



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
UNITED STATES ARMY EUROPE AND SEVENTH ARMY
UNIT 29351
APO AE 09014-9351

AEAGA-AERC

9 December 2011

MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION

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

1. The European Tri-Component Retiree Council (ETRC) convened at 0900 on 8 December 2011 in the General Maude Conference Room, Building 2304, Patch Barrack, Stuttgart.

2. The following persons were present:

a. Members:

COL (USA) Theodore J. Fox	Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, USAREUR
COL (USA, Ret) Robert Mentell	President, Army in Europe Retiree Council, and 2011 Chair, European Tri-Component Retiree Council
Col (USAF) Frank Battistelli	Chief, Readiness Division, Manpower, Personnel and Administration Directorate, J1, USEUCOM
Mr. Wayne C. Boswell	Chief, Family and Force Readiness Branch, Readiness Division, Manpower, Personnel and Administration Directorate, J1, USEUCOM
LtCol (USAF) Andrea Miller	Deputy Chief, Personnel Division, Directorate of Manpower, Personnel, and Services, A1, USAFE
CMSgt (USAF, Ret) Michelle Lippert	Retiree Representative, USAFE, and USAFE Member, US Air Force Retiree Council
LCDR (USN, Ret) Arthur Coogan	Retiree Observer, USNAVEUR (via telephone)

b. Visitors:

LTC (USA) Douglas Campbell	Deputy Chief, Readiness Division, Manpower, Personnel and Administration Directorate, J1, USEUCOM
LCDR (USN) Todd Phillips	Posture Planning Branch, Research and Analysis Division, Directorate for Plans and Policy, J5, USEUCOM
Maj (USAF) Tametria S. Whaley	Manpower and Personnel Officer, Family and Force Readiness Branch, Readiness Division, Manpower, Personnel and Administration Directorate, J1, USEUCOM

AEAGA-AERC

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

CPT (USA) Thomas S. Feusi	Manpower and Personnel Officer, Family and Force Readiness Branch, Readiness Division, Manpower, Personnel and Administration Directorate, J1, USEUCOM
Mr. William L. Kiser	Supervisory Management Analyst, Family and Force Readiness Branch, Readiness Division, Manpower, Personnel and Administration Directorate, J1, USEUCOM
Mr. Arthur A. Veseth	Director, Theater Army Postal Operations, Military Programs and Policy Division, DCofS, G-1, USAREUR

3. Opening Remarks. Chair opened the meeting at 0900 welcoming everybody and asking them to introduce themselves to the group.

4. Welcome and Guidance. Col Battistelli, standing in for COL (USA) Michael Godfrey, Director of Manpower, Personnel and Administration, J1, USEUCOM, expressed support for the efforts of the council on behalf of Retired Services Members and the Families and Survivors.

5. Council Administration (Chair).

a. Review of the Agenda: The council approved the agenda as presented.

b. Approval of the Minutes: The council approved the minutes of the 23 June 2011 as presented.

c. Procedures and Documentation: Chair stated that he would prepare minutes of the meeting and share them for review with the members of the council prior to signature. Upon approval of the minutes, the Chair would pass to USAFE for Calendar Year 2012.

6. USEUCOM Force Posture (LCDR Phillips). Col Battistelli explained that the posture of the US military in Europe sets the frame of reference for the environment in which the Retired Service Members and their Families and Survivors living in theater find themselves. Projecting that posture into the future provides the retired community with insight into what is likely to come and what expectations are realizable.

CDR Phillips defined Force Posture as the interrelationship between Forces (forward-stationed forces, rotationally-deployed units, US military capabilities and equipment), Footprint (facilities, pre-positioned equipment sites, and supporting infrastructure), and Relationships (trust, treaty obligations, access agreements, host nation support and status protections).

He highlighted the fact that there are uncertain times ahead driven predominantly by the announced withdrawal of forces from Iraq and Afghanistan and the realities of the national debt and budget deficits. These and other factors are having and will continue to have a dramatic

influence on the US national interests and priorities abroad. The reduction of additional forces and the closure of additional facilities in Europe are to be anticipated.

7. Demographics of Retired Service Members and Annuitants in Theater (COL Mentell). COL Mentell presented demographic data obtained from Defense Manpower Data Center on Retired Service Members and Annuitants with DFAS corresponding address in countries in the USEUCOM area of responsibility as of the end of FY 11. (Annuitants are surviving family members of retired Service Members receiving monies from DFAS, e.g., SBP proceeds.)

a. Overview: There were 14,355 Retired Service Members residing in 42 of the 51 countries in the USEUCOM area of responsibility. In addition, there were 2,520 Annuitants residing in 30 of the 51 USEUCOM countries. Approximately 30% of the retired Service Members and approximately 80% of the annuitants were 65 years of age or older. While the number of Retired Service Members remain virtually unchanged since FY 10 (-7), the number of Annuitants jumped (+297) presumably as the result of a refinement of the source data. Over the same period of time, the percentage of Retired Service Members and of Annuitants remained unchanged.

b. Populations: Of the 14,355 Retired Service Members, 6,841 (48%) were Retired Soldiers, 1,817 (12%) Retired Sailors and Marines, and 5,697 (40%) were Retired Airmen. Of the 2,520 Annuitants, 1,474 (58%) were surviving spouses of Retired Soldiers, 219 (9%) were surviving spouses of Retired Sailors or Marines, and 827 (33%) were surviving spouses of Retired Airmen. All of these percentages are virtually unchanged from those for the end of Fiscal Year 2010.

c. Trends: The trend for Retired Service Members residing in USEUCOM area of responsibility over the period from the end of FY 01 thru FY 11 shows an increase of 4.4%, ranging between 13,594 (FY02) and 14,528 (FY05). The trend for annuitants over the period FY01 thru FY11 in showed a continuous increase of 2.5% from 1,877 (FY01) to the current population of 2,520 (FY11).

8. Updates on ETRC Priorities:

a. Priority 1: TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery Program [PHDP Prescriptions by Preferred Providers and PHDP for Retired Beneficiaries in Germany].

(1) As discussed at previous ETRC meetings, the German government has indicated its intent to enforce a European Union law that prohibits the importation of medicines by mail from outside the EU. USAREUR, as the EUCOM executive agent for Germany, has submitted two requests for exception for PHDP beneficiaries – one for Members of the Force and one for retired beneficiaries. The Germany government has not responded to either request.

(2) Mr. Veseth was able to confirm this statement of the situation as being current based on a recent meeting he had with representatives of USAREUR OJA and USAREUR OPM. He was also able to confirm that German officials are stepping up their confiscation of MPO parcels

that contain prohibited contents including medicines and expanding their efforts to include the confiscation of parcels shipped by Express Scripts, the PHDP contractor.

(3) Maj Whaley mentioned that the EUCOM Surgeon felt that, based on the number of beneficiaries who use the PHDP for the medications and the number of prescriptions they submit, the problem was not yet significant enough to warrant the development of a work-around, especially since German government had not yet taken an official position of the two requests for exception.

(4) The council discussed the option of having PHDP parcels shipped to the support MTF rather than to the beneficiary's APO box. This option was acknowledged to have its advantages as virtually all PHDP prescriptions are issued by physician in an MTF. While the German government had indicated informally that they did not have any objections to this option, the US Army Europe Regional Medical Command (ERMC) Command Judge Advocate rendered a legal opinion that this option would result in the MTFs and ERMC becoming complicit in the violation of Germany law.

(5) The council also discussed the option of the MTF being the source of medications that have been requested previously through PHDP. It was presumed that this option would shift the costs of the medicine to the budget of the MTF resulting in increased operational costs especially if the medication is not on the formulary and has to be special ordered. The concern was also expressed that the 90-day supply of medicine that could be ordered thru PHDP would not be available at the MTF.

(6) The council was of the opinion that waiting for the eventuality that the Germany government would disapproved the requests for exception before developing alternatives was not in the best interest of PHDP beneficiaries, especially since it had already begun to confiscate PHDP parcels. This opinion was reinforced when it was mentioned that the PHDP beneficiary waiting for delivery of a parcel with medicines that may never arrive could be an exceptional family member in dire need of the ordered medication.

b. Priority 2: DFAS Support for Retirees and Annuitants Overseas [DFAS Toll-Free Telephone Number from Overseas]:

(1) As discussed at previous ETRC meetings, the support the Retired and Annuity Pay Directorate of DFAS provides to Retired Service Members and Annuitants in the European Theater consists primarily of the following:

(a) The toll-free telephone number that beneficiaries Germany can use to call Retired and Annuity Pay, which DFAS is keeping in place "for the time being." The number (0800) 5891634 can be dialed from any commercial telephone in Germany.

(b) The annual, two-week long visit by a DFAS representative to Europe during which he visits all of the direct-reporting garrisons and most of the indirect-reporting garrisons in

AEAGA-AERC

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

the Army in Europe, plus Ramstein AB, providing Retired Service Members and Annuitants will pay issues and with on-on-one audits of their pay records.

(2) The council discussed the importance of both of these services and expressed concern that they may be discontinued due to current and anticipated budgetary constraints.

c. Military Postal Support for Retirees Overseas [Increase MPS Weight Limit from 16-Ounces to 5-Pounds; Approve a One-Year test Program; and Restore Postal Support by Department of State].

(1) Col Battistelli asked Mr. Boswell to report on the visit with representatives of the Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA) during a recent trip Ms. Boswell had made to Washington, thus fulfilling a commitment Col Battistelli made to the council at its June 2011 meeting.

(2) Mr. Boswell confirmed the information the council had received previously, specifically, that there was no explicit law or language that authorizes the expenditure of appropriated fund to support providing MPS services to Retired Military Personnel. This is despite the fact that there is and has been a DOD manual that authorizes the service and that the service has been provided for “decades.” Mr. Boswell said he shared the MPSA position that now is not the time to pursue obtaining the necessary legal basis, especially considering the current and anticipated budgetary constraints.

(3) CMSgt Lippert repeated the USAFE concerns of the increased costs of raising the limit and the associated additional workload in theater to handle the mail.

(a) USNAVEUR had previously also expressed concerns about its capability to handle the additional in-theater workload.

(b) USAREUR continues to believe that any increase in in-theater workload would be minimal and current staffing would be able to handle it.

(4) Col Battistelli restated the EUCOM position that, without consensus by all of the components, EUCOM could not support any action of this issue at this time.

9. Identification of New Issues for Consideration:

a. USAREUR (COL Mentell). Five potential issues for possible submission for consideration by the Chief of Staff, Army, Retiree Council were introduced.

(1) Postal Support to Retired Service Members thru Overseas MPOs: The Military Postal Service Agency (MPSA) and some of the services have stated that the primary obstacle to raising the current 16-ounce limit is the increased Secondary Destination Transportation (SDT)

costs, i.e., the cost of transporting the mail from CONUS to or from the overseas theater. These costs are initially borne by OSD but then reimbursed by the services.

(a) The recommendation would be: 1) the adoption of procedures that would have the Box-R patron pay both the inbound and outbound SDT costs and 2) the increase of the weight limit to five-pounds until workload and other impacts could be obtained and evaluated.

(b) The council found this variation to be a very innovative way to avoid any increase in SDT costs while meeting the concerns of Retired Service Member. Mr. Veseth said he had discussed this suggestion with the representatives of MPSA and they believe that it too would require pursuit of a legal basis in order to implement it. It was pointed out that the suggestion did not address the concerns of increased in-theater workload.

(2) Issuance of Smartcards to Retiring Soldiers. Access to Army Knowledge On-Line is being modified, based on security consideration, as well as others, to accept only CACs/Smartcards, eliminating the Username / Password option that currently exists.

(a) The recommendation would be to issue smartcards (CACs) to Retiring Soldiers to permit them continued access to Army Knowledge On-Line during their transition from active-duty into retirement.

(b) The members of the council took notice of AKO security upgrade as it may portend a similar security upgrade with similar impacts to like portals of the other services.

(3) Deduction of Rates at Army Lodging Facilities for Retired Soldiers participating in Retiree Appreciation Days. Overnight lodging rates at Army guest houses are at a point that many military retirees and annuitants cannot afford the set charges. Local garrison commanders do not have the authority to provide discounts to those Retired Soldiers participating in RADs.

(a) The recommendation would be that the contributions – past, present and future – of Retired Soldiers be recognized with a reduced rate at Army Lodging Facilities when the Soldier is participating in a Retiree Appreciation Day.

(b) The members of the council took notice of this Army-unique issue.

(4) Protection of Retiree Appreciation Days. In these times of financial constraints which will certainly result in changes to entitlements and benefits and in reductions in garrison staffing, to lessen the requirement to conduct RADs would not be in the best interest of those who have served, many of whom continue to serve, and of the service activities that support them.

(a) The recommendation would be that a annual Retiree Appreciation Day event at each garrison and overseas theater level remain a requirement.

(b) The members of the council took notice of this Army-unique issue.

AEAGA-AERC

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

(5) Service-Level Retiree Council Coordination. Currently, there are no formal procedure for the service-level retiree councils to coordinate the issues each supports that would require presentation to OSD or higher, to ensure consistent problem statements and recommendations.

(a) The recommend would be that the coordination among the three service-level retiree councils be strengthened by convening formal meetings involving the leadership of each of the councils augmented by selected subject matter experts as required.

(b) The members of council acknowledged that such coordination is already taking place but did not know how structured it was.

NOTE: Subsequent to the meeting, USAREUR submitted the first three issues to HQDA for consideration by the Chief of Staff, Army, Retiree Council.

b. USAFE (CMSgt Lippert). USAFE had no new issue to introduce.

c. USNAVEUR (LCDR Coogan): USNAVEUR had no new issues to introduce.

10. Selection / Prioritization of Issues: The council decided to retain the same issues and with the same prioritization as previously selected, i.e.:

a. Priority 1: TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery Program

b. Priority 2: DFAS Support for Retirees and Annuitants Overseas

c. Military Postal Support for Retirees Overseas

11. Strategy for Pursuit of Prioritized Issues

a. TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery Program: EUCOM J1 will work through the EUCOM Surgeon with the component surgeons and the TRICARE Area Office Eurasia-Africa to develop a solution which would permit PHDP beneficiaries, including retired beneficiaries, to continue to receive the medication.

b. Priority 2: DFAS Support for Retirees and Annuitants Overseas: USAREUR will continue to work with Retired and Annuity Pay Directorate, DFAS, to preserve the toll-free number and to encourage the continuation of the visit by a DFAS representative to Europe

c. Military Postal Support for Retirees Overseas: Given the realities of the current and anticipated budgetary constraints, this issue will be retained as a priority issue but no action will be taken at this time. The council will review the situation at future meetings.

AEAGA-AERC

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

12. Selection of Next Meeting Date:

a. The Chair reviewed the dates for the 2012 service-level retiree council meetings, as the primary purpose for the spring meeting of this council will be to review the results of these three meetings.

(1) Chief of Staff, Army Retiree Council: 23 – 27 April 2012

(2) Secretary of the Navy Retiree Council: April 2012 (The exact dates had not been set when these minutes were prepared.)

(3) Chief of Staff, Air Force Retiree Council: 7 - 11 May 2012

b. Subsequent to the meeting, the council selected 13 June 2012 as the date for the Spring Meeting of the council.

13. Closing Remarks.

a. USAREUR:

(1) COL Fox announced that we would be receiving a new assignment in the summer 2012 time frame.

(2) COL Mentell thanked everybody for their participation and for all they do for Retired Service Members and their Families and Survivors.

b. USAFE:

(1) LtCol Miller announced that she would be receiving a new assignment in the summer 2012 time frame.

(2) CMSgt Lippert announced that she would probably be returning to CONUS in the new year as her civilian employment position is being eliminated and there are no provisions for her accepting a career referral in USAFE.

c. USEUCOM:

(1) Col Battistelli announced that we would be leaving his current position in the spring 2012 time-frame and that LTC Campbell would be his successor.

(2) Mr. Boswell announced that he has accepted a position with the OSD Wounded Warrior Program in Washington, DC, with a reporting date of 15 January 2012.

AEAGA-AERC

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

14. Adjournment. Chair adjourned the meeting at 1345.



FRANK BATTISTELLI
Col, USAF
Advisor

ROBERT MENTELL
COL (USA, Retired)
2011 Chair

DISTRIBUTION:

USEUCOM, ATTN: ECJ1, Unit 30400, APO AE 09131-0400
USAREUR, ATTN: AEAGA, Unit 29351, APO AE 09014-9351
USNAVEUR, ATTN: N1, FPO AE 09613
USAFE, ATTN: A1, Unit 3050, Box 25, APO AE 09095-0025
Ea Council Member
Ea Participant