



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
UNITED STATES AIR FORCES IN EUROPE
UNITED STATES AIR FORCES AFRICA

30 Jan 15

MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION

FROM: European Tri-Component Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Minutes of the European Tri-Component Retiree Council Meeting

1. The summer 2014 meeting of the European Tri-Component Retiree Council (ETRC) convened at 1000 15 Jul 14 via teleconference.
2. The following members participated:
 - a. COL (USA) Michael Matthews Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, USAREUR/G1
 - b. CMSgt (USAF, Ret) Bruce Collet Senior Retired Airman Representative, USAFE, and ETRC chair
 - c. CDMCM (USN, Ret) Bruno Capista Senior Retired Sailor Representative, USNAVEUR
2. The following members were unable to participate:
 - a. Col Donna M.G. Pike Chief, Readiness Division, Manpower, Personnel & Administration Directorate, J1, USEUCOM, and Advisor, ETRC
 - b. Mr. Ricky Harness Deputy Director of Manpower, Personnel, and Services, USAFE/A1D
 - c. CDR (USN) Carla Blair Director, Manpower and Personnel Directorate, N-1, US Navy Region Europe, Africa and Southwest Asia
 - d. MSG (USA) Dante Flojo Senior Enlisted Leader, Manpower, Personnel & Administration Directorate, J1, and Advisor, ETRC
 - e. COL (USA, Ret) Robert Mentell President, Army in Europe Retiree Council
3. Other participants:
 - a. CDR (USN, Ret) Thomas J. Brennan Navy in Europe Member of the Secretary of the Navy Retiree Council
 - b. SGM (USA, Ret) David Stewart Army in Europe Member of the Chief of Staff, Army Retiree Council
 - c. Mr. Eduardo G. Francis Chief, Military Personnel Policy Branch, Military Programs and Policy Division, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, USAREUR

d. Mr. David Fulton

Chief, Relocation Task Force, Wiesbaden
Mission Support Element Director

4. Opening remarks. CMSgt Collet, ETRC acting chair, opened the meeting at 1000. All members met via teleconference with three objectives: 1) review previous ETRC action items and update status, 2) compare and synthesize component-level council topics, and 3) chart a course for future topics and objectives.

5. Administration.

- a. Agenda review: The council approved the agenda as presented
- b. Meeting minute approval: The Council approved the meeting minutes from the 11 December 2013 meeting at Patch Barracks, Stuttgart as written.
- c. Identification of goals and objectives: As identified in the meeting invitation, the primary purpose was to compare minutes from recent component-level retiree council meetings and have situational awareness on all initiatives. The Chief of Staff, Army Retiree Council was held at the Pentagon 28 Apr – 2 May 2014; the Air Force Retiree Council was held at Randolph AFB 5 – 9 May 2014; and the Secretary of the Navy, Navy and Marine Corps Retiree Council is upcoming 19 – 23 Aug 2014 in Washington D.C. Secondary and tertiary goals/objectives were to review previous ETRC topics and determine if they are still applicable and identify any new topics for the council to consider.

6. Update of military retiree issues:

- a. Chief of Staff, Army Retiree Council review, SGM (Ret) Stewart:
 - 1) SGM Stewart highlighted issues presented at this year's 54th CSARC meeting. In all, 22 issues were nominated; 6 were related to health care, 7 to benefits or entitlements and 9 other that were general in nature. It was emphasized that in the face of declining budgets and personnel reductions, it is becoming increasingly difficult at all levels to fund initiatives and sustain existing programs.
 - 2) Health care (cost and sustainment) remains a primary concern for the Army retiree community. Specifically Tricare support and provider availability (CONUS and overseas) and rising costs such as co-pays.
 - 3) Benefits and entitlements are considered a long-term contract with retirees and their families. This included such topics as retaining commissary benefits, adjustments in COLA and issuing permanent ID cards to spouses over 65.

- 4) General topics included Solider for Life program and Retiree Appreciation Days (RAD). Specific to Europe, there was emphasis placed on DFAS continuing to support RADs as they have proved to be an incredible resource in assisting retirees and annuitants with pay and financial issues. Army Knowledge Online was discontinued; however, it was replaced with Solider for Life which now includes e-mail capability.
 - 5) A comprehensive presentation of all topics discussed can be found at Attachment 1.
- b. Air Force 2014 Retiree Council review, CMSgt (Ret) Collet:
- 1) CMSgt Collet recapped this year's 39th Air Force Retiree Council meeting. Comprised of 15 world-wide area representatives, the council reviewed 19 topics being considered for Chief of Staff Air Force. Final outcome of the topics are expected to be briefed to the Chief mid-September 2014 by the council co-chairs.
 - 2) Similar to the Army, the Air Force's topics could be binned into three categories: medical, personnel and administrative, and general. Also similar to the Army, the Air Force is feeling the effects of budget and personnel reductions--thus affecting support to retirees.
 - 3) Medical topics discussed and considered revolved around Tricare, Medicare, fees and the need for expansion of Preferred Provider Network Program for overseas locations.
 - 4) Examples of personnel and administrative topics discussed were similar to the Army's such as indefinite ID cards for spouses, Survivor Benefit Plan and full pay for month of death. In addition, an initiative was brought forward for reserve component survivor benefits for deaths that occur on inactive duty training.
 - 5) General topics included items such as continued paper distribution of the Afterburner newsletter (for retirees without e-mail), the wear of the retiree pin on the uniform; and like the Army, the continued need for DFAS RAD support.
 - 6) Additional information on all initiatives presented can be found at Attachment 2.
- c. Pre-Navy Retiree Council review, CDR (Ret) Brennan:
- 1) As the Navy council had not yet met, CDR Brennan provided six notional topics being considered for presentation from the European region.

- 2) The DoD's one-pound weight restriction for retirees continues to be a top quality of life issue for retired Navy members in the USEUCOM AOR. To compensate, they're asking that the weight limit be raised to five pounds and that either DoD or members themselves pay second destination transportation costs.
- 3) Retirees in Spain are prohibited from shopping in the commissary and the Navy Exchange (NEX.) This is caused by verbiage in the Agreement on Defense Cooperation between Spain and the United States. Their request is the Departments of Defense and State negotiate a change to allow members to enjoy this retirement benefit.
- 4) Space-A tuition cost for DoDDS can range between \$23,500 to \$25,900 per child, per year. Due to this incredible cost, they're requesting either a study be performed to evaluate actual cost or a change to the Status of Forces Agreement to allow retirees to be considered "federally connected" and therefore eligible for Space-A tuition free.
- 5) Medicare members overseas enrolled in Tricare for Life at the age of 65 must pay Medicare Part B even though Medicare benefits are not available overseas. Tricare pays for these benefits—but they're received by Medicare. Their proposal would send the funds to DoD thereby reducing the cost to support Tricare.
- 6) As retirees can be recalled to active duty, a topic being considered would request the Status of Forces Agreement be altered to allow retirees be considered members of the Total Force and therefore eligible for employment into the DoD civilian component.
- 7) The final topic still being considered would allow Space-A travel for un-remarried spouses of deceased retired service members to travel on military aircraft.
- 8) Results of the council meeting should be published in time for the ETRC Fall council meeting. CDR Brennan's presentation can be found at Attachment 3.

7. Previous ETRC Prioritized Issue Review

- a. **Impact of the Affordable Care Act on retired service members overseas.** Council members discussed the topic and all agreed that it needs to remain a focus item and the need to continue pulsing the retiree communities to evaluate its affects. For this meeting, no new issues or concerns were brought forward other than those previously mentioned in the component-level council meeting review (above.)

- b. **Expansion of the Tricare Preferred Provide Network Program.** Both SGM Stewart and CMSgt Collet brought this topic forward to their respective Army and Air Force councils as an offshoot from last December's ETRC meeting. The issue stems from European base closures thereby reducing the number of available medical treatment facilities and forcing members to seek host nation providers. The request is to a) have more host nation providers become available under the Tricare preferred provider network umbrella in areas where there are large communities of retirees and b) continue sustainment in communities that already have members enrolled. At the time of this ETRC meeting, no additional information could be provided from the Army or Air Force meetings. This item remains open.
- c. **DFAS Support to Military Retiree Overseas.** As mentioned previously in the component-level council meeting review, both Army and Air Force expressed the need for DFAS to continue to support European RADs. Both CSM Stewart and CMSgt Collet stated DFAS expressed their regret for not being able to support RADs in 2013 due to budget constraints; however, funds were available in 2014 and to anticipate their support. This item will remain open until the Fall 2014 ETRC meeting and then council members will assess results and impact.
- d. **Military Postal Support to Military Retirees Overseas.** This is an ongoing ETRC issue that continues to be unresolved. The council members considered requesting a "test" location—i.e., a medium-sized base somewhere in the Europe that could temporarily raise its limit to five pounds for a 6-12 month evaluation so actual data could be gathered. This data would then be used to derive what an actual increase to weight would cost. It was also considered to "pulse" the retiree community with a survey to see how important this topic really is and whether it was worth potentially frustrating DoD leadership and placing all retiree postal service at risk. CSM Stewart mentioned that the representative for Korea raised the topic; however, the council tabled the topic and requested additional information. The ETRC council agreed that the topic needed further discussion and to have a telecon at a later date so more time could be focused solely on that topic. Results will then be presented and discussed at the Fall ETRC.

8. New Issues: As this council meeting was directly on the heels of the component-level council meetings (except for the upcoming Navy's), no new items were brought forward by members at this time.

9. Closing Remarks:

- a. CMSgt Collet thanked everyone for their continued support to the retiree community. He also mentioned how important this forum was to share and collaborate on topics. It was very evident during the Army and Air Force council meetings that the two collaborated and were "lock step" in supporting the European retiree population.

- b. Notional dates were considered for a follow-on discussion of the one-pound mail limit targeting September or October. That meeting will be held via telecon.
10. Next Meeting: As this meeting was telecon only, representative will gather at Patch Barracks in Stuttgart for the December meeting. A date will be selected later in the Fall.
11. Adjournment: CMSgt Collet adjourned the meeting at 1145.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Bruce C. Collet', written in a cursive style.

BRUCE C. COLLET, CMSgt (Ret), USAF
Chair