

COMZIEUR



The “Untold” History 1951-1964

By Capt. Greg Jones



Jeeps, tracked vehicles and other support vehicles participate in a ceremony in 1962.

As the heat of July seeped into the French countryside of 1951, the world was at a crucial point of change in many ways. This was the summer that World War II officially ended with a peace treaty between the Allies and the belligerents. Though active hostilities had ceased years prior, it was not until this balmy European summer that the state of war with Germany ended.

With the end of one war, came the onset of another, later known as the cold war. This inactive conflict (though very active in Korea at the time) would consume the politics, militaries and in many ways lifestyles throughout Europe for the next four decades.

On the lighter side of things, some may remember this as the year Alice in Wonderland was first released by Walt Disney studios, and the first color Television broadcast was offered by CBS.

It was in this context that an organization was born that would, through various transformations across six decades become the 21st Theater Sustainment Command.

“At the conclusion of World War II, the massive logistical network developed to support that war represented a complex and far-reaching organization.” (From the unit annual history report, 1981)

After the end of hostilities, personnel began redeploying and the troop strength dropped drastically from over 2.5 million to 278,000 by 1946. Sustainment personnel throughout the force in Europe were drastically reduced, and the redeployment itself placed great demands on the sustainment community, then consisting of the U.S. Army Europe logistical staff elements, and logistics organizations organic to subordinate units.

This great demand on limited resources, coupled with the rising threat of the Soviet Union, prompted USAREUR to establish a separate command to handle logistics functions.

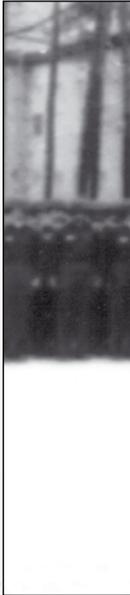
U.S. Army Communications Zone Europe, popularly referred to as COMZ or COMZEUR, was officially established by a document signed and dated July 15, 1951; just a day after that first color broadcast

in the states, and just six days after then president Harry S. Truman requested the official cessation of war with Germany.

The purpose of this organization was to provide a Line of Communications across France to U.S. Forces throughout the European Theater. In essence, like the 21st TSC today, COMZEUR was the major subordinate command answering directly to USAREUR and primarily responsible for a broad scope of logistical support missions throughout theater.

These logistical functions had previously been overseen by staff elements within USAREUR, and executed by units subordinate to USAREUR and its subordinate commands. With the establishment of COMZEUR, USAREUR setup a separate subordinate command that provided logistical support to the Army throughout Europe.

Initially stationed in France, COMZEUR was established to provide a robust Line of Communications across France to units within Central Europe. At the time, the primary movement of supplies, equipment and other cargo was overseas



1954 Desegregation

The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* marked a turning point in the history of race relations in the United States. On May 17, 1954, the Court stripped away constitutional sanctions for segregation by race, and made equal opportunity in education the law of the land.

Brown v. Board of Education reached the Supreme Court through the fearless efforts of lawyers, community activists,

parents, and students. Their struggle to fulfill the American dream set in motion sweeping changes in American society, and redefined the nation’s ideals.

In the photo on the left, Nettie Hunt, sitting on the steps of the Supreme Court, holding a newspaper, explains to her daughter Nikie the meaning of the Supreme Court’s decision banning school segregation. (Photo by World-Telegram

courtesy of Library of Congress)



What’s in a Name? Communication Zone Europe

July 15, 1951 to April 28, 1969

Mission

The COMZEUR was created to establish a line of communications across France and provide logistical support to forces operating throughout the European Theater. The specific tasks in the command’s original mission set included; Negotiations with French government, military and civilian agencies for that which concerned as-



through ports in France and neighboring countries, then across land to the rest of Europe. The purpose of COMZEUR was two-fold. First they were to facilitate rapid movement of troops, supplies and equipment from the Atlantic and into and throughout the European theater. Second, they were to maintain certain stockpiles and depots of readily available sup-

plies, ammunition and other logistical needs. The intent was that a certain size of force could be supported and moved forward immediately upon arrival in theater, and continued support could be provided for sustained operations.

At its inception, COMZEUR was organized based more on geography than function. It consisted of

the Headquarters, a Base Section (BASEC) and several Advanced Sections (ADSEC), all named for their geographic location.

Each of these commands contained a variety of sustainment services under a single organization, and the units typically did not become function-specific until one got down to the battalion and company levels.



287th MP Horse Platoon at their "last roundup" – A ceremony held on 28 Mar 1958 at HQ, 3C, in honor of the platoon, which was the last such platoon on active duty with the U.S. Army.

pects of development of the Line of Communications; preparation of plans for the rapid expansion of the LOC, such plans to embrace the requirements of the European Command; provision of logistic and administrative support of the LOC utilizing the minimum of funds, personnel, units and equipment; provision of security for LOC per-

sonnel, installations, facilities and equipment except for internal security of exempted installations; representation for Command in Chief, Europe, in negotiations with French governmental, military and civilian agencies for other than LOC matters, such representation to be determined by EUCOM; preparation, coordination and implementation of

emergency plans as may be directed by EUCOM.

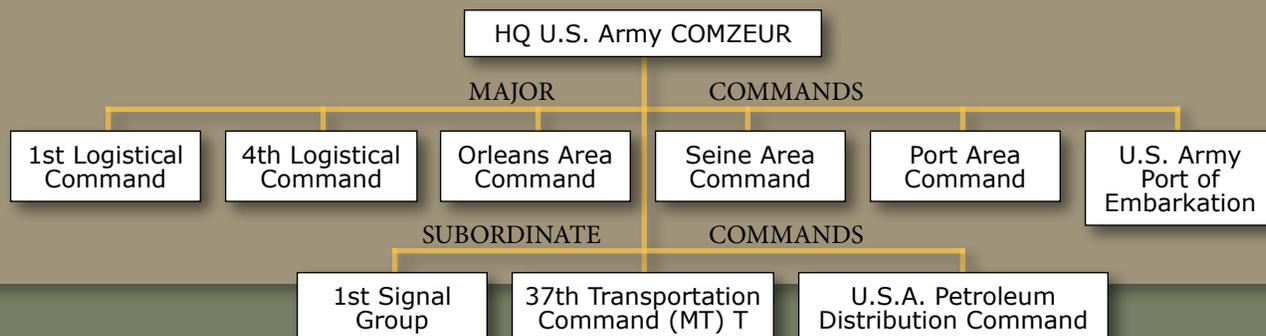
Background

The COMZEUR was actually an organization that was a section of the headquarters of all U.S. forces in Europe dating back through the First World War. In 1951 a letter of instruction designated it as a separate command under the command of a Major General. This rep-

resents the first time the U.S. Army in Europe had a major subordinate command responsible for theater logistics.

How it is different

The COMZ was established as a geographically organized command in which 'area' commands provided all manner of logistical support to customer organizations within their area.



This worked for their mission at the time, because their primary mission was to push logistics along a line of communication through France to Germany, primarily to defend against a potential Soviet invasion. This line of communications was intended for two main purposes. First, to sustain the troops that were then operating in theater, and second, to support a much greater flow of troops, supplies, and equipment in the case of full scale war with the Soviet east.

This meant that the COMZEUR, as an organization had to be ready to very quickly increase its mission load and logistics services by exponential amounts.

To support this, the command was organized into the multifunctional sections described above, and they maintained numerous depots throughout the theater, maintaining a full 30-day stock of all war supplies.

One of the most significant challenges for the COMZEUR, as a logistics unit, was transportation of goods. Extensive bombing in World War II had decimated the rail

system, and it was decades before it was operable again. Even into the mid to late sixties, rail transport was not used in any significant way by US forces to move supplies. This meant that all supplies were transported over roads not designed for major logistical traffic.

“Everything we moved was by truck,” said Lloyd Mullins who served from 1962-1967 as an Engineer in the COMZEUR. “And the roads in this rural part of France just weren’t ready for that.”

In fact, it was in the hottest, driest days of summer and the deepest freeze of winter that the COMZEUR did most of its transport, as the roads were either finally dried up from the spring rains, or frozen hard enough to serve as a paved road.

As an additional duty, at various times during this period, the commander of the COMZEUR was also designated as the senior military envoy to France, and was responsible for direct liaison with the French government. Such a duty could not come at a more challenging time than the mid sixties.

The Cold War was beginning to accelerate into full swing, peaking with the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, when the U.S. and the Soviet Union faced off in a nuclear showdown that many believed might bring us to nuclear war. This Cold War pitted the members of NATO against the Soviet Union, and that put significant political stresses on the member nations of NATO. One of these nations, France, ultimately decided to reduce its ties with NATO by removing NATO forces from within its borders. After years of political struggles both internal and external to France, then French president Charles De Gaulle ejected all NATO forces from France. He accomplished this through various means, one of which was by placing increasingly restrictive requirements on foreign forces on French soil. Eventually, those that were not ordered out, left France of their own accord because of these restrictions.

Prior to the move from France the COMZ had already begun to organize more functionally. At the very beginning, in 1954, the structure

1958 Elvis in the Army

In 1958 Elvis Presley, at the time one of the most well-known names in the entertainment world, was drafted into the United States Army. To the surprise of many, and earning the respect of many more, Presley did not accept offers to join the Special Services, avoiding real military training and service to go on tour performing for soldiers world-wide. Instead, Presley voluntarily served as a regular soldier in the 1st Medium Tank Battalion, 32d Armor in Germany.

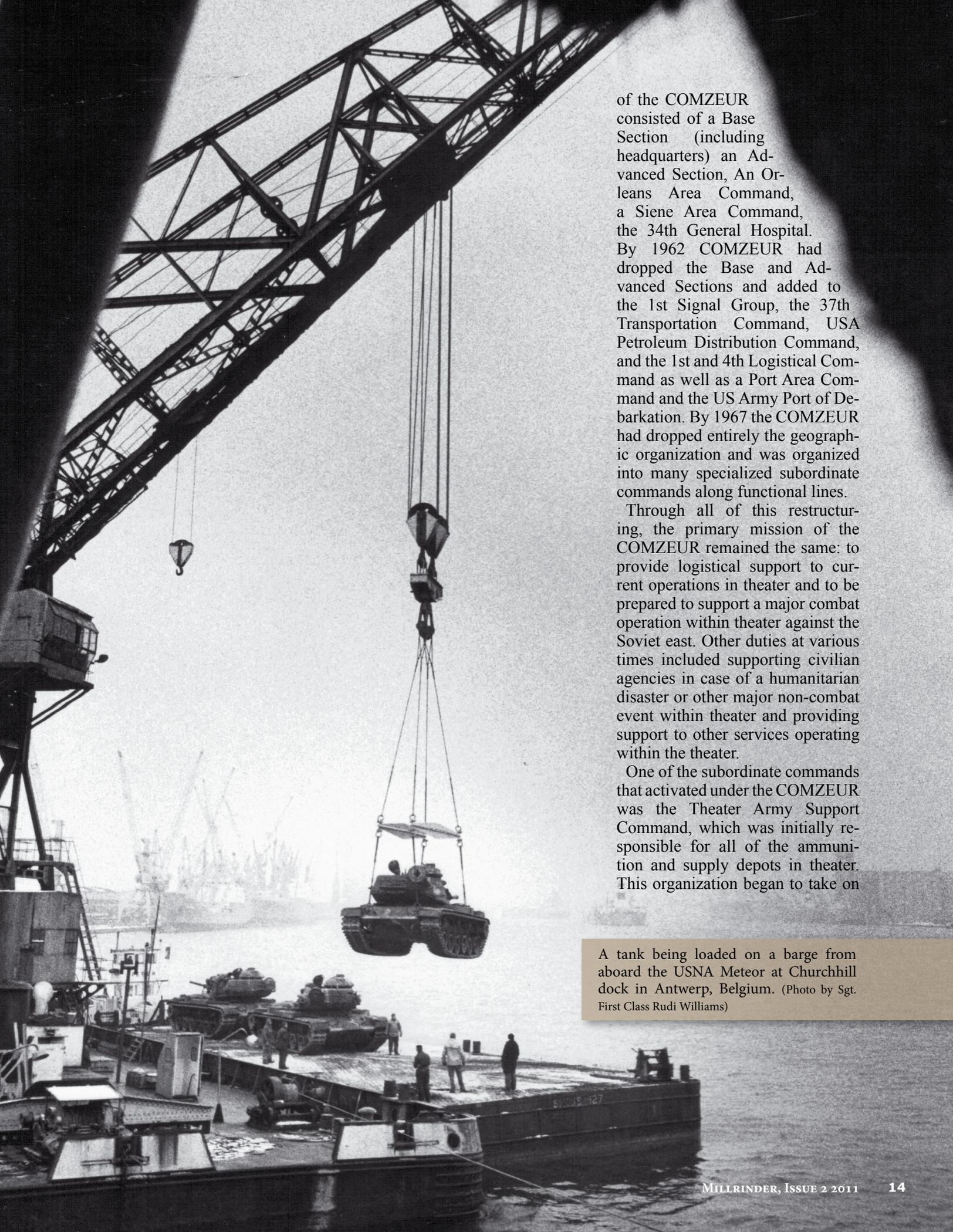
At the time, establishing stockpiles, depots and

lines of communication to support the many armored battalions that would be a large part of the defense of Western Europe in case of war with the Warsaw Pact was the main focus of the COMZEUR. The fuel that kept Presley’s battalion moving, the rounds they fired, and the transport missions needed to move those tanks



throughout the region were all provided by the COMZEUR.





of the COMZEUR consisted of a Base Section (including headquarters) an Advanced Section, An Orleans Area Command, a Siene Area Command, the 34th General Hospital. By 1962 COMZEUR had dropped the Base and Advanced Sections and added to the 1st Signal Group, the 37th Transportation Command, USA Petroleum Distribution Command, and the 1st and 4th Logistical Command as well as a Port Area Command and the US Army Port of Debarkation. By 1967 the COMZEUR had dropped entirely the geographic organization and was organized into many specialized subordinate commands along functional lines.

Through all of this restructuring, the primary mission of the COMZEUR remained the same: to provide logistical support to current operations in theater and to be prepared to support a major combat operation within theater against the Soviet east. Other duties at various times included supporting civilian agencies in case of a humanitarian disaster or other major non-combat event within theater and providing support to other services operating within the theater.

One of the subordinate commands that activated under the COMZEUR was the Theater Army Support Command, which was initially responsible for all of the ammunition and supply depots in theater. This organization began to take on

A tank being loaded on a barge from aboard the USNA Meteor at Churchill dock in Antwerp, Belgium. (Photo by Sgt. First Class Rudi Williams)



“Safety First” is the maxim at the Orleans American School in Orleans, France, Mar. 16, 1954. Military Police of the 7805 MP Detachment are on hand each afternoon at the school to help direct youngsters to their school bus and to aid them in crossing the street. Here, Pvt. Alfred Logan helps little Francis Wolleon, left, and Lillian Barnes, right, across the street to catch their school bus, as Pvt. Albert Fulmer, by the MP vehicle, keeps a sharp eye out for traffic. (Photo by Sgt. Mayfield, Det C, 497th Sig Co.)

more broad logistical duties while some of the headquarters functions within COMZEUR began to move to USAREUR headquarters. On April 25, 1969 the COMZEUR was re-designated as the Theater Army Support Command which then took command of a wide variety of functionally-aligned support organizations, including the 1st Support Brigade, the unit that through various transformations would eventually become the 21st Theater Sustainment Command.

While the conflict in Viet Nam had not had a great impact on the TASCOM, the end of that conflict did impact it severely. In 1973 the end of the conflict in Vietnam brought a significant reduction in funding to many military organizations, including USAREUR. Various reduction studies were conducted, and the result of one of these studies was that on 30 September, 1974, the TASCOM effectively came to an end when it was reduced to zero strength. The organization was not immediately inactivated and instead was assimilated as a section of USAREUR with no man-

1961 Berlin Wall goes up

Starting on the evening of August 13, 1961, the East Germany government quite literally overnight, built a wall between East and West

Berlin, essentially ending free travel between the Soviet-controlled eastern sector and the western sector. The wall, first of barbed wire, and later of

concrete, was built in response to increasing numbers of east Germans fleeing to the west.

Along with the Cuban Missile Crisis this was

one of the most memorable events, and longest standing symbols of the Cold War.

While life in the COMZEUR was directly affected minimally by the Berlin Wall being built, the Cold War that the wall symbolized would occupy the majority of the command's efforts until the fall of that wall in 1989.

In the photo, a crane moves a section of the Berlin Wall beside the Brandenburg Gate.



ning, but ready to be re-constituted should the need arise (1978).

“Thus the Army’s largest logistical organization came to an end,” (1978). “Its 69,000 civilian and military staff discontinued support of nearly 400,000 Americans in Europe, Asia Minor, and Africa. This monumental job would pass to other smaller organizations scattered throughout these areas.”

This restructure was part of a three-pronged approach to the restructuring of logistics in USAREUR. First, efforts were taken to make greater use of external sources of logistical support to reduce the requirements for logistical support originating from within USAREUR. Second, the TASCOCOM was dissolved and many of its headquarters functions were moved to the USAREUR staff. Finally, the 1st Support Brigade assumed all of the support functions that were neither moved to USAREUR, nor outsourced. This approach to theater logistics would last just two years before the 1st Support Brigade was re-designated as the 21st Support Command and took on the

role of USAREUR’s senior logistics command previously filled by COMZEURO and TASCOCOM.

Life in the COMZEURO

In the early fifties, the world was a very different place than it is now in many ways. Television was beginning to take a greater part of our cultural activities, beginning with the first transcontinental television broadcast of a speech by then president Harry S. Truman in the very first year that the COMZEURO officially stood up.

While the budding popularity and availability of television marked the cultural front, society itself was going through some of the most significant changes as years of segregation and institutional discrimination were being swept away through the struggles of the civil rights movement.

The military, in this respect was far ahead of its time, having been ordered in 1948 to fully desegregate all of its units, and accomplishing that directive by 1954, a full ten years before the passing of the most

significant anti-discrimination law in U.S. history, the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

While most of the non-European world had recovered from World War II by this time, France, one of the most hard-hit countries involved in World War II, was the home of the COMZEURO.

Many of the soldiers who served in the COMZEURO, were conducting day to day missions that directly related to ongoing recovery from World War II.

“Every once in a while, the town of Verdun’s water supply would stop flowing, because of the war damage, and we’d pump water from the river and purify it for them,” said Mullins. Who served there almost two decades after the end of the war. “You could still see evidence of the war everywhere. Bullet holes... Bombed out areas...”

In general, soldiers of the early COMZEURO suffered many of the difficulties suffered by the European citizenry of the time as they tried to piece together lives torn by war. Housing was in short supply, and often not adequate in quality. Ser-

A Living History

Lloyd Mullins

COMZEURO

1962-1967

Lloyd Mullins, of Lexington Kentucky, served with the COMZEURO from 1962-1967 as an engineer. His service with the unit began in France and included the massive exodus of US Army units from France in 1967. At a time when all of Europe was still recovering from World War II, Mullins shared the hardships of life in Europe in those days, and remembers taking great pride in not only being able to provide

support to military operations, but also to help the citizens of the host nations in which he served.

“One of the greatest things I was involved in was helping out the folks of the City of Verdun. Just about every year their water system would fail and they would run out of water, and we would setup a water purification system to pump water out of the river for the city. It felt good to be part of something like that.”





SP4 Lloyd Mullins, France 1964-67

Spec. 4 Lloyd Mullins in France. Mullins was part of COMZEUR during the 1960s. Read his *Living History* sidebar on page 16.

vices such as electricity and water were considerably far behind what most of the soldiers were used to back home (1954).

As years passed and conditions improved, soldiers began to have more opportunities to enjoy life in Europe. Leisure travel was more common and the general quality of life steadily improved. Also, while the United States was struggling its way through the tumultuous 60's, soldiers in Europe enjoyed a much quieter lifestyle far removed from the hectic events of their homeland.

"You really didn't experience any of that stuff going on in the states," said Mullins, who served in the COMZEUR in the mid sixties. "We didn't get a whole lot of TV from the states, and the European news carried only a little. You heard about it in letters, but really, it was like we were in a separate world over here."

One of the significant hardships Soldiers in today's 21st TSC do not share with those in the COMZEUR of the fifties and sixties, was a much greater amount of separation from family. Unaccompanied tours were

1962 Cuban Missile Crisis

In October 1962, President John F. Kennedy learned that the Soviet Union was deploying nuclear missiles in Cuba. He demanded that the weapons be withdrawn. U.S.

ships blockaded Cuba. B-52 bombers loaded with nuclear weapons flew in holding patterns just beyond Soviet airspace, ready to attack. The crisis abated only

when the Soviets agreed to remove the missiles and the U.S. quietly removed similar missiles from Turkey. Having established much of the support network that

would stand ready to support the remaining three decades of the cold war, the COMZEUR stood at a very heightened state of alert during this crisis, which many historians feel brought the world on the brink of nuclear war. In the photo, a U.S. Navy Lockheed SP-2H Neptune of patrol squadron VP-18 flying over a Soviet freighter as part of the naval blockade during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. U.S.

Navy photograph



not uncommon, and those married Soldiers that did have their families here in Europe with them, did not enjoy the amount of family time most Soldiers do today. Soldiers regularly worked 6-day work weeks and were also often geographically separated from their families for long periods. To overcome this, Soldiers would go to great lengths, as illustrated by Mullins' creative use of a 4-day pass-mission sometime in 1965.

"Some general needed a special kind of glue up in Frankfurt," recounted Mullins. "So the first sergeant called me in, as I didn't have any particular mission that day."

Mullins' first sergeant handed him a 4-day pass (at the time passes were used not only as a means of giving Soldiers time off for travel, but also authorizing them to travel for official business). With the pass, the first sergeant directed Mullins, then performing duties primarily as a truck driver, to procure the special glue and have it back by Monday when the general needed it in Frankfurt. This was Friday morning.

"Well, I already knew the depots so well, I knew exactly where to get the glue and I had it by Friday afternoon. I drove back home, parked the five-ton in back of my house, and spent a long weekend with my wife before bringing the first sergeant his glue on Monday morning," recounts Mullins with a laugh. "The general got his glue, and I got few days at home relaxing with my wife."

While there were both hardships endured and also good times being had in their personal time, Soldiers of the COMZEUR at duty kept busy at a wide variety of missions. Doing anything from tank repair, to trans-european transport to personnel services, the average COMZEUR Soldier was providing support to the warfighter, and most of them were proud of the support they provided. Through numerous exercises and real-world support, COMZEUR Soldiers had opportunities to ply their talents in direct support of the combat troops.

"When you'd work so long, in the cold, or the heat or whatever else, and finally see that bridge built up

across the river, and watch the tanks roll across it..." said Mullins. "Or, when you got the fresh water flowing to Verdun when their systems weren't working... You really felt like you accomplished something. It was a feeling we all shared."

Events like the Cuban missile crisis and the Berlin stockade were particularly of interest to COMZEUR Soldiers and the shadow of the threat of war with the Soviets hung over them constantly.

"You had the Russians over there, and you knew that's what we were here for," said Mullins. "We knew we had all these depots for a reason, and if we ever really started using all this stuff it was because things had gone very wrong. It wasn't like you were scared of it all the time, but it was always on your mind."

This ever-present threat would not soon subside, and in fact, in the coming years the Cold War would become the nearly singular focus of the daily efforts of the Soldiers in the units that would follow in the footsteps of COMZEUR and TASCOM.

What's in a Name? 1st Support Brigade

23 June 1965 to August 18, 1976

Mission

The initial mission of the 1st Support Brigade was to provide a variety of support services within theater, primarily in

the rear areas, that were not provided directly through the staff of USAREUR, or TASCOM (the 1st Support Brigade would later fall under TASCOM, but initially was a separate element). At the time, the three major corps operating in theater also had significant Support Commands within their own structures.

Background

The 1st Support Brigade was activated basically to pick up where other theater support units left off. Early the brigade's history, USAREUR conducted a major restructuring that left no major subordinate logistical command and this placed a significant burden of support on the brigade, which soon was upgraded to a command.

How it is different

As a brigade it was not a major subordinate command. Its capabilities of providing support within its structure did not match that of the preceding organizations of the COMZEUR and the TASCOM, and USAREUR upgraded the unit to something much more closely matched to the structure of the TASCOM.

