RADIO NEWS

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JUNGLE BROADCAST

A world-wide radio program prepared by our Armed Forces and transmitted from the interior of Central American jungles.

By GEORGE B. HILL
Panama Canal Zone

WHEN soldiers at a small Army broadcasting studio were asked to take their equipment into the jungle, arrange a 75-mile remote control circuit through some of Central America's most difficult terrain, and present a program to be heard around the world, workers at the Armed Forces Radio Station scratched their respective heads, and asked for a few days to think it over.

Panama Mobile Force was preparing the first world-wide radio program from Panama's jungles—a realistic picture of jungle combat training—and the problem dropped in the AFRS lap was so complicated at first glance that it seemed almost impossible. There could be no "boosters" on the 75-mile line. Jungle mud would prevent any wires being strung on the ground. Something might go out anywhere along the circuit. Explosions of mortar shells, bangalore torpedoes, or TNT might knock a line out or damage a microphone, for all sound effects were to be the real thing.

It was almost like putting through a radio program on a prayer. Signalmen throughout the Department promised help and two days later, Mobile Force was notified that the Army's radio men were willing to try it.

When Sergeant Ewald Wyberg, engineer of the AFRS, began to check the coming 20-minute broadcast, he found troops were to go through two problems in a rugged Atlantic-side area. It was in the hilly and swampy Panama terrain, which does not have to play second fiddle to any jungle for being bad. Announcers were to describe the action on the spot—just as it happened. That was the only easy part of the broadcast, except that even the announcers were to find themselves slopping through heavy mud for almost a mile to complete their speaking parts.

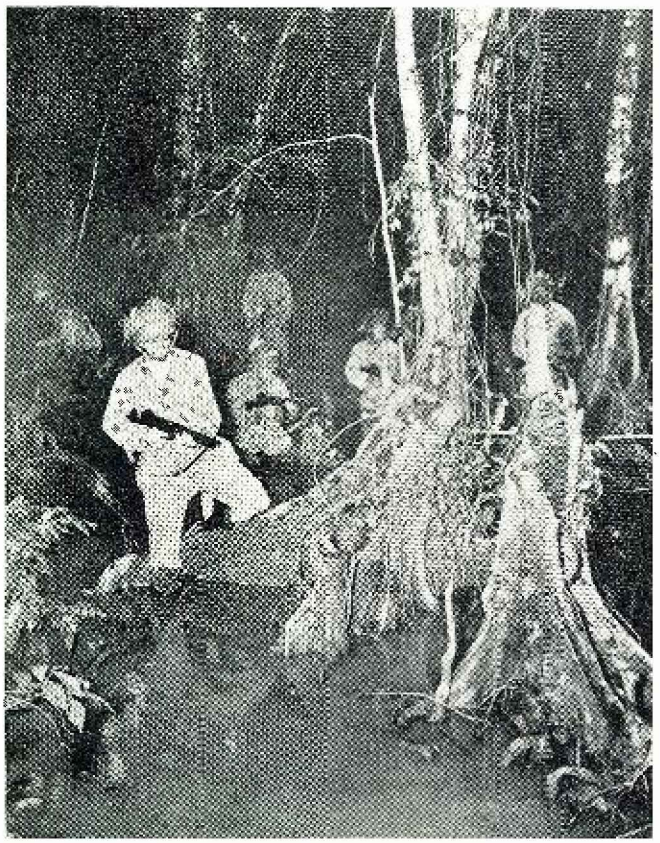
The 75-mile setup was completed by Signalmen, co-operating with Wyberg, and on the day of the broadcast —November 14—soldier helpers carried about 600 pounds of equipment up a slippery trail to put it in position while Signalmen climbed through lush branches to make jungle phone poles of the tropical trees.

Five miles away, the second problem was to fill the program's remaining 10 minutes, beginning as the first ended.

Sgt. Wyberg took over Problem No. 1's technical end and Sgt. Jim Weathers, formerly with WAGF at Dothan, Alabama, took the mike. The broadcast from this area was to be made from a small hillside overlooking a maze of undergrowth, fallen trees and barbed wire entanglements facing three Jap-type pillboxes.

The second area was a swampy, mud-filled strip of dense undergrowth, vines and slush beside a tropical river, which had recently gone out of banks several times because of the rainy season, then in full swing. Here, expert Infantry swimmers were to make

Soldiers preparing for a combat stream crossing during broadcast.



Announcers describe stream crossing made under simulated offensive.

Announcer pinch-hitting at the controls.

Part of the equipment carried by the Panama Mobile Force Infantry and Engineer troops.

a stream-crossing assault on the opposite bank. Sergeant Charles (Chuck) Bras, who was radioing with KOMO and KJR at Seattle before that morning in December, 1942, when the President sent him "Greetings," stood in mud well above his ankles to make the description of the crossing.

2nd Lt. Mark Braymes, AFRS manager formerly with Mutual out of New York, crossed his fingers and predicted "our biggest flop or our biggest success."

Worrying over, everything went right—as right as things can go in a mass of mud and vines. Helpers brought heavy dynamos into place, after the portable power plants had been carried by truck for more than 50 miles. Amplifiers were packed down trails which one ex-southern farmer, now a Mobile Force jungle soldier, described as a "big pig pen," and beside swampy waters which ducks, wisely enough, have never been known to enter.

One of the chief problems, after the setup was made, was sound. There were to be no artificial sound effects. A crucial point in the program, however, brought out one which was unscheduled, but necessary. Weathers described the action: Mortar shells softening pillboxes; machine guns and riflemen opening up to drive the "enemy" into his hole and neutralize opposing fire; jungle troops preparing to move through the wire, bringing up a bangalore torpedo to blast the hole; Infantrymen pouring through. An engineer flame thrower and a pole-charge man crept toward the pillbox. The flames leaped toward their objective and the pole charge went into place. At this crucial point, Weathers paused. The charge failed to go off. Captain Robert B. Winkler, twice-decorated veteran of

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Technical assistant at a remote outpost during the realistic training-maneuvers broadcast.

of Resistor R_1 in the schematic diagram.

Many practical applications of panoramic reception will readily occur to the experienced radio man. Its value in monitoring the various frequency bands is obvious and becomes even more apparent when it is known that weak signals that could easily be missed in the noise and "static" of normal loudspeaker reception are plainly visible on the screen. When such equipment is once more available, the marine services, airlines, amateurs and all who have occasion to look for signals over a wide range of frequencies will find Hallicrafters Panoramic Adapter a revolutionary improvement in their work.

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Jungle Broadcast

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the Buna campaign who directs jungle training for Mobile Force, whipped out his pistol, pointed it in the air near the mike, and pulled the trigger. Weathers still hopes it sounded like a pole charge destroying a Jap-type pillbox.

The announcer-sergeant had another, but non-technical, problem. His first speaker was Lieutenant General George H. Brett, head of the Caribbean Defense command, and the second was Major General E. F. Harding, Mobile Force commander, and a veteran of the Buna campaign. Both have reputations as genial generals, but the average soldier may be in the army for many months without ever seeing as much as a brigadier. After the brief experience with his prominent guests, however, handling ordinary captains and lieutenants held no worries and Weathers lost the only slight case of jitters he has had around a mike in years.

Sergeant Bras had nothing to contend with higher than a lieutenant colonel who led a group of swimmers through a wall of blazing gasoline, and a nautical private who insisted on putting "hello, mom" into the script.

However, Bras and Sgt. George Odom, a KSFO (San Francisco) man before the war, were "sweating out" another problem. It was their mike. Five minutes before they were to go on the air, Bras and Odom went through a final checkup. Odom claims that what came out was the most silent silence he has ever heard. They made a quick check of the connections, found everything in order, tried again, and still got no sound. More from disgust than from any hope of success, Chuck jiggled the microphone, and the final test was made. The "one, two, three, four" came through; everything was all right again, and, except for wondering if the mike would go out sometime during the remaining 10 minutes, there was no "hitch" in the entire 75-mile-plus setup.

Bras' soft voice told its story: jungle swimmers wearing full equipment swimming across the river—through fire—supporting troops going over in boats, ammunition and mortar fire with its soldier-director screaming "On the way!! On the way!!!"

" . . . the Army Hour returns you from the jungles of Panama to the United States in New York;" the Q line answered "Thanks, Panama, that was swell," and it made it all worth it.

But, as Odom, Bras, Weathers, Wyberg and Braymes left the Mobile Force training area, they mused over a line which Private Bill Osborne of Hinton, W. Va., had said when called to the Mike: "I used to think that the jungle was something that nobody but Tarzan would go into, but I know different now."

"Tarzan was smart," Bras explained dryly. "He traveled in the trees."

They left, speculating on what Lord Greystoke would have done about hauling all that radio equipment back where they got it.

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Mine Locators

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electrical fields is disturbed and the instrument is useless.

The initial orders for the detector were placed with various firms in Britain's radio manufacturing trade. The creation and adjustment of an electrical field is not a difficult job in theory. Production of the equipment for use in the field is another story.

All sorts of difficulties that the layman would not ordinarily anticipate were encountered. Take, for example, the wax that holds the coils in position. The War Office specified that the equipment must be for use in both tropical and arctic ranges of temperature. The trouble about wax with a high melting point is that under conditions of severe frost it cracks and shrinks. If the wax moves even so much as one-thousandth of an inch the coils come out of adjustment and the detector is useless. Contrariwise, a wax which will not crack in severe cold has a low melting point and will melt in the tropics.

The heaviest and most critical period in the evolution and production of the electrical mine detector was in June of 1942 for most of the detectors which had been stored in reserve in the Middle East were lost when Tobruk fell. They had to be replaced as quickly as possible. And replaced they were. But the reorganization involved in drastically stepping-up the output to make good the losses was considerable.

Yet, largely by the unstinting efforts of the girls who assemble the weapons, the deficit was made good.

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