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

AEPE

26 November 2013

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 25 October 2013 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 Member, European Tri-Component Retiree Council
EA Member, Army in Europe Retiree Council

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
UNITED STATES ARMY EUROPE AND SEVENTH ARMY
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AEPE-AERC

25 October 2013

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

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Army in Europe Retiree Council Meeting

1. The 128th meeting of the Army in Europe Retiree Council (AERC) convened at 0900 hours on 25 October 2013 in the USAREUR G1 conference room at Clay Kaserne, Wiesbaden.

2. The following persons were present:

a. Members:

COL (Ret) Robert A. Mentell	President
SGM (Ret) Don R. Norris	Acting Vice President
CW3 (Ret) Sandra K. Simpson	Secretary
LTC (Ret) Sheldon L. Dick	Member
LTC (Ret) David V. Fulton	Member
CW4 (Ret) Melanie A. Ladra	Member
SGM (Ret) David B. Stewart	Member

b. Advisory Members:

COL Michael R. Matthews	Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff, G1, USAREUR, and USAREUR G1 Representative to the Council
Mr. Robert P. Schoffman	Assistant Chief of Staff, G1, IMCOM-Europe
Mr. Patrick E. Vestal	Chief, Military Personnel Branch, IMCOM-Europe, representing the IMCOM-Europe Region Retirement Services Officer for the Army in Europe

c. Associate Members:

CMSgt (USAF, Ret) Bruce C. Collet	USAFE Retiree Council and Member, US Air Force Retiree Council

d. Guests:

COL James D. Grady	Chief, Clinical Operations, US Army Europe Regional Medical Command (ERMC)
CDR (USN, Ret) Thomas J. Brennan	Member, Secretary of the Navy Retiree Council
Mr. Alan L. Belyea	Deputy Chief, R2 Division, DCofS, G1, USAREUR

Mr. Eduardo G. Francis	Acting Chief, Military Policy Section, Military Programs and Policy Branch, Military Personnel and Plans Division, DCofS, G1, USAREUR
MSgt (USAF) Christine E. Black	Senior Enlisted Liaison, TRICARE Area Office Eurasia-Africa
Ms. Ulrike S. Engel	Deputy Chief, Regional Operations Division, TRICARE Area Office Eurasia-Africa

3. Opening Remarks.

a. The president of the Army in Europe Retiree Council opened the meeting and introduced CDR Brennan, CMSgt Collet, and Mr. Vestal. He also welcomed Mr. Schoffman who joined the meeting via VTC.

b. Special guests in the room included European members of the three service-level retiree councils – SGM Stewart, Chief of Staff, Army, Retiree Council; CDR Brennan, Secretary of the Navy Retiree Council; and CMSgt Collet, US Air Force Retiree Council. This is the first occasion in recent memory at which European members of all three councils were able to get together face-to-face. Mr. Gottardi, USAREUR G1 and proponent for the Retirement Service Program in the Army in Europe, will meet with the three individuals after the completion of the Council meeting.

4. Agenda and Minutes. The updated agenda was accepted as provided and the minutes of the meeting on 12 June 2013 were accepted with the following adjustments:

a. Paragraph 6b: BG Cho did not return to Europe to command ERMC but has been reassigned as Commanding General, Western Regional Medical Command, Tacoma, WA.

b. Paragraph 8f: SBP beneficiaries must have either a Social Security number (SSN) or a Tax Payer Identification Number (TIN).

5. President's Report.

a. Review of the Quarter: The President:

(1) Drafted for DCofS, G1, approval, an information paper for use by the USAREUR Commanding General during a visit by Department of Army representatives concerning the importance of Retiree Appreciation Days to the Retirement Services Program and to the Army.

(2) Briefed a senior delegation from the Veterans of Foreign Wars on concerns and issues of Retired Soldiers in Army in Europe.

(3) In addition to coordinating the AE RAD Speakers' Program, the Healthcare Roundtable and the Retiree Council Presidents' Meeting, the president participated in five IPRs hosted by USAG Wiesbaden.

(4) Represented the Council at the USAG Kaiserslautern / Ramstein AB RAD and made a Retired Service Member Update presentation.

In addition, the USAREUR leadership accepted the recommendation of the Council Executive Committee and submitted the nomination of LTC (R) Dave Fulton for membership in the Chief of Staff, Army, Retiree Council.

b. Office Calls with Army in Europe Leadership:

(1) President and SGM (R) Norris briefed the USAG Ansbach Garrison Commander on supporting Retired Soldiers in the Army in Europe.

(2) Unfortunately, efforts to coordinate a visit with the Commanding General, USAREUR were not successful. Attempts will be made to get on his calendar for the next in-person meeting of the Council in May 2014.

(3) Similarly, efforts to coordinate an office call with Deputy Commanding General, USAREUR, have not been successful. Attempts will be made to get on his calendar in conjunction with the next meeting of the Council in February 2014.

c. AKO Transition: In April 2013, Secretary of the Army made the decision to transition AKO to Next Generation Enterprise Services. Accordingly, all Retired Soldiers and retired DA civilians and their Family Members will lose AKO access and AKO webmail accounts.

(1) Beginning 1 November 2013, AKO webmail account holders without CACs/Smart Cards will be able to designate a civilian email address to which AKO emails should be forwarded.

(2) As of 31 December 2013, all inactive AKO accounts will be closed. Inactive is defined as not having changed the password within the last 90 days or emails not forwarded to a .mil account. All active account will remain open. In addition, email storage for all accounts will be discontinued.

(3) As of 31 March 2014, all remaining accounts will be closed.

(4) As of 31 December 2014, forwarding of emails will be discontinued.

NOTE: There are 350,000 retired service members who have AKO addresses in MyPay. These individuals need to update their information and provide a new email account address.

d. Associate Membership Update: By virtue of their positions as representatives from their organizations on the European Tri-Component Retiree Council, the following are the current Associate Members of the Army in Europe Retiree Council:

- MSG (USA) Dante R. Flojo, Senior Enlisted Leader, ECJ1, USEUCOM
- CDMCM (USN, Ret) Bruno Capista, USNAVEUR
- CMSgt (USAF, Ret) Bruce Collet, USAFE

e. Schedule for AFAP Conferences: President presented the dates for the upcoming Army Family Action Plan conference at the garrison, Army in Europe, and Department of the Army levels.

(1) The president asked Council Members, as a part of their liaison duties, to urge Retired Soldiers to participate in the on-going AFAP conferences at their garrisons.

(2) The president thanked Dr. Joy Summerlin, DCofS, G1, POC, for keeping the Council updated on AFAP matters.

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

a. USAREUR Transformation Update:

(1) COL Matthews thanked the Council for its patience as this meeting was re-scheduled several times while attempting to get it to mesh with the Commanding General's calendar and for our patience in dealing with the AE RAD Speakers' Program, which also changed several times.

(2) There are several on-going studies under way to determine the appropriate infrastructure and personnel posture for the Army. The office of the Secretary of Defense and the Chief of Staff, Army also recently directed a reduction of all headquarter staffs. USAREUR is currently performing its own analysis.

b. Status of Budget Constraints: At this point in time, the USAREUR G1 is operating under significant fiscal constraints. Mr. Gottardi' s intent is to continue to support the Council as best as he can.

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

a. There are seven direct reporting garrisons in the region: Ansbach, Bavaria, Benelux, Rheinland-Pfalz, Stuttgart, Vicenza, and Wiesbaden.

(1) The subordinate communities will be led by civilian "deputy garrison managers" as opposed to having military commanders.

(2) USAG Grafenwoehr has been redesignated USAG Bavaria and USAG Kaiserslautern has been redesignated USAG Rheinland-Pfalz. The remaining garrisons will maintain their current status.

b. There is a significant challenge with mail for retired service members and survivors in garrisons that have closed. Mail rooms are being flooded with mail for individuals who have moved but have not changed their mailing addresses. There is a 60 day cut-off from the closure of an APO/CMR, after which mail will be returned to sender instead of being forwarded. Retired Service Members in communities that are closing need to be directed to communities where there is capacity. In communities that no longer have capability for "R" boxes, mail can still be received there using general delivery.

c. IMCOM-Europe is under similar budget constraints as USAREUR. The size of seven direct reporting garrison staffs may be subject to reduction and that will potentially impact their ability to provide services to Retired Soldiers. The Council offered to try to help manage expectations of the Retired Soldier Community via the RetireeInfo List Server, if IMCOM-Europe would share the information.

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

a. Garrison Retirement Appreciation Days (RADs):

(1) The RAD at USAG Benelux was not supported by the Federal Benefits Unit from the US Embassy in London due to the government shutdown. The other on-going RADs are being supported by the local Federal Benefits Unit.

(2) The Council asked if it would be possible to spread out the scheduling of RADs beginning in CY14 so that they are not all concentrated in a two-week period, recalling that they were concentrated to accommodate the schedule of a DFAS SME, who will no longer be participating in overseas RADs. The return to the original concept would permit Retired Soldiers and their Survivors more options for obtaining RAD-type service throughout the year.

b. IMCOM-Europe Retiree Bulletin for the Army in Europe: Next bulletin will be published and emailed in December. The deadline for providing input is 15 November.

c. Defense Retiree and Annuitant Pay System (DRAS) Training: On-line training is now available. The IMCOM-Europe Region RSO and all of the benefits coordinators are trained. Council asked whether training could be made available to all RSOs.

d. Retired Soldier and Spouse Guide: At present time, IMCOM-Europe is not preparing this document. IMCOM-Europe will explore the possibility of developing an electronic version.

e. DFAS Debit Card: Retired and annuity pay would be credited to a debit card if beneficiary does not have electronic payment to bank.

f. Mandatory Social Security Number/Tax payer Identification Number for SBP Annuity Pay Applicants: Mr. Vestal confirmed that SBP beneficiaries must have either a Social Security number (SSN) or a Tax Payer Identification Number (TIN).

g. Update on Garrison RSOs: Ms. Dawn McCarthy is the new RSO in USAG Benelux. The Schinnen community will have a new RSO by early November and the Brussels community by mid-November.

h. Generic Email Addresses for RSOs in the Army in Europe: All RSOs have a generic email address. IMCOM-Europe will share format for addresses with the Council.

i. SBP Training: All RSOs, as well as transition point personnel, are signed up for this training.

9. USAF/USAFE Retiree Council Report (CMSgt (R) Collet).

a. At this time, there are no local Air Force retiree councils in USAFE and some USAFE bases may not even have a Retiree Activity Office.

b. The 2013 meeting of the Chief of Staff, Air Force, Retiree Council was held virtually. Issues presented included arrears of pay and communication with retirees via written means. CMSgt Collet agreed to review the 5-pound postal test program with USAFE leadership.

10. SECNAV Retiree Council Report (CDR (R) Brennan). The 2013 Secretary of the Navy Retiree Council met 19-22 August 2013. This council reports directly to the Secretary of the Navy and covers both Navy and Marine Corps issues. Time at the council was compressed due to budget constraints.

a. The main topics of discussion included:
- Extension of presumption of exposure to Agent Orange to Blue Water Navy personnel
- Acceptance of TRICARE by civilian health care providers and clinical facilities
- Management oversight of RAO functions
- Establishment of "email for life" contact for retirees

b. The following items were included for further discussion:
- Denial of commissary and Navy Exchange privileges to retirees at NS Rota, Spain
- TRICARE enrollment fees and premiums should be pre-tax benefits
- Limitations on retiree use of APO system
- Increase mail communication with retirees and coordinate with DFAS mailing to cover retiree information
- New ID card format is not accepted universally throughout the health care system
- Retiree access to Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) requires a CAC card
- Transition Assistance Program does not cover reserve retirement benefits and issues
- Inter-service cooperation and collaboration in support of retiree service facilities, assets and training.

11. Chief of Staff, Army, Retiree Council Call for Issues - 2014 (COL Mentell & SGM Stewart).

a. AERC Issues: Three issues that are being considered are:

(1) The continuation of support to Retired Soldiers and their Families and Survivors in the Army in Europe in the form of dedicated RSOs, is being reduced.

(2) The expansion of the TRICARE network providers program to include areas in which military treatment facilities will close but where there is a significant number of retired beneficiaries.

(3) The implementation of the 5-pound postal test program.

b. IMCOM-E Issues: No issues identified at this time

c. ETRC Issues: None identified at this time

12. Army in Europe Retiree Appreciation Day Update - 2013 (LTC (R) Fulton).

a. All AE RAD activities will be held in the Community Activities Center, Clay Kaserne, Wiesbaden, except for medical and dental services which will be provided at the respective clinics.

b. The speakers' program for the AE RAD has undergone a number of iterations. BG Walter E. Piatt, Commanding General, Joint Multinational Training Command, will present Commander's Comments and COL Judith A. Lee, Commander, Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, will be the keynote speaker.

c. The Retiree Council Presidents' Meeting will be in the USAG Wiesbaden command conference room.

13. Special Visit: US Army Europe Regional Medical Command Update (COL Grady).

a. Military medicine is transitioning from a culture of healthcare to one of health – from health care delivered as needed to a patient centered medical home (preventive medicine). Activity, nutrition and sleep are the three main components of this program.

b. COL Grady acknowledged that there is confusion among Retired Service Members as to the locations where applications for TRICARE Plus are being accepted and the location at which specialty services are available. He pointed out that the status of both could change on a daily basis. However, he agreed to explore the possibility of posting a matrix with that information on the ERMC web page.

14. Special Visit: Ready and Resilient Campaign in the Army in Europe (Mr. Belyea.). The two main components of this program are: Ready which is defined as the ability to perform the mission; and Resilient which is defined as the ability to overcome adversity.

a. High risk behavior continues to be a significant problem in today's military. Some of this may be attributed to the lost art of leadership in a garrison environment.

b. Commander's Risk Reduction Dashboard is a new online software application which will identify high-risk behavior in Soldiers that will be used by commanders to make decisions on how best to help Soldiers through intervention activities.

c. The Community Health Program which will administer this program will be available in all direct reporting garrisons with specified core requirements and allocation of resources as appropriate.

d. Council believes that Retired Soldiers and their Families are a resource that can be used in support of this and other related Army programs.

15. Special Visit: TRICARE Update (MSgt Black and Ms. Engel).

a. The main topic of discussion was the Affordable Care Act and how that affects TRICARE beneficiaries overseas. MSgt Black pointed out that no one has yet come up with definitive information but the consensus was that if you are under 65 and eligible for TRICARE, or if you are 65 or older, eligible for TRICARE, and enrolled in MEDICARE Part B, you are probably covered.

b. Council again urged the TRICARE Area Office to provide the links for subscribing to TRICARE electronic updates that provide information pertinent to Retired Services Members and their Families residing overseas. Council offered to help disseminate that listing on the RetireeInfo List Server. Agreeing to continue to try to obtain such a listing, MSgt Black pointed out that one way Retired Service Members can help themselves is to sign up for news at www.tricare.mil/subscriptions.

16. Progress Report: Liaison Responsibilities (SGM (R) Norris).

a. Total percentage of collective liaison efforts by the Council members improved this quarter despite the fact that two communities (Stuttgart and Vicenza) were still without Council member presence.

b. Since the last meeting, the eight members of the Council made timely liaison with 88% of the 142 assigned contacts.

17. Progress Report: RetireeInfo List Server (LTC (R) Dick). The reconstitution of the RetireeInfo List Server, after the Enterprise Email Transition, continues.

a. LTC (R) Dick has reconfigured the RetireeInfo List Server and successfully posted several test documents.

b. One posting to the entire list of 1,700 subscribers has been sent. Some 200 errors were returned, presumably as the result of residual presence of pre-enterprise military email address. LTC (R) Dick will review the errors. In addition, he will work on several cosmetic upgrades to the email format used.

c. Subsequent to the meeting, the procedure for direct subscription to the list was finalized and published, eliminating the need to manually top-load individual email addresses. Those procedures can be found by clicking on the Subscribe Here link at the lower right-hand corner of the USAREUR G1 webpage www.eur.army.mil/g1/.

18. Progress Report: AERC Webpages (SGM Stewart). Webpages are up to date as of 24 October 2013. SGM (R) Stewart invited all Council members to review it periodically and report to him any changes that need to be made.

19. Update on Recording Volunteer Hours (COL (R) Mentell). Council, as a volunteer organization, has been re-located from USAG Baden-Wuerttemberg to USAG Wiesbaden in the Volunteer Information Management System (VMIS). President will be creating member positions descriptions in the new location. Once those are created, Council members will be asked to post their volunteer hours in the new location. Until then they are to continue to post their volunteer hours as in the past.

20. Update on Local Retiree Councils (LTC (R) Fulton). No major changes

21. Update on Local Retiree Associations (LTC (R) Fulton). No major changes

22. Council Administration (COL (R) Mentell).

a. Existing Member Vacancies: There are two existing vacancies on the Council: vice Gurnell (Northern Italy area) and vice Campbell (Stuttgart area).

b. Projected Membership Vacancies (thru 4th Qtr, CY 14): LTC (R) Fulton - 30 Sep 14, CW3 (R) Simpson - 31 Dec 14

c. Unprojected Member Vacancies: None

d. Existing Officer Vacancies: None

e. Projected Officer Vacancies (thru 4th Qtr, CY 14): Secretary - 30 Sep 14

f. Unprojected Officer Vacancies: None

g. Designation of New Member Mentor: SGM (R) Stewart accepted the position of serving as a mentor to new members when they are selected to join the Council. President also re-articulated the need for new members.

23. Review of Immediate Action Item (SGM (R) Norris).

a. Mr. Schoffman agreed to provide guidance on how mail will be forwarded as installations close.

b. Mr. Vestal agreed to consider DRAS training for all RSOs including developing a link to an electronic version of the Retired Soldier and Spouse Guide.

c. COL Grady agreed to explore the possibility of posting a matrix on the ERMC web site with information on where TRICARE Plus is available and what clinical services are available to Retired Soldiers at which ERMC MTFs.

d. MSgt Black agreed to continue to try to obtain a listing of links for subscribing to TRICARE electronic updates that provide information pertinent to Retired Service Members and their Families residing overseas.

e. SGM (R) Norris will provide changes to liaison matrices to the Council President.

24. Selection of Next Meeting Date and Adjournment. The next meeting will be held on 5 February 2014 via DCO. The meeting was adjourned at 1610 hours.

MICHAEL R. MATTHEWS
COL, GS
DCofS, G1, Representative

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