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U.S. ARMY EUROPE ASKS OPINION LEADERS TO SUPPORT U.S. FORCES IN EUROPE DURING HEIDELBERG CONFERENCE

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U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

HEIDELBERG, Germany -- The U.S. Army Europe commander asked French and German opinion leaders to support the Army's presence in Europe during a conference here Oct. 30.

"The current plan that we're on takes us down to about 28,000 Soldiers. I go on record saying that's not enough to do our missions today," said Gen. David D. McKiernan, USAREUR commander.

McKiernan spoke at the 27th USAREUR-sponsored Legion of Merit conference, during which about 50 recipients of the medal

received briefings on the transformation of U.S. forces in Europe and their leading role in the Global War on Terrorism.



War on Terrorism, and shared opinions on a variety of issues facing USAREUR and the U.S. military today.

"It is important to get these briefings ... so that we are informed and can, as Gen. McKiernan asked for this morning, 'preach the gospel' in our society and in the public when we have a chance," said retired German army Gen. Leopold Chalupa, who has attended every LOM conference since the first in 1980.

Chalupa and the other non-U.S. conference attendees have all earned the LOM, which is awarded to U.S. servicemembers and foreign military and political figures for exceptionally meritorious conduct – giving validity to the insights and thought-provoking questions the former senior Cold War leaders offered at the conference.

Discussion was open and frank, including topics such as the role of private security forces in GWOT; generals speaking out against the Army after retirement; and how the U.S. deals with opposing viewpoints from allied parliaments.

Other topics included retention plans, counter-improvised explosive device training, theater security cooperation, Joint Task Force-East, and USAREUR's role in NATO.

“I think it's really something great when we combine senior members of our military together with former senior members of other militaries (to exchange ideas),” said Col. Kevin Beerman, USAREUR engineer.

Given the role allied forces continue to play in U.S. operations worldwide, such interaction with foreign military leaders remains a central reason for holding the annual conference, especially since it falls in line with one of McKiernan's main objectives: building tomorrow's coalitions.

“Making the relationships that form our coalitions is important,” McKiernan said. “Who I am today as a leader I credit to the exposure I've had not just to U.S. leaders, but to leaders of all NATO countries.”



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