

## SOA Executive Committee

### Minutes of the Meeting

**13 May 2015**

1, The SOA Executive Committee met on the 13 May 2015 in the PAO Conference Room. Attendance apologies received from Steve Covington, Alan Jeavons, Jean Vanderwal, and Veronique Leroy. The Agenda and the minutes from the previous meeting of 15 March 2015 were approved.

#### **,Action Items and their status from the previous meeting and General Assembly (to include follow-on actions)**

**SOA Membership List. The SOA Membership list has been converted to a usable application and is available to all members in tabular format** sorted by Name and by Nationality. The membership list will be distributed via email once a year and will be provided to all new members: Continuing action: Mirek) .

- a. Newcomers Welcome Guide. The current Newcomers Welcome Guide will be updated to include SOA membership information. Deadline for 2015 input has passed and next update for the guide will be in 2016. (Action: JW)
- b. NMR/Senior Staff Involvement.
  - 1) The president's letter to the NMRs has been sent and received by the Dean of the NMRs. He will forward it to the other NMRs. The SOA representative to the NMRs, B/G Richard Laurent (RL) will follow up with the Dean to determine the level of effort the NMRs will be willing to provide in support of the SOA. There will most likely be a requirement for a formal presentation to the NMRs. (Action: GB will provide the latest GA brief to RL as a template).
  - 2) The committee discussed the history of senior staff and SACEUR involvement and guidance by USEUCOM ethics legal adviser to the SACEUR not to accept the position of "Honorary President" as it posed a potential

ethics/conflict of interest risk. That was surprising as each serving SACEUR has accepted to be the Honorary President for the past 50 years until the last and current SACEUR. The committee does not understand the USEUCOM position and RH was asked to coordinate with the SHAPE Legal Office for their position on the issue. RH spoke with Michele Vrydag, SHAPE Legal Adviser, and was advised that the 2010 NATO code of conduct is very general in nature as it applies to conflict of interest or ethics issues, however, military personnel are also subject to their national rules when it comes to ethics issues. Given the very general NATO limitations, it is often the case, particularly with US military personnel, that national rules are far more restrictive. A former head of the SHAPE Legal Office is a member of the SOA, and he indicated to RH he would be willing to contact the Judge Advocate in early June, at a mutually attended conference, to re-address the issue to determine what drove the decision to advise the SACEUR to not accept the honorary title. Depending on the outcome of that meeting will determine whether or how best to approach the SACEUR again and deal with the NMR's. As to the other senior staff's involvement, other than the need for the SOA to be more assertive, the discussion remained inconclusive and should be continued. Action -Ongoing.

- c. Facebook Account. The US Facebook Account has become the official SOA Facebook Account. Jim Stiles is the US Chapter Facebook Account administrator and Jack Smits is the European administrator. They will coordinate and post any inputs to Facebook (Action complete)
- d. SOA Web Page. Web site training has been completed . The current web page has been upgraded. It is recommended that it include current and planned activities and a summary of recent. Item still open. (Action: JV & JW)
- e. SOA flyer. RL reported that his informal contacts had indicated that the current SOA flyer wasn't a real eye catcher to outsiders. While the information provided remains overall valid and useful, its lay-out and format should be reviewed and adjusted to make the flyer more attractive and easily readable. (Action: JW).

f.Measures to make SOA more visible and attractive.

- 1) SOA sponsored lectures/conference. The re-initiation of the quite successful series of SOA sponsored lectures/conferences as a measure to offer professionally meaningful activities will be reconsidered, in particular based on feedback from the NMRs. (Action:RL)
- 2) Engagement with similar/like-minded organizations in SHAPE. It was noted that there are a number of organizations in SHAPE with similar/overlapping aims with the SOA (e.g. SHAPE Cavalry and Armour Officers' Associations, Junior Officers Group). It might be useful to identify them all and explore their willingness to engage with the SOA on possible synergies and mutually reinforcing activities. This could include opening-up SOA activities to these organizations subject to available capacity (i.e. first come, first serve), preferably on a reciprocity basis)(Action: ongoing)
- 3) SHAPE Community Life.
  1. It was agreed that the SOA should seek to include an article in the September edition of the SHAPE Community Life to introduce itself, in particular to newcomers. The next earliest opportunity would be September 2015. (Action:JW).
  2. Similarly, upcoming activities should also be advertised in the SHAPE Community Life (in addition to reports/summaries of past activities).(Action: JW)
- 4) Advertisement of upcoming SOA activities through email. The Committee discussed reported difficulties and restrictions on the access to the SHAPE network, in particular the creation of a specific user group in order to reach all SHAPE officers and equivalent civilian staff. DOM should be engaged to clarify the situation. (Action: RL)

## **2. Actions for the 2015 Symposium:**

- a. Hotel Selection: Rooms at the Casteau Moat House (Best Western): Info received from US Chapter indicates a larger number than anticipated will attend . The number of rooms reserved (12) has been increased from 12 to 21 have been

- reserved.. Action completed by RH.
- b. SOA President's engagement with NMRs. General SHAUD wishes to meet with the NMRs in the margins of the upcoming Symposium. This will most likely occur at a working lunch (hosted by SOA) and/or a round table discussion (tentatively on 08 Oct 15 p.m.). (Action: RL).
  - c. Happy Hour : A location for the Happy Hour - the THANKS Galerie in Mons -- has been confirmed and the conditions for it agreed to . Cost is 30€ per person attending. One question raised was if the facility could accommodate 60 plus persons- answer – yes. NMRs will also be invited to the Happy Hour (with possible impact on the overall number of attendees). Action remains open subject further questions.
  - d. Friday Evening Event . The Annual Friendship Concert may be held at the Mons Theatre on Friday 9 October. If so, it was proposed and accepted that the SOA would participate in funding a part of the event under the condition that the SOA members would be invited to the Vin d'Honneur following the concert. Action JV. Still open
  - e. Saturday Events : Golf Tournament and Cultural Visit . JB will cover the Golf Tournament and for the Cultural Event the event will occur in conjunction with Mons 2015 and the event needs to be coordinated with Mons . Action for next meeting
  - f. Annual Dinner: The site for the annual dinner was confirmed by the committee to be the Grand Hotel in Valenciennes. Price per person is 55€ all inclusive. Menu to be decided at next meeting from choice provided by the hotel. Action still open (RH)
  - g. Transportation : Bus transportation requirements were discussed. For the official part of the program, SHAPE Transportation can be arranged and Mirek would arrange it. For the social part, the SOA will pay and arrange. Bus requirements are as follows: 1) Thursday 8 Oct – Hotel to Mons and return, 2) Friday 9 Oct- hotel to SHAPE and return and at night, Hotel to Mons and return 3) Saturday – day, transport to & from cultural event and night , to and from dinner location in Valenciennes
  - h. Deadlines for Symposium: 1) Invitation -15 August, 2) Reminder -1 Sept, 3) Reservation Deadline – 23 Sept.

### **3. Social Activities for 2015 Status;**

- a. Brussels Auto Museum: Good potential visit but delay until the fall after the Symposium. Action JW.

- b. Ascenseur and River Cruise: Project accepted but cancelled due to lack of subscribers. Reschedule for a later date and open it up to the SHAPE community. Action JV.
- c. 5KM Hike /St. Denis Arts et Métiers Festival : Interest in having the 5 km hike in the woods ending up at St Denis Arts et Métiers Festival was raised by a number of members. The proposed date for the event is Sunday, 30 August. Albert Lefebvre will again be the guide. Publicity, details etc need to be worked. Action ongoing.

#### **4. Additional Orders of Business**

- a) Change to the constitution: The reintroduction of the “Associate Member” requires a change to the constitution. This item will be addressed when the committee has more members in attendance. A draft description of an “Associate Member “ to be prepare ; Action (JH)
- b) Membership status: 29 persons have not paid dues after numerous efforts to contact. Drop them as members ? Committee decision – drop them as members. (JB)
- c) Scholarship Program: Ongoing search for viable candidates. Action (SS)

#### **5. Next Meetings**

Wednesday 8 July 2015 at 14:30 in the PAO conference room.

Wednesday, 30 Sept 2015 at 14:30 in the PAO conference room.