

Live, from CP Oscar . . .
Keeping the Eighth Army on the VTC
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How do senior Army officers from throughout the peninsula meet and discuss tactics and strategies during this year's Reception, Staging, Onward-movement and Integration exercise?

Well, they use a sophisticated communication system called Video-Teleconferencing Control. And a dedicated maintenance crew at Command Post Oscar keeps the system here at Camp Walker up and running.

"Everyone can't be at the same site at once," said Spc. Raymond LeDay, systems analyst for the Oscar VTC room, "so that's where the role of VTC comes in."

The communication system is used as a commanders' tool, which supports the U.S. Forces Korea commander and works as a bridge so commanders can talk live with each other from distant locations. Also, it eliminates the dangerous situation of all commanders being in one place at one time.

Since the CINC and other commanders discuss sensitive information over the airwaves, the software that the VTC uses scrambles the data as it is transmitted. They use the Global Command and Control System of Korea, a form of warfare software that uses slide shows and maps with very sensitive information.

He said the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Secret Service can't even unscramble it.

For the 2001 RSOI, there are four other VTC sites on the peninsula, to include CP Tango, CC Seoul, Third Republic of Korea Army (TROKA) and the Second Republic of Korea Army (SROKA). The conference room inside CP OSCAR, which holds about three or four conferences per day, seats about 40 people.

"It gets real busy," said LeDay. Before each conference, the VTC staff deals with the pressure of getting their job done under the time crunch, and part of that involves performing certain checks.

The crew must check the audio, video and lighting systems; their primary and secondary phones connection to other VTC sites; and the primary and the secondary speakers.

"VTC is the technical aspect of the G-6 Message Center," said Sgt. 1st Class Johnny Cabe, NCOIC CP OSCAR Message Center. This is Cabe's fourth exercise, so he's seen the VTC room improve. Cabe said he's seen new soldiers come and get a good handle on learning the VTC room quickly, then have to leave after their one-year tour.

This is LeDay's first field exercise with Eighth U.S. Army. He said he will be more prepared next time, since the exercise has allowed him to get familiar with the setup of the VTC room and the contacts.

He said he feels his job is very important to the leaders because the outcome of their discussions are directly linked to the VTC.