

## **Quality of Life conference concludes with 10 recommendations for improvement**

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Garmisch, Germany — Senior military officers and Department of Defense officials received a list of the top 10 recommendations to improve quality of life, provided by delegates who attended the annual U.S. European Command 2008 QoL conference here March 9-14.

The conference gathered service members, their spouses, and youth advocates in an effort to suggest ways EUCOM can improve the services it provides. Many new ideas and issues of concern were raised in the areas of deployment support, healthcare, benefits and community services.

The following, in no particular order or ranking, are the 10 recommendations conference delegates would like to see reviewed:

- A request to expand spouse education programs

Delegates would like to expand the Military Spouse Career Advancement Initiative to spouses overseas. They would also like to expand the number of career fields under the program, and expand the eligibility requirements.

- A request to extend services hours at base Post Offices

Delegates want to make on-base Post Offices more available by extending hours, to possibly include evenings and Sundays. They also request to augment postal staff through increased spousal employment.

- A request to enhance DoDDS-Europe Educators Feedback process

Currently there is no external performance feedback or documentation process for DoDDS teachers. Delegates promote the use of student and parent surveys, ICE, and other external sources to include superintendents and principals from different regions.

- A request to establish Teenager At-Risk Behavior and Prevention programs

Delegates suggest that installations establish local teen action committees to implement solutions and reduce risk behaviors. This proposed committee would have representation at command level.

- A request to implement Standardized readjustment time after deployment

Readjustment time after a deployment is administered differently between the military services. Delegates ask that a standard calculation be applied. The suggested calculation would give one day of readjustment non-chargeable leave for every 30 days the servicemember is deployed to a combat zone. Command would have the authority to

defer the non-chargeable readjustment leave as mission dictates.

- A request to implement matching TSP contributions by deployed service members  
Delegates suggest a long-term incentive in the form of matched TSP contributions, not to exceed 5% of a deployed service member's base pay.

- A request to increase the per diem incidental expense rate for deployed/mobilized personnel in a combat zone to \$7.50  
Currently, the incidental per diem rate for a deployed member is \$3.50, and hasn't been increased in 25 years. Delegates request an increase of this amount to \$7.50, citing a need to frequently replenish incidentals and limited item availability as the primary catalyst.

- A request to authorize Space A travel for DoD civilian employees assigned OCONUS who are on a transportation agreement  
Delegates believe that by including DoD civilians in space available Category VI, or creating a new category (CAT VII) civilian employees and their families can enjoy the same benefit as their stateside counterparts.

- A request to obtain centralized DoD-wide Approval and Funding of medical travel  
Required medical travel is administered differently between the services. Delegates believe this creates a disparity in funding medical travel. They suggest that TRICARE Europe become the executive agent for approving required medical travel, and believe that all medical travel should be funded through the Defense Health Program.

- A request for increased multi-media resources to provide continuous effective health and dental care education  
Delegates believe there are myths, misunderstandings and a lack of effective communication regarding basic medical and dental healthcare services. They suggest more resources be aimed at educating servicemembers.

These 10 issues, as voted on by the conference attendees, will be forwarded to an Executive Steering Committee for further review or action.

U.S. Navy Vice Admiral Richard Gallagher, Deputy Commander, US European Command, provided closing remarks after listening to delegate's concerns. He took care to remind delegates that change doesn't happen overnight, and noted that some successes might be harder to achieve than others. However, the admiral did state EUCOM leadership would review each item and try to make changes when possible and appropriate.

"Quality of Life is a combat-readiness issue," Gallagher said. "We are a fighting force that produces a capability for our nation. Whatever enhances that [capability] is good, and we should support it."