



# Base Realignment and Closure

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## Air Force trauma care consolidates with Army

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The Air Force's only Level 1 trauma center, Wilford Hall Medical Center at Lackland Air Force Base, discontinues trauma services July 1.

All severely injured trauma patients from San Antonio, Bexar and surrounding counties, and South Texas, will go to nearby Brooke Army Medical Center or University Hospital in San Antonio – the other two leading trauma centers serving the region. Transition began June 22 when the hospital began diverting its trauma patients.

Wilford Hall will remain open and the hospital will continue to operate a fully-accredited emergency department.

However, local emergency medical services will no longer transport trauma patients to the hospital with injuries such as gunshot victims or individuals with life threatening injuries.

The relocation of trauma services is the next of several historic moves as Wilford Hall shifts inpatients and staff to Fort Sam Houston to create the San Antonio Military Medical Center by Sept. 15, 2011, as mandated by the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure law.

As SAMMC becomes one of the largest inpatient facilities in the Department of Defense, Wilford Hall will emerge as the largest ambulatory surgical center, servicing a large beneficiary and trainee population.

Both the San Antonio Military Medical Center and the Wilford Hall Ambulatory Surgical Center will be staffed and led by Army and Air Force professionals.

“Since this hospital was designated a Level 1 trauma center in 1996, we’ve been proud to provide comprehensive trauma services to the city of San Antonio and this part of Texas,” said Air Force Maj. Gen. Tom Travis, commander, 59<sup>th</sup> Medical Wing, and senior market manager for the San Antonio Military Medical System.

“By providing this trauma care, we have also kept our skills sharp for our missions in the largest theater hospitals in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, the 2005 BRAC law directed that military medical assets in San Antonio be consolidated, and for the past five years, leaders at Wilford Hall and BAMC have studied and planned the implementation of this mandate.”

“The Air Force trauma mission will continue at the same pace as before, but just in a different location, side-by-side with our Army partners,” Travis said.

Wilford Hall trauma surgeons, nurses, and coordinators will now provide trauma care at BAMC as it transforms into the jointly-staffed SAMMC next year.

“We have worked closely with the remaining trauma centers and the city of San Antonio to ensure that there will be no disruption or reduction in trauma care capabilities in the city,” said Maj. (Dr.) Mark Gunst, acting chief of trauma at WHMC.

City officials say San Antonio area emergency medical services have the equipment and training to handle the change.

Coordination and planning has been an integral part of the process to ensure a smooth transition to two Level 1 trauma centers for the city.

“I really don’t think closing Wilford Hall to trauma will have a huge impact on the city,” Gunst said. “Most people will not notice the difference.”

The WHMC emergency department has handled about 1,200 to 1,500 trauma patients each year.

“In the past few months, we have seen anywhere from 50 to 75 patients and more than half have been transfers from other hospitals,” Gunst said. “It will improve resident training in that the volume at BAMC will be greater and presumably the number of both operative and non-operative cases will increase.”

Brooke Army Medical Center is able to absorb the additional caseload and continue to provide high quality care for patients with complex injuries, according to Lt. Col. Tim Nunez, chief of trauma at BAMC.

“Although the BAMC Emergency Department is not scheduled to double in size until 2011 with the completion of construction on the consolidated SAMMC tower, BAMC is already prepared for the increased caseload. Renovations have been made in the existing emergency department to support the mission,” Nunez said.

“We are establishing a joint medical team here in San Antonio that is unsurpassed anywhere in the world,” Travis said.