

CECOM Predecessor's Birthday Recalled

By Melissa Ziobro, Command Historian

A version of this article appeared in the 30 July 2010 *Monmouth Message* newspaper.

A CECOM predecessor, the U.S. Army Electronics Command (ECOM), stood up at Fort Monmouth 48 years ago this coming Sunday.

The 1988 CECOM monograph *Command and Command Structure* explains how in 1962 the Department of the Army abolished the Technical Services (including the Signal Corps), assigned their schools to the Continental Army Command, and created the Combat Development Command for doctrine and the Army Materiel Command to handle logistics, research, and development for the entire Army.



The Army had established Fort Monmouth as a Signal training camp in 1917. Over the years, the installation earned a reputation as the “Home of the Signal Corps” as more and more activities of the Chief Signal Officer, like the Signal Corps Laboratories and Signal Corps School, made their home here.

The 1962 Army reorganizations meant that Signal Corps activities at Fort Monmouth would be split amongst the Continental Army Command and the newly formed Combat Development and the Army Materiel Commands.

Troop units and activities that comprised the training missions at Fort Monmouth became the U.S. Army Signal Center and School on July 1 when the School began reporting to the U.S. Continental Army Command headquartered at Fort Monroe, Virginia. The Signal School would ultimately move to Fort Gordon, Georgia.

Activities at Fort Monmouth having to do with the development of combat concepts and doctrine, such as the Signal Board and the Training Literature Offices, became the responsibility of the Army Combat Development Command headquartered at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

But the Army Materiel Command, headquartered in Washington, D.C., would have the largest and longest lasting presence on Fort Monmouth. AMC's newly established subordinate command, ECOM, assumed responsibility for oversight of the Army organizations charged with the development, procurement, and support of Army signal materiel.

Specifically, the new command was responsible for research, design, development, product and maintenance engineering, industrial mobilization planning, new equipment training, wholesale inventory management, supply control, and technical assistance to users of Army commodities involving communications, electronic warfare, combat surveillance, automatic data processing, radar, and meteorological materiel.

At the time of the reorganization, according to *Command and Command Structure*, the structure of ECOM was that of simply a headquarters superimposed upon many of the Signal organizations already in place at Fort Monmouth. Most of the subordinate command and field offices of ECOM corresponded in function to the Signal Corps agencies that they were the day before the reorganization. These organizations included, most notably, the Signal Corps Laboratories and the Signal Materiel Support Agency at Fort Monmouth and the Signal Supply Agency in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Signal Corps Designation

Headquarters Ft. Monmouth
 USA Signal Research and Development Laboratory
 USA Signal Patent Activity
 USA Liaison Group, Project Michigan
 USA Signal Electronics Research Unit
 USASRDL Field Station 1
 USA Signal Materiel Support Agency
 USA Signal Supply Agency
 USASSA Procurement Office
 USASSA Procurement Office
 USASSA Procurement Office
 USASSA Procurement Office
 USASSA Midwestern Regional Office
 USASSA Western Regional Office
 USASSA Plant Inventory Control Office
 USA Signal Avionics Field Office
 USA Signal Missile support Agency
 USA Electronics Proving Ground (R&D Activity)
 USA Signal Air Defense Engineering Agency
 USA Combat Surveillance Agency
 USA Signal Regional Labor Office
 USA Signal Intelligence Agency
 USA Signal IG Field Office #1
 USA Signal IG Field Office #2

ECOM Designation

Headquarters US Army Electronics Command
 USA Electronics Research and Development Laboratory
 USAERDA Patent Activity
 USAERDA Liaison Group, Project Michigan
 USAERDA Research Unit, Mountain View
 USAERDA Field Station, Wisconsin
 USA Electronics Materiel Support Agency
 USA Electronics Materiel Agency
 USAECOM Procurement Office
 USAEMA Procurement Office
 USAEMA Procurement Office
 USAEMA Procurement Office
 USAEMA Plant Inventory Control Office
 USA Avionics Field Office
 USAERDA, White Sands
 USAERDA, Arizona
 USA Air Defense Engineering Agency
 (Discontinued Oct 62)
 USAECOM Regional Labor Office
 USA Intelligence Materiel Development Agency
 USAECOM IG Field Office
 (Discontinued Mar 63)

Other major activities under ECOM included the Electronics Research and Development Activity at Fort Huachuca, Arizona and at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico.

According to the August 2, 1962 *Monmouth Message* newspaper, ECOM would “function primarily within the Continental United States, but personnel will travel abroad when necessary to maintain liaison with troops stationed in foreign theaters, foreign industry, and foreign research and development (R&D) programs.” Indeed, military and civilian personnel would soon deploy in support of the Vietnam War effort.

Government military and civilian personnel assigned to ECOM were expected to fluctuate between 7,000 and 10,000. The annual budget was expected to vary between \$700 million and \$1 billion.



With the establishment of ECOM, the Commanding General here became the commander of ECOM and of Fort Monmouth. Major General Stuart S. Hoff thus became the first Commanding General of ECOM and the twenty-second commander of Fort Monmouth.

General Hoff served until his retirement on July 31 1963. He died in August 1978.

ECOM was relatively short-lived. The Secretary of the Army soon established the Army Materiel Acquisition Review Committee (AMARC) to improve the Army's materiel acquisition procedures. The Committee's report, released in April 1974, said in essence that the commodity command structure of the Army, with its emphasis on "readiness," limited the Army's flexibility and impeded the acquisition process. The Committee recommended that research and development functions be separated from "readiness" functions.

AMARC entailed a two-for-one split for most major subordinate commands of AMC. For ECOM, though, it proposed the establishment of four new organizations: the Communications-Electronics Materiel Readiness Command (CERCOM), the Communications Research and Development Command (CORADCOM), the Electronics Research and Development Command (ERADCOM), and the Avionics Research and Development Activity (AVRADA), a component of the new Aviation Research and Development Command.

Eventual reassessment of the AMARC changes concluded that while the emphasis on R&D had increased as desired, there was also much duplication of effort. AMC combined CERCOM and CORADCOM to form the new Communications-Electronics Command (CECOM), effective 1 May 1981. CECOM has been headquartered at Fort Monmouth since that time.