

From Signal Flags to Satellites

AFCEA celebrates 70 years of building military and industry partnerships that sustain defense and security worldwide.



SEVENTY YEARS AGO, in a meeting area in the Fraunces Tavern in New York, a group of respected military and corporate leaders gathered. Their purpose was to discuss a shared concern, one that was on the minds of many in the aftermath of World War II.

Throughout the war, improved communications and electronics devices had emerged, enhancing military capabilities. These leaders recognized the challenges of not only continuing to advance the technology that had resulted from the war effort, but also of ensuring that military and industry organizations remained in a strong partnership, one that would lead to preparedness for the future.

In simplest terms, the goal of the meeting was not to predict the future but to secure it. The leaders were gathered as part of a new organization that would support global defense and security in ways that would transcend the decades. This organization would become the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association, better known as AFCEA, and it would empower those in military and industry to advance technology and ensure security by opening channels for collaboration.

As the meeting proceeded, a letter from President Harry S. Truman set the tone, acknowledging the organization as one for fostering “industrial preparedness, which must buttress the future security of our country.” Army Chief Signal Officer Maj. Gen. Harry C. Ingles addressed the attendees, and Brig. Gen David Sarnoff, USAR, who became AFCEA’s first president, also spoke. Sarnoff led a distinguished broadcasting career that culminated in his service as chairman of the board of RCA. AFCEA’s founding fathers also included Darryl F. Zanuck, who was a renowned 20th Century Fox movie producer and covered action in North Africa for the Signal Corps.

Today, as the battle against real and growing threats to global security continues to evolve, AFCEA remains true to its founders, sustaining innovation in information and communications technology and providing a forum for collaboration that advances technology and ensures preparedness and strength. Since its inception, AFCEA has continued to

grow better, faster and smarter with age, now with more than 145 chapters, an international headquarters in Fairfax, Virginia, and an office in Brussels, Belgium.

The members of AFCEA in 2016, just like those prominent figures of 1946, are the problem solvers and business builders who continue to move at the breakneck speed of technology.

AFCEA serves its members today as a nonprofit association, including government, industry, academia and all branches of the military in its community. It is unique among defense and security associations as it has both a domestic and an international office. The European office, which opened in 1982, helps manage AFCEA’s global events and supports the association’s close ties to NATO.

As it did in 1946, the association continues to establish affiliations and a congruence of professional interests that encourage broader participation and awareness. Members worldwide in the defense, homeland security and intelligence communities look to AFCEA to connect with essential people, discover powerful ideas and bring needed solutions to the market. And because the association does not lobby, it serves as a bridge between government and military in ways that some other associations and commercial entities cannot.

The association’s networking and educational opportunities are recognized and highly respected throughout the communications and electronics industry, which now includes information technology, cybersecurity and cyber defense as part of its disciplines.

The headquarters office conducts more than 20 conferences, most in locations near the customer, which reduces expenses and cuts down on travel for military and government attendees. Many of the chapters also hold events at the local level. AFCEA’s *SIGNAL* Magazine, which began publication in September 1946, is provided to members monthly in the format of their choice, and *SIGNAL* Online provides news and blogs relevant to AFCEA’s areas of interests. The association’s Educational Foundation, formed more than 37 years ago, provides more than \$2 million in scholarships in relevant fields each year.

With age comes wisdom, strength and perspective

AFCEA: Never more important than it is today and into tomorrow.