Dear National Guard/Military Retirees, Families, and surviving spouses,

I hope this letter finds each of you well. I am writing to inform you of some updates to the “Retiree Weekend.” Since last year’s event, I have had a series of meetings with North Dakota National Guard staff members, the North Dakota National Guard’s Retiree Advisory Board (NDNRGB), and past members of the Retiree Weekend planning committee.

The purpose of those meetings were to develop changes to the weekend and identify topics of interest to embrace the Army’s “Soldier for Life” philosophy that would increase attendance by all Retired Soldier groups (Retired Soldiers, Gray Area Soldiers, and other military affiliated Retirees). As Retirees, you and your families deserve our respect and continued support. We believe an important part of our obligation to you is providing updates on your benefits and entitlements, and RAD weekend gives us a great opportunity to engage with you. Below are some highlights of the changes. I ask for your support so that we may continue to host the Retiree event at Camp Grafton.

**Summary of Changes:**

1. The event name will change to, “Retiree Appreciation Days (RAD),” and will be on 9-10 September 2022, with 11 September being an optional 3rd day. RAD is an official program of record for both the Army and Air National Guard. The event will continue to be at Camp Grafton in order to keep costs down and draw upon military and state support staff. Family members, including spouses, significant others, and caregivers are welcome to attend this exciting event. The NDNRGB will continue to provide guidance, oversight, and a planning committee with Ms. Ashley Timian as the team lead. The event will continue to be a three-day event, but there will be times focused on new or Gray Area Retirees and times focused on current Retirees (those that were AGR or are age 60+ and drawing benefits). All events will be open to all Retirees should they choose to attend.

2. Friday’s proceedings will begin at 1230. Events for Gray Area and recent Retirees will be from 1300 to 1500. The Retiree Benefits and Changes presentation for other Retirees will begin at 1500. At 1615, the Adjutant General will address both groups and present the North Dakota National Guard update. After that, all group photos will be taken and there will be an appreciation barbeque. Attendees may depart anytime, but are welcome to stay for as much of the three-day program as they wish.

3. On Saturday, for all those who register, the agenda is packed with new and relevant briefings. After the last briefing at 1415, the Memorial Service and recognition for those Retirees who have passed away in the past year will take place. Immediately after the service, there will be a no-host social followed by a barbeque. There will not be a formal sit down dinner this year. These changes will solve a problem we encountered last year. Some attendees mentioned they did not want to wait all afternoon or miss the Memorial Service to make it home at a reasonable time.
4. Retirees that wish to stay Saturday night and enjoy more of Camp Grafton may do so. The only event scheduled for Sunday will be an optional tour of Camp Grafton, and you must preregistered for that.

5. An exciting change we have decide on is to include Retirees from all branches of service. Over the years, we have had many Retirees; including friends from the Army Reserve as well as other Services express a desire to attend. While we will not actively advertise to those groups this year, we want to be more inclusive, so please encourage all your Military affiliated friends and their families to attend this event.

You may recall from the letter last year, if attendance continues to fall off, we risk losing the weekend. I am excited for the changes this year, because both the Board and I believe it will lead to greater attendance. A lot of good work has gone into the redesign of this weekend. I hope you will support it by attending and encourage others to attend as well. Please look for the formal invite, registration form, and draft agenda by mid July.

Until then, if you have any questions or thoughts, feel free to pass them on to the planning team members we have listed at the bottom of this letter. I also want you to know that we are looking to revitalize the Mesa, Arizona gathering. There will be more to follow on that event, but if you have any ideas please pass those on as well.

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Sincerely,

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