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ARMED FORCES BROADCASTING CELEBRATES GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

50 years of serving the American military overseas

The Armed Forces Radio and Television Service, a World War II morale booster that became the worldwide satellite network informing and entertaining U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf, celebrates its 50th anniversary on May 26th.

The service, with an audience of 1.3 million in 128 countries, has served generations of military personnel -- from the battlefields of Europe and the Pacific in World War II, to the Korean Peninsula, Vietnam, and Saudi Arabia. Overseas commanders continuously rate AFRTS as a top quality of life program.

Its roster of guest performers and alumni reads like a Who's Who of the U.S. entertainment industry -- Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Lena Horne, Judy Garland, Jack Benny, Pat Sajak and Casey Kasem. And its offerings range from major sporting events to news and syndicated programming.

Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, in a message praising the network on its half century of service, said, "I congratulate you all for carrying on a tradition of keeping America's armed forces the best informed military in the world. From Normandy to Inchon to Pleiku and to Dhahran, you've been there, keeping the troops in touch with the world and keeping up everyone's morale."

The Armed Forces Radio Service was founded May 26, 1942, after Army officials examined unofficial but popular pirate radio stations operating at bases in Kodiak and Sitka, Alaska -- consisting of little more than phonographs sending a signal as far as the mess hall speakers.

Early news broadcasts were sent by shortwave radio, and entertainment programs were shipped overseas on 16-inch records. Television was added in 1953, and satellites were first employed in 1977. By 1988, satellite radio had replaced shortwave broadcasts, and now the service can send the Super Bowl live to ships at sea.

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The first director, Army Colonel Tom Lewis, set a mission for the new service that is still followed: "To assist in supplying the American soldier with the emotional and intellectual impetus he needs to make him a better fighting man, and to strive to maintain in him the mental attitudes of a free American."

During World War II, it was the link home for millions of Americans from all services overseas. Hollywood stars entertained on such shows as "GI Journal," "Command Performance," and "Mail Call." GI Jill did Armed Forces Radio broadcasts to counter Tokyo Rose.

After the war, Armed Forces Radio remained on the air to serve the troops who stayed in Europe and Asia to keep the peace. And when the Korean War broke out, AFRS broadcasters headed for the Korean Peninsula. Any thought of ending the service vanished.

During the 1960s and 1970s, the network's reputation for lifting morale under difficult circumstances was typified by disc jockey Adrian Cronauer, who made famous his sign-on, "Good Morning, Vietnam," and inspired the movie starring Robin Williams.

During Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, AFRTS faced the challenge of building a network of stations covering an area roughly the size of the northeastern United States. Satellite feeds served until a live broadcast in October 1990 from Dhahran brought "Shield 107" to troops whose number would climb to over 540,000.

In that broadcast, from a tiny studio built in a shipping container, AFRTS broadcaster Rick Yanku borrowed a line from Cronauer and opened the first show with, "Good Morning, Saudi Arabia." The first tune was "Rock the Casbah."

From its start as a morale booster in the Arctic, AFRTS has become an around-the-clock operation with quality programming, thanks to a dedicated staff and the generous help of the U.S. entertainment and news industries, program syndicators and sports organizations, providing a window on the home front for service personnel and their families overseas.

The service originates and packages programs from its Broadcast Center in Los Angeles. It mails audio and video entertainment packages and beams time sensitive news and information programs over seven satellites to nearly 1,000 outlets on land and sea. Military broadcasters provide news and information transmitted directly from local commands in Asia, the Pacific, Central America and Europe.

Note: Copies of still photos, audio and video spots are available through Ms. Bettie Sprigg at (703) 695-0168.

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Fact Sheet

Armed Forces Radio & Television Service

The Armed Forces Radio and Television Service provides radio and television news, sports, information, and entertainment programming to military personnel and their family members stationed overseas or at sea. The programs are representative of those seen and heard in the United States and are provided without censorship, propagandizing, or manipulation.

AFRTS exercises no control over the content of program material, but deletes commercials and replaces them with information of interest to military personnel and their family members.

Program owners and syndicators make their products available to AFRTS at a fraction of the cost that would be paid by commercial radio or television stations. Many programs are provided free of charge. Through the generous cooperation of performing guilds, unions, and federations AFRTS is not charged performance rights or residual fees for the programs.

Programs are provided to the AFRTS overseas audience through land stations or deployed ships. Some land-based outlets are organized as networks to serve specific geographic areas; others consist of small, closed-circuit outlets providing service to remote and isolated locations where normal over-the-air AFRTS service is unavailable.

All programs are negotiated for, procured, and distributed by the AFRTS Broadcast Center in Los Angeles, CA. AFRTS provides a balanced selection of top-rated U.S. radio and television programs. Religious programs are selected by the Armed Forces Chaplains Board. Most programs are sent overseas by mail. Time-sensitive programs are transmitted by satellite. Program services include:

Radio News/Special Events. AFRTS provides international, national, and military radio news as well as special events coverage, news analysis and commentary, public affairs material, and play-by-play sports. AFRTS uses satellite facilities to provide this service 24-hours per day, seven days a week. News programs are provided directly from the major U.S. commercial and

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public networks including ABC, CBS, NBC, Mutual, National Public Radio, Associated Press Radio Network, and United Press International Radio Network. In addition to these audio services, AFRTS provides outlets with teletype news copy from the radio wires of AP and UPI.

Radio Entertainment. Radio entertainment programs are produced in house or acquired from commercial and public service radio syndicators. These entertainment programs are placed into weekly program units and mailed to each authorized AFRTS outlet. These packages contain the most popular new recordings in various music categories for use by outlets in producing local radio programs. A satellite-delivered music service is also provided to land-based stations.

Television News/Special Events. The television equivalent of the radio broadcast service is the AFRTS Satellite Network (SATNET). SATNET provides 24 hours of news, sports, special events, and timely entertainment programming to satellite-equipped AFRTS outlets. SATNET uses programming offered by ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, PBS, ESPN, TBS and other sources available through either cable or satellite reception.

Television Entertainment. Most television entertainment programs are non-timely and therefore are delivered to AFRTS outlets by mail via weekly program units on videocassette to supplement the programs delivered via satellite. Affiliates without satellite capability also receive news, sports, and timely entertainment programs on videocassette via priority mail shipments. Also included in the weekly program units are non-timely information, sports programs and feature films. Over a year's time AFRTS units normally include over 90 percent of the top rated programs in the United States.

Fact Sheet

Historical Summary Armed Forces Radio & Television Service

The first military radio stations appeared in Panama and Alaska just prior to World War II. During the first days of U.S. entry into WWII, a military radio station was started on Bataan and Corregidor in the Philippines by General Douglas MacArthur's staff. The success of these early radio stations paved the way for the creation of the Armed Forces Radio Service.

On May 26, 1942, the War Department officially established AFRS with the mission of providing programming, shortwave service, and broadcast equipment for U.S. military personnel overseas. AFRS was to give servicemembers a touch of home and combat Axis Sally and Tokyo Rose. Los Angeles was selected as the first headquarters for AFRS and broadcasting executive Thomas H. Lewis was selected as the first commander. With the overwhelming support of the entertainment industry and dedicated military members, he quickly turned AFRS into a professional broadcast unit. Many young radio entertainers got their start with AFRS during WWII.

In 1945, at the height of WWII, some 300 AFRS radio stations served U.S. troops worldwide.

Armed Forces Television began at Limestone AFB, Maine in 1953. In 1954, the television mission was officially recognized and AFRS became AFRTS - the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service.

Continuing to provide radio and television service to U.S. combat forces overseas, AFRTS quickly expanded during the Korean Conflict and again during the Vietnam Conflict. During these conflicts, AFRTS introduced the use of mobile, self-contained broadcast vans with portable towers which allowed the American Forces Korea Network and the American Forces Vietnam Network to quickly provide AFRTS services during the buildup of U.S. Forces. The American Forces Korea Network remains in operation today.

Keeping up with technology, AFRTS introduced color television in the early 1970s and began using satellites to provide live news and sporting events in 1977. Satellite transmitted radio replaced the shortwave system in 1988 expanding the quality and coverage of worldwide radio services.

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During Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, AFRTS once again provided service to U.S. combat forces. In less than a month, AFRTS deployed portable vans to provide local radio service. Shortly thereafter, the service was expanded to include television. By the end of the conflict, the Armed Forces Desert Network, using over 40 transmitters, was providing news and entertainment from home to an area the size of the northeast United States. When U.S. forces liberated Kuwait, AFRTS was also there to provide radio and television service.

Today, from its Broadcast Center in Los Angeles, AFRTS uses seven satellites to provide service to over 500 outlets in more than 120 countries and U.S. territories. Over 400 U.S. Navy ships at sea also receive AFRTS programming.

From the days of isolated radio stations, AFRTS has grown to a worldwide, state-of-the-art network, continuing to provide a touch of home to over 1.3 million U.S. servicemembers and their families serving overseas.

FACT SHEET

Armed Forces Radio & Television Service Manned (*) & Unmanned Outlets

U.S. & Territories Locations

Alaska *
American Samoa
Kure Island (Hawaii)

Puerto Rico *
Wake Island
Guam

Foreign Countries

Algeria	Germany	Norway*
Angola	Ghana	Oman
Antarctica*	Greece*	Pakistan
Argentina	Great Britain	Palau
Australia*	Guatemala	Panama
Austria	Guinea	Papua New Guinea
Bahamas	Guinea - Bissau	Paraguay
Bahrain	Guyana	Peru
Belgium*	Honduras*	Philippines*
Benin	Hong Kong	Poland
Bermuda*	Hungary	Portugal*
Bolivia	Iceland*	Qatar
Botswana	Italy	Romania
Brazil	India	Rwanda
Brunei	Indonesia	Saudi Arabia*
Bulgaria	Israel	Sengel
Burkina Faso	Japan	Seychelles
Burundi	Jerusalem	Sierra Leone
Cameroon	Jordan	Singapore
Cape Verde	Kenya	South Africa (Namibia)
Central African Republic	Korea	Spain
Chad	Kuwait	Sudan
Chile	Lebanon	Suriname
China	Lesotho	Swaziland
Colombia	Liberia	Switzerland
Congo	Luxembourg	Syria
Cote d'Ivoire	Madagascar	Tahiti
Cuba*	Malawi	Tanzania
Cyprus	Mali	Thailand
Czechoslovakia	Marshall Islands*	The Holy See
Denmark	Mauritania	Togo
Diego Garcia*	Mauritius	Tunisia
Djibouti	Micronesia	Turkey *
Ecuador	Morocco	Uganda
Egypt	Mozambique	U.A.E.
Equatorial Guinea	Netherlands*	Uruguay
Ethiopia	New Zealand	Yugoslavia
Fiji	Nicaragua	Zaire
France	Niger	Zambia
Gabon	Nigeria	Zimbabwe
Gambia	Nepal	