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### **Bundeswehr presents Cross of Honor to Wiesbaden commander in honor of contributions to German-American relations**

**By Karl Weisel**

U.S. Army Garrison Wiesbaden Public Affairs Office

**WIESBADEN, Germany** – The German army presented the commander of U.S. Army Garrison Wiesbaden commander with one of its highest-ranking military decorations.

Recognizing “outstanding commitment, personal initiative and even courage” on behalf of enhancing German-American relations, German Maj. Gen. Gerhard Stelz awarded Col. Ray Graham with the Cross of Honor of the Bundeswehr Jan. 25.

“The United States of America and the Federal Republic of Germany have shared a long and varied history,” said Stelz, who commands the Bundeswehr’s Wehrbereichskommando II, during the presentation at the Community Activity Center here.

“The values of freedom, democracy and human rights provide the common basis of the German-American relationship. Indeed, our common link is the deep-rooted friendship which has evolved over so many decades.”

Even the closest friendship needs dedicated individuals who keep the flames kindled, said Stelz, referring to Col. Graham’s contributions. “For you, the German-American friendship has never been a mere obligation, but always a matter close to your heart.”



KARL WEISEL

German Maj. Gen. Gerhard Stelz, Wehrbereichskommando II commander, presents Col. Ray A. Graham Jr., commander of U.S. Army Garrison Wiesbaden, with the Cross of Honor of the Bundeswehr Jan. 25 for Graham’s contributions to German-American relations.

Among other accomplishments, Stelz cited Graham's role in opening the doors to Wiesbaden Army Airfield to German citizens who rarely get an inside look at the workings of the U.S. military in Europe during events marking the 60th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift.

"In June last year you opened the doors of the Wiesbaden Army Airfield in Erbenheim as the first U.S. garrison in Germany, and, as I was told, as the first U.S. garrison in Europe ever, after the dreadful attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, for an open day to the public," the general said. "... More than 30,000 visitors came as an overwhelming manifestation and demonstration of friendship and solidarity with the American fellow citizens."

In addition to the Berlin Airlift commemoration, Stelz also praised Graham for helping strengthen ties between the German and American military forces. "This is exemplary and has set new standards for an entirely successful cooperation."

"The Cross of Honor of the Bundeswehr represents the most distinguished German military decoration," added Stelz. "It is a great honor -- and at the same time a real pleasure to me -- to honor such a Soldier for his outstanding services to German-American friendship by awarding this decoration to him."

Graham, who hails from Cleveland, Ohio, assumed command of U.S. Army Garrisons Hessen and Wiesbaden in June 2007. He plans to retire from the Army this summer after 28 years of service.

"I was surprised and deeply moved by this presentation, and am honored to accept in recognition of the many things we have done together to bring our nations' military forces closer together," the colonel said.



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