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AEPE-M

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INFORMATION PAPER

SUBJECT: Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) – Living Pattern Survey (LPS) and Retail Price Schedule (RPS)

BLUF: All Department of Defense (DoD) Service Members not living in the barracks, who are on Permanent Duty orders to any of the 12 DoD identified locations in Germany, and who have been on station for at least 3 months are required to complete the 2012 COLA LPS. Locations include, Ansbach, Bremerhaven, Garmisch, Geilenkirchen, Vilseck/Grafenwoehr, Heidelberg, Hohenfels, Kalkar, Spangdahlem, Stuttgart, Wiesbaden, and Kaiserslautern.

DISCUSSION:

- The COLA LPS for Germany will be conducted on-line during the period 1 – 31 OCT 12. To access the survey, military members must visit the USAREUR Home-page under **“Hot Topics.”** Soldiers are encouraged to take the survey at home with their families. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.
- The survey asks military members and their families to identify local economy outlets where they normally shop for food items, clothing, and other goods and services, such as restaurant meals, hair care products/services, auto repair, etc. It also asks how much of their shopping is done on the local economy, and how much is done at the Commissary, Exchange, or on the internet.
- Data collected during the survey is used to adjust the COLA rate of military members in Germany. The Living Pattern Survey is one of the “Building Blocks” of COLA. Every 3 years a LPS is conducted to determine the local economy outlets where military families shop. Then, during the follow-on annual Retail Price Schedule (RPS) or Market Basket Survey which is scheduled to begin o/a 10 NOV 12, the prices of 120 goods and services are collected from outlets identified by Service members during the LPS. Prices are then forwarded to the Defense Travel Management Office (DTMO)-Allowances Branch who compares the prices in Germany to those in the U.S., and then computes the Cost of Living Index which is ultimately used to establish the country’s COLA rate per locality.
- Commanders, S1s, and Service members can directly influence their COLA rate by taking the survey, and by encouraging assigned military personnel and fellow Soldiers to do the same. The key to success is maximum participation and good data.

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