



## *Fort Monmouth, NJ: From Signal to CECOM LCMC*

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A version of this article appeared in the 26 March 2010 *Monmouth Message*.

The Army established Fort Monmouth at the outbreak of World War I, when it recognized that the Signal Corps - with its strength of 55 officers and 1,570 men - was insufficient to furnish communications for the tremendous Army needed.

The search for land for additional Signal training camps led the Army to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; Leon Springs, Texas; Presidio of Monterey, California; and to a site in New Jersey formerly home to the Monmouth Park Race Track and luxury hotel.

A gentleman named Melvin Van Keuren owned the NJ site in 1917. The Army leased 468 acres of the tract from Van Keuren on 16 May 1917 with an option to buy.

The Army originally called the installation "Camp Little Silver," based merely on its location. General Orders dated 17 June 1917 named LTC Carl F. Hartmann the first commander.

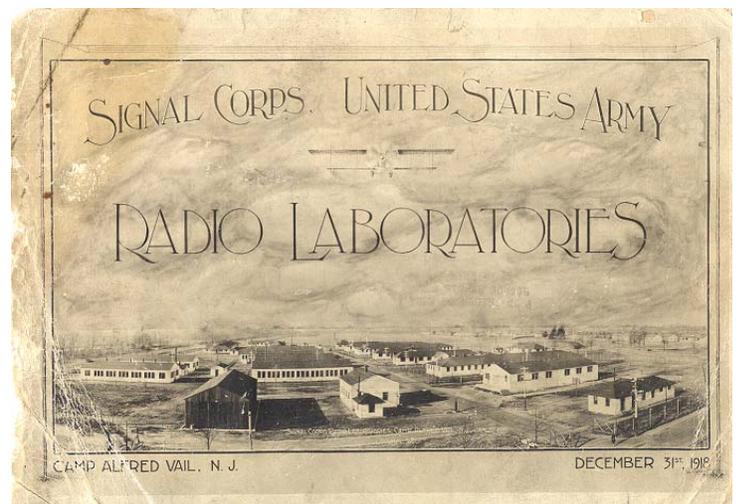
The Army renamed Camp Little Silver "Camp Alfred Vail" in September 1917 to honor the New Jersey inventor who helped Samuel Morse develop commercial telegraphy. By the end of 1918, some reportedly called it the "best equipped Signal Corps camp ever established anywhere."

The camp ultimately prepared several battalions for war. A total of about 1,000 officers and 9,000 enlisted men served at the post in 1918 alone.

In addition to wartime training, the Army conducted research and development work at the radio laboratories and associated airfield on post. This included pioneering work on air to ground radios and direction finding by radio.

The Chief Signal Officer authorized the purchase of Camp Vail in 1919 for \$115,300. The Signal Corps School relocated to Camp Vail from Fort Leavenworth in that year. The Signal Corps Board followed in 1924.

The installation received permanent status and the name "Fort Monmouth" in August 1925. The designation honored the Soldiers of the American Revolution who died in the Battle of Monmouth Court House in 1778.



The Signal Corps' Electrical Laboratory of Washington and the Signal Corps' Research Laboratory of New York merged with the Radio Laboratories at Fort Monmouth in 1929 to form the consolidated "Signal Corps Laboratories." The scientists of these labs developed the first U.S. aircraft detection radar, among many other things, during the inter war period.



The Signal School and Laboratories flourished at Fort Monmouth for several decades, training tens of thousands of Soldiers and participating in scientific feats such as man's first contact with the moon; the first weather radar; first communications satellite; first weather satellite; first televised weather satellite; and the first high capacity communications satellite.

Then, the 1960s brought big changes to Fort Monmouth. On 16 February 1962, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara's Project 80 was quietly put into effect. Although done with little fanfare, Project 80 totally reorganized the Army. It abolished the technical services and assigned their schools to the Continental Army Command, created a Combat Developments Agency to handle Army Doctrine, and established a single, giant, logistics agency, the Army Materiel Command (AMC), to handle all logistics, research, and development for the Army.

One of the Major Subordinate Commands of AMC, the U.S. Army Electronics Command (ECOM), was activated at Fort Monmouth on 23 May 1962 and established on 1 August 1962 to handle most of the logistics functions that formerly belonged to the Office of the Chief Signal Officer, as well as all associated organizations, installations and personnel. This included a work force of 14,000 people and a budget of \$760 million. MG Stuart S. Hoff was appointed the first Commander of ECOM.

At the time of the reorganization, the structure of ECOM was that of simply a headquarters, superimposed upon Signal Corps organizations that were already in place. The subordinate commands and field offices of ECOM corresponded in both name and function to the Signal Corps agencies that they were the day before reorganization. With the exception of

several intensively managed products and functions, the ECOM of 1962 was just a new Command Group for all the functions formerly done by the Office of the Chief Signal Officer.

This was not what Secretary McNamara intended when he undertook the reorganization. Nor was it what the AMC Commander, General Frank S. Besson, Jr., wanted when he spoke of “integrated commodity management.” A major and total reorganization of the old Signal Corps structure was needed to provide the integrated commodity management that General Besson wanted, and to reduce duplication of effort within the Command.

This task fell to MG Frank W. Moorman, who assumed command of ECOM on 29 August 1963 after MG Hoff retired from the Army 31 July of that year. MG Moorman immediately began to lay plans for a massive, command wide reorganization, officially implemented on 1 May 1964. In effect, this was the first true ECOM organization, the earlier structure being merely a transition from the Signal Corps structure to a new ECOM structure.

ECOM continued in the tradition of its Signal Laboratory forbearers and supplied combat troops with a number of high-technology commodities during the Vietnam conflict. These included mortar locators, night vision devices, and surveillance systems.

ECOM, for example, provided the AN/PPS-5 man-portable surveillance radar that one commander called, “worth 500 men,” and supported the new, transistorized FM radios of the AN/VRC-12/PRC-25 families that General Creighton Abrams (1968-1972) reportedly dubbed, “the single most important tactical item in Vietnam.”

But during Vietnam, the majority of the Signal Corps’ enlisted personnel trained at the Southeastern Signal School at Fort Gordon, not at Fort Monmouth. Fort Gordon, not Fort Monmouth, also hosted the Officer Candidate School.

The Army would soon order the consolidation of the Signal School activities split between Fort Monmouth and Fort Gordon. This consolidation was meant to economize manpower and operational costs for communications-electronics training due to the reduced training requirements resulting from the drawdown in Vietnam.

Combining the two schools at Fort Gordon would provide greater efficiency in the administration and support of academic programs, and a year-round climate more conducive to the conduct of field exercises. The Army also claimed that Fort Gordon had better access to adequate field training sites.

In fact, veteran Frank Effenberger, when interviewed in March 2010 about his experiences at Fort Monmouth in the early 1950s, recalled that during bivouac, “part of it was to go out in a night march and I could hear the juke boxes playing, you know, from Route 35 and the bars there...and we’re marching practically through people’s back yards, and of course they all want to know what was going on. The last night of the bivouac they held a mock battle out in the woods. We were all issued blank ammunition...they had a machine gun setup firing and making a big racket. Police pulled into the clearing and wanted to know what was going on...”

Not everyone agreed with the decision to move the school. Fort employees and the local communities formed a "Save our Signal School Association." At the time, Rep. James J. Howard

declared the move "A waste of the taxpayers' money and an insult to the people of the Third Congressional District." State Sen. Joseph Azzolina, R-Monmouth, called the idea, "Typical false economy." Assemblyman Joseph Robertson, R-Monmouth, said, "If that's the Army's idea of economy, we're in bad trouble."



The last of some 280,000 servicemen and service women of all ranks, and of all arms and services, to be graduated from the former Army Signal Center and School, PFC Rose M. Hull, 20, Elizaville, N.Y., makes final run-through on training equipment. A 1974 graduate of Germantown (N.Y.) High School, she is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Dmetre Hull Sr., Elizaville.

Veteran William Ryan, who trained at Fort Gordon in 1952 and later taught at the Signal School at Fort Monmouth, and thus had experienced both installations, said in 2008 of the move, "I thought it was the worst thing they ever did. They moved, essentially, the core of talent away from the center. The ...center of communication industry, is New York City. Or California. But to take it and move it all the way to Georgia, away from that reality, I thought was a disaster."

On 1 July 1974, the Southeastern Signal School at Fort Gordon became "The U. S. Army Signal School." The signal school at Fort Monmouth continued to operate for a time as "The U.S. Army Communications-Electronics School," while equipment and personnel transferred. Fort Monmouth's last class in signal communication graduated on 17 June 1976. PFC Rose Hull had the distinction of

being the last of some 280,000 servicemen and women of all ranks and all arms and services to receive a diploma from the school.

The old troika of the post, school and laboratory, formed in 1919, was officially and finally broken up with the official closing and transfer of the school to Fort Gordon. The movement of the school involved the transfer of only 89 civilians who had elected to accompany the school. More than 700 others were either reassigned to other agencies on Fort Monmouth or retired.

The Signal School at Fort Monmouth had existed under various names over the years, to include the Signal School, the Signal Corps School, and the Eastern Signal Corps School. In addition to its traditional training missions, the school had trained several thousand foreign officers and enlisted men representing 60 different countries. The School administered some 200 correspondence courses to a yearly average of 15,000 registered students at home or deployed.

After several reorganizations at Fort Monmouth, the new Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM) stood up effective 1 May 1981, charged with the research, development, engineering, acquisition, and materiel readiness of communications and electronic systems. Personnel from this organization worked round the clock during the Gulf War to equip Soldiers with everything from jammers to night vision, to surveillance and intelligence systems, and to sustain these systems in the field.

For example, 24<sup>th</sup> ID Commander MG Barry McCaffrey commented, “our night vision technology provided us the most dramatic mismatch of the war,” and BG John Stewart remarked, “JSTARS [Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System] was the single most valuable intelligence and target collection system in Desert Storm.”

On 2 August 2004 Claude M. Bolton, Jr., Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology (AL&T), and General Paul J. Kern, Commanding General of the Army Materiel Command, signed a memorandum of agreement to formalize the Life Cycle Management Initiative. That initiative established Life Cycle Management Commands by aligning the AMC systems-oriented major subordinate commands such as CECOM with the Program Executive Offices (PEOs) with which they worked.

The result of the initiative at Fort Monmouth would eventually be the formation of the Communications-Electronics Life Cycle Management Command (C-E LCMC). The C-E LCMC, now known as the CECOM LCMC, stood up on 2 February 2005

Support for the troops continues today. The team headquartered at Fort Monmouth intensively manages some 128 major defense programs, amounting to over \$10 billion in total obligation authority to acquire, field, and provide new equipment training on C4ISR systems. In recent years the Command has repaired, recapitalized, or replaced over 127,000 C4ISR systems. The CECOM LCMC team is responsible for almost half the Army’s inventory of end items and spare parts.

The Command is in the process of relocating to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland as a result of a 2005 Base Realignment and Closure decision.

Contact the CECOM LCMC Command Historical Office at (732) 532-6322 for more information on the Army reorganization of 1962 and its effect on Fort Monmouth, or about the Signal School relocation.