

As television swept through civilian life in a surge of popularity, it was recognized at once as an important medium for military morale and information.

The Air Force installed a pilot station at Limestone (now Loring) Air Force Base, located in northeastern Maine, 2 miles from the Canadian border. This station began telecasting Christmas Eve 1953, continuing until 1956 when a commercial station began operation in the area.

The television service, starting in New York in 1954, quickly had to expand to accommodate the rapid interest and build-up of television outlets. On October 17, 1954, a 50-watt station began operation at Lajes Field in the Azores and the Armed Forces Television was on its way.

Television programing and production moved to Los Angeles in 1957 while New York continued as the main clearing agency for all television programing.

During 1962 AFRTS became a field activity of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower) under the Directorate for Armed Forces Information and Education, Washington, D.C.

During 1965 the number of radio outlets, including relay stations and ships at sea, had grown to 288, and the weekly radio shipment reached a peak of 85 hours. The volume of television programs amounted to a weekly shipment of 55 hours to 43 outlets (including relay stations). Military and veterans hospitals were being furnished a selected music library on a weekly basis. The teletype news service, started in January 1964, was being sent around the world, and timely news, sports, and special events were being broadcast around the clock via shortwave transmitters from New York and Los Angeles.

b. Press service history

The value of news as an aid to military efficiency and morale has long been recognized by the Armed Forces. Instances of commanders who have taken special pains to provide their men with the latest news in the form of little handwritten sheets can be found in the records of almost every war in which the United States participated.

But it was not until World War I that a regular, authorized, and official service newspaper became an integral part of our operations. This was the famous Stars and Stripes distributed to the men of the AEF under General of the Armies, John J. Pershing.

In World War II great strides were made in news services for our fighting men. Since then, unit newspapers have become an established feature in the Armed Forces. Nearly every command down to the lowest unit now publishes a newspaper, even if it is no more than a mimeographed sheet or two.

The troop newspaper provides a daily or weekly roundup of materials supporting the commander, the needs of the base or station, and equally important, the news and events of the United States. The troop newspaper is fundamentally a tool of the commander that serves the wider objective of providing more detailed news on a more timely basis than any other media. Stars and Stripes is a major daily newspaper distributed by major commands to the Armed Forces overseas. Straight military news is not provided adequately by the regular news sources to the many smaller military newspapers and some assistance is provided by the Armed Forces Press Service.