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From: Stephanie Rutz <[redacted]>
Sent: Wednesday, March 06, 2019 6:54 PM
To: Steve Mueller
Subject: Fw: VFW/ Atascosa county Meeting/ use of AOR's

me

----- Forwarded Message -----
From: Steve <[redacted]>
To: 'Beverly Duran' <[redacted]>
Cc: 'john shipley' <[redacted]>; 'Larry Sanders' <[redacted]>;
'Jeffrey Rankin'
<[redacted]>; "[redacted]" <[redacted]>
Sent: Tuesday, November 28, 2017, 4:21:40 PM CST
Subject: VFW/ Atascosa county Meeting/ use of AOR's

Commanders,

After consulting with DC Duran via phone and reviewing the recent email traffic, it is apparent we have a
lot of different opinions concerning our approach to community programs within the Atascosa County and
that is causing some confusion among the Public.

VFW Post 12162 Operations
First of all, VFW Post 12162 is a prototype and is currently testing theories and strategies that will
eventually be used to revitalize the VFW as a whole. It has been viewed as a catalyst. It is specifically
designed to be High Impact, high visibility in order to attract younger high energy members and achieve
longevity in community service activities with an emphasis on maximizing youth participation. Specifically
the strategies employed are intended to correct deficiencies I have identified in the operation of currently
existing posts throughout the state of Texas. No other post in the nation is organized to achieve what
12162 has achieved in the speed it achieved it in. Developed from my experiences as a Post Commander
and business owner, these strategies are proven in business and their use has been overwhelmingly
successful with the introduction in Pleasanton, exceeding all of my expectations.

Public confusion/ Use of AOR's (Areas of Responsibility)
Chief Kaiser's email was expected. I had hoped to avoid this. I had anticipated the dilemma of Public
confusion developing and I originally asked State Commander Torres in late July to intervene and identify
and/or establish AOR's for each Atascosa County post to operate within. I felt this

would allow a fair playing field for the other posts in the county. However, it has been explained to me by more than one officer (at the state and District levels) that there is no By-Law guideline defining AOR's for Posts. I can't find anything in the By-laws concerning this either. So I am forced to acknowledge the fact that the By-Laws offer no guidance for establishing AOR's but that does not mean that are not required or needed in this particular situation. It's true that Posts in Bexar County are free to engage across San Antonio in pursuit of their Post activities. Several Post Commanders over the years have expressed this to me. I agree that all posts should be operating as one collective unit in regards to the VFW mission, but we must considering the uniqueness and individual community programs that are indigenous to each post respectfully.

The facts:
1. VFW National has established AOR's- they are called States.
2. The Department of Texas, contrary to recent statements, has also established AOR's- they are called Districts.
It seems logical, in order to maintain operational success in a constantly changing environment that the use of AOR's is an essential part of what we do already.

Fourteen out of the nineteen District 20 VFW Posts are in Bexar County. Bexar County has a population of 1.7 million, with 153,000 eligible combat veterans (ECV's) from which the VFW has only captured less than 5%. Atascosa County has a population of 45,000 with 4,000 ECV's from which the VFW has had a more successful capture rate of 12%. My research has indicated that these higher capture rates are indicative of rural areas and similar statistics are well substantiated across Texas. However, with a larger proportional ECV capture rate comes greater visibility and thus potential for confusion among the public if VFW posts are in close proximity of one another and engaging in similar community service initiatives. I first notice this discrepancy in policy when I was commanding 4853 in Jourdanton, but was unsuccessful in affecting change at the District level. This confusion could be counterproductive for the VFW if not mitigated. Post 12162, 4853 and 6970 are all within 10 miles of each other. Although, they are all VFW posts, they are all very different demographically and operationally.

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Posts community program activities will dictate how the public views them and the VFW as a whole and thus the establishment of AOR's becomes an important issue in this scenario. Posts must follow VFW doctrine, but also must be free to develop and institute community based programs that are unique to that post and that reflect community needs. These unique Post programs could be the deciding factor in success or failure of the Post. Specific and/or unique Post programs will become selling points for community donors, supporters and prospective ECV's and should be protected in order to maintain custody of specific Post activities.

Leadership Discussion

These issues are not unique to Atascosa County or district 20, and as the VFW is revitalized will demand national attention. They must be discussed to their logical conclusion. The use of AOR's will allow for better control and focus of VFW initiatives and programs specific to VFW Posts while increasing the rate of success in accomplishing mission critical requirements. The inclusion of Post defined AOR's in the National By-Laws is legitimate. A need for further debate at the district, department and national levels is required.

Recommendation

It is my recommendation that Posts AOR's should be established by the Post Commanders and regulated/ enforced by the District commander to ensure compliance. The use of AOR's should be used when a market ECV capture rate exceeds 10% and/or if the Posts physical location in closer than 12 miles from another post or posts and/or if posts share a school district or city. Under no circumstance should a post conduct operations outside of their established AOR unless a collaboration agreement is made between all posts involved that clearly outlines Mission parameters such as Lead personnel, staff, and post contribution and expected returns. Once established, the AOR's can be modified as new posts are founded and as the VFW awareness needs grows. Specific Guidelines should be developed to streamline this process. We must project a "UNITED" image for the public and the establishment of AOR's could accomplish while still offering protection for unique posts activities and community programs.

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Commander Rankin is right in recommended dialogue. I agree. It's time for this.

Meeting
I request a meeting of all Atascosa County Post Commanders to discuss the possibility and establishment
of AOR's within Atascosa County, Posts programs (independent and Joint) and to identify the needs that
are unique to the 4 VFW Post operating in Atascosa county. I request the District 20 Commander chair
the meeting and act as a mediator/ By-Law advisor. As this is an exploratory meeting meant to develop
an index for future discussion, it's not meant to establish any AOR's, but to examine the feasibility of inter-
District AOR's and/or agreements to recognize and not violate Post specific community service initiatives
that have been created within the Posts AOR's if adopted. Obviously, the success of the Atascosa County
posts are contingent on open communication between each Post, as well as, operating as a single unit
collectively in the Atascosa County to accomplish the VFW mission. If we can accomplish this, The VFW
mission effectiveness will be greatly enhanced.

Steve Mueller
Founder/ Post Commander- Pleasanton VFW Post 12162
Gold Legacy Lifetime VFW Member
2 Time All-State & All-American Post Commander
Pleasanton, Texas
[redacted]

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS