

Unit Introduction

Why should Public Affairs Officers care about AFRTS?



You get stationed overseas: Department of Defense men and women stationed overseas and their families are provided many of the same radio and television broadcast services available in the United States. They receive these services through the American Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS). When assigned overseas you need to know how to take advantage of AFRTS. This lesson will teach you how you can use AFRTS to your advantage.

Your commander wants a briefing on AFRTS: Many new commanders overseas have little to no understanding of AFRTS. As the commander's PAO you must be able to support the communication needs of your commander. You should understand as much as you can about the way AFRTS does business so you can use the power of broadcast information to reach your overseas internal audience.

Working with a local AFRTS station helps you complete the overseas PA mission: Perhaps the most important thing to remember about AFRTS is it can help you get the word out to the troops about the important "hot topics" of your commander. AFRTS stations are staffed with teams of broadcasters who are able to communicate your command messages during radio and television broadcasts. Most outlets have daily local television and radio newscasts and are able to broadcast command information 24 hours a day.

Intermediate Training Objective (ITO)

Given a joint public affairs scenario, analyze AFRTS support for the public affairs mission in the joint environment in accordance with Department of Defense and service public affairs policies and regulations. Upon completion of this unit of instruction, the student will be able to:

- State the mission and purpose of AFRTS
- Describe how the military broadcasting service supports the AFRTS mission
- State the directive that governs AFRTS outlet operations
- State the "Brand Name" commonly associated with AFRTS broadcast products
- List the broadcast products and services provided by AFRTS
- Explain the relationship between AFRTS and the PAO
- Explain how to request AFRTS service at an overseas location

Unit Overview

This unit will cover the following key areas:

- AFRTS mission
- How military broadcast services help AFRTS
- Department of Defense Directive 5120.20-R
- The AFRTS "Brand Name," American Forces Network (AFN)
- The AFRTS audience and broadcast programming
- The PAO/AFRTS Relationship
- Requesting AFRTS Service



An AFRTS Airman prepares broadcast programming elements

AFRTS Mission and Purpose

This unit will cover the following key areas:

AFRTS is the American Forces Radio and Television Service. It is part of the Department of Defense, and falls under the operational control of the American Forces Information Service (AFIS). The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (ASD-PA) exercises direct control over AFIS.

AFRTS is headquartered in Alexandria, Va.

The AFRTS mission is to communicate Department of Defense policies, priorities, programs, goals and initiatives. AFRTS provides stateside radio and television programming, "a touch of home," to U.S. service men and women, DoD civilians, and their families serving outside the continental United States. It provides radio & TV news, sports, information & entertainment programming to DoD personnel and their family members stationed overseas, at sea, or areas where English language broadcasting services are unavailable or deemed inadequate

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Why have AFRTS?

The primary purpose of AFRTS is the **inform**. AFRTS outlets keep our overseas forces informed about current world events and issues within their service and command. In short, AFRTS makes them aware of news and information that affects their lives and their careers.

AFRTS has a secondary purpose, as well - to **entertain**. AFRTS outlets bring a "touch of home" to service members stationed far from that home. It brings stateside news, sports and entertainment programming to locales around the globe, providing a welcome link with what's going on back stateside.



Military Broadcast Services and AFRTS

There are three military broadcast services that help AFRTS carry out its global mission:

Army Broadcasting Service (HQ, Alexandria, Va.) American Forces Network-Europe(North & South), AFKN, Hondo, CPN

Air Force Broadcasting Service (HQ, Lackland AFB, San Antonio, TX), a directorate of the Air Force News Agency (AFNEWS), AFN-Incirlik, AFN-Aviano, AFN-Spangdahlem, AFN-Lajes, AFN-Misawa, AFN-Yokota, AFN-Okinawa, AFN-Iwakuni, AFN-Sasebo

Navy Broadcasting is a division of the **Naval Media Center** (Anacostia, District of Columbia) Adak, Keflavik, Rota, Sigonella, Guantanamo Bay, Diego Garcia, Lisbon, McMurdo Station, Roosevelt Roads, Souda Bay, and all USN ships

What the broadcasting services do

The three military broadcast services support AFRTS by:

1. Operating and maintaining AFRTS outlets in designated geographic areas
2. Providing centralized management of AFRTS assets (personnel, equipment, financial resources)
3. Setting up AFRTS outlets (manned and unmanned) in contingency areas to include such places as Afghanistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bosnia, Africa and other places where military men and women carry out significant military missions

Military Broadcast Services and AFRTS

OASD-PA sets policy for AFRTS through the American Forces Information Service.

The AFRTS, Defense Media Center provides broadcast radio and television programming worldwide via a vast system of satellites, ground stations and assorted equipment.

The Broadcasting Services operate and maintain outlets around the world (ABS, AFNEWS, NMC).

Geographically, the AFRTS system is the largest broadcasting network in the world.

AFRTS could be likened to major national U.S. networks like ABC, NBC and CBS and the military broadcast services like the local affiliates.

DOD Directive 5120.20-R (AFRTS operations and management guide)

DOD Directive 5120.20-R governs management and control of the global American Forces Radio and Television Service. The regulation covers everything including day-to-day broadcast operations. In addition, the regulation explains how to request AFRTS service in a remote/contingency area such as what you might find in Iraq.

As a Public Affairs Officer, you should be familiar with this directive so you can understand how to request AFRTS service and so you can understand how AFRTS can support your on-going, overseas public affairs mission.



"American Forces Network"

The AFRTS brand name is:

A...F...N...

AFN "The Brand Name": Stands for American Forces Network. The call letters "AFN" are as easy to recognize as CBS, NBC, CNN, ABC, UPN, FOX, etc., for most service members.

The American Forces Radio and Television Service operates **American Forces Network or AFN**. AFN is a worldwide radio and television broadcast network that serves nearly a million American service men and women stationed around the world. The audience includes Department of Defense civilians and their families stationed at bases and American embassies and consulates in more than 179 countries, as well as U.S. Navy, U.S. Coast Guard and Military Sealift Command ships at sea.

Since World War II, AFN has enjoyed the generous support from all major broadcast networks, syndicates, public radio services, and individual stations and program producers throughout the country. Their contributing coverage of news, professional and collegiate sports events and other programs make it possible for AFN to keep America's overseas forces entertained and informed by providing a morale-boosting "touch of home."

The Past is only a prologue to the future

To really understand the “now” of AFRTS, the true student of the military media must look at its history. It's future is moving as fast as the military in the ever-changing world situation.

The “now”...

- A. Click the **AFN in Iraq** link below. The **AFN in Iraq.pdf** file will open in the Adobe Acrobat viewer within a new browser window.
- B. Click the Print button  to print the article.
- C. Close or minimize the window to return to the **Public Affairs and AFRTS Operations** unit.

[AFN in Iraq](#)

- A. Click the **AFN Commercial** link below. The **AFN Commercial.pdf** file will open in the Adobe Acrobat viewer within a new browser window.
- B. Click the Print button  to print the article
- C. Close or minimize the window to return to the **Public Affairs and AFRTS Operations** unit.

[AFN Commercial](#)

- A. Click the **Recent Events** link below. The **Recent events.pdf** file will open in the Adobe Acrobat viewer within a new browser window.
- B. Click the Print button  to print the article
- C. Close or minimize the window to return to the **Public Affairs and AFRTS Operations** unit.

[Recent Events](#)

Personalities and Places

The definitive detailed history of AFRTS was written by Army Public Affairs Hall of Famer Trent Christman in his book, "Brass Button Broadcasters." Now out of print, you may still find it in some libraries. Here some other variations - all a bit different, but all the same in most ways.

- A. Click the AFRTS History link below. The AFRTS History.pdf file will open in the Adobe Acrobat viewer within a new browser window.
- B. Click the Print button  to print the article.
- C. Close or minimize the window to return to the Public Affairs and AFRTS Operations unit.

[AFRTS History](#)

- A. Click the AFRTS Personalities link below. The AFRTS Personalities.pdf file will open in the Adobe Acrobat viewer within a new browser window.
- B. Click the Print button  to print the article.
- C. Close or minimize the window to return to the Public Affairs and AFRTS Operations unit.

[AFRTS Personalities](#)

- A. Click the Stars & Stripes version link below. The Stars & Stripes version.pdf file will open in the Adobe Acrobat viewer within a new browser window.
- B. Click the Print button  to print the article.
- C. Close or minimize the window to return to the Public Affairs and AFRTS Operations unit.

[Stars & Stripes version](#)



The AFRTS Audience

The **primary audience** for AFRTS broadcasts is military personnel stationed overseas. Typically, these individuals are between the ages of 18 and 34. In the states, this demographic would be of prime importance to advertising agencies, marketers and network programmers. They are married and have their families living with them. These family members are considered the AFRTS' **secondary audience**.

In addition, AFRTS recognized that its viewership and listenership include a significant **shadow audience**, made up of local citizens of the host nation, as well as U.S. citizens living aboard.

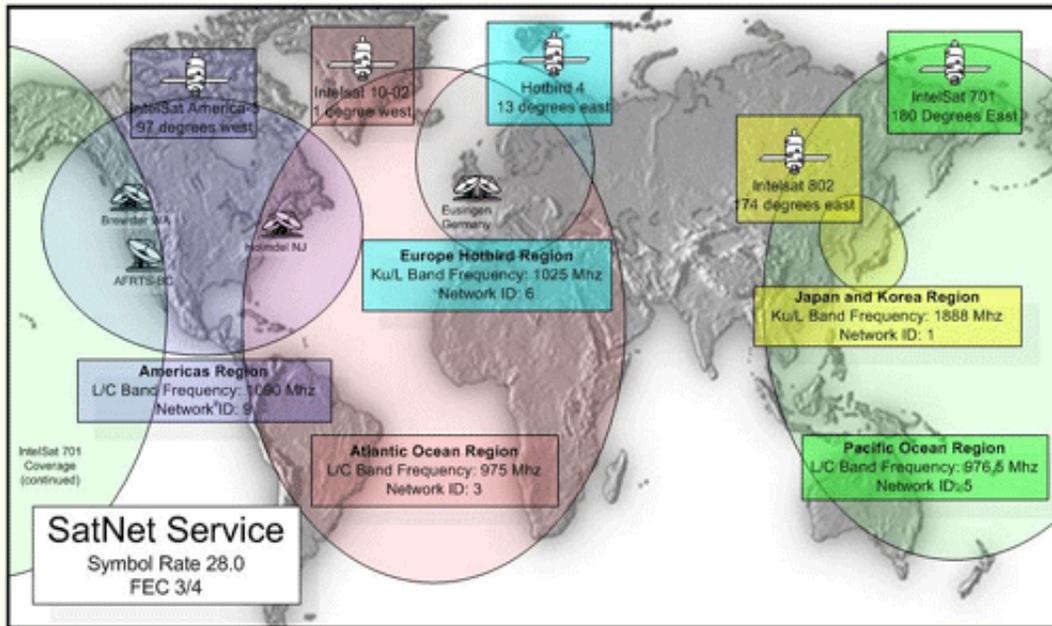


AFRTS Services Overseas

AFRTS spans the globe with its broadcasts reaching U.S. service members wherever they are stationed and deployed. AFN has mobile detachments moving right out with them.

The primary purpose of its manned outlets is to provide internal command information to overseas forces.

- Provides service to 177 countries + 2 territories (Guam & Puerto Rico)
- Operates full-service outlets in 17 countries
- Has direct satellite to 151 countries
- Broadcasts to 170 ships outfitted with Direct to Ship (DTS) service



AFRTS uses two state-of-the-art satellite distribution networks: one is the primary Satellite Network or SATNET; and the other is TV-Direct-to-Ship or TV-DTS. These satellite networks distribute live and tape-delayed television and radio programming worldwide.

AFRTS Services and Distribution

1. Television:

- AFN Pacific
- AFN Atlantic
- AFN Korea
- AFN Spectrum
- AFN Program Guide
- AFN News
- AFN Sports
- AFN Family

AFRTS Services and Distribution

2. Radio: 11 different radio services, and growing even as you read this. AFRTS provides a variety of programming for audiences with a wide variety of tastes.



AFRTS Services and Distribution

3. **128 KBPS data circuit:** Can carry the E-bird, Stars and Stripes Lite.



Programming Notes:

- Broadcast programming beamed overseas represents a sampling of the most popular programs in the United States.
- Materials are broadcast without censorship, propaganda or manipulation.
- All Commercials are deleted and replaced with DOD internal information and public service announcements to ensure the military does not get involved in any copyright violations.
- Religious programs are selected by the Armed Services Chaplains Board.
- AFRTS gets all its programming at a reduced cost or for free
- AFRTS Pays Only \$2,000 per hour and \$1,000 for ½-hour show, which represents an administration fee to producers.
- Sports are offered virtually free to AFRTS.
- National outlets Pay \$4.5 to 5.5 million for major events.
- AFRTS Gets 25,000-plus shows for \$6.8 million when civilian networks would pay hundreds of millions for the same programming.
- The AFRTS relationship with Hollywood dates back to World War II and is preserved today by the strict adherence to copyright protection of commercially produced materials by AFRTS. Around the world, AFRTS runs closed-circuit cable networks and uses encryption technology to ensure programming is not illegally obtained for commercial use overseas and remains limited to the use of Department of Defense men and women and their families.

AFN-Broadcast Center (formerly called the AFRTS-Broadcast Center)

The **American Forces Network – Broadcast Center**, is located at March Air Reserve Base near Riverside, Calif. It is the sole programming source for military radio and television outlets overseas. These outlets serve American service men and women, Department of Defense (DOD) civilians, and their families stationed in more than 175 countries around the world where English language broadcast service is unavailable or inadequate. AFN-BC is responsible for reflecting an accurate cross-section of what is widely available to stateside audiences of the American radio and television industry.

- All programming is acquired and distributed by the AFN Broadcast Center (AFN-BC) at March ARB, Calif. [American Forces Radio and Television Service](#)
- News, entertainment and sports programs are transmitted by satellite. Signals are transmitter via an array of different satellites in geo-synchronous orbit around Earth.
- Broadcast schedules are available on the Web at www.myafn.net
- The American Forces Radio and Television Service originate broadcast programming from AFN-BC, located about 60 miles east of Los Angeles.



Public Affairs Officer / AFRTS Roles, Responsibilities and Relationships

A. AFRTS Station Chain of Command:

- AFRTS stations have a separate chain of command. Overseas station managers do NOT work for the base commander or the PAO
- Station managers support and work with the base commander and PAO
- AFRTS station managers work for an AFRTS network (AFN-Europe/AFN-Tokyo/etc.) or one of the Military Broadcasting Services
- The separate chain command allows AFRTS to provide the same types and kinds of programming available in the United States without censorship, propaganda, manipulation or control. The arrangement ensures a free flow of information to men and women in uniform.

B. PAO & AFRTS - Working Together

- PAOs and local AFRTS outlets must work together to get the word out.
- Common mission: Command/Internal Information.
- PAOs support commanders in planning and managing their unit's Internal Information program.
- Station managers support the commander in using TV/radio to disseminate command information.
- Most U.S. military personnel overseas get their news from AFRTS TV/radio.
- PAOs should keep local AFRTS stations informed of upcoming events. Invite station managers to your staff meetings. Stations should be on press release distribution list.
- Symbiotic relationship should exist between the AFRTS stations & base newspapers.



Unit Summary

In this lesson we have reviewed:

- AFRTS mission
- Station managers support and work with base commanders and PAOs
- Military Broadcast Services help AFRTS
- Department of Defense Directive 5120.20-R
- The AFRTS "Brand Name" American Forces Network (AFN)
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Perhaps the most important thing to remember about AFRTS is that it can help you communicate vital command messages to the military community. If you tap into the power of broadcast communications, you will find that public affairs success can be enhanced with AFRTS. Please make sure you take the time to learn more about what they can do to help you carry out your mission.