HEIDELBERG, Germany -- Eligible U.S. Army in Europe Soldiers will soon be asked, via e-mail, to participate in the 2012 Overseas Cost of Living Allowance Overseas Living Patterns Survey, scheduled for Oct. 1-31.

This survey is used to track the shopping patterns of uniformed service members stationed overseas. The data collected will assist in the determination of COLA paid to members in their country of assignment.

The survey is only for service members stationed at 13 locations in Germany: Ansbach, Kalkar, Bremerhaven, Kaiserslautern Military Community, Buechel, Spangdahlem, Garmisch, Stuttgart, Geilenkirchen, Vilseck-Grafenwoehr, Heidelberg, Wiesbaden and Hohenfels. The service member also must not be living in the barracks and have been on station for at least three months.

Although participation in this survey is voluntary, maximum response is encouraged so that data will be an accurate representation of the service member’s country of assignment.

To prepare for the survey, service members should determine where they purchases groceries, clothing, household furnishings, entertainment, communications and transportation.

Every three years, this survey is conducted to determine the local economy outlets where military families shop. Then, during the follow-on annual Retail Price Schedule, which is scheduled to begin Nov. 10, the prices of 120 goods and services are collected from outlets identified by service members during the COLA survey. The Defense Travel Management Office compares the prices in Germany to those in the U.S. and then calculates the Cost of Living Index, which establishes the country’s COLA rate per location.

For more information, service members and their family members are encouraged to contact their unit personnel offices or visit the COLA survey website.

About us: U.S. Army Europe is uniquely positioned to advance American strategic interests across Eurasia and has unparalleled capability to prevent conflict, shape the environment and, if necessary, win decisively. The relationships we build during more than 1000 theater security cooperation events in more than 40 countries each year lead directly to support for multinational contingency operations around the world, strengthen regional partnerships, and enhance global security.