

USARAF MEDRETEs

Mission and Purpose

MEDRETEs (Medical Readiness Training Exercises) are pre-planned, USARAF-sponsored Title 10 sec. 3013 deployments for training on the continent of Africa for U.S. Army medical personnel. They are primarily meant to enhance the operational readiness skills of medical personnel by providing realistic training in austere environments. However, they must also promote the security and foreign policy interests of the United States, the security interests of the country in which the activities are preformed, and create strategic, operational, or tactical effects that support CCDR objectives in security cooperation or designated contingency plans. This training consists of both the deployment itself and providing direct medical treatment to host nation personnel under authority from Title 10 sec. 401 Humanitarian and Civic Assistance (HCA). Proposed MEDRETEs are approved by the AFRICOM HCA Program Manager and Command Surgeon's Office through OHASIS (Overseas Humanitarian Disaster Assistance Shared Information System). MEDRETEs have been a highly effective and highly popular method of Security Cooperation in Africa.

Authorities and Resources

- 10 U.S.C. sec. 3013
- 10 U.S.C. sec. 401
- DoDI 2205.02 (23 June 2014)
- Tab A to Appendix 8 to Annex Q to CDRUSAFRICOM Theater Campaign Plan 7000-12, Medical Civil-Military Operations (29 June 2012)
- The Honorable Bill Alexander Opinion, 63 Comp. Gen. 422 (22 June 1984)
- The Honorable Bill Alexander Opinion (30 January 1986)
- Commander Steven E. Milewski, Humanitarian and Civic Assistance: A Primer for the Judge Advocate, The Army Lawyer, November 2012
- OPLAW Handbook (2014), pp. 243-46

Important Contacts

Mr. Brian Ross, USARAF G-5 Exercises, brian.r.ross.civ@mail.mil

Historical Problems with MEDRETEs

Until very recently, the USARAF staff saw MEDRETEs as nothing more than training exercises preformed under Title 10 authority. As a result, coordination with AFRICOM was minimal, and indeed, in early 2014 AFRICOM's Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) recommended stopping all USARAF MEDRETEs because AFRICOM had not provided specific operational authority to perform them.

At the same time, the content of MEDRETEs was constantly changing. While some MEDRETEs were focused on providing medical treatment to patients, others provided no treatment at all. Instead, participating medical personnel established

military to military contacts and discussed interoperability and safety issues with HN personnel. Such MEDRETEs might be described as medical TCTs (Traveling Contact Teams) and should operate under Traditional Combatant Commander's Authority (TCA).

USARAF OSJA began a serious review of MEDRETE's in the summer of 2014 after the Staff Surgeon proposed new extended MEDRETEs focused on treatment and lasting up to 90 days. Our review concluded that operational authority for MEDRETEs was lacking. Moreover, the treatment provided to HN personnel during MEDRETEs was so substantial that it could not be considered incidental to training. As a result, further legal authorities were also necessary. We therefore recommended that USARAF request approval for MEDRETEs from AFRICOM as HCA activities. We also advised that if any future MEDRETEs moved away from a 3013/HCA model to a medical TCT or some other configuration, this would require separate operational authorities from AFRICOM

Beginning in FY15, USARAF G-5 Exercises began forwarding MEDRETE proposals to AFRICOM through the OHASIS system. Approval for HCA missions was then transmitted back to USARAF through OHASIS. However, AFRICOM has not issued any orders related to MEDRETEs despite statements from G-5 that an AFRICOM TASKORD would be forthcoming.

Current Issues

Our review of MEDRETEs has resulted in a number of questions which will be forwarded to AFRICOM OLC for further clarification. These include:

1. Does approval in the OHASIS system constitute adequate operational authority to proceed with MEDRETEs?
 - o AFRICOM guidance indicates that MEDRETEs will be approved through the OHASIS process. This would seem to provide authority for both the underlying Title 10 deployment as well as the HCA component.
2. Does USARAF maintain any inherent authority to perform Title 10 training in Africa without specific AFRICOM approval?
3. What authority is necessary to conduct a PDSS of a potential MEDRETE site?

Current as of 12 January 2015
CPT Christopher Rich