

VFW Leaders Kick Off New Year With Troop Visits Abroad

Delegation arrives in Europe to continue legacy of service to overseas troops, veterans, and families

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WASHINGTON — Last week, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief Carol Whitmore, Washington Office Executive Director Ryan Gallucci and Director of Operations Brad Hazell landed in Brussels to begin an eight-day command visit to Belgium and Germany, visiting major commands such as NATO's Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and United States European Command (EUCOM), as well as U.S. service members, Department of Defense (DOD) civilians, veterans and military families who live and work in the two countries.

"I'm so honored to get this opportunity to return to Europe and represent the VFW to our troops serving here," said Whitmore, an Iraq war veteran who was also stationed in Germany during her 36 years in the U.S. Army and Army Reserve. "The U.S. military's support to our NATO allies and European partners is so vital to the security not only here in Europe, but also for us back home and around the world. That's why it is important for us to be here letting our servicemen and women know they are not forgotten, and we will continue to support them anyway we can."

In addition to providing a morale boost, troop visits enable VFW leaders to learn about their missions, readiness, and quality of life. As part of a larger annual campaign to visit installations and sites worldwide, findings from each trip abroad enable the VFW to better advocate for service members and their families' needs.

"The VFW works hard advocating on behalf of our warfighters," said Gallucci, who is also an Army Reserve veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. "Getting a firsthand look at what the nation is asking them to do and how they are being cared for is critical to our confidence,

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competence, and credibility, whether we are engaging with senior leaders at the Pentagon, testifying before Congress, or reporting back to the administration.”

Similarly, spending time with overseas veterans permits VFW delegations to better understand the unique challenges of using post-service benefits and programs while in a foreign country. In 2024, DOD determined that overseas military retirees may retain American postal privileges after the VFW made the issue a key policy priority in their advocacy efforts.

“Visits overseas are so important for VFW leadership because they allow us to have a face-to-face interaction with the DOD civilians, military families, VFW members and other veterans who make up the lifeblood of the American military communities here. How they are supported by the DOD, the VA and State Department can have a big impact on their ability to support our military’s missions abroad,” said Gallucci.

Another priority that came from VFW command visits overseas is comprehensive legislation to overhaul the Department of Veterans Affairs’ Foreign Medical Program. As the VFW delegation continues its current visit with troops and veterans in Europe, news came today that the Foreign Medical Program Modernization Act, was re-introduced on the floor of the House of Representatives by Rep. Jeff Van Drew (R-N.J.).

“This is exciting news!” said Whitmore. “Knowing that the bill Congressman Van Drew re-introduced today is a direct result of last year’s fact-finding visits overseas, is proof positive that these trips are worth the effort it takes to make them happen. Veterans abroad can rest assured the VFW has their backs.”

Since their arrival in Europe, the VFW team met with key leaders at U.S. Army Garrison Benelux, to include U.S. Army and Ukrainian liaisons to SHAPE, to learn about support to NATO’s mission, especially strategic deterrence on NATO’s eastern flank. Before leaving Belgium, the VFW delegation participated in a wreath laying at Ardennes American Cemetery, reflecting on the 5,162 Americans laid to rest there from World War II. In Germany, the team has visited U.S. military leaders and troops assigned to several installations and combatant command headquarters, such as United States European Command and United States Africa Command in Stuttgart, and Installation

Command – Europe and U.S. Army Europe and Africa in Wiesbaden, and will visit the Kaiserslautern Military Community in Ramstein, Landstuhl and Kaiserslautern in the coming days.

[View photos from the trip here.](#)

For more updates, be sure to follow the VFW on [LinkedIn](#), [X](#), and [Instagram](#) under @VFWHQ and on [Facebook](#) under @VFWFans.