



April 8, 2011 – Associated Press - WWII-era naval hospital imploded in Calif.

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The Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. —

A World War II-era Navy hospital imploded Friday in a massive cloud of brown dust, marking the end of a military medical center that served generations of wounded American soldiers.

The 11-story concrete building in Oakland Hills collapsed seconds after crews detonated 800 pounds of dynamite as neighbors, journalists, city officials and former Navy officers watched from above.

The hospital was the last of about 100 military homes, barracks, stores and other structures that made up the decommissioned Oak Knoll U.S. Naval Medical Center. Oak Knoll opened in 1942 and treated U.S. soldiers wounded in World War II, the Korean War and Vietnam War.

The 167-acre complex was decommissioned 15 years ago amid a wave of military base closures around the country. The federal government sold the property at auction in 2005 to Irvine-based SunCal Companies for \$100.5 million.

SunCal, in a partnership with investment bank Lehman Brothers, had planned to build a major residential development with 960 homes and 82,000 square feet of commercial space.

Lehman's 2008 collapse halted those plans and delayed the complex's demolition and cleanup. Neighbors complained as the property was hit by vandals, thieves and squatters and brush grew unabated, creating a fire hazard, the San Jose Mercury News reported.

Oakland city officials eventually obtained money to secure the property, abate the fire hazards and demolish the remaining buildings after filing claims against Lehman in federal bankruptcy court.

The future of residential development remained unclear.