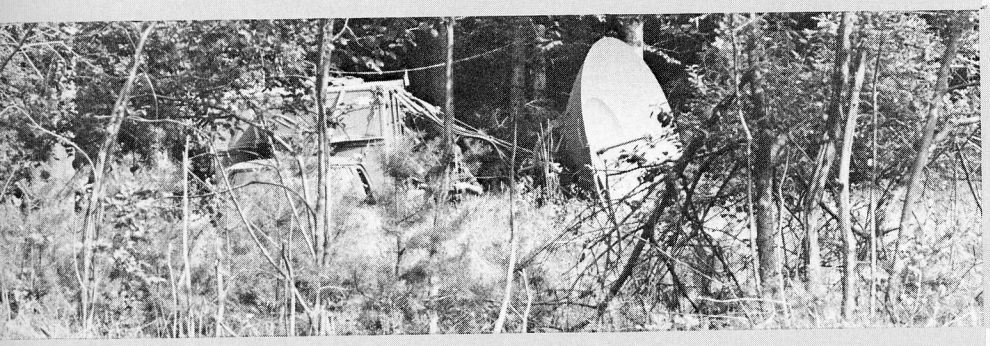
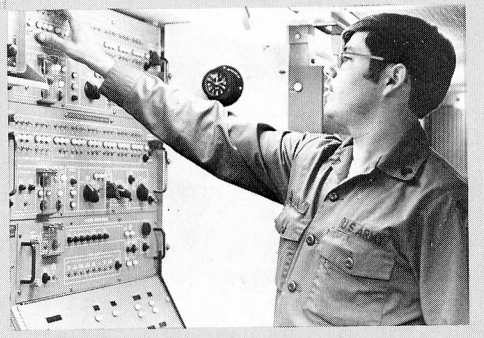
7th Signal Brigade joins 5th Signal Command

story and photos by SFC Joe Hitt



(Left) This parabolic dish (TSC-85) relays communications securely via a satellite 22,510 miles abo ve the Indian Ocean. (Abo ve) The TYC-39 Tactical Message Switch can process 10,000 messages per hour. (Below) The 300-line capacity TTC-38 switch aids in tactical communications.



All US Army Signal assets above corps level in the European Theater are under the command and control of a single communications manager, Brig. Gen. Norman E. Archibald, commander, 5th Signal Command. The final step in pulling all these signal functions together under a single commander was the transfer of command of the 7th Signal Brigade from HQ USAREUR/7A to the US Army Communications Command.

The 7th Signal Brigade was constituted as a Field Army Area Signal Brigade in February 1970 when the Army doctrine called for fighting in field army echelons. Today, however, the field army doctrine has evolved into the Echelons Above Corps (EAC) doctrine. The mission of the 7th Signal Brigade has therefore evolved from supporting a field army to providing communications support in the field to the echelons above corps.

With more than 2,700 professional communicators, the 7th Signal Brigade provides transportable field communications support using tactical signal equipment for the echelons above corps in Europe, including lateral communications support to NATO Headquarters such as the Central Army Group. In wartime, the 7th Signal Brigade would serve as one of the field communications units of the Theater Communications Command — Army, the 5th Signal Command, in the European Theater of Operations.

The 7th Signal Brigade provides field access to a variety of fixed communications networks and systems including the Automatic Digital Network (AUTODIN), the Automatic Voice Network (AUTOVON), and the Secure Voice Network of the Defense Communications System, the garrison dial networks, commercial networks and other systems such as the German Bundeswehrgrundnetz.

The brigade is composed of three signal battalions and one reinforced signal company. The 1st Signal Battalion is one of two area signal battalions in the brigade. This battalion provides area communications service and multichannel extension to supported headquarters. The battalion also provides digital subscriber terminal equipment capability to organizations it supports.

The 44th Signal Battalion is the other area signal battalion in the brigade. The companies are stationed well forward and strategically dispersed as they provide major nodal points connecting HQ USAREUR to the US Corps in the European Theater. The battalion also operates two automated message switches. The two TYC-39s, Pre-Production Model TRI-TAC Switches, make the 44th the only tactical organization in the European Theater with the capability of automatic routing of tactical communications over transportable equipment.

The 72nd Signal Battalion is the largest battalion in the brigade. It is a command operations signal battalion providing long-haul command communications systems linking HQ USAREUR with subordinate and supported commands. The battalion also provides HQ USAREUR with command operation terminal facilities. The battalion operates 12 of the low-rate initial production models of the ground mobile force tactical satellite terminals.

E Company, 67th Signal Battalion is also assigned to the brigade. It is a reinforced area signal company providing field communications support to US Forces stationed in the northern portion of Germany.

Working with members of the 5th Signal Command is nothing new for members of the 7th Signal Brigade since the brigade has been functioning under the operational control of the commander, 5th Signal Command.

Col. Jack Hammett, commander, 7th Signal Brigade, recently said, "To be successful in combat we must integrate the fixed and tactical systems. Without close teamwork this integration effort is futile. The transfer of the 7th Signal Brigade to USACC is a positive move that will strengthen the teamwork that prevails in both organizations already."