

OPAG Minutes
16 January 2008
1300 – 1600
Naval Services FamilyLine WYN Bldg 200

The meeting was called to order at 1303. Members in attendance were:

Mrs. Josi Hunt, CNO Ombudsman-at-Large
Mrs. Diana Campa, CNO Ombudsman-at-Large
Mrs. Sue Genie, COMNVRESFOR Senior Spouse Advisor
FORCM Kevin Blade, CNIC
Mrs. Pat Nicholson, Family Support Program Manager, COMNAVRESFOR
Mrs. Cathy Stokoe, Family Readiness Program Manager
Ms. Christine Degraw, CNIC FFSP Program Analyst
Mrs. Doreen Scott, CNIC FFSP Program Analyst
Mrs. Pat Johnson, CNIC FFSP/IT, Training and Management Analyst
Mr. Ed Roscoe, Management IT, Training Analyst
CAPT Rhetta Ray Bailey, Command Leadership School, by phone

Members not in attendance were:

Ms. Marcia Hagood, Personal Family Readiness

Guests in attendance were:

MCPON Joe Campa
FLTCM Rick West, USFF
FLTCM Tom Howard, COMPACFLT
YNC Eloy Vazquez, OPNAV

MCPON Campa opened the meeting by stating that the Ombudsman Program is good and strong. However, CNO Roughead has received input from TYCOM Commanders concerning the issue of re-instating Fleet, Force and Regional Ombudsmen. These positions were removed with the issuance of OPNAVINST 1750.1F in March 2007. CNO has asked for input from the OPAG members to consider as he makes the decision of whether or not to re-instate. MCPON Campa questioned the impact to Navy Families with the removal of Fleet/Force/Regional Ombudsmen. CNO requested MCPON Campa discuss and consider input from the OPAG before making a decision about this matter.

The issues discussed included:

- Defining the gap caused by the removal of Fleet/Force/Regional ombudsmen
- Establishing guidelines for these positions, to include tenure
- Define what a staff ombudsman is and their role
- Are the needs of the families being met by FFSC staff?
- Are families lacking any services because of the removal of these positions?

- Do Admirals feel family support is lacking from the removal of these positions?
- Two and Three Star Admirals, and Fleet, Force and Regional Master Chiefs should have input on this decision
- The ombudsman field is now level – Fleet/Force Master Chiefs suggest that now is the time to rebuild it utilizing input from those affected.
- Who is accountable for the success of the program?
- What recourse is there for non-compliance of the instruction?
- Concern about the level of responsibility placed upon ombudsmen (There was discussion about how the other services are handling the increased responsibility placed upon their volunteers.)
- Reimbursement issues – if we can't provide timely and appropriate reimbursement for command ombudsmen, how can we justify the funding of travel for F/F/R ombudsmen? Advised to direct all reimbursement issues to the CMC for the region in question
- How can we improve the program?
- How best to market any changes decided upon by the CNO

Suggested solutions to the issue:

- Clarify roles and positions
- Offer guidance for these roles, if reinstated
- Do not call them by Fleet/Force/Regional Ombudsmen – call them staff ombudsmen
- Define staff and the area of responsibility that will be covered
- Determine who is accountable for compliance
- Equal standards must apply to all ombudsmen
- Possible verbiage to use in positions are reinstated
- Make the change enduring to cross over change in personnel
- Possible format for presentation of new guidance

After thoroughly discussing the above issues and suggestions, the OPAG agreed that they did not want the positions of Fleet/Force/Regional Ombudsmen re-instated in its former capacity, but would be *in favor of* (would support) a modified role with definitive guidelines. Suggested verbiage to consider are available in the handout “Review of Fleet, Force and Regional Ombudsman and OPNAVINST 1750.1F”, attached.

YNC Eloy Vazquez, MCPON staff, has submitted meeting notes for this portion of the OPAG meeting, and they are attached for your review.

After this discussion, MCPON Campa, FLTCM West, FLTCM Howard and YNC Vazquez left the meeting. The meeting continued after a brief break.

The minutes from the previous meeting on October 17, 2007 were approved.

Three regions have held a Regional Ombudsman Advisory Board (ROAB) meeting:

Europe – no action items

CNRSW – no action items

CNRNW – issues with the Ombudsman Registry

Khaki attendance at Ombudsman Assemblies (involve Force Master Chiefs with this issue)

Regions need to provide the names of ROAB chairperson. OPAG will see all ROAB action items. OPAG minutes will be posted on FFSP website.

The annual Ombudsman Training Symposium is tentatively scheduled for 13 – 15 May 2008. CNIC is accepting proposals for locations. Please send suggested topics for speakers/breakout sessions. Breakout sessions will be offered twice each, to increase attendance. Some suggestions are:

- Ombudsman Coordinator Desk Guide
- Ombudsman Registry – changes and demo
- NKO – Chat Feature
- IA/GSA
- Update on all family support programs
- Poll trainers for ideas through E-Blast

Ombudsman Registry – being revised. Beta tests are taking place with a group of ombudsmen, CMCs and FFSC Ombudsman Coordinators. Plan is to implement the new registry in March/April timeframe.

Admiral McDonald released a NAVADMIN to Reserve Forces commanding officers requiring them to register their ombudsmen. BZ to the Reserve Force for the numbers of commands registering. The ombudsman locator for the Reserve community needs to be updated (it has been updated) so that ombudsmen can be contacted rather than the site administrator. NOSC's are combining monthly worksheets and submitting quarterly. It was noted that this method required a manual check of each individual NOSC within the registry to determine if a report has been completed.

Damaris Wilson, SPECOPS has inquired whether they can hire a paid ombudsman position. The ombudsman, by instruction, is a volunteer position. If someone is hired to perform those duties, they may not be called an ombudsman, nor will it replace the command's requirement to have an ombudsman. The Marine Corps is hiring Family Readiness Officers. These positions are different from Key Volunteers, and do not replace Key Volunteers. A description of the Family Readiness Officer will be sent to the OPAG members.

The Ombudsman Reimbursement Survey was sent to 1389 ombudsmen. Forty-five percent of recipients completed the survey. The majority are not having issues, however, there are still a number of Ombudsman not reimbursed. CNIC will develop an Advanced Training or brief on reimbursement, and develop a FACT Sheet for the Commander's Toolkit. Advanced Training is being developed or planned for FAP/SAVI, Return/Reunion and Reimbursement. Mediums other than Advanced Training may be more effective, but some sort of training will be offered. The proposed Commander's Toolkit will cover all FFSP programs and will be offered as a funded CD.

OPAG members will receive a schedule for NFAAS training and may attend at their own convenience. NFAAS is developed by SPAWAR.

The FRG instruction revision has been drafted. CNIC Legal will review and chop. Commands are not required to have an FRG. However, if they have one and it is command endorsed, they will have to follow the instruction. If it is not command endorsed, they will not have to follow the instruction.

Reserve Ombudsman Training has been challenging because of the cost of training the ombudsmen who do not live near an FFSC. Every NOSC ombudsman will be required to attend standardized OBT. A working group will establish a policy to offer modified training to Navy Reserve and Recruiting ombudsmen.

The question was raised whether it is possible to develop an ombudsman coin. No decision was made at this meeting. This question raised the issue of the ombudsman pin. The instruction says that it is available at the NEX, but some ombudsmen have had trouble ordering or finding it. CNIC will forward concern to NEX.

The next OPAG meeting is scheduled for 05 March 2008, 1300, at Naval Services FamilyLine.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 pm.