



BERLINBRIGADE.COM

5 MORE SURPRISING FACTS ABOUT THE U. S. ARMY'S

BERLIN BRIGADE (1945 - 1994)

From 1945 to 1994 the United States had a military presence in Berlin the former capital of Germany. As part of the post-World War II agreements on how Germany and Berlin were to be governed after the end of the war the US along with the UK, USSR, and French Republic each had a hand in that that governing and rebuilding. Initially, the city of Berlin was divided into three sectors: US, UK, and USSR. Later, the western sectors governed by the United States and the United Kingdom gave up some control and ground to accommodate the French Republic's input in the governing and rebuilding of Berlin. All was good until the Soviet Union was in a position to want the US, British, and French out of western Berlin. The post-World War II celebrations and general good mood immediately after the end of the war did not last very long. Tensions remained high until November 9, 1989 when the Berlin Wall fell and German Reunification took place in October of the following year.

#1 Berlin Brigade used the GRÜNEWALD FOREST to maintain Soldier Skills

The Grunewald or Grünwald (German for Green Woods or Green Forest) is located in the western side of the city of Berlin in what was formerly known as the American Sector. It is the largest green area in all of Berlin with almost 3,000 hectares/7,400 acres of forest area. It was here that the US Forces would go to train, practice, and in some occasions qualify with their weapons. Additionally, when the US Forces in Berlin (Berlin Brigade) were put on alert and after mustering on 4.des Juli Platz (4th of July Platz) would begin a road march to the Grunewald and arrive at their assembly area typically around the Grunewaldturm (Grunewald Tower). Facing local restrictions the soldiers would not dig foxholes or even build hasty fighting positions unless they were in specifically designated areas of the forest. Down the road from the Grunewald Tower was Keerans Range. At Keerans Range, US Soldiers would go to practice and qualify on their assigned rifles and machineguns. Just about every weapon from the M1 Garand to the M1911 ACP Handgun to the M16 Rifle to the M249 Squad Assault Weapon were fired on this range throughout the entire duration that US forces were in Berlin. Lastly, the Grunewald Forest was the temporary home to the American GIs when they first entered Berlin in July of 1945. Then the GIs camped out in pup tents as what was to become McNair Barracks was getting cleaned out and made ready for those GIs to move in.

#2 Berlin Brigade soldiers would ride the U-Bahn (Underground/Subway) and Buses for Free

That's right. While not certain when the policy exactly started, it was very much appreciated, to allow any member of the Allied Forces in Berlin, while in uniform could ride the BVG U-Bahn and Buses for free. Those uniformed Allies would be allowed to ride the mass transit without paying the rate that the citizens of Berlin and out of uniform soldiers to ride. This came in handy during ALERTS for those soldiers that lived on the economy or at the military housing sites and needed to get their respective sites without having to fumble for loose change.

There was one time that non-uniformed soldiers could travel at no cost by BVG. After the LaBelle Disco Bombing (April 1986), the security level of all US, French, and British sites and personnel was understandably elevated. A temporary

agreement was reached in which Allied personnel were allowed to ride the BVG U-Bahn and bus lines without having to buy a ticket. The expectation was that if any further attacks on US Soldiers or other allied interests in Berlin were to happen the ability to travel out of uniform would make the GIs less of a target and the BVG system less of a target as well. This special exception was short lived as the threat level against the US, British, and French interests in Berlin eventually returned to a level that was close to normal. Thus, by start of summer of 1986 the only Army of Occupation members that could ride the BVG lines for free were those traveling in uniform, everyone else had to pay.

#3 The Berlin Brigade had its own Television and Radio Station

The Berlin Brigade had an entire radio and television station solely for the audio and video news, information, and entertainment of the soldiers based in West Berlin. AFN-BERLIN (Armed Forces Network Berlin) headquarter in Berlin-Dahlem at Podbielskiallee 23. The radio station first started broadcasting about one month after the US Forces entered Berlin on 4 August 1945. The Radio and Television broadcasts were not only aimed at providing the GIs, stationed in Berlin, information from back home but the news, music and television programming was offered the citizens of East and West Berlin an opportunity to see and hear first-hand what life was like in the United States and news that was not filtered or censored by East German Communist officials.

To watch the AFN-Berlin television programming the West and East Berliners would have to have a special television system as AFN-Berlin TV broadcasted on the US television format known as NTSC (National Television System Committee) while West Berlin (and Western Europe) broadcasted television signals using PAL (phase alternating line format) and East Berlin (and Eastern Europe) used SECAM (sequential couleur avec memoire/sequential color with memory). It has been said that SECAM was adopted by the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries during the cold war because it was incompatible any western television receiver and thus could broadcast what they wanted to the citizens of Eastern Europe. Additionally, the ability to watch Western television (PAL) was not an option and that seemed to satisfy the Communists. Ironically it was on their on television sets (SECAM) that the citizens of East Berlin first found out that the travel restrictions to the west had been eased and thus the Berlin Wall fell. Sadly, on July 15th 1994 AFN-Berlin signed off the air as the Berlin Brigade having accomplished its mission and formally deactivated as a US Army unit.

sources: www.afn-berlin.com | en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AFN_Berlin |

#4 Berlin Brigade soldiers worked closely with the local citizens of Berlin

Part of the mission of the Berlin Brigade was to protect the citizens of West Berlin. The citizens kindly reciprocated by being there for the soldiers and airmen of the Berlin Brigade. They helped the Berlin Brigade community as much as they could. The citizens of Berlin did so by helping with the Guard Duty, Cooking, Clerical Staffing, Teaching, Training, Social Events, and most times just being friends with the Soldiers based in a city so far away from home. The 6941st Guard Battalion supported the Berlin Brigade¹ in ways that to this day continues to amaze anyone that ever served in the city. Their service to the US Army and the Soldiers of the Berlin Brigade was priceless. The Local National Employment program was “tailored to enhance employment of host nation citizens and support the mission requirements of the United States Army in Germany.”² However, it wasn’t all work the German-American Volksfest, the Christmas Family program, and Open Houses were other opportunities for members of the Berlin Brigade to interact with the citizens of Berlin. No matter what capacity those local civilians served they did their work, supported our mission, and made some great lifelong friends along the way. That’s why almost 20 years after the departure of the US forces from the city of Berlin the bond with those Berliners that worked to make like just a little easier continues to grow stronger and deeper.

Sources: ¹6941st-gdbn.com | ²<http://www.eur.army.mil/g1/content/CPD/internationalprograms/employmentinfo.html> | <http://www.deutsch-amerikanisches-volksfest.de/>

#5 The Berlin Brigade's Parade Season

If there is one thing the US Military is known for, aside from being the greatest fighting force on the planet, is Drill and Ceremony. Parades are a part of the military tradition of Drill and Ceremony. The Berlin Brigade was no stranger to parades. Those that never served in the Berlin Brigade would call it the Parade Brigade and that was only partly true. The Berlin Brigade was the only unit that would block a section of the calendar year solely dedicated to "Parade Season" which typically started in May and ended in early to mid-July, with some exceptions over the years. The major parades of the Berlin Brigade were the Armed Forces Day (third Saturday in May), Memorial Day Parade on the last Monday in May, Allied Forces Day Parade (on or about the 18th of June), Independence Day Parade (4th of July). Other Parades or Ceremonies were Change of Command Ceremonies (Battalion and Brigade Level), Open House events, and other social events that were not part of the official Berlin Brigade operations and training calendar.

The uniqueness of the major parades were the "vehicles had to be prepared for repainting and then the polishing and shining with baby oil and other compounds, and Soldier's had to spit shine jump boots, prepare their parade pistol belts by blackening all the brass eyelets with edge dressing [eventually Sharpies or Black Magic Markers were also used], and getting their "parade uniforms" highly starched and pressed. Another item that had to be cared for and maintained was the black helmet liner. This was issued prior to each parade season and was highly polished and shined. We had to keep them clean using window cleaner and furniture polish. Ascots of Infantry Blue with the 502nd unit crest in cloth sewn to the Ascot or camouflage Ascots were also issued and to be worn on appropriate occasions. White gloves, and brass belt buckles were also issued."¹ Other items were used to help increase the shine on the boots, the tires, the tracks, the vehicles, and while most of them were highly unauthorized they were just a sign of the level of importance placed on the parades. The level of importance was because almost all the time members of the Warsaw Pact were looking in and observing the parades from aircraft flying around West Berlin or Soviet Military Liaison vehicles parked along the parade routes taking photographs to report back to their commanding officers about the best soldiers and equipment the United States sent to West Berlin.

The last Parade held by the Berlin Brigade was at its deactivation ceremony in early July 1994. The Berlin Brigade marched on to the parade field at the 4 des Juli Platz (4th of July Platz) and marched off as individual units.

Source: ¹<http://www.usmilitariaforum.com/forums/index.php?/topic/182187-berlin-brigade-parade-season-gear-and-photos/>

Information compiled from various sources and presented by David Guerra (BerlinBrigade.com). For more information, please visit the Berlin Brigade website at <http://www.berlinbrigade.com> or follow BerlinBrigade.com on Twitter: [@berlinbrigade](https://twitter.com/berlinbrigade)

The author has provided this e-book to you without Digital Rights Management (DRM) software applied so you can enjoy reading it on your personal devices. This e-book is for your personal use only. You may not print or post this e-book, or make this e-book publicly available in any way. You may not copy, reproduce, or upload this e-book, other than to read it on one of your personal devices.

©2013 David G. Guerra. All rights reserved.