

Ham Operators Provide Message Service to Troops in Viet Nam

Green Bay area residents wishing to contact servicemen in Viet Nam may send messages through two Green Bay amateur radio operators on a new military hookup.

Arrangements for the service were instituted with cooperation of the U.S. Army and amateur radio operators throughout the nation. The special teletype network was set up in December and is just now getting into operation.

Green Bay operators are Paul Simandl, 2793 Whippoorwill Dr. and Harvey Mattes 2759 Shawano Ave.

Six Stations

"The Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS), now 17 years old, has organized the Viet Nam program with the establishment of six stations in Saigon," Simandl said. "It is different than the usual ham radio disaster emergency calls in that it is operated on a military frequency

which is outside of the regular amateur bands. However, the stateside radio operators must have an amateur rating to participate.

Two Methods

"So far there has not been much traffic to or from Saigon, chiefly because the system is just being coordinated and established. However, we will make every attempt to get as many calls through as possible," the radio operator noted.

The system provides two methods for transmitting messages overseas. The important factor in each case, Simandl stressed, is the necessity of providing the complete military address of the serviceman, including his Army Post Office (APO) number.

Persons sending a message may choose from any number of pre-written texts covering various subjects. The code number of the selected text is then transmitted overseas and the message with the corresponding number then delivered to the serviceman.

No Guarantee

Persons also may dictate their own message to either of the operators and it will be put through. These personal messages are limited to 25 words including the signature.

"We can't guarantee delivery," Mattes said, "but delivery has been pretty much regular

and pretty much in good time. I have had messages to Korea and a return within 24 hours. I have sent messages to Korea that were delivered within an hour and a half . . . We can't guarantee that kind of service on this network, but we'll try."

Both Simandl and Mattes have full equipment and facilities for four types of communication including radio keys, two types of voice transmission and teletype.

The relay from Saigon goes to Hawaii and then to the Pentagon in Washington before coming to Green Bay. The same route, in reverse, is used for outgoing messages to Viet Nam.

The project was instituted by the Army to provide messages to and from servicemen in Viet Nam and also to provide training for a reserve supply of radio operators for national emergencies.

"We got a workout and also proved help a year ago in the floods along the Mississippi and the hurricane disasters," Mattes said.

"During those emergencies there was someone in military affiliate radio system on duty 24 hours a day. The government thought so much of our program and its results that they have furnished us with emergency power equipment during our tenure on the Viet Nam system."

Simandl, a structural steel design draftsman, has been an amateur radio operator for the past six years. He is also Wisconsin assistant MARS director.

Mattes employed at Northern Radio & Television Corp., has been a radio ham since 1927 and has been with Military Affiliate Radio System for the past four years.



Message to Viet Nam — Paul Simandl, 2793 Whippoorwill Drive, one of two Green Bay amateur radio operators on MARS teletype hookup for sending messages to servicemen in Viet Nam, sends message at his teletype in the radio room at his home. (Press-Gazette Photo)