

Interview with Alexander Lutz (Germany)

# High-quality shelter systems can save lives

**ZEPPELIN MOBILE SYSTEME GmbH of Germany is one of the leading manufacturers of shelter systems in the world. The company is a direct successor of the famous ZEPPELIN airship construction and was one of the first manufacturers of lightweight containers in an aluminium-sandwich-structure ("shelters"). Meanwhile their systems are in use in more than 40 countries all over the world. The company operates in different business fields of which medical appliances have become one of the most important ones. Zeppelin offers a variety of mobile medical solutions. These are suitable to provide fast and comfortable medical support in case of natural disasters or other catastrophes or in military operations.**

**MCI: Mr. Lutz, how would you describe today's role of Zeppelin in the international market of mobile medical products for military applications?**

**Lutz:** I think that - without being immodest - we can claim of playing a key role in this particular market. It is particular as military requirements are much more challenging than civilian demands. Zeppelin has a record of more than 30 years in this field. Our products have served in international military operations such as in Bosnia, Kosovo or in Afghanistan for many years which means that we can state without exaggeration that our products have a proven lifetime of almost 30 years.

**MCI: Could you please describe in a few words the range of products that Zeppelin offers in the medical sector?**

**Lutz:** First of all, it is important to know that we offer all of our products as turn-key solutions. The customers get a system that is fully designed to be immediately operative. This starts with individual truck- or trailer-mounted mobile clinics - from general surgery to specialized units (dentistry, ophthalmology etc.) - and ends with large mobile field hospital systems up to 300 patient beds. Box body ambulances complete our comprehensive range of medical products.

**MCI: Where would you see the particular benefits of the Zeppelin products for the end-users?**

**Lutz:** Among the most important benefits is the stability of the shelters that is tested according to military standards (MIL and STANAG). This robustness is a priceless advantage not only for the medical staff, but mainly for the patients to be treated. It is no secret that the working conditions of soft shelters (tents) cannot cope with the conditions in hard shelters as they are produced by Zeppelin. This applies for the stability and protection of the shelters but mainly for the hygienic environment in terms of sterilization which can decide about the patients' lives.

Another advantage is the high mobility by all means of transport (even by helicopter) and the easy and fast handling of the Zeppelin shelters. At site, the installation time is often a very important criterion. Hard shelters offer the advantage that all of the medical equipment is transported in the shelters itself so that the build-up time is limited to the minimum. Even our expandable shelters can be deployed within minutes only.

**MCI: If you had to highlight one of your products which one would it be?**

**Lutz:** Well, that's of course difficult to say. However, one of our premium products is the Zeppelin expandable shelter that has been optimized in terms of user-friendliness and with regards to the installation of the medical equipment. Our technology allows the installation of equipment to the floor and the ceiling in the central part of the shelter and at the same time the mounting of cabinets or working stations directly to the extension walls.

The important part of this state-

ment is that all of these installations can remain fixly mounted even during transport.

This shelter is now also available with a semi-hydraulic extension mechanism that does not only facilitate a truck-mounted operation but also guarantees the highest possible tightness of any expandable lightweight shelter.

**MCI: Where are your key markets and where would you see your main focus in the future?**

**Lutz:** It goes without saying that as a European manufacturer NATO projects have always been among our main targets. However, the globalization process and the increasing number of international hot spots - either military or civilian - has also raised our awareness of being present all over the world. Today, we are having representatives or co-operations on all continents, whereby the Middle East - but also Africa - is in the centre of our overseas activities. Of course, this international network is also important for the provision of a comprehensive after-sales service which also includes the medical equipment. In our opinion the demand for mobile medical systems will increase tremendously over the next



Fig. 1: Mobile Clinic or Rescue Station in a 1-side expandable shelter



Fig. 2: Zeppelin 2-side expandable shelter, suitable to be used as Operating Room or Intensive Care Unit

mers' staff when a system is being delivered. A product that is handled and maintained correctly will have much less problems and failures than products that are used improperly. This is an important aspect to which we pay a lot of attention. The efforts and costs that are invested in a suitable training are later paid back by less service costs. If service or even repair works are requested our service engineers stand by to be sent to whatever part of the world. This also applies for the suppliers of the medical equipment which are basically well-known companies that operate a worldwide service network.

first manufacturers Zeppelin has realized the increasing demand for mobile medical systems due to the change of the political and climatic environment in the world. Of course there is always potential to improve and we're constantly trying to adapt our products to the requirements of the customers. However, the key parameters will remain the same: stability, reliability, transportability and ease of use. All of that for the safety of the persons who use or who are in need of our medical systems.

**MCI: Mr. Lutz, we thank you for the interview.**



**Alexander Lutz,**  
 • Studied International Business Administration at the University of Mannheim/Germany  
 • Worked for a Swiss Crane Manufacturer and later for a Management Consultancy  
 • Joint Zeppelin in 2005 as International Head of Sales

**Author's contact details:**  
 ZEPPELIN MOBILE SYSTEME GmbH  
 Leutholdstr. 108 / 88045 Friedrichshafen / Germany  
 Tel.: +49 7541 202-525  
 Fax: +49 7541 202-160  
 E-Mail: a.lutz@zeppelin-systeme.de

couple of years. This could either be peace-keeping missions or operations in areas of natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods/tsunamis or large fires as we have recently seen them all over Southern Europe, particularly in Greece. In such catastrophes the availability of mobile medicine will help to save lives. In these cases there is often no time to evacuate a large number of people and to bring them to the nearest hospitals. The logical consequence is to bring the medical care to the people.

**MCI: What was the last major project that you have won in military medicine?**

**Lutz:** Just recently we have been awarded the contract - together with Siemens Spain - in a field hospital of the Spanish Ministry of Defence, most probably the biggest military field hospital that has been tendered in a European NATO country within the last 5 years. The project will be realized from 2007 - 2010. All components of the hospital meet international military standards in order to be used in operations all over the world.

**MCI: What kind of after sales service are you providing to your customers?**

**Lutz:** Well, first of all, the after sales service already starts with an extensive training to the custo-

**MCI: What would you consider the biggest challenges for your company in the future?**

**Lutz:** One of the biggest challenges in the past was to be prepared for the present today. As one of the

- Large mobile hospital systems with up to 300 patient beds
- Based on advanced Shelter technology acc. to NATO specification 6516/SHCPE/86
- Suitable for the harshest environmental conditions



**The Specialists in Military Field Hospitals**

**ZEPPELIN MOBILE SYSTEME**









**ZEPPELIN MOBILE SYSTEME GmbH**  
 Leutholdstr. 108  
 88045 Friedrichshafen/Germany

Tel: +49 (0) 7541 202-04  
 Fax: +49 (0) 7541 202-160  
[www.zeppelin-systeme.de](http://www.zeppelin-systeme.de)