DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
UNITED STATES ARMY EUROPE
UNIT 29351
APO AE 09014-9351

AEPE

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Army in Europe Retiree Council Meeting

1. The minutes of the Army in Europe Retiree Council meeting of 6 February 2013 have been reviewed and approved.

2. The point of contact for this memorandum is COL (R) Robert Mentell, President, Army in Europe Retiree Council at [+49] (171) 786-1669 or email robert.a.mentell.vol@mail.mil.

Encl
as

LARRY D. GOTTARDI
Deputy Chief of Staff, G1

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EA Member, European Tri-Component Retiree Council
EA Member, Army in Europe Retiree Council

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
UNITED STATES ARMY EUROPE
UNIT 29351
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AEPE-AERC 10 February 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR Commanding General, United States Army, Europe, ATTN: AECG, Unit 29351, APO AE 09014

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Army in Europe Retiree Council Meeting

1. The 126th meeting of the Army in Europe Retiree Council (AERC) convened at 1000 hours on 6 February 2013 via Defense Connect Online (DCO) hosted from the USAREUR G-1 conference room at Campbell Barracks, Heidelberg.

2. The following persons were present:

a. Members:

COL (Ret) Robert Mentell	President
COL (Ret) Charles Westpheling	Vice President
CW3 (Ret) Sandra K. Simpson	Secretary
LTC (Ret) Sheldon Dick	Founding Member
SGM (Ret) Donald Norris	Member
SGM (Ret) David Stewart	Member

b. Advisory Members:

COL Michael Matthews	Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff, G1, USAREUR and USAREUR G1 Representative to the Council
Mr. Robert Schoffman	Assistant Chief of Staff, G1, IMCOM-Europe
Mr. Michael Malone	IMCOM-Europe Retirement Services Officer for the Army in Europe

c. Guest:

Mr. Eduardo Francis	Action Officer, Military Policy Section, Military Programs and Policy Branch, Military Personnel and Plans Division, DCofS, G1, USAREUR

3. Opening Remarks. President welcomed the Council to the second DCO meeting.

4. Agenda and Minutes. Agenda and minutes were accepted as prepared.

5. President's Report.

a. Appointment / Reappointment to Membership: Welcomed CW4 (Ret) Melanie Ladra as a member of the Council. Her last duty assignment was with Office of the Inspector General, USAREUR. She is currently working for US Army NATO.

b. Review of the Quarter:

(1) Represented, along with COL Matthews and Mr. Francis, the Army in Europe at the fall meeting of the European Tri-Component Retiree Council meeting hosted by J1, EUCOM, on 12 December. (See para 11 below.)

(2) Participated, with COL Matthews, Mr. Schoffman, Mr. Malone and Mr. Francis, in the first Army in Europe Retirement Services Program Oversight Panel meeting on 5 February at which topics of interest at the executive level were discussed.

c. Office Calls with Army in Europe Leadership:

(1) Spoke with USAREUR CSM Davenport to provide and receive an update on issues and concerns of Retired Soldiers in the Army in Europe. CSM Davenport provided feedback on his visit to the US Consulate General Office in Frankfurt. He came away very optimistic of the motivation of the personnel in the Federal Benefits Unit (FBU) to support Retired Soldiers and their Families and of the desire to participate Retiree Appreciation Days.

(2) Met, subsequent to the meeting, with Mr. Gottardi, DCofS, G1, during which a wide variety of Retired Soldier topics were discussed.

6. DCofS, G1, Report (COL Matthews).

a. USAREUR Transformation Update: LTG Campbell formally assumed command of U.S. Army Europe in a ceremony on Clay Kaserne, Wiesbaden, on 9 January. This summer will be a busy and intensive time as transformation continues and units including HQ USAREUR relocate.

b. Budget Issues: USAREUR is under strict direction from Department of the Army to plan and execute budget cuts in anticipation of sequestration, but the ultimate scope is unknown at this time.

c. Appointment / Reappointment to Office: The DCofS, G1, approved the extensions in office of COL Mentell and COL Westpheling as President and Vice President of the Council, respectively, until 30 June 2015.

7. IMCOM-Europe Report (Mr. Schoffman).

a. IMCOM-Europe Transformation Update: Proposals have been submitted to re-designate US Army Garrison Grafenwoehr and it subordinate organizations as US Army Garrison Bavaria

and to re-designate US Army Garrison Kaiserslautern and its subordinate organizations as US Army Garrison Rheinland-Pflaz. The new hospital construction, replacing Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, appears to be on track, as its funding has already been approved, as is the case with other previously scheduled headquarters/garrison moves and closings.

b. Retiree Appreciation Days: RADs planned in the Army in Europe are subject to budget constraints. IMCOM-Europe is looking for non-appropriated fund contributions.

c. Changes in Leadership: None

8. Retirement Services Officer Report (Mr. Malone).

a. Schedule of 2013 RADs:

(1) The schedule for RADs in the Army in Europe remains as published in the December IMCOM-Europe Retiree Bulletin. The schedule is: 18 Oct – USAG Vicenza, 21 Oct – USAG Benelux, 22 Oct – USAG Kaiserslautern, 23 Oct – USAG Stuttgart, 24 Oct – USAG Ansbach, 25 Oct – USAG Grafenwoehr, and 26 Oct – Army in Europe Retiree Appreciation Day hosted by USAG Wiesbaden. (See para 14 below.)

(2) DFAS has already cancelled their support for all Retired Soldier events in CONUS for March and April. It appears unlikely that DFAS will support the participation of their representative in the Army in Europe RADs scheduled for this Fall. Mr. Malone plans to attend all RADs and, if no DFAS support is available, will provide substitute DFAS services.

(3) Should it be determined that the DFAS support will not be forthcoming, IMCOM-Europe will work with the garrisons to adjust the schedule of RADs to permit Mr. Malone to participate and provide support through "day-trips" wherever possible. Also being considered is spreading the RADs throughout the year, as they once were.

b. IMCOM-Europe Retiree Bulletin for the Army in Europe: The December 2012 bulletin has been published in electronic form only, as will all future December editions. Retirees who have previously received the print version via post are urged to subscribe to the email version. The June editions will continue to be distributed in hard-copy.

c. Update on Garrison RSOs: Hiring freeze will complicate filling RSO positions that become vacant. However, at present, all garrisons have qualified, SBP-trained RSOs. As vacancies occur, the RSO in the next nearest garrison will be tasked to pick up the support function until a replacement can be hired.

d. RSO Training: SBP training for RSOs will now be on-line, simplifying the requirement for them to attain and maintain proficiency. The decision has been made not to train garrison RSOs to use the Defense Retirement and Annuity Pay System (DRAS) because garrison RSO use it too seldom to maintain proficiency. The IMCOM-Europe RSO will maintain DRAS

proficiency and will remain available to provide assistance. [DRAS is a system that allows RSO to access and make limited changes in the DFAS records of a Retired Soldier or an Annuitant.]

e. RSO Generic Email Addresses: Options have been examined to provide "transparent" non-personal email addresses for RSOs. One option considered was to request an "alias" such as stuttgart.rso@mail.mil for the quite complicated organizational email address under the current system. The option selected is to create a single webpage on which links to all the garrisons with RSOs would be listed. Clicking on the link for the nearest garrison would open an email template which an individual could use to contract the RSO in that garrison. This webpage should be activated in the near future at which time IMCOM-Europe will publish the web address widely.

f. Retired Soldier Spouse Guide: IMCOM-Europe will examine the alternative to publishing a hard-copy document of creating a webpage on which links would be listed to the various subjects unique to living in the Army in Europe that a Retired Soldier and Spouse should consider together. It would not be a Casualty Assistance Guide, but one that described actions that should be considered prior to the passing of the sponsor.

9. Army in Europe Retirement Services Program Oversight Panel Meeting Back Brief (COL Matthews and Mr. Schoffman). One of the important questions discussed at the meeting was how Retired Soldiers and Annuitants can more efficiently and effectively make their issues and concerns known to the leadership of the serving organization and/or garrison.

The panel recommends the use of the Interactive Customer Evaluation (ICE) website, a link to which is on the webpage for every garrison. By going to http://ice/disa/mil and clicking on the Army / Europe link on the left side, a page will open that list all of the ICE links in the Army in Europe.

The ICE system allows customers to submit online comment cards to provide feedback to the service providers they have encountered at military installations and related facilities around the world. It is designed to improve customer service by allowing managers to monitor the satisfaction levels of services provided through reports and customer comments.

Issues, concerns, and suggestions, as well as compliments, expressed via those websites are reviewed by the leadership and appropriate action is taken. If the individuals include their contact information, they will receive a response to their submissions.

10. USAF/USAFE Retiree Council Report. The retiree council being formed in the Kaiserslautern area will most likely be chartered under the auspices of USAG Kaiserslautern with a proviso that it will coordinate with the 86th Wing.

11. European Tri-Component Retiree Council (ETRC) Back brief: The ETRC Fall meeting, chaired by USAFE and hosted by J1, EUCOM, met at Patch Barracks, Stuttgart on 12 December 2012. Subsequent to this AERC meeting, the minutes of the ETRC meeting were released. The prioritized issues are:

a. Priority 1: DFAS support for military retirees residing in the council's area of responsibility especially during RADs.

b. Priority 2: Consulate (FBU) support for retirees residing in the council's area of responsibility.

c. Priority 3: The issue regarding current weight limitations on mailing parcels will be retained as a priority issue but no action will be taken at this time. The council will review the situation at future meetings.

12. 2013 Chief of Staff, Army Retiree Council (CSARC) AE Issues (COL Mentell / SGM Stewart).

a. The issues, with recommendations, the Army in Europe submitted to HQDA for consideration by the CSARC are:

(1) Funding / Filling Retirement Service Officer (RSO) Positions: CSA urge CG, IMCOM, to fund and expeditiously implement the standard job description and grade of garrison RSOs and to fill at the target grade at least one full-time, primary-duty RSO position at all garrisons, including those in OCONUS.

(2) Funding Retirement Service Program (RSP) Activities: CSA urge CG, IMCOM, to maintain the level of funding for pre- and post-retirement activities of the Army RSP to include RSO training, RADs, garrison retiree bulletins, and garrison retiree council activities.

(3) Smart cards for Retired Soldiers: Issue Smart Cards to Retired Soldiers who request them and are willing to reimburse the cost of issuance in order to facilitate their access to AKO and other websites.

(4) Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) Support of Overseas Retired Soldiers and Annuitants: Encourage DFAS to preserve the toll-free number for DFAS customers in Germany and to encourage the participation of a DFAS SME at overseas RADs.

(5) Notification of TRICARE Program Changes: Encourage TMA to make more timely notification of developments and changes especially those impacting retired beneficiaries residing overseas.

(6) FBU Support of Overseas RADs: Encourage DoS to support the participation of overseas FBUs in RADs.

b. The CSARC is still scheduled to meet during the third week of April although budget consideration could change that.

13. Army in Europe Retiree Demographics (COL Mentell).

a. As of the end of September 2012, there were 15,112 retired military service members and 2,535 annuitants in the USAREUR AOR, which includes Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. These numbers represent "no-change" from the end of September 2011 with trends over the last 10 years remaining essentially flat.

b. Four points of reference are:
- Almost half (47%) of the retired military service members are Retired Soldiers.
- Over half (55%) of the retired military service members live in Germany
- Well over half (58%) of the annuitants are survivors of Retired Soldiers
- Over half (53%) of the annuitants live in Germany

14. Progress Report – Army in Europe Retiree Appreciation Day (AE RAD) hosted by USAG Wiesbaden (COL Mentell).

a. The concept for the conduct of the AE RAD was approved by the Wiesbaden Garrison Commander although details, such a location, could not be determined due to the ongoing construction and renovation.

b. The Speakers' Program is envisioned to consist of the LTG Campbell, CG USAREUR, who will provide Commander's Comments, LTG (Ret) Lovelace, Co-Chair, CSARC, who will be the guest speaker, and COL (Ret) Mentell, who will provide a Retired Soldier Update. In addition, there will be Healthcare Roundtable, which will again be optional, and a Retiree Council Presidents' Meeting, which will again be by invitation only.

15. Progress Report - RetireeInfo List Server (LTC Dick).

a. A replacement server with the necessary software has been located and is being configured to accommodate the AERC-managed email system – known as the RetireeInfo List Serve r- for the dissemination of information of interest to Retired Soldiers and Annuitants. LTC Dick is working with the POC to load the files with some 1,700 subscriber email addresses. Once that is complete, he will advise subscribers.

b. Individuals may subscribe by clicking on the RetireeInfo List Server / Subscribe Here link on the USAREUR G-1 webpage http://www.eur.army.mil/g1/.

16. Progress Report - Liaison Responsibilities (SGM Norris).

a. Total percentage of collective liaison efforts by the AERC members was low for this quarter due to illness of one member and to the fact that three garrisons (Kaiserslautern, Stuttgart and Vicenza) were still without AERC member presence.

b. During the last quarter, the seven members of the Council made timely liaison with 68% of their 130 assigned contacts.

c. Members were asked to review the updated "Responsibilities Sheet" of the Master Liaison Matrix and identify these changes on their individual matrices.

17. Progress Report - AERC Web Site (COL Westpheling). The website will be updated to provide information on submitting ICE comments (para 9 above). President requested Council members review the website and report to COL Westpheling other suggested changes.

18. Observational Feedback (All). All garrisons are showing signs of the budget constraint although at this time, essential services are still being maintained. A Benelux issue concerning cashing of personal checks at Finance centers—amount is about to be drastically reduced—is being addressed locally.

19. Council Administration (COL Mentell).

a. Existing Member Vacancies: There are two existing vacancies on the Council: vice Grunell and vice Campbell.

b. Projected Membership Vacancies (thru 1st Qtr, CY 14): LTC Dick—30 Sep 13, SGM Stewart—30 Sep 13

c. Unprojected Member Vacancies: None

d. Existing Officer Vacancies: None

e. Projected Officer Vacancies (thru 1st Qtr, CY 14) None

f. Unprojected Officer Vacancies: None

g. Volunteer hours: Council members were reminded to ensure that they enter all of their volunteer hours into the Volunteer Information Management system.

20. Review of Immediate Action List (COL Westpheling). COL Mentell needs to share copies of the Army in Europe Retired Soldier Demographics briefing and the Liaison Matrix with members of the Council.

21. Selection of Next Meeting Date and Adjournment. The next meeting will be on 8 May 2013 at the KMCC on Ramstein Air Base. The meeting was adjourned at 1145 hours.

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