekly.

According to one project engineer, those on the design team worked closely together to give the customer what they needed.

Fritz Kroesen, one of the Corps project engineers



Photo by Brian H. Temple

Fritz Kroesen, project engineer, (left) talks with Michael Keller about the completion of the interior construction in Coleman Army Airfields flight tower. The joint venture between Peter Gross GmbH & Co. and d&b Bau produced a state-of-the-art tower for the Mannheim community.



Photo by Brian H. Temple

**H-60 Blackhawk helicopters parked in front of the outdated air traffic control tower. The new tower features a more efficient location and boasts the only air traffic control tower elevator in USAREUR.**

on the project, said Jan Peter Reeves from the Staatliches Hochbauamt Heidelberg, the German government construction agency, put the design together.

"He is extremely proud of it," Kroesen said. "He is also heading the construction management team from the Bauamt, and working hard to coordinate all the players on the U.S. side and the German contractors. The success story ... is really his."

Chris Yaden, Corps project manager and architect, said the indirect project is managed through the Staatliches Hochbauamt Heidelberg under an international agreement known as ABG75, giving the Bauamt primary control of the schedules. He said there was more coordination and frequent meetings during design to help speed up the process, however.

"Many different interest groups participated in the design development, including folks from Fort Rucker, and technical experts from Omaha

District," Yaden said. "We have to send all design documents to them for review and approval."

We encountered one problem along the way, however, Yaden said.

"This project was to implement a runway upgrade project. ... Since the runway project is in limbo awaiting approval from the city of Mannheim ... we have incurred a lot of field changes to make the facility 'usable.'"

In the end, he added, it was a very special team effort (partnering with the Bauamt and Corps' customers) to execute the project on time and under budget.

"And it is one of the most attractive Army ATC towers I have seen to date," Yaden said.

The Engineers did an outstanding job, ensuring that the right people were in the right place at the right time, said Violette.

Would he personally choose the Corps for future construction?

"Only if I wanted the job done professionally," he laughed. "Just a little arbitrary back patting for the Corps. Seriously, anytime."



Photo by Brian H. Temple

**Fritz Kroesen, Europe District, (left) talks to David Lipsky, North Atlantic Division, about the construction's progress.**