

Des experts américains voient le besoin urgent d'une nouvelle recherche sur les origines de la pandémie ›

Une plaque tournante de la Seconde Guerre mondiale pour les sous-marins allemands est désormais un centre de vaccination français.

Par Gaëlle Fournier

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Comme de nombreux pays européens, la France a démarré lentement sa campagne de vaccination. Mais comme il s'est amélioré pour obtenir des coups de feu dans les armes, il administre des inoculations dans des endroits inattendus.

Disneyland Paris. Le stade national. Et une base sous-marine désaffectée de la Seconde Guerre mondiale dans la ville occidentale de Lorient, où près de 60 000 tirs ont été tirés.

In K2, one of the three large blocks of the Kéroman Submarine Base, tents and chairs have been set up for patients and medical staff between the concrete walls of a windowless room that covers more than 9,500 square feet.

Over the past 80 years, the base has had many lives. A military installation until 1997, it has since served as a concert venue, a filming location and a site for sailing and other leisure activities. It is now a neighborhood of its own, complete with bars and restaurants.

The structure was built in 1941 after France surrendered to Germany and was one of five Atlantic Coast bases used to launch German U-boats. Lorient was nearly destroyed under Allied bombardment in 1943, but the base was almost unscathed.

“It is a pretty dark symbol in our history,” said Lorient’s mayor, Fabrice Loher.

To convert the base to a vaccination center, officials revamped the heating system to reduce the spread of the virus and added an art exhibit to give people something to look at while waiting for their shots.

The center delivered more than 6,000 doses over the past week. As coronavirus cases decline in France, which has seen about 5.7 million total cases and more than 100,000 deaths, more than 15 percent of the population has been fully vaccinated.

Among the first to receive a shot at the former submarine base was a Frenchman, now in his 90s, who was conscripted by the Germans during the war to repair and work on the reassembly of submarines, said Jean-Michel Pasquet, the chief of the vaccination center. It was the first time the man had been back to the base since the war, Mr. Pasquet said.

«Il nous a dit que c'était un beau symbole de résilience», a déclaré M. Pasquet. «Ce bunker qui construisait des navires de guerre pour tuer des gens incarne désormais un retour à la vie.