DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
UNITED STATES ARMY EUROPE
UNIT 29351
APO AE 09096-9351

AEPE

25 June 2015

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 28 May 2015 have been reviewed and approved.

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

Encl

LARRY D. GOTTARDI
Deputy Chief of Staff, G1

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EA Garrison Commander / Command Sergeant Major
EA Deputy Garrison Manager / Sergeant Major
EA Garrison RSO
EA Co-Chair, Chief of Staff, Army, Retiree Council
EA Member, European Tri-Component Retiree Council
EA Member, Army in Europe Retiree Council

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
UNITED STATES ARMY EUROPE
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AEPE-AERC

28 May 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR Commanding General, United States Army, Europe, ATTN: AECG, Unit 29351, APO AE 09096

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Army in Europe Retiree Council Meeting

1. The 134th meeting of the Army in Europe Retiree Council (AERC) convened at 0900 hours on 28 May 2015 in the USAREUR G-1 conference room on Clay Kaserne, Wiesbaden. The first meeting was held on 29 August 1980.

2. The following persons were present:

a. Members:

COL (Ret) Robert A. Mentell	President
LTC (Ret) David V. Fulton	Vice President
CW3 (Ret) Sandra K. Simpson	Secretary
COL (Ret) Gary Langford	Member
LTC (Ret) William K. Bergman	Member
SGM (Ret) David B. Stewart	Member

b. Advisory Members:

COL John L. Pollock	Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff, G1, USAREUR, and USAREUR G1 Representative to the Council
Ms. Lynn R. Lott	Assistant Chief of Staff, G1, IMCOM Europe
Mr. Mike Malone	Retirement Services Officer, IMCOM Europe

c. Associate Members:

CDR (USN, Ret) Thomas J. Brennan	USNAVEUR member of the European Tri-Component Retiree Council and member, Secretary of the Navy Retiree Council
CMSgt (USAF, Ret) Bruce C. Collet	USAFE member of the European Tri-Component Retiree Council and member, US Air Force Retiree Council

d. Visitors:

LTG Frederick B. Hodges	Commanding General, USAREUR
CSM Sheryl D. Lyon	Command Sergeant Major, USAREUR
COL James D. Grady	Chief, Clinical Operations, US Army Europe Regional Medical Command (ERMC)

Col (USAF) Paul W. Plocek	Executive Director, TRICARE Area Office Eurasia Africa
CW4 (Ret) Robert A. Pierce	President, USAG Wiesbaden Retiree Council
Mr. Eduardo G. Francis	Chief of Policy, ODCofS, G1, USAREUR
Mr. Michael P. Kreilein	Program Analyst, ACofS, G5, IMCOM-Europe
Mr. Tom D. Petty	Postal Policy Specialist, Office of Director of Theater Army Postal Operations, DCofS, G1, USAREUR

3. Opening Remarks (COL Mentell).

a. President said farewell to COL Michael Matthews who is leaving the G1 for a position in US Army North in San Antonio, Texas. He thanked him for all his support to the Council as the USAREUR G1 Representative, and wished him all the best.

b. He welcomed COL John Pollock, the incoming Assistant DCofS, G1, USAREUR and the new USAREUR G1 Representative to the Council.

c. LTC Bergman provided an update of the status of COL (Ret) Charles T. Westpheling, a former Vice President of the Council, who has experienced some serious health issues. On behalf of the Council, the president wished him a speedy recover.

d. Review of the agenda: COL Mentell requested CDR Brennan provide an after action update on the 27 May 2015 meeting of the European Tri-Component Retiree Council.

4. Review of the 4 February 2015 Minutes. Minutes were accepted as presented.

5. President's Report (COL Mentell).

a. Office Calls with Army in Europe Leadership: President met with:

(1) Mr. Larry Gottardi, DCofS, G1, USAREUR, to provide an update on concerns and issues of Retired Soldier in the Army in Europe and to receive his guidance.

(2) Mr. Michael D. Formica, Region Director, IMCOM-Europe, to discuss supporting Retired Soldiers in the Army in Europe.

(3) COL Christopher M. Benson, Garrison Commander, USAG Ansbach, to discuss supporting Retired Soldiers in the Army in Europe.

(4) COL Glenn K. Dickenson, Garrison Commander, USAG Stuttgart, to discuss supporting Retired Soldiers in the Army in Europe.

(5) COL James D. Grady and COL Michael G. Doran, Commander, US Army Europe Regional Dental Command (ERDC), to discuss input for the operations order specifying support

for RADs in Europe and their support for the Healthcare Roundtable at the Army in Europe Retiree Appreciation Day (AE RAD).

(6) COL James A. Laterza, incoming commander, Landstuhl Regional Medical Center.

b. Review of the Quarter. On behalf of the Council, the President:

(1) Presented an AERC Certificate of Appreciation to COL Judith A. Lee, the outgoing commander at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, for her support to members of all Services.

(2) Accepted the Retiree Volunteer of the Year Award on behalf of SGM Donald R. Norris, AERC Member, who was unable to attend.

(3) Participated in the European Tri-Component Retiree Council meeting on 27 May 2015.

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

a. COL Pollock introduced himself to the Council and stated that he is quite familiar with the European environment as this is his fourth tour of duty in Europe.

b. USAREUR Transformation Update: A public announcement of the reduction of aviation assets in USAREUR indicates the command will still retain both lift and attack capabilities through the use of rotational forces. Several of the smaller commissaries in the USAREUR footprint will be closed and others may reduce operating hours or close on select days. He strongly encouraged Retired Soldiers to use the USAREUR website to keep up with transformation changes.

c. Status of Staffing and Budget Reductions: USAREUR headquarters is undergoing a 40% reduction in staffing and the new manning guidance specifies an 80-90 percent fill rate for military authorizations. The budget situation has not improved and is expected to tighten even further since another round of sequestration is expected in fiscal year 2016.

7. IMCOM-Europe Report (Ms. Lott).

a. Changes in Region and Garrison Leadership: The Ansbach and Stuttgart USAGs underwent changes of command. The leadership throughout the region will remain fluid as several of the garrison deputies are due to change out this summer.

b. Delivery of Retirement Services (Future): IMCOM-Europe will keep the full time Retirement Services Officer (RSO) position currently authorized. RSO duties will continue to be included in all the position descriptions for the region RSO and the garrison RSOs.

8. IMCOM-Europe Transformation Update (Mr. Kreilein).

a. From FY 06 to the end of FY 15, the number of Soldiers has decreased from 64K to 31K (an approximately 58% reduction) in seven direct reporting garrisons and 61 sites. The end goal is a population of approximately 27K Soldiers located in seven enduring garrisons and 96 sites. Units are stationed based on function, i.e., mission command, training, sustainment, etc.

b. Rotational Forces and European Activity Sets: There are two different sets of equipment returning to Europe. The first battalion-sized set will be placed at Grafenwoehr and the six additional battalion-sized sets will be housed at Coleman Barracks in Mannheim. The equipment will remain in these locations approximately one year for onward movement to Eastern Europe. Rotational forces will fall in on these equipment sets.

c. There is an ongoing DoD-initiated study to consider creating a Joint Base Ramstein-Kaiserslautern.

d. The site at Baumholder will become a training area for ADA units. Additionally, Special Operations Forces will continue to use the training area on a rotational basis.

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

a. Mr. Malone identified a slight decline in the Army Retired population, a slight increase in the Navy and Air Force Retired population, and an increase in the number of retiree deaths. He provided the Council with slides showing the demographics by garrison.

b. IMCOM-Europe Retiree Bulletin for the Army in Europe: The bulletin will be delivered to publisher within the next week.

c. Update on Garrison RSOs: All Garrison RSOs are on board and fully trained.

d. RSO Generic Email Addresses: Organizational email addresses are in place but are not yet the desired generic email addresses.

e. Retiree Funerals: There is a misperception among many spouses of retired Service members that the Army will pay for all costs associated with funerals.

(1) Mr. Malone explained that surviving spouses will receive a one-time payment of $225 from Social Security and approximately $300 from VA for plot purchase and burial. This issue requires continual emphasis and education in the retiree community.

(2) Mr. Malone was asked to develop an informational flyer that the Council and garrisons could use to educate retirees and their spouses on the entitlements and benefits they can expect to receive upon the death of the retiree. He agreed.

(3) President opined that such issues should go out as "Hot Topics" at RADs, on the Region RSO website, and via the RetireeInfo ListServer.

10. 2015 Retiree Appreciation Days in the Army in Europe.

a. AE RAD hosted by USAG Wiesbaden:

(1) USAG Wiesbaden Preparations (CW4 Pierce): The draft operations order tasks the medical and dental communities and the garrison public affairs office to provide support for the AE RAD which will be held on Saturday, 31 October 2015. The first IPR will be on 14 July 2015. The garrison operations plan has been reviewed and returned to the garrison with comments. At this time, it is unknown if the comments have been received and/or accepted.

(2) DCofS, G1: Speakers Program (COL Mentell):

(a) LTG (Ret) Lovelace, Co-Chair, Chief of Staff, Army, Retired Soldier Council, is scheduled to be the Keynote Speaker.

(b) The AE RAD is on LTG Hodges' calendar and a formal invitation has been prepared asking him to provide Commander's Comments.

(c) COL Mentell will provide a Retired Soldier Update on the top concerns and issues.

(d) ERMC and ERDC will support a Healthcare Roundtable. It is anticipated the TRICARE Area Office will support it as well.

(e) The President will host a meeting of retiree council presidents

b. Garrison Retiree Appreciation Days

(1) Schedule (Mr. Malone): US Army Garrison Ansbach conducted their RAD on 21 May 15. The schedule for the remaining RADs is as follows:

- 3 October: USAG Benelux
- 9 October: Schinnen/Brunssum
- 13 October: USAG Rheinland-Pfalz / Ramstein AB
- 16 October: USAG Vicenza
- 22 October: USAG Stuttgart
- 23 October: USAG Bavaria
- 31 October: AE RAD hosted by USAG Wiesbaden

(2) RAD Coverage by AERC Members (LTC Fulton):

- LTC Bergman: USAG Benelux and USAG Schinnen.

- COL Langford: USAG Rheinland-Pfalz/Ramstein AB and USAG Stuttgart.
- SGM Stewart: USAG Grafenwoehr.
- COL Mentell: USAG Vicenza and the AE RAD.

(3) DFAS support for RADs: The Chief of Staff, Army, Retiree Council supported the AE recommendation that DFAS develop the systems and procedures that are compatible with technology already available to RSO offices. This would permit DFAS to provide the required level of support to clients at RADs. The Council recommended that IMCOM-Europe request DFAS conduct trial runs at the USAG Rheinland-Pfalz / Ramstein AB RAD and at the AE RAD.

11. Visit by USAREUR Commanding General (LTG Hodges).

a. "Strong Europe" is the Army contribution to NATO, EUCOM, AFRICOM and other commands. Although populated by only 30,000 Soldiers, the CG intends to project the strength of the 300,000 who were present in Europe at the Army's high point. LTG Hodges consistently emphasized that Europe is an ocean closer to the main problems faced by the United States and that USAREUR already has good working relationships with the other nations in the footprint. His plan will allow for greater use of Reserve and National Guard forces and utilization of Allied military capabilities such as bridging and Heavy Equipment Transporters (HETs).

b. The economic ties that exist with Europe are the greatest strength of the alliance. The United States will not execute unilateral actions, instead it will always turn to its allies, and the strongest are here in Europe.

c. The CG directed that the AERC be represented on the emerging Strategic Communications Board that will be standing-up as soon as the in-bound colonel, charged with running this board, arrives.

d. The CG directed his XO to ensure that representatives of the AERC have the opportunity to meet with LTG Halverson, IMCOM Commander, during his upcoming visit to the USAREUR AOR.

e. The CG thanked Retired Soldiers and their Families for their services and pledged his support.

12. Health Care Update (COL Grady).

a. In addition to the core priorities of the US Army Medical Command, which include combat casualty care, health and readiness of the force, ready and deployable medical force, health of Families and Retirees, ERMC has also placed a high priority Medical Diplomacy. This allows for contact and eventual interoperability with host nation hospitals and medical units.

b. The medical footprint has shrunk from 300,000 enrollees at it's the highpoint to 92,000 enrollees as of 2014.

c. The operational medical units in Europe are now assigned to 21st Theater Sustainment Command under USAREUR, although some clinics of US Army Central have been aligned with ERMC.

d. At some point in the not too distant future, the US Army Public Health Command Region-Europe (PHCR-Europe) and the ERDC will align with ERMC to become a health command.

13. TRICARE Update (COL Plocek). The Defense Health Agency acknowledges that DoD cannot provide all required health care and has contracted out the management and delivery of that care.

a. In the European AOR, the current contractor is International SOS, which has recently been selected to remain so under the new contract starting in September 2016. A one year transition phase between contracts is expected.

b. One of the contract improvements that will become available is the ability to receive direct deposit payments of claims provided the beneficiary has a US bank account.

c. Council pointed out that ultimately, the contract should provide for direct deposit into a foreign bank account in the same manner that military retired pay, VA benefits, and Social Security now operate.

14. 2015 Chief of Staff, Army, Retired Soldier Council Backbrief (LTC Fulton). 30 issues were considered and council members were divided into three groups: Medical and Health Care, Benefits and Entitlements, and Retirement Services.

a. One of the big areas of concern is Gray Area Retirees—those who have completed Reserve service but are not yet eligible to receive retired pay.

b. All five of the AERC issues were supported by the council. Those were:
- Improve process for notification of TRICARE beneficiaries when there is a change in policy
- Issue Common Access Cards to Retiring Soldiers
- Create a training program for Retired Volunteers
- Instill the Soldier for Life Philosophy into the culture of Retired Soldiers
- Encourage DFAS provide virtual support for RADs if in-person support is not possible

15. USNAVEUR Retiree Council Update: (CDR Brennan).

a. The priority issues from the past council meeting were Agent Orange and the Blue-Water Navy, the need to increase the numbers of TRICARE providers (CONUS issue), opposition to

the proposed TRICARE fee increases, the ongoing shortage of mental health providers, and a recommendation that eye exams be in accordance with American Optometric Association guidelines.

b. Other issues included better training for retiree volunteers, using retirees in support of specific projects instead of contractors, and the need to eliminate the arrears in pay problem.

c. Overseas specific issues included: payment for MEDICARE Part B required to enroll in TRICARE for Life when MEDICARE is not available overseas; Space-A transportation for widows/widowers with residency overseas; the denial of commissary/exchange privileges in Spain, the latter which CDR Brennan noted is being followed up with a SECNAV letter to the State Department.

d. The meeting of the Secretary of the Navy Retiree Council is scheduled for 3 to 6 August 2015. CDR Brennan said he intends to propose the following issues: MPS weight limits on retirees residing overseas, surviving spouses and space-A transportation, CAC cards for retirees, and DFAS support to overseas RADs/seminars.

16. USAFE Retiree Council Update (CMSgt Collet).

a. The date for the meeting of the USAF Retiree Council has slipped due to problems with bringing retirees back to active duty. The dates for the meeting have not yet been announced.

b. Issues that CMSgt Collet would plan to present for this year's council include: TRICARE notifications – continue to notify in hardcopy if member does not have electronic means, training program for RAOs (Retirement Assistance Officers), changes to hiring processes for retirees and veterans, CAC cards for retirees, and virtual DFAS support for RADs.

17. European Tri-Component Retiree Council Backbrief (CDR Brennen). Deferred due to time constraints until next meeting

18. AR 600-8-7 Retirement Services Program (SGM Stewart). The version of the AR dated 28 April 2015 is only a placeholder. The actual regulation is still in staffing and should be published in the October 2015 time frame.

19. Military Postal Service Update (Mr. Petty). The US Postal Service has become very concerned with standardization of addresses. The new requirement is to have box number and the R to be listed together, i.e., CMR 123 Box 4567R. He also mentioned that effective 1 October 2015, all customs declarations must on an electronic form and that no hand-written forms will be accepted.

20. Progress Report: Liaison Responsibilities (SGM Norris). Deferred due to time constraints until next meeting.

21. Progress Report: RetireeInfo List Server (LTC Dick). Deferred due to time constraints until next meeting.

22. Progress Report: AERC Public Affairs Plan (SGM Stewart). Deferred due to time constraints until next meeting.

23. Progress Report: AERC Webpage (All). Deferred due to time constraints until next meeting.

24. AERC Future (LTC Fulton). Council members were reminded to complete survey forms and return them to LTC Fulton.

25. Observational Feedback (All). Deferred due to time constraints until next meeting.

26. Council Administration (COL Mentell).

a. Existing Membership Vacancies
Vice Ladra

b. Projected Member Vacancies (thru 2nd Qtr, CY 16)
SGM Norris—30 Sep 15

c. Anticipated Member Vacancies (thru 2nd Qtr, CY 16)
None

d. Existing Officer Vacancies—None
None

e. Projected Officer Vacancies (thru 2nd Qtr, CY 16)
President – 31 Dec 15
Vice President—30 June 16

27. Review of Immediate Action List: (LTC Fulton).

a. Mr. Malone will develop an informational flyer that the Council and garrisons can use to educate retired service members and their spouses on the entitlements and benefits they can expect to receive upon the death of the sponsor.

b. Mr. Malone agreed to incorporate the death entitlement information into the next IMCOM-Europe Retiree Bulletin.

c. Mr. Malone will continue to develop generic email addresses for RSOs.

d. Mr. Petty will provide the AERC President with information on the new electronic postal customs procedures so that this information can be disseminated via the RetireeInfo ListServer.

e. The AERC should be prepared to meet with LTG Halverson during his next visit to USAREUR at the end of June 2015.

28. Selection of Meeting Date/Adjournment. The next meeting will be on 12 August 2015 via teleconference. Meeting was adjourned at 1600.

JOHN L. POLLOCK
COL, GS
DCofS, G1, Representative

MENTELL.ROBERT.A.1098576270
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ROBERT MENTELL
COL, USA (Retired)
President