

Title: European Communications

Date: October 2007

Frequency: Updated daily

Page views: tbc



15 October, 2007 13:55

PRINT EMAIL

NSSL helps speed up contact between UK families and soldiers in the field

International satellite communications provider NSSL is helping UK troops to keep in touch with home while they serve abroad. Some relationships between soldiers and their loved ones are negatively affected due to the lack of speedy communication. Now, thanks to NSSL's support, communication has vastly increased in speed from weeks to days and sometimes even hours. Military experts believe that regular communication with home is an essential part of retaining effective fighting forces and enhancing general morale.

The system is called 'Bluey' and enables soldiers stationed in areas like Afghanistan, which suffers from poor terrestrial coverage, to get messages to and from family members quickly and easily. The name 'Bluey' derives from pre-electronic messages which were printed on blue paper. There are 3 types of 'Bluey':



1. eBluey (text only: email via web portal converted into letter)
2. FaxBluey (scanned copy of fax converted into letter format)
3. PhotoBluey (text and photo via portal converted into letter)

At present, 90% of messages from UK forces in Afghanistan to loved ones comprise of 'FaxBluey', which works by scanning in written letters and then printing them off in the UK. In comparison, only 10% of messages being sent to Afghanistan comprise of 'FaxBluey'; the rest are made up of 'eBluey' and 'PhotoBluey' messages. Family members simply log onto the internet, type their message and click send. The message is sent from a web server to the nearest Forces Post Office 'in field' where it is printed and supplied to the soldier.

'Bluey' makes use of entry level BGAN which enables remote access from virtually anywhere in the world. To connect to entry level BGAN users simply plug in a highly portable satellite terminal to their laptop. Prior to 'Bluey', UK forces relied on Iridium satellite phones which, at 2.4 kb/s, were notoriously slow. NSSL is now providing support to seven 'Bluey' sites in Afghanistan.

Major Adrian Spicer, who has hands-on experience of using 'Bluey' 'in field' commented: "NSSL support has been fantastic. At the moment the 7,000 UK troops based in Afghanistan are receiving 12,000 messages per week and sending 8,000 messages. This sort of technology means that more families can keep in touch, which means better relationships and ultimately happier and more motivated soldiers."

Danielle Edwards, Product Marketing Manager at NSSL said: "Providing satellite equipment to the British Army was a great way to prove that the kit we supply not only works in the toughest of environments but is often the only way to keep in touch. We're glad that the technology we provide is having such a positive impact on the morale of UK forces and helping them feel just that little bit closer to civilisation."

EUROPEAN communications