

Fort Polk barracks to get major upgrade

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Town Talk staff

The Army will spend \$166 million to upgrade barracks at Fort Polk, members of Louisiana's congressional delegation said Thursday.

The delegation members learned of the funding in a meeting with Lt. Gen. Robert Wilson, commanding general, U.S. Army Installation Management Command, according to a news release on behalf of U.S. Sens. Mary Landrieu, D-New Orleans, and David Vitter, R-Metairie, and U.S. Reps. Jim McCrery, R-Shreveport, and Rodney Alexander, R-Quitman.

Last month, Landrieu said the junior enlisted barracks at Fort Polk are moldy and in a dilapidated condition "that no American should live in."

Conditions at the barracks have deteriorated significantly over the years, and this situation has had negative impacts on unit morale and readiness, according to a joint news release.

Vitter, Landrieu and McCrery recently sent a letter to chief Army officials that outlined their concerns with living conditions at the base and requested a meeting to discuss these issues.

Concerning the funding, Vitter said, "These important upgrades have been a long time coming, and this will help boost the morale of troops stationed here."

Landrieu said, "Each and every one of our brave soldiers deserves a clean, livable home, and I am proud that after our delegation's hard work together, the Army is finally acting."

McCrery said, "Today is a great day

for Fort Polk. This initiative constitutes the largest maintenance and repair project in the installation's 68-year history." Alexander said, "Our troops deserve nothing less than the very best, and making improvements to the barracks at Fort Polk is a way of honoring their commitments as well as investing into the overall success of Fort Polk."

Throughout its history, the joint news release said, Fort Polk "has struggled with pervasive mold issues, and many of the barracks suffer from a litany of problems compounded by poor design and a lack of appropriate upkeep and maintenance."

The Army plans to use funds remaining from the current fiscal year to make the necessary upgrades and repairs at Fort Polk, officials said.