DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
CHIEF OF STAFF, ARMY RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF G-1
300 ARMY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20310-0300

DAPE-MPL-RS 28 April 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF OF STAFF, ARMY

SUBJECT: Annual Report of the Chief of Staff, Army Retired Soldier Council

1. The fifty-seventh meeting of the Chief of Staff, Army Retired Soldier Council was held at the Pentagon from 23 to 28 April 2017. The Council is administered in accordance with Army Regulation 600-8-7, *Retirement Services Program,* and its charter, which is approved by the Secretary of the Army. The Council represents 1.2 million Retired Soldiers and surviving spouses. We reviewed 30 issues nominated by installation retiree councils. Each issue is discussed in detail in the installation report at Enclosure 4. We extend our gratitude to you and Sergeant Major of the Army Dailey for your strong support of the Council and the retired community.

2. The Retired Soldiers have heard the call of the Soldier for Life (SFL) the program. The SFL Program communicates that Army values are forever…along with the desire for continued selfless service. In or out of uniform, we are Soldiers for Life, and your 965,000 Retired Soldiers are an underutilized resource of your team. We do not see it as merely a jobs program. We need only to hear clearly your mission for us…communicating how and where you want us to serve. We will help hire Veterans, inspire the next generation to serve in the Army, and connect the Army with Americans in hometowns everywhere we live. We urge you to operationalize the Army's largest demographic to realize the full potential of the SFL Program.

3. However, Army communications with your Retired Soldiers lack focus and purpose, while being restricted by technology. *Army Echoes* is a great resource, but it is only one medium, being published only three times per year. We urge you to use all your assets, including installation, state, and Regional Support Command retirement services officers, public affairs officers, and installation and state retiree councils to ensure their efforts are synched with those of the SFL's centers of influence.

4. The single most important and efficient tool for communicating with Retired Soldiers is email. Unfortunately, the only database that maintains Retired Soldiers' email addresses belongs to the Department of Defense. Your support will be critical for convincing DOD to expand its Retiree Address Finder system to include Retired Soldiers' email addresses, which are already resident in the Defense Manpower Data Center's database. With access to these email addresses, the Installation Management

Command estimates it can push your message regularly and reduce current printing and mailing costs by $250,000 in the first year alone.

5. Retired Soldiers continue to express their concerns about eroding military benefits and entitlements. The myriad of "nickel and dime" cuts to benefits and entitlements earned through a Soldier's career of sacrifice and selfless service are evidence we are being more heavily scrutinized than other Federal entitlement programs. The effort to balance the budget must not focus solely on military benefits and entitlements. The recent change to fold TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra into TRICARE Select, which will create new annual premiums and increase co-pays and catastrophic caps for Retired Soldiers is but one example. Others are detailed in Enclosure 4. We urge you to implore Congress to limit healthcare cost increases to the cost of living adjustment for military retired pay and not break faith with the military's retired community.

6. We appreciate LTG Nadja West's initiative to improve access to healthcare and for providing an improved patient experience. We caution that the consistency of this care over time is just as vitally important to the retired community. We also extend our thanks and appreciation to LTG Kenneth Dahl for Installation Management Command's support of Retiree Appreciation Days, its improvement of the Volunteer Management Information System, and for the outstanding work his installation retirement services officers perform every day. We commend the leadership provided by COL Adam Rocke and his team as they incorporate the SFL vision into our Army's culture. We extend our thanks and appreciation for the outstanding support and assistance provided by Mr. Mark Overberg and the Army Retirement Services staff for their work throughout the year supporting Retired Soldiers, their families, and this Council. We also extend our thanks and appreciation to the entire group of distinguished guest speakers listed at Enclosure 1 for the invaluable information and insight they provided.

RAYMOND F. CHANDLER
Sergeant Major of the Army
U.S. Army, Retired
Co-Chairman

JAMES J. LOVELACE, JR.
Lieutenant General
U.S. Army, Retired
Co-Chairman

Enclosures
1. Guest Speakers
2. Council Members
3. Ongoing Initiatives
4. CSA Retired Soldier Council Installation Report

GUEST SPEAKERS

General Mark A. Milley, Chief of Staff, United States Army

Sergeant Major of the Army Daniel A. Dailey

Lieutenant General Joseph Anderson, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7, United States Army

Lieutenant General Kenneth R. Dahl, Commander, U.S. Army Installation Management Command

Lieutenant General Timothy J. Kadavy, Director, ARNG

Lieutenant General (Ret) Raymond V. Mason, Director, Army Emergency Relief

Lieutenant General James C. McConville, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, United States Army

Lieutenant General Nadja Y. West, The Surgeon General, United States Army

Major General Malcolm B. Frost, Chief of Public Affairs

Major General (Ret) James T. Jackson, Director, Vietnam War Commemoration

Major General Michael R. Smith, Deputy Chief, Army Reserve, Office of the Chief, Army Reserve

Colonel Adam Rocke, Director, Soldier for Life Program

Captain Edward D. Simmer, USN, Deputy Director TRICARE Health Plan

Command Sergeant Major Christopher Kepner, Command Sergeant Major of the Army National Guard

Command Sergeant Major James R. Gordon, State Command Sergeant Major Indiana Army National Guard

Command Sergeant Major Melissa Judkins, U.S. Army Installation Management Command

Sergeant Major Scott Wilder, Soldier For Life Program

Mr. Andrew R. Corso, Assistant Director of Military Compensation Policy, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense

Mr. Scott Hope, Deputy Director for Training, Disabled American Veterans

Ms. Sarah Maples, Director, National Security and Foreign Affairs, Veterans of Foreign Wars

Mr. Mark Overberg, Director, Army Retirement Services

Ms. Rhonda Powell, Director, National Security, American Legion

Mr. Jeffrey Presley, Director, Retired & Annuitant Pay, DFAS

Mr. Thomas Shull, Director/Chief Executive Officer, Army and Air Force Exchange Service

2017 CHIEF OF STAFF, ARMY RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL ROSTER
CURRENT MEMBERS

NAME	***IMCOM REGION***	***INSTALLATION***
Co-Chairmen:		
LTG James J. Lovelace	At-Large	At-Large
SMA Raymond F. Chandler	At-Large	At-Large
Members:		
COL Lenore Enzel	Central	Fort Bliss, TX
COL Charles N. Posehn	Central	JB San Antonio, TX
COL Gerald E. Thompson	Atlantic	Fort Stewart, GA
COL Michael H. Zang	Atlantic	Carlisle Barracks, PA
LTC David V. Fulton	Europe	HQ, USAREUR
CW5 David A. Ratliff	Atlantic	Fort Jackson, SC
CSM Divina B. Bobb	Central	Fort Hood, TX
CSM William Grant	Atlantic	Ft. Benning, GA
CSM Joel Jenkins	Pacific	Schofield Barracks, HI
CSM Saundra Matlock-Williams	Atlantic	Ft. Meade, MD
CSM Tommy Williams	Atlantic	Fort Stewart, GA
MSG Miguel D. J. Padilla	Central	Fort Lewis, WA

ONGOING INITIATIVES

1. Continue to support the ongoing efforts between the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs to improve the compatibility of the two health care systems to preserve and improve the benefits for all beneficiary groups.

2. Support efforts to provide full concurrent receipt of military retired pay and disability compensation to all eligible military retirees regardless of disability rating or years of service. Additionally support efforts to provide concurrent receipt of both DIC and SBP to surviving spouses.

3. Support the DFAS initiative to forgive any overpayment of retired pay for any period after the date of death of a Retiree through the last day of the month in which death occurs.

4. Support a test program under which Retired Soldiers who are supported by APOs in Germany be allowed to send and receive parcels weighing up to 5 pounds, for the purpose of quantifying impacts. The three Service Retiree Councils have repeatedly supported a test program and senior leaders in Europe (USAREUR and USEUCOM) and Korea (USFK) have requested the amendment of Military Postal System (MPS) rules to authorize mail privileges for Box R (military retirees) for parcels up to 5 pounds. However, OSD has disapproved those requests citing assumed increases in cost and workload. This issue remains the top quality of life issue, after health care, for military retirees residing in Europe and the Pacific.

5. Support the recommendation for issuance of permanent IDs for spouses and surviving spouses IAW the June 2012 Joint Uniformed Services Personnel Advisory Committee recommendation to OSD allowing Retired Soldiers' spouses and surviving spouses to obtain permanent ID cards at age sixty-five if they purchase Medicare Part B. This was addressed in our 2013 Memorandum to the CSA. Although we considered the comments submitted, in 2014, by HRC we non-concur and remain firm in our 2013 position which said: "Acknowledge spouses' long-term commitment to the Army by issuing them an indefinite ID card at age 65. We request HRC provides any metrics or other data that justifies maintaining the age for a permanent ID card at 75. Otherwise, recommend action immediately be taken to reduce the age to 65 in recognition of the long term commitment of our spouses and to send the clear message that like their Soldiers their association with the Army is for Life.

6. Support the authorization of Space A travel for Surviving Spouses of Retired Service Members. The CSARC, annually since 2008, recommended approval of a change to this policy. We continue to strongly believe that the execution of this initiative will acknowledge a spouses' long-term commitment to our Army at a very small price given that their priority will only allow them to fly when there are empty seats available on flights. This will send a strong message that our surviving spouses' support of the Army will not be forgotten after the death of their Soldier and that their association with the Army, like their Soldier's, is for life.

7. Continue to oppose the imposition of any fees on the TRICARE for Life beneficiaries. Additionally, the current fee structure for TRICARE Standard and Prime should be maintained at the current levels. Any necessary increases should be limited to the most recent COLA.

8. Support the recommendation to rectify the disparity in the National Guard and Army Reserve early retirement by making the original NDAA legislation (signed on 28 January 2008) and subsequent change retroactive to September 11, 2001.

ISSUE: 2017-01-01
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: USAG Stuttgart Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Access to Medical and Dental Facilities

DISCUSSION: Fortunately most retirees in the Stuttgart Military community are not totally dependent on Medical and Dental facilities. Therefore, they do not have a stress effect on the clinics and Tricare, or German or other types of private insurance cover most.

RECOMMENDATION: When clinics have the space and personnel continue to alert the retiree community to availability of services. The Stuttgart Medical Services do this well and are very retiree friendly.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
MAJ (Ret) Anthony T. Moody Council President,
GySgt (Ret) William H. Goble, Council Vice President,
GySgt (Ret) Stephanie Borges, Council Secretary

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council is pleased to hear that there is adequate access to Military Treatment Facilities (MTF) in Stuttgart. Across the spectrum of the retired population, access to care has been an issue for a number of years. The Army Surgeon General has made a commitment to increase access to the maximum extent possible. In the past year, the retired community has seen an increased availability of appointments compared to the previous year. The Surgeon General is commended for this effort. However, there is concern that as the active force increases, access for the retired population will decrease. Forcing Retired Soldiers out of the MTF again is contrary to the Army's commitment to the Soldier for Life program.

ISSUE: 2017-01-02
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: USAG Stuttgart Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Tricare for Life (changes that affect costs or services)

DISCUSSION: Are there any upcoming changes that will affect the service and cost of TRICARE for retirees, those who are not yet 65 and for those 65 and over on TRICARE for life? In addition, how do Retirees get letters to validate that they in fact are on TRICARE?

RECOMMENDATION: Known changes should be published and distributed. The local Tricare Office should assist all retirees in getting an eligibility letter. Many older retirees are not Internet Skillful and require assistance.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
MAJ (Ret) Anthony T. Moody Council President,
GySgt (Ret) William H. Goble, Council Vice President,
GySgt (Ret) Stephanie Borges, Council Secretary

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: With the significant TRICARE changes due to take place in 2018, the Defense Health Agency has developed an aggressive multimedia campaign plan to include a letter to each beneficiary. As it stands, TRICARE For Life and TRICARE Prime will not change, however, those beneficiaries transitioning from TRICARE Standard/Extra to TRICARE Select will require specific communication regarding costs and benefits.

The local TRICARE Service Centers have been closed, however access to eligibility letters is available electronically via TRICARE.mil or via the USPS at: DMDC Support Office, 400 Gigling Road, Seaside, CA 93955

Recommend the Soldier for Life program managers investigate the potential for utilizing TRICARE resources to enhance communication with the Retired Soldier population.

ISSUE: 2017-01-03
INSTALLATION COUNCIL Fort Ord, CA, Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Long-Term Care for Retirees with Tricare-for-Life

DISCUSSION: Long-Term Care is very expensive and can drain a family's life savings, eating up any pension as well as social security payments they may receive. Neither Medicare nor Tricare-for-Life covers the costs of extended stays in a facility (over 90 days, and/or not for rehabilitation). Military retirees have endured much, physically and mentally, while serving their nation, often incurring early or increased deterioration as a result. Lack of ability to pay for extended stays in a Skilled Nursing Facility places great burdens upon the family of the patient, mentally, physically and sometimes monetarily.

RECOMMENDATION: Tricare-for-Life covers at least some of the costs of extended stays in Skilled Nursing Facility.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
COL Paul Fellinger, Garrison Commander, Presidio of Monterey
LtCol (Ret) Richard Novak, Chairman, Fort Ord, CA Retiree Council
CW5 (Ret) Louise Goetzelt, Vice Chairman, Fort Ord, CA, Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: Although the Council agrees that Long Term Care (LTC) is an important aspect of caring for our aging beneficiary population, we understand that this is not a TRICARE benefit. While LTC is not a TRICARE benefit, it should be noted that certain medically necessary treatments while in the LTC environment are covered by TRICARE. The Council highly encourages the Defense Health Agency to include Long-Term Care in any future considerations for improved and enhanced TRICARE and TRICARE for Life benefits.

ISSUE: 2017-01-04
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Ord, CA Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Retiree Access to Recognized Non-traditional Medical Treatments (i.e. Chiropractic, Acupuncture, etc.)

DISCUSSION: Chiropractic and acupuncture treatments are recognized adjunctive therapies to diminish pain, improve quality of life, and reduce or eliminate the need for strong medications. There is a dichotomy between DOD, VA, and TRICARE concerning these treatments. Active Duty Service members may receive chiropractic treatment at a MTF and the VA may provide acupuncture treatments to veterans. TRICARE does not authorize these recognized treatments.

RECOMMENDATION: TRICARE should allow recognized non-traditional treatments such as chiropractic, acupuncture, medical massage, and hyperbaric oxygen therapy. Access to these therapies would improve retirees' quality of life and be cost effective by reducing the need for more invasive treatments and more/stronger medications.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
COL Paul Fellinger, Garrison Commander, Presidio of Monterey
LtCol (Ret) Richard Novak, Chairman, Fort Ord, CA Retiree Council
CW5 (Ret) Louise Goetzelt, Vice Chairman, Fort Ord, CA Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council understands that TRICARE may cost-share only medically necessary services and supplies provided by TRICARE-authorized providers. The services must be authorized by regulation and the provider type must be specifically detailed in the regulation. Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) treatments have gained both favor and acceptance in western medicine through increased use in interdisciplinary pain management centers. Proven through research and utilization, these treatments have shown to decrease opioid use and improve the quality of life for patients. Already in use for active duty and many other Soldier for Life patients, the Council strongly suggests the Defense Health Agency consider a change to the regulatory guidance to allow CAM treatment of patients through TRICARE coverage, at a minimum removing the regulatory stipulation that nontraditional treatments are specifically excluded from coverage.

ISSUE: 2017-01-05
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Drum, NY Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Proposed TRICARE for Life Enrollment Fees

DISCUSSION: TRICARE premiums have already been paid through honorable service in defense of the United States of America.

TRICARE for Life is an optional, supplemental insurance for retirees and their spouse once they reach the age of 65. To be eligible for TRICARE for Life, a retiree/spouse must enroll in MEDICARE Part A and purchase MEDICARE Part B. TRICARE for Life costs are offset by MEDICARE Part B, which costs the service member and spouse a minimum of $100/month each, depending on the family income. Therefore, an additional TRICARE for Life enrollment fee, above and beyond the MEDICARE Part B costs, would create an unfair financial burden for retired military families.

RECOMMENDATION: Oppose the suggested TRICARE for Life enrollment fees in the 2017 federal budget.

APPROVED BY GARRISON RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
MG (Ret) Robert Kasulke, Co-Chairman, Ft. Drum, NY Retiree Council
CMSgt (Ret) Patrick R. Rourk, Co-Chairman, Ft. Drum, NY Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council acknowledges the constraints associated with the budget and competing priorities within the Armed Forces; however, the Council is also keenly aware of the incremental, seemingly small, changes in various fees that continue to diminish the value of the Retired Soldier's income. While there is no current legislation proposing changes to TRICARE for Life (TFL). The Council strongly opposes the imposition of any additional fees upon our most senior Soldiers for Life.

ISSUE: 2017-01-06
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Aberdeen Proving Ground MD Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Space Available Use of Military Dental Clinics by Retirees

DISCUSSION: DOD Instruction 1315.19 (Footnote 1) authorizes access for overseas civilian employees and their families to military medical and dental treatment facilities on a space-available and reimbursable basis only. DOD Instruction 6025.23 (Footnote 2) authorizes military health care eligibility for individuals without a specific statutory entitlement or eligibility, used very sparingly, and only when it serves a compelling DOD mission interest. It shall be on a reimbursable basis, unless non-reimbursable care is authorized by this Instruction or the Under Secretary of Defense waives reimbursement for Personnel and Readiness (USD (P&R)) or the Secretaries of the Military Departments when they are the approving authority.

It is estimated that there are 2,107,000 military retirees as of 2015. Of that number, 1,004,000 are over the age of 65. Almost 42,000 retirees live outside the continental United States, Alaska and Hawaii. The TRICARE Retiree Dental Plan, administered by Delta Dental under contract with DOD, has over 1.5 million enrollees. Few if any of these retirees currently use the services of the military dental clinics. The National Defense Authorization Act for 2017 (Footnote 3) seeks to reform TRICARE, attempting to return beneficiaries back into the MTFs to increase training, experience and readiness of the military's medical cadre. In this same vein, retirees are a ready source as military dental clinic beneficiaries, when space is available, to hone skill sets and maintain proficiency and readiness of military and contract civilian dental professionals. TRICARE contracts with dental providers can be amended to include reimbursement for services rendered.

The Aberdeen Proving Ground Retiree Council believes this privilege should be considered for all military retirees eligible for TRICARE.

RECOMMENDATION: In support of the principles of Soldier for Life, the Aberdeen Proving Ground Retiree Council requests consideration for authorizing space available dental treatment in military dental clinics for military retirees.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
LTC (Ret) Nelson Laughton, Co-Chairperson, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD Retiree Council
1SG (Ret) Thomas Shumate, Co-Chairperson, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: Army Regulation (AR) 40-400 provides that Retired Soldiers may receive medical and dental care on a space available basis. The medical treatment facility (MTF) commander has the final authority to determine if a beneficiary will be seen. Retired Soldiers are considered category 3 if they are enrolled in TRICARE Prime. Categories 1 and 2 are for active duty military and active duty family members enrolled in TRICARE Prime. Retired Soldiers not

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[1] http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/131519p.pdf

[2] www.dtic.mil/whs/**directives**/corres/pdf/602523p.pdf

[3] https://armedservices.house.gov/hearings-and-legislation/ndaa-national-defense-authorization-act; http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/FY17%20NDAA%20Bill%20Summary.pdf

enrolled in TRICARE Prime, category 5, can also be seen on a space available basis. While Retired Soldier access to medical care at the MTF has increased in recent years, the same is not true for dental care. As an enhancement to the care provided to Soldiers For Life, the Council recommends that The Surgeon General assess this situation and determine if it is feasible to provide additional access for dental care.

ISSUE: 2017-01-07
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Ord, CA Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Cost of Living Calculation of Retirement Pay

DISCUSSION: Currently, the annual cost-of-living increases of military retirement pay (and veterans' disability pay) are based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI). As a person ages, their spending habits change due to changes in their family, life style, and frequently due to medical care. The CPI does not adequately reflect these changes, often a great increase in medical care expenses. Recently Rep. Peter A DeFazio, D-Ore., introduced H.R. 3961, which would require the establishment of a Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers to compute cost-of-living increases for Social Security and Medicare benefits under titles II and XVIII of the Social Security Act.

RECOMMENDATION: The DoD should utilize a "Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers" to compute cost-of-living increases to compute cost-of-living increases for military retirees, especially older retirees, such as those over 60 years of age.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
COL Paul Fellinger, Garrison Commander, Presidio of Monterey
LtCol (Ret) Richard Novak, Chairman, Fort Ord, CA Retiree Council
CW5 (Ret) Louise Goetzelt, Vice Chairman, Fort Ord, CA, Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council agrees that the elderly population is potentially disadvantaged by the current CPI and would support any initiative that would more accurately reflect the true costs, specifically medical, faced by an aging population.

ISSUE: 2017-02-08
INSTALLATION COUCIL Fort Ord, CA Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Surviving Spouses of Retired Service Members Access to Space-A Flights.

DISCUSSION: Retirees and their spouses are authorized to travel "Space-A," an earned benefit. After the death of the Retired Service Member, their surviving spouse no longer has access to this benefit. This causes hardship to the survivor wishing to or needing to travel to visit children, parents, or other family members. Access to Space-A travel by surviving spouses could greatly enhance their quality of life.

RECOMMENDATION: Allow surviving spouses of retired Service Members to travel Space-A.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
COL Paul Fellinger, Garrison Commander, Presidio of Monterey
LtCol (Ret) Richard Novak, Chairman, Fort Ord, CA Retiree Council
CW5 (Ret) Louise Goetzelt, Vice Chairman, Fort Ord, CA, Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: Space A travel for surviving spouses of Retired Soldiers is a recurring Soldier for Life concern that has been addressed in several previous Council reports. We continue to strongly believe that favorable consideration and execution of this initiative will first and foremost acknowledge a spouse's long-term commitment to our Army at a very small price given that their priority will only allow them to fly when there are empty seats available. The contention that a major increase in volume and subsequent costs will occur by providing this entitlement to surviving spouses is not considered valid given the current circumstances. The sooner this initiative can be adopted the better. This will send a strong message that our surviving spouses' support to all Services will not be forgotten after the death of their Soldier and that their association with the Army, like their Soldier's, is for life. Recommend a proponent on the Army Staff be identified to facilitate this recommendation.

ISSUE: 2017-02-09
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Aberdeen Proving Ground MD Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Unaccompanied Space Available Travel for Foreign Born Spouses

DISCUSSION: DOD Instruction 4515.13 (Footnote 4) is the guiding reference for space required and space available travel on military aircraft. The instruction authorizes space available travel for dependents in many situations in various categories. In addition to higher priority categories, category VI allows spouses to travel space available when accompanied by their sponsor. The Aberdeen Proving Ground Retiree Council requests consideration for adding the authority for unaccompanied space available travel for foreign-born spouses to annually travel to their OCONUS home for non-emergent reasons. An eligible parent or legal guardian must accompany dependents under 18 years of age. Travel would be authorized in Category VI, the lowest priority for space available travel.

According to USA Today, September 6, 2013 (Footnote 5), one in five married households have at least one spouse who was born outside the United States. Three states and the District of Columbia have 12% or more households where one spouse is American-born and the other is not. Immigration trends have contributed to the growing number of foreign-born Americans, and the Census Bureau found 21% of married households in the U.S. in 2011 had at least one foreign-born spouse. DMDC demographics of the military (in 2014) (Footnote 6) show that 55.3% of 1.326 million active duty members are married, and 45.3% of 832,000 reserve component members are married.

The Migration Policy Institute (Footnote 7) states 5% of active duty military (in 2008) are foreign-born, totaling over 65,000 members. According to USCIS, about 300 foreign-born spouses become naturalized citizens every year. The majority of these naturalized citizens come from Japan, Germany, and South Korea.

Although the Aberdeen Proving Ground Retiree Council believes there may be approximately 233,000 foreign-born spouses in both the active and reserve component, we also believe the impact on the space available system will be minimal. Nonetheless, we believe this privilege should be expanded to include unaccompanied space available travel for this demographic.

RECOMMENDATION: In support of the principles of Soldier for Life, the Aberdeen Proving Ground Retiree Council requests consideration for adding the authority for unaccompanied space available travel for foreign born spouses to annually travel Category VI to their OCONUS home for non-emergent reasons.

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[4] http://execsec.defense.gov/Portals/34/Documents/Air%20Transportation%20Eligibility%20(DoDI%204515.13)%20January%202016.pdf

[5] http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/09/06/stateline-marriages-foreign-spouse/2775271/

[6] http://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2014-Demographics-Report.pdf

[7] http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/immigrants-us-armed-forces

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
LTC (Ret) Nelson Laughton, Co-Chairperson, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD Retiree Council
1SG (Ret) Thomas Shumate, Co-Chairperson, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council does not support the introduction of unaccompanied Space Available Travel for foreign-born spouses. While the Council fully supports seeking opportunities to enhance Retired Soldier quality of life, this issue, as it is currently framed, affects more than just the Retired Soldier population and does not seek to establish equity for all spouses of Retired Soldiers.

ISSUE: 2017-02-10
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Aberdeen Proving Ground MD Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Space Available Travel for Surviving Spouses of Retirees

DISCUSSION: DOD Instruction 4515.13 (Footnote 8) is the guiding reference for space required and space available travel on military aircraft. The instruction authorizes space available travel for dependents in many situations in various categories. In addition to higher priority categories, category VI allows spouses to travel space available when accompanied by their sponsor. The Aberdeen Proving Ground Retiree Council requests consideration for adding the authority for space available travel for surviving spouses of military retirees. An eligible parent or legal guardian must accompany dependents under 18 years of age. Travel would be authorized in Category VI, the lowest priority for space available travel.

According to the DOD Office of the Actuary Statistical Report on the Military Retirement System for 2014 (Footnote 9), there are 327,073 survivors receiving pay for survivor's benefits. 280,205 of those are over the age of 65. 6,803 do not live in the continental United States, Alaska or Hawaii. 251,619 are surviving spouses not children or an insurable interest.

Although the Aberdeen Proving Ground Retiree Council believes there may be approximately 252,000 surviving spouses, we also believe the impact on the space available system will be minimal. Nonetheless, we believe this privilege should be expanded to include space available travel for this demographic.

RECOMMENDATION: In support of the principles of Soldier for Life, the Aberdeen Proving Ground Retiree Council requests consideration for adding the authority for space available travel for surviving spouses of military retirees.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
LTC (Ret) Nelson Laughton, Co-Chairperson, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD Retiree Council
1SG (Ret) Thomas Shumate, Co-Chairperson, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: Space A travel for surviving spouses of Retired Soldiers is a recurring Soldier for Life concern that has been addressed in several previous Council reports. We continue to strongly believe that favorable consideration and execution of this initiative will first and foremost acknowledge a spouse's long-term commitment to our Army at a very small price given that their priority will only allow them to fly when there are empty seats available. The contention that a major increase in volume and subsequent costs will occur by providing this entitlement to surviving spouses is not considered valid given the current circumstances. The sooner this initiative can be adopted the better. This will send a strong message that our surviving spouses' support to all Services will not be forgotten after the death of their Soldier and that their association with the Army, like their Soldier's, is for life. Recommend a proponent on the Army Staff be identified to facilitate this recommendation.

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[8] http://execsec.defense.gov/Portals/34/Documents/Air%20Transportation%20Eligibility%20(DoDI%204515.13)%20January%202016.pdf

[9] http://actuary.defense.gov/Portals/15/Documents/MRS_StatRpt_2014.pdf

ISSUE: 2017-02-11
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Stewart, GA Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Allowing technical and vocational students to retain or enroll in DEERS

DISCUSSION: Dependents of active duty and retirees between the ages of 21 and 23 may be enrolled in DEERS and be eligible for health care benefits if they are enrolled full-time in an accredited college in pursuit of an Associate's Degree or higher. Full-time students pursuing certificate or diplomat programs, primarily associated with technical and vocational career field, are not eligible under current rules.

Politicians and educators throughout our country have proclaimed the need for vocational training, diplomas, and certification programs. This emphasis on technical training is highlighted by the fact that Post 9-11 GI Bill benefits are available for training at non-college-degree Institutions. However, students enrolled in these programs are being denied DEERS enrollment for health care benefits because they do not meet the criteria of attendance at an Associate's Degree or higher institution.

RECOMMENDATION: The Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System allows full-time dependent students enrolled in technical and vocational non-degree programs to enroll in DEERS and be eligible for healthcare benefits commensurate with the benefits provided to students in degree programs.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
COL (Ret) Gerald E. Thompson, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council
CSM (Ret) Tommy A. Williams, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: This Soldier for Life issue is resolved and the Council recognizes that more must be done to communicate these type of changes to the Retired Soldier population. Full-time dependent students enrolled in technical and vocational non-degree programs are permitted to enroll in DEERS and be eligible for healthcare benefits commensurate with the benefits provided to students in degree programs. Sponsors/students should ensure the school is in compliance with DoD Voluntary Education Partnership and reflected in GoArmyEd.com. If a school is listed and in compliance and the student still has issues with being added into DEERS, then the student/sponsor should request the ID card site's, Site Security Manager to contact the Army Project Office at 502-613-9029 or email the documents to askhrc.army@us.army.mil for additional guidance or clarification to resolve any outstanding issue.

ISSUE: 2017-02-12
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Ord, CA, Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Access to the Armed Forces Recreation Area (AFRC), Garmisch (Edelweiss Hotel)

DISCUSSION: Recently this Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR), a non-appropriated fund activity, started prohibiting active duty and retired Service Members not stationed in (in the case of retirees not being in EUCOM for 30 days or more and in possession of appropriate German tax documents) EUCOM from staying at their facility. This is a reduction of earned benefits, and could unfavorably impact the travel costs incurred by retirees.

RECOMMENDATION: Allow retired Service Members to patronize the MWR facility, AFRC Garmisch and the Edelweiss Hotel. If this really does hinge upon the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), modify the same or at least allow retirees not staying in the EUCOM area for 30 days or longer to obtain German tax documents so they may utilize this earner benefit.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
COL Paul Fellinger, Garrison Commander, Presidio of Monterey
LtCol (Ret) Richard Novak, Chairman, Fort Ord, CA Retiree Council
CW5 (Ret) Louise Goetzelt, Vice Chairman, Fort Ord, CA, Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council understands the legal complexity of this issue and does not wish to involve itself in what is essentially a SOFA matter under the purview of the EUCOM, USAREUR and USAFE Commanders. The Council does believe that IMCOM HQs could mitigate this Soldier for Life concern generated by the change to Edelweiss Lodge and Resort (ELR) patron eligibility by better promoting local German (English-speaking) hotels in the vicinity of the ELR as viable options for visiting Retired and Active Duty Soldiers who do not enjoy any privileges under the NATO SOFA in Germany. Research has shown that there are many German hotels in the area of ELR that provide a service that is on par, if not better, than the ELR and often at a lower rate. Additionally, the Council recommends IMCOM HQs research the feasibility of an ELR business model that would permit visiting Retired and Active Duty Soldiers who do not enjoy any privileges under the NATO SOFA to stay at the ELR. The Council understands that this business model would need to conform to German customs and taxation rules and that achieving such a business model would require great coordination and time. Yet, for the specific aim of demonstrating commitment to the principles of Soldier for Life and keeping faith with the retired community, the Council highly encourages IMCOM HQs to embrace these recommendations.

ISSUE: 2017-02-13
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Knox, KY Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Army University programs be made available to retirees

DISCUSSION: The Army University is an umbrella organization similar to any state university system. Its function is to bring together all Army schools, training and education facilities, research experience and libraries under one roof. This will enable the Army to accredit and certify Soldiers from the moment their initial training starts and give them academic and professional credits for the training completed. This accrediting and certification would accumulate as they attend formal classroom and hands-on training and assumed responsibility as their career progresses. Presently some MOS's and duty assignments do carry recommendations for college credits, but not all. If colleges and universities do not accept these credits, they have no value to a Soldier pursuing a college degree. This program will organize the Army's education system in such a way to maximize a Soldier's ability to be granted credits for education and experience during his Army career. In some cases, the Army schools, along with the experience of having worked in an MOS, surpasses the standard for accreditation by colleges. Presently most colleges will not accept credits deserved by virtue of Army schools and experience when many times the Army experience exceeds the civilian requirements.

RECOMMENDATION: Chief of Staff of the Army direct that the benefits provided by the Army University Program to active duty Soldiers be provided to retirees.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
COL (Ret) J. Michael Weaver, Chairperson, Fort Knox, KY Retiree Council
CSM (Ret) Rodney J. Newell, Vice-Chairperson, Fort Knox, KY Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Army University cannot currently broaden its mission from active and reserve components to support Retired Soldiers. We will readdress the issue on behalf of Retired Soldiers and all Veterans when the Army University program is fully operational.

ISSUE: 2017-02-14
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Knox, KY Retiree Council

SUBJECT: The Army's Career Skills Program be made available to retirees

DISCUSSION: The Army's Career Skills Program (CSP) is designed to provide civilian job placement training to Soldiers upon completion of their term of service. Training is provided by employers in conjunction with installation civilian education offices and varies from installation to installation. Some employers are local to a specific installation; others hire nationwide. This benefit should be made available to retirees with consideration of hiring requirements of employers, especially in situations where job openings go unfilled by currently separating Soldiers.

RECOMMENDATION: Chief of Staff of the Army direct that the Career Skills Program be made available to retired Soldiers.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
COL (Ret) J. Michael Weaver, Chairperson, Fort Knox, KY Retiree Council
CSM (Ret) Rodney J. Newell, Vice-Chairperson, Fort Knox, KY Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: Until CSP is fully matured across the Army and able to support its primary target audience of active duty Soldiers, the Council is not willing to recommend that CSP be made available to Retired Soldiers. The focus of CSP is the at-risk service member. This includes Soldiers who are involuntarily separating due to force shaping, rapid separation from active duty, and separation due to medical conditions that prevent further service. CSP is designed to provide credentialing, training, apprenticeships and internships to active duty service members during their transition period (180 days from separation) in hopes that these opportunities will result in job offers or valuable resume building experiences as service members prepare to transition to civilian life.

What is available to many Retired Soldiers and Veterans is the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program. It is a public state and federally funded program for SFL Veterans who choose, prepare for, obtain and maintain employment. VR&E services can assist with job training, employment accommodations, resume development, and job seeking skills. To be eligible, a SFL Veteran must have received a discharge that is other than dishonorable and have a service-connected disability rating of at least 10% from VA.

ISSUE: 2017-02-15
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Drum, NY Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Survivor Outreach Services

DISCUSSION: The sacrifice of a Fallen Solider is a debt that can never be repaid. Nearly 10 years ago, the Army established this program to provide long-term assistance to families of the Fallen. The survivor outreach program confirms the Army's commitments to the families of the Fallen and reassures survivors that they are linked to the Army for as long as the family desires. Our surviving families tell the Army's story, and the Survivor Outreach Program is part of that story.

RECOMMENDATION: Continue to sustain support for the Survivor Outreach Program.

APPROVED BY GARRISON RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
MG (Ret) Robert Kasulke, Co-Chairman, Ft. Drum, NY Retiree Council
CMSgt (Ret) Patrick R. Rourk, Co-Chairman, Ft. Drum, NY Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: We applaud the Army for continuing to support the families of fallen service members.

ISSUE: 2017-02-16
INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC COUNCIL: Fort Stewart, GA Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Early Retirement for Mobilized Members of the Guard and Reserve

DISCUSSION: Under normal circumstances a member of the Guard and Reserve with at least twenty years of qualifying service may at age 60 receive retired pay.

The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, members of the Reserve Components who served at least 90 days during a deployment in support of overseas operations as the Iraq or Afghanistan campaigns are authorized to retire three months early for each 90 day period they served in any fiscal year. This applies to only members of the Guard or Reserve who participated in qualifying active-duty mobilization after January 2008, which is the date the act, was signed into law. Service on or before this date does not count toward early retirement.
In January 2013, Congress expanded the criteria for early retirement by authorizing additional eligibility requirements. The new rules allow members of the Guard and Reserve to count activations for national emergencies including natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods etc. Members of the Reserve Components may also be eligible to retire early if they were in a Warrior Transition unit and were injured while mobilized for responses as stated above.

The 2015 National Defense Authorization Act removed the requirement for the 90 days of active duty service to be performed within the same fiscal year; activations could cross over into a consecutive fiscal year. This language is not retroactive to 28 Jan 2008, the date of the original legislation.
The above legislation recognized the contributions and hardships of Reserve and Guard members and their families during prolonged mobilizations after 28 January 2008. However, since September 11, 2001 over 900,000 Reserve and Guard members have been mobilized in support of overseas contingency operations or domestic natural disasters. Reserve and Guard members mobilized before 28 January 2008 made the same family and civilian career sacrifices incurring the same risks and hardships those mobilized later.

RECOMMENDATION: The CSA Retired Soldier Council proposes that Army leadership requests the Department of Defense include language in the Department's FY 2018 National Defense Authorization Act to The Congress rectifying the disparity in Guard and Reserve Component Early Retirement by making the original legislation and subsequent changes retroactive to Sept 11, 2001 rather than 2008.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
COL (Ret) Gerald E. Thompson, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council
CSM (Ret) Tommy A. Williams, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council supports the recommendation to include language in the DoD's FY18 National Defense Authorization Act rectifying the disparity in the National Guard and Army Reserve early retirement by making the original legislation (signed on 28 January 2008) and subsequent changes retroactive to September 11, 2001. The National Guard and Army Reserve have made essential contributions in time of war and national defense. They provide critical combat power in support of contingency operations and national emergencies. Making the original legislation and subsequent changes retroactive to September 11, 2001 is a sign of good faith commensurate to the service of our Guardsmen and Reservists.

ISSUE: 2017-02-17
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Sill, OK Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Elimination of the "Widow Tax"

DISCUSSION: Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is a monetary award offered by the VA and is deducted from the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP), hence why it is called a "Widow's Tax". Annuitants cannot receive both SBP and DIC concurrently. When DFAS is informed that an annuitant is eligible to receive DIC from the VA, DFAS will deduct the amount of DIC received from the amount of SBP. For example, if an annuitant receives a monthly annuity of $500 from DFAS and becomes eligible to receive a monthly DIC award of $400 from the VA, DFAS will deduct the $400 DIC from the $500 SBP and pay the remaining $100 to the annuitant.

If the SBP is greater than the DIC award, a partial refund of premiums paid into the program during the service member's retirement will be made. If the DIC payment is greater than the SBP payment, SBP will be stopped completely and all basic spouse premiums paid into the program during the service member's retirement will be refunded.

The Army nor DOD can resolve this issue, as it currently exists. Only congress can resolve the issue by passing a law that allows two entitlements to come out of the same pot of money just as they did with a Veterans disability award and the service retirement. Bottom-line, the law as it currently exists is not fair to surviving spouses of service members and needs to be changed.

RECOMMENDATION: CSA Retired Soldier Council elevates this issue to Congress for discussion.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
LTC (Ret) G. Allen Shell, Co-Chairman, Fort Sill, OK Retiree Council
SGM (Ret) Ed Mounts, Co-Chairman, Fort Sill, OK Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: This issue has been raised to the Council multiple times. While DoD believes there is perceived duplicity in the SBP and DIC, those of us who have served see this differently. The Council will continue to support this issue and seek opportunities to support other issues that send a strong message that our surviving spouses' support will not be forgotten after the death of their Soldier and that their association with the Army, like their Soldier's, is for life or as long as they desire.

ISSUE: 2017-02-18
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Drum, NY Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Defense Self-Service Logon for Retired Soldiers and Surviving Spouses – Progress and Success

DISCUSSION: In recent years retired Soldiers' Army Knowledge Online accounts terminated as the Army transformed to a more cyber secure enterprise system. Additionally, the vast majority of retired Soldiers and surviving spouses do not possess a common access card, which provides access to military agencies and programs. Retirees maintaining access to these agencies and programs is a vital element to telling the Army's story to a Nation in which less than 10% of our population are veterans. Recent changes have allowed retired Soldiers and surviving spouses to access, TRICARE and my pay accounts using the Defense Self-Service logon system. Retirees appreciate these changes and use of this system, which enables retired Soldiers to access and obtain copies of Army personnel and health records through Human Resources Command. Our sense is this important program is working well for retired Soldiers and surviving spouses.

RECOMMENDATION: Continue to sustain and support the Defense Self-Service logon enterprise system.

APPROVED BY GARRISON RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
MG (Ret) Robert Kasulke, Co-Chairman, Ft. Drum, NY Retiree Council
CMSgt (Ret) Patrick R. Rourk, Co-Chairman, Ft. Drum, NY Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council agrees DS Logon provides a positive and necessary service ensuring a secure method for Retired Soldiers to access specific government websites. DS Logon should be sustained and efforts should continue to ensure user-friendly and secure access to critical websites is maintained and improved where possible.

ISSUE: 2017-02-19
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Campbell, Kentucky

SUBJECT: Change Survivor Benefit Plan law to allow two years post retirement to decide upon participation.

DISCUSSION: The decision for retiring service members (SM) to take part (or not take part) in the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) must, by law, be made prior to their retirement date. Many SMs choose not to take part because they are unsure about their financial situation after retirement. No small numbers of SMs retire without having post-retirement employment arranged. Others have employment arranged but are unsure as to how much disposable income they will have. Many change jobs several times post-retirement. Having to make the decision "right now", in a situation of employment and financial turmoil, causes many not to take part in the Survivor Benefit Plan.

Retirement Services Officers (RSO) regularly hear from Retirees requesting to participate in SBP after declining the opportunity at retirement. The RSOs must inform the retiree that SBP is no longer available to them and counsel them to try to purchase commercial life insurance or some other method of securing their spouse's finances in the event of their death.

Currently, if a SM declines SBP at retirement, the decision is irrevocable. If that SM does take part in SBP, they are "locked-in" and must pay premiums for two years before they are allowed the "flexibility" to quit the program only between the 25th and 36th month of receiving retired pay. This "flexibility" does little for the retiring SM with no employment or budget.

If SMs were allowed additional time to establish employment and allow their personal finances to develop after retirement before being required to make a SBP decision, it is very likely that significant numbers would elect to participate, rather than decline irrevocably. For those that still elect not to participate, at least they would be confident in their decision. For those that choose to do so, they would have the peace of mind that their spouse and children would be well taken care of after their death.

More worrisome is the fact that younger SMs, retired due to disability, find little value in SBP due to their age and the fact that they would not be "paid-up" until they are 70 years old. A preponderance of these SMs do not reside near a military installation after separation, rely heavily on VA disability compensation and have even more difficulty finding employment and establishing a budget.

This change is unlikely to increase the overall cost of the Survivor Benefit Plan Program. In fact, with more SMs taking part, the program would likely become healthier. Additionally, requiring SMs to pay back premiums to their retirement date pro rata would complete the solution. The Reserve Component SBP (RCSBP) program has set precedence for pro rata payments for RCSBP back to the date of receipt of the notification of eligibility commonly referred to as a "20 year letter."

RECOMMENDATION: In support of the principles of Soldier for Life, in the realization of the incredible stress undergone by SMs when transitioning from the service, and in the spirit of taking care of Family Members, the Council recommends an amendment to U.S.C. Title 10, Chapter 73, "Annuities Based on Retired or Retainer Pay" in the next National Defense Authorization Act, to allow all retiring SMs two years to make a decision to participate in SBP (with costs pro-rated back to the retirement date).

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
LTG (Ret) Keith Huber, Chairman, Fort Campbell Retired Soldier Council
CSM (Ret) Marvin Hill, Co-Chairman, Fort Campbell Retired Soldier Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council does not support the recommendation to allow a two year post-retirement window to decide upon participation in the Survivor Benefit Plan.

ISSUE: 2017-03-20
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Stewart, GA Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Use of OMA funds by Retiree Councils

DISCUSSION: As noted in the CSA Retired Soldier Council Comments of Issue 2016-03-23, "Operation and Maintenance, Army [OMA or any other Appropriated Funds (APF)] should not be used to fund gifts to retirees, because gifts to those that are no longer part of the active force does not further the objectives of the OMA." While the council reiterated that use of OMA for gifts is both inappropriate and unwarranted, the rationale is not consistent with supporting the idea that "once a soldier, always a soldier/a bounded Alumni." Simply put, if the Army supports the idea that a retired soldier is still part of the force, subject to recall under specific conditions, and a valuable asset to help strengthen and recruit soldiers of the future, then limited use of OMA funding should also be used to support this idea. Other avenues for funding such as Morale, Welfare & Recreation (MWR)/ Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA)/Army Air Force Exchange System (AAFES) should be utilized to the fullest extent possible before authorizing OMA funding; however, OMA can and should be authorized in support of Retiree Appreciation Day or other activities supporting the Army's Soldier For Life (SFL) as mandated by AR 600-8-7. Retired soldiers are considered to be part of the force.

RECOMMENDATION: In full support of the principles of the Soldier for Life, the Army must adjust or amend AR 600-8-7 authorizing use of Base Operations (BASOPS) funding to include OMA in support of Retiree Appreciation Day activities and allow non-standard purchases where necessary.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
COL (Ret) Gerald E. Thompson, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council
CSM (Ret) Tommy A. Williams, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council recognizes that expending OMA funds in support of Retiree Appreciation Days is an issue that must be addressed by IMCOM and resolved by the Command. AR 600-8-7 requires regionally affiliated installations to provide sufficient funding to provide current information to Retired Soldiers who reside within their catchment area. OMA can and should be authorized in support of Retiree Appreciation Days or other activities supporting the Army's Soldier For Life concept when determined appropriately by local commands. The IMCOM Commander and Command Sergeant Major will continue to address installation standardization for notification and conduct of RAD events.

ISSUE: 2017-03-21
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Drum, NY Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Defense and Finance Accounting System (DFAS) limited Hours of Operation

DISCUSSION: DFAS's telephone call center operates from 0800 to 1700 hours (EST) in support of 9 million beneficiaries to include 2 million retired military personnel and surviving spouses. Many retired Soldiers and surviving spouses work during normal business and/or reside in OCONUS locations. These time and location realities restrict access to customer support at DFAS. While many finance inquiries can be addressed through the web-based system on a 24/7 basis, some inquiries require person-to-person conversations.

RECOMMENDATION: Department of Army support DoD change to enact 24-hour coverage, as this issue affects the Active and Reserve Component, as well as the retiree community.

APPROVED BY GARRISON RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
MG (Ret) Robert Kasulke, Co-Chairman, Ft. Drum, NY Retiree Council
CMSgt (Ret) Patrick R. Rourk, Co-Chairman, Ft. Drum, NY Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Soldier for Life community is sufficiently covered by DFAS hours of operation (0800-1700). DFAS has researched this issue and the Council concurs that establishing a 24-hour call center is cost prohibitive. DFAS also currently has a web-based system that adequately provides services to the Soldier for Life population 24/7.

ISSUE: 2017-03-22
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Stewart, GA Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Retirement Benefits for Reserve Component Soldiers & Retirees

DISCUSSION: The term "Reserve Component (RC)" is used to refer collectively to the seven individual reserve components of the armed forces: the Army National Guard (360,171 soldiers), the Army Reserve (304,221 soldiers), the Navy Reserve (109,738 sailors), the Marine Corps Reserve (108,216 marines), the Air National Guard (105,708 airman), the Air Force Reserve (104,877 airman), and the Coast Guard Reserve (9,488 sailors). Thus, as of September 2013, there were 1,102,419 soldiers, sailors, Marines, and Air Guard/Air Reserve personnel.

Frequently heard from these RC personnel in National Guard (NG) Armories and Army Reserve Centers, and from retired RC soldiers at Retiree Appreciation Days (RADs), are questions such as: "What are my retirement benefits?" "When can I draw retired pay?" "What happens when I am a "Gray Area Retiree"? "What benefits can my family expect?" Retirement benefit and service responses RC soldiers and retirees are looking for seem to center around pay, social security, base/post access (commissary & PX/BX privileges), medical & dental care, VA assistance, GI loans, life insurance, retirement homes and death benefits.

RC Soldiers and families are interested in receiving the latest information to assist in preparation for retirement, or in retirement itself. Higher headquarters (battalion or higher) seem to have and host pre-retirement/retirement briefings. Lower headquarters (company/detachment) do not appear to have the necessary personnel resources to support periodic briefings. Thus, RC soldiers/RC retirees and their families away from major Armories/Reserve Centers find the onus is on them to secure this essential information as they approach retirement or have retired.

RECOMMENDATION: Preparation is the "key" to successful RC retirement. Support intended is to make sure the knowledge and understanding of all retirement programs and opportunities are afforded to RC personnel in a timely fashion, so they can make sure informed decisions are made, further structuring their plan. The United States Army Reserve Command (USARC) and Chief of the United States Army Reserve (CAR), along with the National Guard Bureau (NGB), should develop RC oriented retirement materials that delineate the benefits and services RC soldiers/RC "Gray Area" retirees /RC soldiers over 60 and their families can expect. The information delineating the RC retirement benefits and services should be available at NG Armories and Reserve Centers for both RC soldiers and "Gray Area" RC soldiers. RC retired soldiers 60+ years old, but not yet drawing retired pay, should either be considered for hard copy dissemination if not online, and those who are online can virtually access the USARC/CAR/NGB websites for RC retirement benefits and services.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
COL (Ret) Gerald E. Thompson, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council
CSM (Ret) Tommy A. Williams, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council recommends the Director, Army National Guard and the Chief, Army Reserve continue addressing the cohort of over 100,000 Gray Area Retired Soldiers that are not being serviced by pre-retirement processes. While we concede that each individual has a personal responsibility to seek their entitlements we also believe the RC could assist by adding a message to their information campaign seeking contact with those Gray Area Retired Soldiers

who are not receiving their retired pay or have not maintained current contact information with Human Resources Command (HRC). The Council concurs with the RC policy that all retirement-eligible Soldiers receive a retirement briefing prior to entering the Gray Area effective 18 February 2017. This process will greatly enhance the ability of those RC Soldiers for Life preparing for retirement. In addition, HRC has a role in maintaining contact with these soldiers and the Council recommends that it become more engaged with the Gray Area Retired Soldiers.

ISSUE: 2017-03-23
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Stewart, GA Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Casualty Assistance to Survivors of Retired Soldiers

DISCUSSION: Under current policy per Army Regulation 600-8-1, there is no requirement that Casualty Assistance Centers appoint Casualty Assistance Officers to assist the survivors of a Retired Soldier. Retired Soldiers could ideally fill this "assistance gap". Retired Soldiers for Life deserve the peace of mind that comes with the knowledge that their surviving spouses will receive capable and dignified assistance from a Retired Soldier. The challenges facing survivors of Retired Soldiers are no less than those dealt with by survivors of Active Soldiers. During the difficult period following the death of a Retired Soldier, the spouse should have qualified in-person assistance from the Army. As a minimum, the spouse may need assistance in notifying the Defense Finance and Accounting Service and establishing the Survivor Benefits Annuity account. The deaths for many Retired Soldiers result from a service connected condition incidental to wounds, injuries and illnesses incurred during military service. In these cases, the surviving spouses are entitled to Dependent and Indemnity Compensation and Dependent's Educational Assistance that are administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The evidence gathering and application process for these benefits are very complex. Other issues facing the widowed spouse may include assisting with arranging funeral honors and making a claim for insurance administered by VA. In addition to benefits administered by the federal government, many states have generously provided benefits to survivors of current and former military members. These benefits may include property tax exemptions or discounts, reduced fees for motor vehicle registration and discounts for other services administered by state and local governments.

Casualty assistance provided by Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) to surviving spouses of military retirees is often inconsistent and inadequate. Most VSOs are not military retirees. The Department of Veterans Affairs General Counsel does not accredit local Post Service Officers. The majority of accredited VSOs work at Veterans Regional Offices, therefore due to time and distance are not accessible to many elderly surviving spouses. Additionally, accredited service officers working at the VA Regional Offices do not receive causality assistance training.

Through distance learning, training costs for Retired Soldiers, as Casualty Assistance Officers/Noncommissioned Officers are minimal. A model for this training is the Combat Related Special Compensation and Traumatic Service Group Life Insurance tutorial developed in 2012 by Human Resources Command's Adjutant General Directorate.

RECOMMENDATION: Recommend the CSA direct the Army Staff review the suitability, feasibility and acceptability of training and utilizing Retired Soldiers as Casualty Assistance Officers/Noncommissioned Officers for surviving spouses of Retired Soldiers.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
COL (Ret) Gerald E. Thompson, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council
CSM (Ret) Tommy A. Williams, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council supports the revised language in AR 638-8 which now requires the Casualty Assistance Center (CACs) to assign a Casualty Assistance Officer (CAO) to support a family when requested. In addition, Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) are available. SOS provides survivors specific information on state and/or local benefits. This process

ensures all Soldiers for Life are cared for properly. The Retired Soldier population can provide assistance.

ISSUE: 2017-03-24
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Drum, NY Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Retired Soldier Council Volunteer Hours Add Value for the US Army

DISCUSSION: Since March 2016, the Fort Drum NY Retired Soldier Council has captured Council volunteer hours using the local Army Community Service Volunteer Management Information System (VMIS) system. We are now averaging about 1,300 volunteer hours every 90 days and this projects to more than 4,000 hours per year.

Our primary concern is not volunteer recognition for this council but rather using the existing US Army Installation Command and Army Community Service Volunteer Management Information System (VMIS) to illustrate local Retiree Council's support for the Soldier for Life effort Army wide. The council's activities include efforts to strengthen communications between the Active Army, the Army National Guard, the U.S. Army Reserve, and the retired community as well as the local community. They tell the Army Story to potential recruits, local leaders and elected officials.

RECOMMENDATION: Use the VMIS Army wide to document Retired Soldier Council volunteer hours in support of Soldier for Life program.

APPROVED BY GARRISON RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
MG (Ret) Robert Kasulke, Co-Chairman, Ft. Drum, NY Retiree Council
CMSgt (Ret) Patrick R. Rourk, Co-Chairman, Ft. Drum, NY Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: Soldiers for Life can currently use VMIS to log/track their hours by creating a dedicated group for their organization. Retired Soldier Councils can coordinate with an Army Volunteer Coordinator to capture all volunteer hours at their installation. VMIS is currently undergoing modernization testing and the results will be released to the field in late 2017. In addition, these groups could be used to identify and record the contributions of Retired Soldiers, thereby enhancing SFL programs.

ISSUE: 2017-03-25
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Army in Europe

SUBJECT: Volunteer Management Information System (VMIS) Enhancement

DISCUSSION: Retired Soldiers are acknowledged as a powerful enabler of our force readiness and management of our limited fiscal resources in our garrisons, due to their willingness to volunteer time, energy, and expertise to programs supporting our military communities,

The Volunteer Management Information System (VMIS) (Footnote 10) assists the Army Volunteer Corps in managing these dedicated volunteers and allows volunteers a way track their hours, awards, trainings and certificates. This IMCOM-managed application is capable of generating reports on how many hours an individual volunteered and on how many hours volunteers contributed to a specific organization.

However, VMIS has limitations in the data it captures. Specifically, when individuals register in VMIS as a volunteer, they are restricted to identifying themselves in only one category (e.g., Retired, Family Member and DA Civilian). As a result, we have many Retired Soldiers who are potentially identified in VMIS as a DA Civilian, as a Family Member, or as a contractor. We also have many Family members of Retired Soldiers who volunteer but are only identified as a Family Member within VMIS. The inability to select all categories that apply to one when registering in VMIS masks the full contribution that Retired Soldiers and their Family Members and survivors bring to an installation.

In addition, VMIS has limitations in that the reports that an Army Volunteer Corps Coordinator can generate do not provide a holistic view of the contributions made by the various segments of the volunteer population. Specifically, reports can be generated for an individual volunteer and for a specific organization that used volunteers. A report cannot, however, be generated by category of volunteers or across organizations.

The ability to generate a VMIS report that shows how many volunteer hours Retired Soldiers, for instance, have contributed in a given garrison or region would provide a more complete perspective of their contribution. It could also be used to market the volunteer program to underrepresented segments of the community.

RECOMMENDATION: Chief of Staff, Army, urge the Commander, U.S. Army Installation Management Comment, to direct a feature enhancement be made to the VMIS in order (1) to capture a volunteer in all categories (using the DOD ID Card categories) they are entitled to claim and (2) to incorporate flexibility and ability in the VMIS reporting system to allow Army Installation Volunteer Corps Coordinators to produce reports that show the holistic contribution of all volunteer populations.

APPROVED BY ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON: LTC (Ret) Dave Fulton, President, Army in Europe Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council recognizes that current council members can use VMIS to log/track their hours by creating a dedicated group for their organization. Retired Soldier Councils can coordinate with an Army Volunteer Coordinator to capture all volunteer

[10] https://www.myarmyonesource.com/familyprogramsandservices/volunteering/vmis/vmishome.aspx

hours at their installation. VMIS is currently undergoing modernization testing and the results will be released to the field in late 2017. In addition, these groups could be used to identify and record the contributions of Retired Soldiers, thereby enhancing SFL programs.

ISSUE: 2017-03-26
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Sill, OK Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Army Education Centers Supporting Retiree Appreciation Days (RAD)/ Retiree Events

DISCUSSION: In an effort to bring in newer Retirees at the RAD and provide them face time with Education Center representatives to show them opportunities that they have and are available with their benefits, as the current policy reads the Education Center's on all military installations are not allowed to attend Retiree Appreciation Day events anywhere across the DoD. This policy is wrong and limits options to our Retiree's.

Most Education Center personnel agree that our on-post schools should be able to attend events such as this; however, higher headquarters has placed upon this policy on us. As for the exact policy, please refer to Footnote 3 of DoDI 1322.25, 15 March 2011, incorporating Change 3 effective 7 July 2014. Schools seeking access to the installation as stated in the DoDI also include the schools that currently have an MOA to offer education programs on the installation. On-post schools must abide by the same rules. The above DoDI is the main regulatory policy document. The rest are policy memorandums we have received from Army HQ, ACES at HRC level that have restated Army policy on installation access to include where schools can go on an Army installation and for what purpose. They have either originated from the TAG or the director of Army Education at HRC. Briefings from DoD OSD Chief, Voluntary Education, Office of Military Community and Family Policy basically states education fairs and hiring events are the only places any school, on or off post, may go.

They all at one point or another refer to the above DoDI. In the attempt to protect our Soldiers and Family members from the unscrupulous schools who prey upon them for their education benefits, it has also severely restricted where legitimate schools can go and what they can do on a military installation to include those that currently have an MOA to operate on an installation.

The key paragraphs of DoDI 1322.25 that are specifically in question (or interpretation) which need to include RAD and retiree events are:

- Page 21, para 3.c - Educational institutions interested in providing education, guidance, training opportunities, and participating in sanctioned education fairs on a DoD installation will provide their requests to the responsible education advisor, who will review and analyze these requests on behalf of the installation commander.

- Page 22, para 3.e.2 - Engage in unfair, deceptive, or abusive marketing tactics, such as during unit briefings or assemblies; engaging in open recruiting efforts; or distributing marketing materials on the DoD installation at unapproved locations or events. (Specifically only authorized at Career Fair's and Education Fairs as stated by memorandums and briefings by DoD)

- Page 26, para 4.f.1 - Only advise or counsel students at the education center or at a location approved by the responsible education advisor.

RECOMMENDATION: CSA Retired Soldier Council contact the Chief, Army Continuing Education regarding Army policy as directed by the DoD. POC is Dr. Pam Raymer, Chief, Army Continuing Education, at HRC (FT Knox). Email is pamela.l.raymer.civ@mail.mil and phone (502) 613-8630.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
LTC (Ret) G. Allen Shell, Co-Chairman, Fort Sill, OK Retiree Council
SGM (Ret) Ed Mounts, Co-Chairman, Fort Sill, OK Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council acknowledges that all Army Installation Education Centers are funded and staffed to support each installation's Active Duty Soldier population and all Soldiers for Life. To the extent that resources permit, education centers may conduct and participate in community-wide education promotional activities, such as community/retiree appreciation events. However, due to mission requirements and staffing, at times education centers are challenged to support their core mission, prohibiting their ability to support these additional post-wide events. These events are currently authorized under current Army policy. Including Army Education Center at RAD events will greatly contribute to the SFL program.

ISSUE: 2017-03-27
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Stewart, GA Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Provide Army RSOs with Retiree Contact Information

DISCUSSION: In support of Army Regulation 600–8–7, Retirement Services Program, it is imperative that the Army communicates with retirees and their families reducing concerns, issues and rumors. Retirees need to know about the many changes that impact them -such as medical and pay benefits. Thus, the Army G1 RSO should be working with DFAS – Cleveland, to supply the Post RSOs with retiree contact information (i.e. the first list of those retired soldiers with E-Mail addresses and USPS addresses, and a second list of those retired soldiers with only USPS addresses).

Like with other installations, the Fort Stewart RSO has very limited funds, and by all indications, the next fiscal year will be worse. In February 2017, Fort Stewart spent in excess of $28,000 on printing and postage for mailing hardcopy flyers informing retired soldiers and their families of its Retiree Appreciation Day (RAD). This mailing cost has now become prohibitive for Fort Stewart. That is why the Fort Stewart RSO and its Retiree Council is suggesting a way to better communicate with and disseminate information to retirees in its service region. Obviously, the various means of technology will be the fastest and most inexpensive method of communication with those retirees who receive information in print fashion. But what about those retired soldiers who are not connected digitally?

In 2016 DFAS – Cleveland provided the Fort Stewart RSO with 60,000+ USPS addresses on retired soldiers in Fort Stewart's service area. This was a combination of retired soldiers who had both E-Mail addresses and USPS addresses, and those retired soldiers that had only USPS addresses. If DFAS - Cleveland could separate from this list those retired soldiers who have E-Mail addresses, leaving a contact listing of retired soldiers who only have USPS addresses, an effort like this would cut in half the $28,000 Fort Stewart spent on printing and postage for mailing hardcopy flyers to the retired soldiers within their service region.

A solid supporter, DFAS – Cleveland also provided a 30,000+ "ListServ" of retired soldiers with their E-Mail addresses, within the Fort Stewart's service area. Fort Stewart RSO and its Retiree Council will continue to emphasize using E-Mail addresses to send flyers informing retired soldiers and their families of its annual RAD.

RECOMMENDATION: Petition DFAS – Cleveland to supply each Post RSO with both contact information lists for retirees within their service region, in the form of a retiree database. The first download of retiree contact information should be those retired soldiers with E-Mail addresses. The second download of retiree contact information would then be those retired soldiers with only USPS addresses. Both contact lists should then be supplied to Post RSOs annually.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
COL (Ret) Gerald E. Thompson, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council
CSM (Ret) Tommy A. Williams, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council recommends DFAS and DMDC partner to pursue a solution which will allow access to the Retiree Address Finder (RAF) to include the

email address retained in both. This will provide the RSO and Installation Retiree Council a list of Retired Soldiers in their area of responsibility. Current contact with the all Retired Soldiers is a key tenant of the Soldier for Life Program. Additionally this will result in a significant cost savings.

ISSUE: 2017-03-28
INSTALLATIONCOUNCIL: Fort Sill, OK Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Retiree contact information

DISCUSSION: Throughout the year, the Retirement Services Office (RSO) and the Retiree Council must contact the Retiree and the current services used are inadequate. This is used to facilitate actions for Retirees for retiree events or issues that impact the Retiree, their spouses, widows and widowers. Currently the RSO offices collect the address of the retiree while the retiree is in the out-processing stage and we as the Army must rely on the retiree to update this information over time. The most common practice is to mail flyers or other information using print materials which is not effective. The cost just for Fort Sill to print and mail items just for the Retiree Appreciation Days is well over $30,000, to send information to our Retirees with over 40% being returned as undeliverable. The costs associated here are too much of a burden for the Retiree Council as they are not funded by the local command and rely on fundraisers to produce, print, and mail these document but also to coordinate and perform their Retiree Appreciation Day events.

Many Retirees after retirement re-locate to a new location within 12 months of their retirement date. There are currently a number of Retirees who have multiple addresses. Some maintain a state residence in one state while residing in another state simply to avoid taxes on their retirement. While this is a problem in and of itself, it is just one example of the difficulty in finding the exact location of the Retiree or their family. The RAD is a DA mandated regulatory requirement and to operate the RAD, the Army for each installation should offset the funding for the print material. Technology is the best way to reach the thousands of Retirees in each AOR. It only makes sense to use existing contact resources that are already used to support these functions.

RECOMMENDATION: In support of the principles of Soldier for Life, the Army must assist the various Retiree Council's in funding their print contact initiatives at no less than $30,000 per AOR. Currently DFAS has the email of each Retiree while the RSO has no access to these emails. DFAS should be required to assist the RSO in accumulating the correct email addresses for the Retirees in their specific AOR. This information could be done simply from DFAS by identifying each Retiree by their state of residency and providing these emails to the RSO office.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
LTC (Ret) G. Allen Shell, Co-Chairman, Fort Sill, OK Retiree Council
SGM (Ret) Ed Mounts, Co-Chairman, Fort Sill, OK Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council recommends DFAS and DMDC partner to pursue a solution which will allow access to the Retiree Address Finder (RAF) to include the email address retained in both. This will provide the RSO and Installation Retiree Council a list of Retired Soldiers in their area of responsibility. Current contact with the all Retired Soldiers is a key tenant of the Soldier for Life Program. Additionally this will result in a significant cost savings.

ISSUE: 2017-03-29
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Stewart, GA Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Joint Service Retiree Council within each Army RSO

DISCUSSION: The Army currently leads the way in servicing retirees by regulation with permanent RSO staff. Army RSOs not only assist Army retirees, but also provide assistance and support to retirees from other branches of service. A significant number of retirees from other services also regularly attend Army RADs to stay informed of issues and seek to assistance.

The Fort Stewart RSO, for example, provides support and assistance to retirees as follows:
52,845 Army retirees
14,332 Family members of Army retirees
53,525 Air Force retirees
12,439 Family members of Air Force retirees
64,329 Navy/Marine retirees
17,634 Family members of Navy/Marine retirees

This means the Fort Stewart RSO provides support and service to a joint retiree community of 215,104 individuals.

There is no doubt that each Army RSO will continue to provide excellent care and assistance to retirees from the other branches of service; and unfortunately comes at an increased cost in man-hours and wages to each Army RSO, with already stretched resources. The lack of similar RSO support in each of the other three branches of service means the Army RSOs are providing the other three branch retirees support and service for free, a true test of 'joint service' support.

One logical solution would be to form a Joint Service Retiree Council within the area of responsibility of each Army RSO. The leadership of the Ft Stewart RSO and its Retiree Council could establish a Joint Service Retiree Council with the bases where other branches of services are located to ensure all retirees, regardless of branch of service, receive similar assistance across the board. A Joint Service Retiree Council would improve the care and assistance given to retirees and their families. The mutual exchange of retiree information and resources among all branches of service would share the costs now born mainly by Army RSOs, while enhancing benefits received by all military retirees and their families.

Since this is an unfunded request, installations most likely are going to be short Temporary Duty (TDY) funds for an annual face-to-face Joint Service Retiree Council meeting. Although not the best, virtual applications can bring installation retiree representatives from all branches of service together to form the Council, exchange information, and share available resources benefiting military retirees.

RECOMMENDATION: That CSA Retired Soldier Council support an initiative by each Army RSO to establish and sustain Joint Service Retiree Council, with representatives from other branches of service at bases in each Army RSO service region.

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
COL (Ret) Gerald E. Thompson, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council
CSM (Ret) Tommy A. Williams, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council recognizes that the Army Staff cannot direct DoD Retiree Council activities and is not responsible for funding of Joint Service Councils or activities, except at the currently established Joint Bases. Army Retiree Councils are encouraged to include Joint Service Members on their Councils where appropriate and acceptable by Installation Commands.

ISSUE: 2017-03-30
INSTALLATION COUNCIL: Fort Stewart, GA Retiree Council

SUBJECT: Using Web Site and Social Media to Better Support Retirees

DISCUSSION: Reservists across the country need to be aware of all their benefits. Transition and accredited financial counselors need to be readily available as early as 18-12 months before their exit from the military, in order to acquire as much knowledge of available support and resources possible, in order to make informed decisions - the values of Soldier for Life. Our use of the electronic highway can greatly enhance RSO series of sessions by re-enforcing that retirement is a process. Each Army RSO should establish and keep current a Web Site in support of Army retirees and their families. This Army RSO retiree web site might be a stand-alone web site but better supported and utilized by retirees if it is attached to the web site of the respective Army RSO's Post (i.e. Fort Stewart, GA). Since the Post's Public Affairs Office (PAO) supports the Post web site then it would make sense that some digital support would be available to the RSO. The budgets of all Army Posts and their RSOs are being constrained. To continue to best support retired soldiers, teaming digital efforts now are more critical than ever.

Besides web based information transfer, another cost effective way to communicate to retired soldier and their families is through the use of social media. The Army Post's PAO along with the respective RSO should establish an Army Post retiree social media page on one or more of the established media sites (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). These media sites would allow an instantaneous flow of information at no cost, with minimal overhead being involved in maintaining each site.
DFAS – Cleveland could supply to each retired soldier in the Post's service region their respective Uniform Resource Locators (URLs), along with the social media address for the Post's Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts. These actions would continue to support the Army's "Soldier for Life" program by conveying appropriate messages to the retired soldier population through these media forms.

RECOMMENDATION: CSA Retired Soldier Council support informed communication with retired soldiers through each RSO Post's URL, and attached to their Post Web Site a URL for their Army RSO. The CSARC should endorse the Army G1's establishment of Army retiree social media page(s) on one or more of the following social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram).

APPROVED BY INSTALLATION/GARRISON/ASCC RETIREE COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS:
COL (Ret) Gerald E. Thompson, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council
CSM (Ret) Tommy A. Williams, Co-Chairperson, Ft. Stewart, GA Retiree Council

CSA RETIRED SOLDIER COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Council acknowledges that Soldier for Life Office currently manages social media accounts on one or more of the following social media sites: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and RallyPoint later this year. RC retirement benefits and services can be downloaded and printed from the current RC Retirement webpages and are available upon request via RC RSOs and/or HRC, RC Retirement Branch. Army Reserve pre-retirement briefings are conducted at locations for the identified RC audience (i.e. population density and/or locations not previously serviced). This process provides sufficient information to the Soldier for Life community.