

U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

contact: paoci@eur.army.mil
phone: 49-6221-57-5815 / DSN 370-5815
fax: 49-6221-57-6376 / DSN 370-6376



RELEASE #2008-10-22-01

October 22, 2008

European Legion of Merit recipients meet to share expertise, experience with U.S. Army Europe leaders at 28th annual conference

By Sgt. Daniel J. Nichols

U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

HEIDELBERG, Germany -- Active and retired military leaders from across Europe shared their expertise and experience with U.S. Army Europe leaders during the 28th annual U.S. Army Europe Legion of Merit Conference here Oct. 20.



SGT DANIEL J. NICHOLS

After his presentation on the Georgia humanitarian aid mission Brig. Gen. Jon Miller, deputy commanding general of U.S. Army Europe's 21st Theater Sustainment Command (left), discusses his participation in the mission with retired German army Brig. Gen. Dr. Volker Schwamborn (center) and retired German army Lt. Gen. Ruediger Drews, at the 28th annual U.S. Army Europe Legion of Merit Conference in Heidelberg Germany, Oct. 20.

USAREUR officials said the conference recognizes military leaders who have worked closely with the U.S. Army and have been presented the U.S. Army Legion of Merit medal, while also serving as an open forum for allied military leaders to share their perspectives on today's military challenges.

“I think that what is important is that these meetings continue, to meet old friends again, to talk to them again, but also to discuss the present state of our world,” said retired German army Gen. Leopold Chalupa, who has attended every Legion of Merit conference since the program began nearly three decades ago. “Here of course things have tremendously changed, and when we discuss the problems of today, they are different from those behind us.”

The conference also provides a venue for getting information to other military communities in the European theater.

While retired, the officers who attend the conference are all successful and continue to work closely with their nations' defense communities and the U.S. Army, said Col. Ben Everson, chief of USAREUR's International Operations Division.

"They're just like our retired officers," Everson said. "They don't really disconnect from their institutions when they retire. They still act as mentors. We go back and ask for their guidance on things."

Topics at the conference included a USAREUR and 7th Army command overview and transformation update, information on the Republic of Georgia humanitarian assistance mission, and a NATO transformation briefing. Underlying these topics was a constant theme of how military operations are continuously changing in order to meet new challenges.

Although the bulk of information at the conference was presented by USAREUR officers to the guests, discussion and debate were key parts of the event.

"To be totally honest with you, I'm actually hoping we'll get more back from you," Gen. Carter F. Ham, USAREUR commanding general, told participants during his opening remarks at the conference. "We're looking for your feedback and your conversations, your comments and concerns. I look forward personally to engaging in this dialogue with you and helping us better shape the future for the U.S. Army in Europe," he said.

The conference is also a way for USAREUR to strengthen its bonds with fellow NATO allies, the general added.

"This conference today is designed to recognize the value of partnership," Ham said.

"Looking at the U.S. Army and the German army especially, we have a very close cooperation and it's always good to stay in contact," said German army Col. Hans Kling. "To keep the contact, and to exchange information...today's event was a very useful and ... constructive conference."

The conference also included lunch, where discussion continued, and a performance by the USAREUR Soldiers Chorus.



www.hqusareur.army.mil