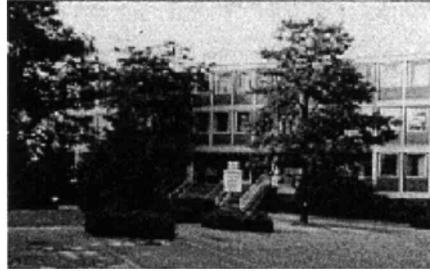

AFN History



The American Forces Network Europe began broadcasting from London during World War II, using equipment and studio facilities borrowed from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)

Our first transmission to U.S. troops began at 5:45 p.m. on July 4, 1943 and included less than five hours of recorded shows, a BBC news and sports broadcast. Our signal was sent from London via telephone lines to five regional transmitters to reach US troops in the United Kingdom. Nazi bombing raids over England kept knocking the station off the air. In May 1944, **AFN** London moved from its original BBC studios at 11 Carlos Place to 80 Portland Place.

As D-day approached, the network joined with the BBC and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to develop programs especially for the Allied Expeditionary Forces. When the actual invasion began, AFN programs were beamed to the war fronts via long-wave transmitters from the BBC and re-transmitted by AFRS (Armed Forces Radio Service) mobile vans that were attached to the various U.S. Army units attacking the European mainland. Mobile stations, complete with personnel, broadcasting equipment, and a record library were deployed to broadcast music and news to troops in the field. The mobile stations reported on front line activities and fed the news reports back to studio locations in London.

Although the network's administrative headquarters remained in London, its operational headquarters soon moved to **AFN** Paris. In November 1944, **AFN** Paris was located in the Herald Tribune building on the Rue de Berri broadcasting on a 15kw transmitter given to the U.S. forces by a French government that greatly appreciated the Allied liberation of the nation.

As Allied forces continued to push German soldiers back into their homeland, **AFN** moved east as well. The liberation of Belgium, **France**, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands saw **AFN** stations serving the forces liberating Biarritz, Cannes, LeHarve, Marseille, Nice, Paris, and Reims.

It's now the end of World War II in Europe, May 1945 and **AFN** Frankfurt goes on the air from a mobile van parked behind the famed I.G. Farben building, General Dwight Eisenhower's headquarters building in Frankfurt. This building was later known to U.S. troops as the General Abrams building, home to the U.S. Army's V Corps until late 1994.

On June 10, 1945 **AFN** Munich began beaming its signal from the mansion on Kaulbach Strasse to two 100kw transmitters in Munich and Stuttgart. In August 1945, **AFN** Europe moved its headquarters from London to the European mainland in Frankfurt, Germany.

AFN services in Berlin, Bremen and Nuremberg soon followed.

On December 31, 1945, AFN London signed off the air, and during 1948 AFN closed all its stations in France.

During the late 1940s, AFN reporters and microphones covered such significant world events as the Nuremberg War Crime Trials, the Soviet blockade of West Berlin, and the Berlin Airlift.

On March 17, 1948 AFN Stuttgart signed on the air, and in 1949 AFN Bremen moved north to the port and became AFN Bremerhaven.

There was much expansion at the network in the 1950's. AFN Nuremberg began broadcasting from the Grand Hotel in downtown Nuremberg in 1950. Three years later, AFN Kaiserslautern began local programming from a mobile van, and on October 21, 1954 moved into its present facility on the still-gigantic U.S. military complex at the Kaiserslautern-Vogelweh Military Shopping Center.

On May 23, 1958 AFN France return to existence when AFN Orleans began broadcasting to US military personnel in Camp Des Loges, Dreux Air Base, and Orleans. AFN Poitiers joined the AFN France network on November 20, 1958, and AFN Verdun followed on October 16, 1959.

AFN France grew into a collection of almost 50 FM radio transmitters scattered throughout the region to inform and entertaining American troops stationed there. France withdrew from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1967 and kindly asked the United States to leave the country, sounding the demise of AFN France. The station was trucked north along with all the U.S. forces heading for a new Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. AFN SHAPE signed on the air in 1967 at Chievres, Belgium. From its conception in 1967 until 1974, AFN SHAPE radio service was actually originated in Frankfurt and was broadcast to the SHAPE audience. On February 5, 1974, AFN SHAPE became a full-blown staffed AFN affiliate and originated its own broadcasts to the local audience in Casteau, near Mons, Belgium.

From the late 1940's to 1966, the AFN Europe network headquarters and Frankfurt affiliate were located in the Hoechst Castle, on the Main River in a Frankfurt suburb. In 1966, Hessen, Germany state radio Hessischer Rundfunk provided a building near downtown Frankfurt for AFN, where we are presently located.

Until the early 1970's, U.S. military television service was provided in Central Europe by Air Force Television at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. In the early 1970's, AFN assumed this responsibility for the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS).

On October 28, 1976, AFN television moved from AFTV's old black and white studios at Ramstein Air Base to the network's new color television studios in Frankfurt. In the 1980's the network added affiliates with studio capabilities in Wuerzburg, Germany and Soesterberg, the Netherlands.

In 1984 AFN network headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany started receiving regular satellite transmissions from the AFRTS Broadcast Center in California. Using an uplink facility at Usingen, Germany, a satellite positioned over the Indian Ocean, and a system of television receive-only dishes, the AFN SuperStation began radio and television satellite transmissions on December 29, 1987.

The satellite distribution system increased the network's audience, and using on-base cable systems, brought AFN television into U.S. military housing areas in England.

Before 1989, most AFN Europe FM stations played recorded music for an older audience and the primary information network was on the AM dial. In the late 1980's, the AFN FM frequencies became the standard bearer for local radio services and acquired the Z-FM moniker.

In January 1991, the network dispatched news teams and technicians to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. These professional broadcasters reported to families of soldiers deployed from Europe, and staffed a number of the U.S. radio stations making up the Armed Forces Desert Network.

The US defense drawdown began in earnest after the Gulf War, and impacted AFN stations across Europe. Even though the Europeans are not our primary audience, many of their feelings are summed up in a German newspaper article in the early 1990's that stated "the U.S. military can leave Europe, but AFN must stay".

Many of the AFN standard bearers shut their doors in the 1990's, including Munich in 1992, Bremerhaven in 1993 and AFN Berlin and AFN Soesterberg, Netherlands in 1994. AFN Stuttgart relocated in 1993 to serve the troops in the Heidelberg and Mannheim military communities.

In 1995, the last U.S. forces in Nuernberg relocated and AFN Nuremberg closed and the staff and equipment headed to the hills of Vilseck, Germany and signed on as AFN Bavaria. In late 1998, U.S. forces vacated the beautiful southern German city of Augsburg and a large transmitter serving a number of active-duty and a large number of retired Americans in southern Germany fell silent.

Let's rewind to a very key statement made early in AFN's life that epitomizes everything we strive to do today. It's July 4, 1943 and Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Dwight D. Eisenhower is addressing the American Forces Network staff in London: "A soldier who is well-informed and knows this country's national goals has good reason for being motivated and that gives him a fighting edge. It makes him a better soldier."

Here in the 21st century, the American Forces Network Europe is still dedicated to this ideal.

U.S. military radio and television service in Europe is responsibility of the Army Broadcasting Service (ABS). AFN uses many of the top-rated stateside radio and television programming provided at a relatively small cost to us by AFRTS. Locally produced radio and television messages are placed in these programs where normally in the USA you would see commercials. The AFN network and local stations work with military leaders throughout Europe to provide information in these messages to keep the military and civilian personnel in theater informed and updated on significant events around the different military commands.

It's now Christmas 1995, and AFN Europe is called upon once again to bring radio and television service to troops deploying into the Balkans. You may remember the video of the first U.S. transport aircraft landing at Tuzla Air Base and the AFN/AFRTS vehicle rolling off as one of the first in this new location. We're still on the air from Tuzla, Bosnia and Tazsar, Hungary to inform and entertain U.S. forces in the region maintaining peace in that volatile region of Europe.

In April, 1999 AFN was again called upon to bring a "touch of home" to forces deploying for missions in Albania. AFN went on the air May 29th with service at the Tirana airport with satellite decoders and large screen televisions placed in high traffic areas.

The U.S. military invited AFN along again on another adventure in late-May of 1999. AFN technicians advanced into the Yugoslav Republic of Kosovo along with NATO peacekeepers. Z-FM and Power Network radio services are broadcast in the U.S. sector from Camp Bondsteel and Monteith. AFN television service is via satellite in many locations and even over the air in a number of locations in Kosovo.

The times have changed the way we do business, but as you can see AFN still deploys and participates in contingency operations whenever called upon in the U.S. European Command. U.S. military members and their leaders know that AFN will be with them on the next mission, wherever that may take them.