

HISTORY OF THE US ARMY VISUAL INFORMATION CENTER, 1918-1993

PREFACE: THE FORERUNNERS

Historically, the US Army was conservative in using visual information as a military tool. Still photography, the original medium, got a slow start. Although developed in the 1800's and used in the Crimean War, the first US military photography was done by civilians like Matthew Brady.

In 1880 Sergeant George W. Rice became the Army's first military photographer. The Signal Corps, which then also served as the US National Weather Service, sent him to cover an early scientific Arctic expedition in 1881 as part of the international First Polar Year. He completed the job. However, Navy ships were two years late retrieving the 25 Arctic explorers because of ice packs. Sergeant Rice was among the 18 members who starved to death. His photography was saved. It describes the expedition with images that told more than words.

Soon, the Army began accumulating photographs and using military photographers---especially in various Army headquarters locations in Washington, DC. Army leaders soon recognized that photography was a new Army tool that had to be organized, managed, and exploited.

USAVIC: INTRODUCTION

Throughout Army history, one single identifiable organization has been the focal point and nucleus of Army visual information operations. Despite being renamed, reorganized, and consolidated many times over the decades, that organization has survived as the Army's primary visual information organization. It is now known as the **U.S. Army Visual Information Center**.

The beginning of today's USAVIC traces back to 1918, when the **Signal Corps Photographic Laboratory** moved into temporary buildings at the area which is now Fort McNair. At one time the post included the Old Washington Barracks and later became the US Army War College.

By 1920 the **Army War College Signal Corps Photographic Lab** had still and motion picture activities. It had handled millions

of feet of WWI silent film and thousands of photographs. By 1925 all Signal Corps photo processing facilities were consolidated there during the post-War drawdown.

When sound motion picture technology came, the Army saw the potential of "talkies" as a powerful mass training tool. Selected War College "photographic officers" went to Hollywood to study at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences---then returned to the War College Signal Corps Photo Laboratory for training, experience, and command of photographic operations. The Laboratory soon got the mission of operating a photographic library which included negatives of Matthew Brady, the Arctic explorations, the Indian Wars, and WWI.

By 1942 the War College Photo Laboratory work force had grown to 167 officers, 56 enlisted and 106 civilians who handled motion picture and still photography for the Chief Signal Officer.

WARTIME: THE ORGANIZATION SPLITS

Wartime brought big changes. Because of limited space at the War College Lab, huge shipments of still photos from the battlefields, and massive requirements for training films, the Army split the Lab's motion and still picture functions into two organizations.

The motion picture organization quickly became a giant. The Army bought Paramount Pictures' studio complex in Long Island, NY and moved Army motion picture elements there. This became the Signal Corps Photographic Center (later Army Pictorial Center). By the end of the War, that "splinter" of the War College Photo lab grew to a work force of 1,200 military and civilian personnel.

ARMY PICTORIAL SERVICES DIVISION: WWII EXPANSION

Meanwhile the War College Still Photo Lab planned to make a big move. As the new "Pentagon" office building neared completion, the War College Still Photo Lab merged with the Still Photo Library and command elements to form the **Army Pictorial Services Division**, Office of the Chief Signal Officer. The Division gradually moved into especially designed rooms on the Pentagon's fifth floor, completing the move on 3 Feb 1943. BG W.H. Harrison was the Chief of Army Pictorial Service.

The Pictorial Services Division's Pentagon lab printed more than 100,000 black and white prints a month at the height of WWII, plus hundreds of lantern slides. Film shipments to the Pentagon lab were flown in from battlefields in Africa, Europe, and the Pacific. Besides photos taken by Army combat photographers, they processed wartime photos taken by famous photographers like Margaret Burke White, portraitist Yausses Karsh, and Vogue magazine photographer Horst P. Horst---a draftee. They processed three-color separation negatives which for the first time in history were transmitted across the ocean so the public could see President Truman, Prime Minister Atlee and Joseph Stalin at the Potsdam Conference. The 21-minute transmission went to the Army Communications Office on the Pentagon fifth floor; then down the hallway to the lab for printing and distribution.

The Pentagon movie editing facilities were regularly used by big name Hollywood talent who enlisted their services for the Army during WWII. It wasn't unusual during the war years to see COL Darryl F. Zanuck---he and his Signal Corps combat photo team just back from North Africa--walking down the "A" ring past the photo lab with a cigar in his mouth. Down the hallway, COL Frank Capra took work breaks to chat with other Signal officers near a window across from the photo lab. Capra used the "Movieola" editor for scenes for his famous "Why We Fight" film series for the Army.

POST-WWII EXPANSION: JOINT MISSION

The Army's growing library of photo records, plus the need for centralized management, prompted a reorganization after WWII. By General Orders dated September, 1946, the Signal Corps (still) Photographic Library was made part of the photo lab of the Army Pictorial Services Division's Still Picture Branch. This provided faster service to the Pentagon briefers, action officers, and public information officers who ordered slides and prints from the Library. A color lab was installed. A Signal Corps still photo team worked from the 17th Signal Service Company at Ft. Myer to document important military events in the Nation's Capital. The Library was also used as a reference by Life magazine, by General "Blackjack" Pershing, by Service officials, by publishers, and in later years by personalities like Bob Hope and James Jones who needed historical photos for their books.

Photo work was carried out at the Pentagon and at the old War College facility.

But the Army Pictorial Services Division included more than still photography and a photo library. Pentagon operations required facilities to use still and motion imagery in briefings.

Thus, the Army Pictorial Services Division also acquired the 300-seat Pentagon Auditorium, four small motion picture screening rooms, a motion picture film library, and a complete film inspection and editing facility.

After the "War Department" evolved into the Department of Defense in 1947, with James Forrestal as the first Secretary of Defense, the US Army Pictorial Services Division began their "Joint" mission of supporting the Secretary of Defense as well as the Department of Army.

US ARMY PHOTOGRAPHIC AGENCY

Through the Korean War and into the 50's, the Division's structure strengthened. Motion picture coverage in the DC area was added to the Division's missions. Sergeant Chuck Beresford (who later would become a Pictorial Officer and later the senior VI policy official on the Army Staff) and Sergeant Lloyd Carter were the crew. They were the predecessors of the future DA Special Photo Teams. After an inter-agency contest to change the Division's name, it was renamed the **US Army Photographic Agency** by General Orders dated 1 April 1956. In 1962, the Army Photographic Agency got a TV capability in the Pentagon, complete with studio, editing suite, and recording equipment. In 1963 the Agency redesigned the Pentagon Auditorium steps to accommodate President Kennedy, who had an old back injury.

APC CLOSES: TOBYHANNA JOINS AGENCY

The Agency grew larger two years after Army Pictorial Center at Long Island shut down as an economy measure in June 1970. It left a great history, producing 300 training films a year at its peak and winning 2 "Oscars." APC assets scattered to places like Aberdeen Proving Ground, White Sands Proving Ground, and Redstone Arsenal. Its film vaults went to Tobyhanna Army Depot, PA, which had served as a major repository. Later, the Tobyhanna motion picture and tape depository was transferred to the US Army Photographic Agency.

US ARMY AUDIOVISUAL AGENCY

To better describe the Agency's full range of still, motion picture, TV, graphics, combat photography and presentation services, the Agency was redesignated the **US Army Audiovisual Agency** in November 1972.

After the Vietnam conflict ended, the Agency handled audiovisual requirements for the high-priority Volunteer Army Recruiting (VOLAR) project. Agency personnel traveled around the country documenting the "new Army" look in military living

quarters and the improved life style. Coverage went into 3-screen, multi-media presentations and motion picture briefings for use by General Westmoreland and the DA Staff.

USAAVA DOWNSIZES TO "ACTIVITY"

Then the time came for the Agency to take its hits as the military establishment downsized. In May 1974, the Agency went under the Military District of Washington and was redesignated the US Army Audiovisual Activity. It was a "consolidation" which placed some smaller photo units under Agency control, but which took much away from the Agency. Agency managers worked day and night writing impact statements to stop the action-- unsuccessfully. The organization was split into a Pentagon Directorate and an MDW Directorate. The same year, the organization lost its Tobyhanna film and tape depository to TRADOC, and in May 1974, Forces Command was given command of the three DASPO units located in Fort Bragg, Fort Shafter, Hawaii, and Fort Clayton, Panama. Those units were consolidated into one, with all personnel relocated to Fort Bragg. The name was changed from DASPO to Army Special Operations Pictorial Detachment.

One bright spot during these days was in the graphics area. Many graphics shops in the National Capital Region were closed down, and their top artists came to the Agency. Graphics managers like Phil Braunstein and artists like Joseph Pisani and others designed permanent Pentagon exhibits in the Pentagon, including the ANZUS Corridor, the MacArthur Corridor, and the George Marshall Corridor. The Agency photo, TV, and motion picture coverage for the Nation's 1976 Bi-Centennial in the Capital was immense and received high acclaim.

US ARMY AUDIOVISUAL CENTER: GROWTH AS FOA OF DA

Then the dark days ended. Under General orders dated 1975, OSD had mandated a complete consolidation of audiovisual activities in the National Capital Region with USAAVA taking over assets of scattered AV satellites around the Washington area. By 1979, USAAVA was a widespread organization of 253 military and civilian personnel. USAAVA facilities modernized. In orders dated 1978, the audiovisual functions which had been assigned to MDW reverted back to US Army Audiovisual Center. USAAVC was designated as a field operating agency of HQDA DCSOPs. A

champagne bottle was opened to celebrate the Center's reincarnation.

In a related action, an Army-wide Audiovisual Management office was created and AV staff support functions were assigned to USAAVC. The Management Office was to manage all Army-wide functional operations of AV activities. In 1979, Martha A. Dutcher--a Navy veteran who had later served as a civilian lab technician at the Agency, became Chief of the Management office.

DASPO RETURNS: CPD CREATED

Then the former DASPO elements were returned to USAAVC in April 1980. At Fort Bragg and later at Fort Gillem, the combat photographers hadn't been used to the best advantage. They had distinguished themselves as the first recipients of the Humanitarian Service Medal for their documentation of the resettlement program for homeless Vietnamese refugees, but they seldom had been deployed. The April 1980 General Orders changed the name of Army Special Pictorial Detachment to Combat Pictorial Detachment. They relocated to Fort Meade, close to USAAVC's supporting facilities at the Pentagon and near major airports.

But USAAVC took a major loss in 1980. In October, the Still Photographic Library which had been part of the organization since early WWI was transferred to the newly organized Defense Audiovisual Agency (DAVA). Under the new DoD reorganization, eight other AV facilities and depositories of the Services were consolidated under DAVA. At the time, the USAAVC Still Library had 16 employees handling about 300 written inquiries and over 400 walk-in requests a month. It had over 1.5 million photos and negatives on file, including 120,000 color negatives dating back to WWII.

Although DAVA was disestablished later, responsibility for the management of all DoD record still documentation was assigned by DoD to Navy as a Joint mission. The Air Force drew as a Joint mission the operation of the DoD Motion Media Records Center at Norton AFB, CA.

USAAVA, however, picked up its share of additional Joint missions after the demise of DAVA. USAAVA absorbed the Joint mission of contracting out entire productions for the Services; to do it, USAAVC formed Joint Visual Information Service-Washington, now located in Alexandria. USAAVC also was assigned

the Joint mission of replicating and distributing productions for the Services, reclaiming its former subordinate unit at Tobyhanna Army Depot to do the job. That organization is today's Joint Visual Information Activity-Tobyhanna. Additionally, the Center's support in the National Capital Region was designated as a Joint mission, as was its Combat Pictorial Detachment mission.

USAAVC also was already providing technical support for the Office of Secretary of Defense Public Affairs press briefings.

During that busy period in the early 80's, USAAVC covered the Reagan inauguration, the arrival of American hostages from Iran, General Omar Bradley's funeral, and worldwide Joint exercises. Combat Pictorial Detachment became a quickly deployable combat camera unit again, and covered the Grenada operation and other Central and South American events. CPD had become virtually the only combat documentation unit in the Army; the "Army of Excellence" program by 1986 had deleted pictorial assets from all Division and Corps tactical units.

US ARMY VISUAL INFORMATION CENTER: PART OF THE IMA

Then in 1985 came Army Information Management and its profound impact on Army visual information and USAAVC. As the Army watched technology leap forward, decision makers combined several functional areas involving processing, storage, and transmission of information: automation, communication, visual information, printing/publishing, records management, and library functions were placed in the Information Mission Area to make technology a better information tool for decision makers and soldiers. Staff and policy management at DA level were placed under the Assistant Chief of Staff for Information Management--later the DISC4 at Secretariat level. Operationally, the responsibility for IM went to US Army Communications Command, which became US Army Information Systems Command. USAAVC--an operational organization--was transferred from HQDA DCSOPS purview to Information Systems Command. Its Army AV Management Office, with a policy development mission, was split off and transferred to the DA Staff. Its operational Army-wide Programs Management function went too, until HQ USAISC was ready to manage those programs a few years later.

USAAVC soon became the **U.S. Army Visual Information Center--USAVIC**. COL James T. Van Orden, his Staff, and their successors saw their assignment to the IMA as an opportunity to bring visual information into the 21st Century and make it a faster, better

tool for the Army. While technology had gone from vacuum tubes to transistors to semiconductors to digital systems, visual information was still using equipment like that of WWII. Even its "modern" TV cameras, used by its Combat Pictorial Detachment, were bulky and dangerously unsuited for the battlefield. And the biggest problem of all was that visual information didn't have the immediacy that commanders needed. Images--especially those from the battlefield--still had to be processed and hand-carried.

Just getting to the battlefield took a major effort for CPD--which was a TDA unit, not easily deployed with troops. Four successive USAVIC Commanders pushed Army leadership to make CPD a TO&E Combat Camera company supported by state-of-the-art technology.

USAVIC tried to make up for lost time in spite of quickly diminishing resources.

Soon, USAVIC became the Army's leader in use of computer graphics, with a sophisticated system in the Army Operations Center. It used computer graphics to prepare briefings and camera ready art for DA publications like the Army Posture Statement. USAVIC had long before executed Army management of the Defense Automated VI System--a DoD databank of all military motion picture and video productions. It received and managed all pictorial record materials from all Army MACOM's--but manually. USAVIC's Electronic Media Division was into microwave transmission of live TV, as well as operation of a CCTV system in the Pentagon.

In 1986, USAVIC, in coordination with the Army VI Management Office, instituted half-inch VHS as the standard videotape for distribution, replacing the more expensive 3/4-inch videotapes and saving millions in mailing costs.

In that same year, USAVIC evaluated demonstrations of "still video" cameras and saw the systems as a means of electronically recording images that could be transmitted immediately from foxhole to the Pentagon. The next year, Combat Pictorial Detachment Commander, MAJ Peter Theodore, tested prototype still video cameras during a Joint exercise. Another CPD Commander, CPT Pam Brady, tested compact half-inch video cameras to replace heavier ones being used by CPD soldiers. A subsequent CPD Commander, CPT Roy Messersmith, used those cameras and experimented with 8mm video systems--testing equipment in furnace-like Saudi Arabian environments, and a few weeks later in

-50 degree conditions in an Alaska exercise. CPD acquired night vision lenses and adapted them to their 8mm video cameras. By then, CPD had a full fledged Airborne team and needed tough, light, reliable systems for battlefield imagery. At the Army Operations Center in the Pentagon, that imagery would be seen on a one-of-a-kind multi-screen automated display system operated around the clock by soldiers from USAVIC's Graphic Media Division--which was evolving into the field of electronic imaging under Division Chief, Lenn Lamoureux.

While COL Robert Kelley commanded USAVIC, his staff conducted research into leading-edge, digitized imagery technology in 1989. COL Kelley and his staff briefed USAISC and Signal Symposium attendees on the emerging technology which could permit top-quality images to be transmitted up and down the chain of command as rapidly as alphanumeric information. Funding constraints prevented USAVIC from fully equipping itself with the new technology. But DoD and the other Services took note of the research and began acquisitions.

ARMY-WIDE PROGRAMS RETURN: VI MANAGERS MEET

In 1989, following decisions at HQDA DISC4 and HQ USAISC, responsibility for administering three Army-wide VI programs was turned over to USAVIC. The programs included the DA VI Production and Distribution Program, the Army VI Activities Authorization Program, and the Army Documentation Program. The Army Programs Management Office was established to perform the function, which involved close coordination with the DISC4 Army VI Management Directorate that was located next door. With Paula Mokulis as Chief, the Office maintained close contact with all Army MACOM VI managers.

As a sidelight, Ms. Mokulis organized the 1992 Worldwide Army VI Managers' Workshop and Conference, hosted by USAVIC in coordination with the DISC4 Army VI Management Directorate. The event was a resumption of worldwide Army AV/VI conferences that had been held annually for many years, but which had halted in recent years. It was virtually the only forum for VI managers to learn new policies and procedures and to discuss issues.

COMBAT CAMERA HISTORY: JUST CAUSE

It took Operation Just Cause to convince the Nation's military leadership how VI could be a real-time decision tool in the hands of combat camera personnel during a crisis.

USAVIC CPD soldiers led by their Commander, CPT Stanley D. Johnson, were in Panama as part of a Joint operation before Just Cause began. A CPD photographer, SSG Timothy McDaniels, was killed in a helicopter crash while documenting transportation routes. When the situation in Panama reached crisis stage and Operation Just Cause was initiated, CPD's soldiers with still video cameras were beside combat infantrymen throughout the battle activities. They transmitted imagery through electronic circuits directly to the Pentagon, where a Joint Combat Camera Center had been established, manned in part by USAVIC soldiers. The still video images were rushed to the waiting Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as to the Army Operations Center.

For the first time in military history, images were transmitted directly from the battlefield to the National leadership in decision information. On Christmas Eve, the Chairman of the JCS, GEN Colin Powell, and the Commander-in-Chief, President George Bush, studied the still video images as they arrived.

Decision makers also received combat imagery shot by CPD COMCAM soldiers with compact 8mm video cameras--some of which recorded enemy soldiers moving in the darkness. Along with the videotapes which were rushed to Washington from Panama, film-based images also came in. Videotapes and film were processed around the clock by USAVIC's Television Division and Photographic Services Division--then rushed to decision makers. One of the last Just Cause images shot by a CPD COMCAM soldier showed Noreiga loading onto an aircraft after his apprehension. It became the most famous photo of the war.

DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM

Just as USAVIC elements finished the videotape and photographic after-action requirements for Just Cause, the Southwest Asia crisis began to build up and CPD COMCAM teams shipped out under the leadership of CPT Frank Phillips and began video and still documentation of US troops and materiel arriving

in Saudi Arabia. At the Pentagon, the Joint Combat Camera Center was again reinforced by USAVIC soldiers.

As Desert Shield became Desert Storm and battle began, virtually all available COMCAM teams were deployed. But Central Command needed more COMCAM soldiers. As a result, HQDA decided to ship VI soldiers and officers from CONUS installations through USAVIC to be trained, equipped, and armed before deploying directly to SWA as COMCAM soldiers. That task, added to the sudden glut of electronic, videotape, and film documentation from SWA, taxed the understrengthened USAVIC to the maximum. Under the Command of COL Robert Ness, Operations Officer, MAJ Ruth LaFontaine--herself a former CPD Commander--coordinated the deployment and support functions. Four USAVIC officers--CPT Phillips, CPT Cyrus Gwynn, CPT Dave Mallard and CPT Vic Beresford (son of Chuck Beresford) were COMCAM officers in SWA. At USAVIC's Joint Visual Information Activity at Tobyhanna, the staff of Mr. Charles Kohler rushed hundreds of training videotapes to Saudi Arabia to train Reserve units which had been deployed there.

It was reported that when the SWA conflict started, one of the first questions asked by senior JCS leadership--remembering the still video images transmitted during Just Cause--was "Where are my images?" JCCC force-fed film, electronic images, and videotape to USAVIC Photographic Services and Television Divisions for immediate, large scale processing and duplication for all the Services. The Center handled the largest daily workload since WWII. Dozens of video reports were produced in TV Division. Besides reinforcing the JCCC, USAVIC formed an Army Combat Camera Center to handle the input. At COL Ness' direction, a VI Automation Task Force of "computer-smart" VI soldiers was set up to become experts in electronic imagery. Headquarters, USAISC, reinforced USAVIC capabilities by funding new replacement systems to absorb increased missions. USAVIC's final Desert Storm commitment was coverage of the Victory Parades in Washington, DC, and in New York City. It was all over but filing the images.

The fact that this limited war generated such massive VI requirements was proof of the value that military decision makers placed on Combat Camera and VI.

As part of the Army VI Steering Committee chaired by HQDA DISC4, USAVIC's strong management force was a major participant

in fielding updated VI policy and procedure documents: AR 25-1 and DA Pam 25-91. USAVIC management and COMCAM veterans from three wars went to Lowry AFB to assist in writing TM 24-40, Tactical VI Doctrine. In conjunction with Television-Audio Support Activity, USAVIC oversaw completion of new state-of-the-art conference room presentation systems for Secretary of Army and other DA Staffs.

BACK TO "NORMAL OPERATIONS": INAUGURAL, CIVIL EMERGENCIES, SOMALIA

LTC Peter Theodore, a past USAVIC CPD Commander and Operations officer, took Command of the Center's military-civilian work force on 30 April 92 at the height of the Army's post-Cold War drawdown. A series of Center briefings to principals and strong support from Headquarters, Information Systems Command and HQDA enabled USAVIC to avoid a reduction-in-force and maintain enough personnel to continue its Joint and Army support missions, expand its automation and electronic imaging capabilities, and acquire state-of-the-art COMCAM systems at CPD.

The Center's new Electronic Imaging and Graphics Services Division under its Chief, Jim Cox, popularized digital imagery with the DA Staff and established the capability to exchange top-quality digital still images with other Army Electronic Multimedia Imaging Centers and the DoD Still Media Records Center. Television Division, headed by Roy Smith, acquired new studio cameras, a new switcher, and a D-2 digital video recording system. It also upgraded the Pentagon Auditorium and effected the design for the first major renovation of the facility since the Pentagon was built. Photo Services Division, led by Cal Douglas, acquired new fast-response photo processing and copier systems. Assignment photographers covered major events throughout the National Capital Region, and Russ Roederer took portraits of new Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, the Army Chief of Staff and Vice Chief of Staff, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Secretary of the Army, and the Secretary of Navy, among others. At Tobyhanna, Charles Kohler's work force completed a series of major automation improvements that automated the input, processing, and worldwide distribution of motion picture, video, and IVD productions worldwide for the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. JVIA-Washington, led by MAJ James Toth and staffed by veteran producer-director project officers, continued to contract out top-quality productions for the multiple Services and DoD organizations.

USAVIC was a major participant with the Armed Forces Inaugural Committee, covering the Inauguration of President Clinton. Besides the Inauguration, Combat Pictorial Detachment tested a prototype compressed-video transmission system which linked a tactical exercise site live with the Office of the Chief of Staff. CPD COMCAM soldiers covered the Los Angeles Riots, Hurricane Andrew relief operations in Florida, and other emergencies and exercises like Ocean Venture. CPD COMCAM teams again came under fire during relief operations in Somalia.

In 1993, a long-time USAVIC objective was achieved when HQDA approved formation of a TO&E COMCAM company, the 55th Signal COMCAM Company, from Combat Pictorial Detachment. The unit was assigned to USAVIC and was activated in ceremonies at its Fort Meade Headquarters on 17 November 1993, with MAJ Michael Edrington as Commander. The new unit was to grow in strength from 37 to 81 soldiers.

The 55th "Double Nickle" immediately initiated a major initiative to successfully stand up: a building was located and refurbished to become the unit's new headquarters. Another barracks was identified, with rooms painted, carpeted, and furnished for the incoming COMCAM soldiers. Arms room and motor pool accommodations were set up, and new weapons arrived to replace the old .45's. With USAISC support, new, "standard" video, still, transmission, and graphics/electronic imaging systems were ordered. A major training program began to make 25P's and 25S's into the new 25V and to further upgrade the proficiency of the 55th's incoming COMCAM soldiers.

Simultaneously, the 55th immediately responded to numerous operational missions during its first months. Most notable was Exercise AGILE PROVIDER, where for the first time in recent history, Army--specifically MAJ Edrington as well as his teams--was the lead for the large scale joint exercise; the first exercise of the newly created unified command, ACOM. A short time later, 55th teams deployed to Haiti with its commander having oversight over Joint COMCAM coverage of all operations.

Other USAVIC elements such as Electronic Imaging/Graphics Services Division, Television Division, and Photo Division received new systems that boosted their productivity and exploited their creativity. With those capabilities, they were able to handle requirements with a responsiveness and quality standard never before possible.

In May 1994, LT Peter Theodore retired, leaving the Deputy, Mr. Ralph K. Anderson, as USAVIC's Acting Director until the arrival of USAVIC's new Commander, LTC Billy Conner.

During this time frame, USAVIC's Joint Visual Information Activity-Tobyhanna took over their additional mission of distributing productions for the United States Air Force. With that mission, JVIA-T was distributing productions and other VI products---including interactive videodiscs and CD's---for all Services and DoD. Ten personnel spaces came with the mission.

Meanwhile, in Alexandria at Joint Visual Information-Washington, USMC increased their contracted productions significantly---even assigning two qualified Marine Corps warrant officers to JVIA-W to assist as liaison and project officers.

Meanwhile, a new Pentagon organization, the Pentagon Single Agency Manager (SAM) for information technology was created to consolidate information services in the building. USAVIC, already having the joint NCR VI support mission, was a major player in forming the "SAM" and went under the SAM's operational control in October 1994--retaining all its current joint and Army missions while taking on some new Pentagon requirements. Those included reimbursable support to the Navy and Air Force Staffs in the Pentagon when requested.

USAVIC at that time was providing some form of direct VI support to every soldier, sailor, airman, Marine, and civilian in the US Military Establishment.

Shortly after joining the SAM, which was Directed by BG Nabors initially, USAVIC soon earned a reputation with its new headquarters of being an exemplary customer-oriented organization, drawing praise from top level decision makers.

During 1995, MAJ Ralph Harris assumed command of the 55th Signal Company (COMCAM). Immediately after he took over the unit, the Bosnia situation required the presence of US troops, and the new Commander was in Europe planning deployment. Shortly, more than half the company was supporting US and Allied forces. They made major breakthroughs. After getting some technical help from HQ ISC, the 55th COMCAM soldiers were able to transmit still imagery through tactical communications systems for the first time. This made COMCAM support available to every level in the Chain of Command. They also were able to send imagery through the internet.

With USAVIC's 75th year behind it, soldiers and civilians continued to achieve the major goal expressed in the organization's current motto: providing "Today's Images for Tomorrow's Decisions."

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