

Tahiti Telecom

French Polynesia Postal & Telecommunications' Bi-Monthly Newsletter - Vol. 1 • N° 1 - November - December 2002

Welcome to Tahiti Telecom Newsletter



The cover of the new bi-monthly, English language newsletter published by the OPT

Welcome to the first edition of the bi-monthly newsletter, **TAHITI TELECOM**, published in English by the French Polynesia Postal and Telecommunications Department (OPT). «It is a great pleasure for me to announce to our telecommunications partners throughout the Pacific Basin and in Europe the creation of this newsletter», said Geffry Salmon, general manager of the OPT. «We intend to keep all of you well-informed about the latest telecommunications developments throughout Tahiti & Her Islands as well as the role we play in regional and international telecommunications», Salmon said. ◀

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Tahiti Exports Satellite TV to Cook Islands

An increasing number of television viewers in the Cook Islands are paying to watch movies, cartoons and a 24-hour live news channel imported via satellite from French Polynesia. The service began in mid-September with four English-language TV channels provided Rarotonga's Marama Satellite Television under an historic regional audiovisual partnership agreement. The agreement between the French Polynesia Postal and Telecommunications Department (OPT) and Telecom Cook Islands Ltd. (TCI) provides many of Rarotonga's estimated 9,000 residents and an increasing number of the some 5,000 outer islands residents with four, and perhaps soon, six TV channels via the same



Family photo after Tahiti's OPT and Cook Islands' TCI sign historic partnership agreement.

overhead satellite that provides French Polynesia residents with a 19 channels. Since June 29, 2000, French Polynesia has had its first 100% digital satellite TV service—Tahiti Nui Satellite (TNS). Using the same start-up kits of satellite dish and decoder box, Cook Islanders are watching the all-English channels of CNN, Turner Classic Movies and Cartoons Network. They may soon be able to add Eurosports (in French with English subtitles) and M6, a music channel.

See **SATELLITE PHONE** Page 4 ▶

Satellite Phone Hookups Reach Remote Tuamotu Destinations



Taking advantage of the modern world of telecommunications, one of the 84 residents of the Tuamotu island of Makatea makes a call from one of two recently installed public telephone booths.

Each VSAT satellite dish installed in the archipelago replaces the previous old and reliable, but a bit outdated Radio Mahina marine band. Makatea, one of the few upraised coral islands in the Tuamotu Archipelago, is one of seven tiny destinations in French Polynesia's remote outer islands to receive modern satellite telecommunications during the past year.

Twenty-two remote Tuamotu atolls will have joined the modern world of telecommunications by the end of 2003 thanks to installations of VSAT (Very Small Aperture Terminal) satellite dishes.

That means no remote inhabited atoll throughout the sprawling Tuamotu Archipelago will be without direct distance telephone dialing to the outside world by the end of next year, said Moana Allain, head of transmission studies for the French Polynesia Postal and Telecommunications Department (OPT) in Papeete.

The island of Makatea (est. Pop. 84), once famous for its rich phosphate, recently leaped out of obscurity and isolation with the installation of a VSAT satellite dish and eight lines. This provides the island with direct distance telephone, facsimile and Internet contact with the outside world. The eight lines serve the town hall, a health infirmary, a school, two public telephone booths and an OPT facility.

See **COOK ISLANDS** Page 4 ▶

PTC-At-A-Glance



- ◆ The Honolulu-based PTC is an international, non-profit, non-governmental organization created in 1980 to bring together in a single forum both the providers and users of communication services, as well as policy-makers, technologists, lawyers, scientists and academics.
- ◆ PTC has more than 750 members from the Americas, Asia and Oceania.
- ◆ Tahiti's OPT has been a member of PTC since 1983. Tahiti hosted a PTC mid-year seminar in May 1991 and has been a regular participant at PTC's annual conferences in Honolulu.

PITA-At-A-Glance



- ◆ PITA, a non-profit organization based in Fiji, was formed to represent the interests of small island nations in the Pacific Region in the field of telecommunications. PITA's objective is to improve, promote, enhance, facilitate and provide telecommunications services within member and associate member countries.
- ◆ PITA has 59 members, including 19 Pacific Islands countries. Members are telecommunications entities in Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia, Australia and New Zealand. Partner agencies are regional and international organizations with vested interest in telecommunications and its development.
- ◆ Associate PITA members are suppliers of telecommunications equipment or services, regional and international organizations. A final member category includes regulatory bodies from the Pacific.
- ◆ Tahiti's OPT was among the founding members of PITA in 1997.
- ◆ PITA's Executive Committee has five members. **Stuart Davies**, CEO Telecom Cook Islands is president. **Peter Loko**, GM international business Telikom PNG, is vice president. **Maui Sanford**, international relations manager, French Polynesia Postal & Telecommunications Department (OPT), and **Ms. Priccilla Soalablai**, assistant GM/chief financial controller of PNCC, Palau, Micronesia, are members. **Fred Christopher** is manager.

Tahiti's Geffry Salmon Wins PTC Board Member Re-Election



Geffry Salmon, general manager of the French Polynesia Postal and Telecommunications Department (OPT), has been re-elected as the Pacific Islands' board member of the Pacific Telecommunications Council (PTC). At the same time, Maui Sanford, the OPT's international relations manager, was elected to a two-year term on the PTC Advisory Council. Salmon was re-elected, this time for a two-year term, on a new, smaller board that will give a bigger voice for PTC's Oceania Region covering all Pacific Islands Countries. Salmon is one of 14 members of a PTC Board of Governors that will replace the former 79-member Board of Trustees during PTC's 25th annual conference in Honolulu from Jan. 19-23. Salmon was first elected PTC board member a year ago with the endorsement of the Fiji-based Pacific Islands Telecommunication Association (PITA). Salmon represents Pacific Island countries on the PTC board. ▲

Meet Geffry Salmon

Geffry Salmon is general manager of the French Polynesia Postal and Telecommunications Department, a post he has held since January 1994. He has held a number of different posts during his 24-year government career, including that of French Polynesia Government Minister of Transportation, Development of the Archipelagoes and Postal and Telecommunications from 1986 to 1988. Salmon began his government career as an economist in the Commercial Fishing Department in 1977. He then became head of the Ministry of Finance's Payments Office, followed by an appointment as head of the ministry's Territorial Finance Office. He was appointed assistant general manager of the Tourism Development Department in 1979, then became secretary-general of the Territorial Cultural Department in 1981. Salmon holds a bachelor of science degree and master's degree in economics from the University of Aix-en-Provence in France. ◆

Salmon Promises to Tighten PITA-PTC Partnership

Expressing his pleasure at being named to the PTC board of trustees, the council's main decision-making instrument, OPT GM Geffry Salmon noted that his election «gives me the opportunity to represent the Pacific Islands community in this major institution». He also pledged to «definitely contribute to tightening the partnership between PITA and PTC». «PITA is an outstanding success,» Salmon said, noting its recognition by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT) and the Pacific Community Secretariat. «We count on PTC to share with us solutions for our development and help all Pacific countries to overcome their geographical constraints and development challenges,» he said.

■ PROMOTE COOPERATION

«I will make all possible efforts to promote efficient cooperation in helping all PTC members to recognize that we, the Pacific Islands, are living in different situations—economies, sizes and distances—and, therefore, have to adopt different approaches in moving towards common objectives.» During two separate speeches, Salmon addressed the relationship between telecom service providers and regulators and presented key potential trends for the PTC-PITA partnership. In a subsequent message to all PITA members Salmon thanked them «for your support in getting me elected as a member of the board of trustees of the Pacific Telecommunications Council.

This gives us new opportunities to be recognized by the major players in the Pacific region. It also gives me new responsibilities, for which I need your support to promote our needs and priorities.»

■ SERVE PITA OBJECTIVES



Two top officials of Telecom Cook Islands (left to right) — Stuart Davis and Philip Henderson — met recently in Tahiti with OPT officials (right to left)—Maui Sanford, Jackie Vettier and Jean-Marc Mouret

«My new responsibilities in PTC, as a representative of PITA, will be to serve the objectives we had when we started PITA six years ago,» Salmon said. «We have already come a long way and our organization has already achieved a lot. We still have a lot of work to do, and I will do my best to increase the partnership between PTC and PITA to serve our main objective, which is to support the development of telecommunications in the Pacific region, particularly for the small Pacific islands.» ▲

TNT's Two Main Roles

Tahiti Nui Telecom has two main roles. It will insure the management and operation of French Polynesia's international telecommunications. And it will develop regional telecommunications in the South Pacific. In effect, Tahiti Nui Telecom will



inherit a modern, sophisticated telecommunications system that has been put into place over the past 16 years under the working partnership between the OPT and FCR. As a result, the some 50,000 fixed telephone subscribers in Tahiti & Her Islands can call and send facsimiles directly throughout the world and access the Internet. There are also 70,000 cell phone subscribers in French Polynesia. These telecommunications services are all possible via a hookup between a domestic satellite network (POLYSAT), an 11-meter (36-ft.) ground transmitter, 30 ground stations and a link with an earth-orbiting satellite (Intelsat). ♦

FCR : In Tahiti Since 1986

France Câbles et Radio, a private company formed in 1978, has been operating in French Polynesia since 1986 as the OPT's telecommunications partner.

FCR, which has telephone links with more than 256 countries, has been in charge of operating all international telecommunications, including Internet, telephone and data services. FCR and the OPT jointly operate Polysat, a satellite network that provides the most modern telecommunications services to the remote archipelagoes of Tahiti & Her Islands. Tahiti's entire international telecommunications network has been digitized since 1994. For the past several years, FCR has offered a digital network, which consists of a telephone subscription for high-speed multi-media services, such as Internet access.

But FCR also uses the digital network to provide Tahiti & Her Islands with television services by Tahiti Nui Television, Canal + and RFD. The recently-created Tahiti Nui Telecom will continue to use such FCR services. But if new technologies develop in the future, the new telecom will be in a position to take advantage. ♦

Tahiti Nui Telecom Opens Big, New Chapter

Tahiti & Her Islands has leaped into the 21st Century of international communications with the creation of Tahiti Nui Telecommunications. This is a joint venture between the French Polynesia Government's Postal and Telecommunications Department (OPT), France Telecom and its international affiliate, France Câbles Radio (FCR).

A 20-year exclusive operating agreement concluding three years of negotiations gives Tahiti Nui Telecommunications (TNT) a capital of slightly more than 3 billion French Pacific francs (US\$22m, or 25.4m euros). That is divided between the OPT (66%) and FCR/France Telecom (34%). Geffry Salmon, general manager of the OPT, said he was very satisfied with the agreement with FCR, «an important operator within French telecommunications. The OPT's majority ownership of Tahiti Nui Telecom can help shape and direct French Polynesia's international telecommunications development in the near and long-term future. That will help the territory to better anticipate the challenges that it must meet.»

French Polynesia President Flosse noted that French Polynesia's 1996 Statute gives Tahiti & Her Islands and the OPT the right to sign a telecommunications agreement with any international telecom. OPT GM Salmon added : «This new partnership between the OPT and FCR means that the OPT can assure its competence with a maximum efficiency and guarantee its competence more than ever. France Telecom provides an important contribution in the form of equipment, land and know-how», President Flosse said.

«France Telecom and France Câbles et Radio are serious people who have been present in



Announcing creation of Tahiti Nui Telecom (left to right): Geffry Salmon, OPT general manager; French Polynesia Government President Gaston Flosse; Jean-Claude Teriierooiterai, TNT board chairman; and Daniel Fermine, TNT general manager.

French Polynesia for decades. For us to equip ourselves at the international level would involve very big investments.»

Instead, all existing equipment provided by FCR and France Telecom was transferred to Tahiti Nui Telecom in exchange for an operating license and 34% of the capital of the new company. As for the OPT, it provides Tahiti Nui Telecom a 20-year, exclusive operating license to provide international voice services. The OPT will conserve the right to control other signals, such as those linked to computerized data or audiovisual data.

The French Polynesia Assembly voted in December 1999 to give the OPT the green light to negotiate the operating agreement with FCR. The two parties began negotiating a stockholders agreement protecting their individual rights. The delicate negotiations produced an initial agreement that was signed on June 6, 2001. ▴

TNT's First Board Meeting

Tahiti Nui Telecom's first chairman of the board is Jean-Claude Teriierooiterai, who has been in charge of new technologies for French Polynesia President Gaston Flosse since 1999. Jean-Claude also is a former postal and telecommunications government minister. Daniel Fermine, head of France Câbles et Radio in French Polynesia, is Tahiti Nui Telecom's first general manager. TNT's six-member board meets three times a year. Four members are chosen by the OPT. France Câbles et Radio names two members. The Tahiti Nui Telecom board chairman is proposed by the OPT, while the general manager is proposed by FCR.



Tahiti Nui Telecom's first board of directors meeting.

FCR personnel working in French Polynesia have kept their jobs, along with French civil service employees who have chosen to work for the new telecom. ▴

Tahiti Exports Satellite TV to Cook Islands

◀◀◀ Cont. From Page 1

This is the first public service television programming offered to the some 14,000 permanent residents of the Cook Islands, French Polynesia's closest neighbor some 1,000 kilometers to the southwest. It also is the first new technology commercial partnership agreement between Tahiti's OPT and the Cooks' TCI. French Polynesia Government Vice President Edouard Fritch, who also is New Technologies and Postal and Communications Minister, hailed the «business alliance» as «the beginning of an export activity in the area of new information and communications technologies. It clearly illustrates regional development and cooperation perspectives, including those in other economic activity sectors.»

Norman George, the Cook Islands' Telecommunications Minister, described the historic partnership agreement «as a great moment for us in the Cook Islands.»

The agreement was signed by French Polynesia OPT General Manager Geffry Salmon, and Stuart Davies, Telecom Cook Islands Ltd. chief executive. ▶

Satellite Phone Hookups Reach Remote Tuamotu Destinations

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Makatea lies about 192 kilometers (119 miles) northeast of Papeete. Recent ceremonies held for Makatea's modern hookup to the outside world marked the first time a French Polynesia government delegation had ever set foot on the island. It was the biggest attention the island had received since the some 50 years of phosphate mining that ended in September 1966. During World War II more than 200,000 tons of phosphate were exported yearly. The island's 1962 population was 2,273. Up until recently, the OPT served several islands like Makatea with transmission systems based on radio technology, several with digital microwave systems and others with point-to-point IDR satellite transmission, allowing connections to the main island of Tahiti. ▶

Tahiti's Booming Cell Phone Network



The Tuamotu atoll of Fakarava is among several remote destinations in French Polynesia recently hooked up to the Tikiphone cell phone network.

Tikiphone's immediate goals are a network that covers 98% of the Society Islands' population by the end of 2002 and the main islands of the remote archipelagoes by the end of 2003.

The biggest volume of business involves Tahiti and her sister island of Moorea. The 42 Base Transceiver Stations providing coverage for both islands will increase by 29 new stations to 71 by the end of 2002. In the Leeward Islands (Bora Bora, Raiatea, Tahaa, Huahine and Maupiti), the 11 stations at the end of 2001 will increase by 13 to 24 by the end of 2002. And in the remote archipelagoes (Marquesas Islands, Tuamotu-Gambier Islands and Austral Islands), the six stations at the end of 2001 will increase by 11 to 17 by the end of 2002 and by four to 21 in early 2003. ▶

French Polynesia's cell phone network has mushroomed and spread so fast over the past eight years that 80,000 subscribers has become the goal by the end of 2002. That's the goal outlined by Yannick Teriierooiteai, general manager of Tahiti's GSM mobile network operated by Tikiphone, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the French Polynesia Postal and Telecommunications Department (OPT). Known throughout Tahiti & Her Islands as «Vini», after a tiny bird, cell phone use has mushroomed to 77,000 subscribers in almost eight years, representing a third of the overall estimated population of some 230,000 people. The Vini has become so popular that during a typical month some 55 million calls are made. That's an average of more than 1.7 million calls per day, seven days a week during a month of 31 days.

Telecommunications Challenge

Any telecommunications venture in French Polynesia presents a tremendous logistical challenge, whether it be for cell or fixed phones, television broadcasting or Internet connections. Besides being half-way between the American and Australian continents, the 35 islands and 83 atolls of French Polynesia have a combined land area of only 4,000 square kilometers (1,544 square miles). But that land is spread out over an Exclusive Economic Zone ocean area of five million square kilometers (1.93 million square miles). Complicating those logistics even more are the big distances separating the five archipelago groups of islands and the rugged terrain of the high islands and their isolated valleys. ▶

Hotels Begin Offering Tahiti Nui Satellite TV

Tahiti Nui Satellite (TNS), French Polynesia's only 100% digital satellite television service, hopes to be installed in more than 1,000 hotel rooms by the end of 2002.

There's also hope that its special tourist industry eight-channel package will be available soon to passengers aboard two cruise ships based in Papeete for weekly outer island cruises.

TNS, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the French Polynesia Postal and Telecommunications Department (OPT), the Tahiti government's telecom, estimates it has a potential of reaching more than 3,500 hotel rooms and four cruise ships with a total capacity of nearly 1,000 cabins. «Since beginning satellite television broadcasting throughout Tahiti & Her Islands on June 29, 2000, TNS has signed up more than 10,000 customers», said Aroma Salmon, who is in charge of TNS for the OPT. And what began with 11 TV channels and three radio channels was expanded to 23 TV channels and five radio channels on Dec. 20, 2001. The upgrading of the bouquet of channels was done by Intelsat Global Sales & Marketing in partnership with the OPT and France Telecom's broadcast services division, GlobeCast. The expanded bouquet, Intelsat



The 200-room Sheraton Hotel Tahiti became the first hotel in French Polynesia to sign up for a special tourist industry package with Tahiti Nui Satellite. OPT General Manager Geffry Salmon (right) signs agreement along with Sheraton Regional General Manager Fabrice Bobohte (left).

reported, «is the first digital DTH (direct-to-home) service dedicated to French and English programming in the area that mixes video and Internet services in a single platform.» ▶

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