Anritsu

Application Note

Measuring Pulsed Power and Frequency

ML248XA Series Power Meters
MF241XB Series Frequency Counters

Understand how to set up and use the Wideband Peak Power Meter and Frequency Counter for Radar measurements

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Measuring the Pulsed Power and Frequency of a Radar Transmitter

Introduction

This application note shows how to set up and measure Pulsed Radar transmitters with the ML248XA series wideband peak power meter, MA2491A sensors and the MF241XB Frequency Counter

The ML248XA series power meter has a video bandwidth of 20MHz, which makes it ideal for peak and average power measurements on many Radar signals. The power meter has a selection of trigger and measurement features to select precisely the section of the Radar signal under test. Multiple pulse radars pose a challenge for conventional power meters, as a conventional power meter cannot distinguish between the edges on the pulses in the sequence.

The ML248XA series incorporates a special synchronising feature, frame arming which allows the power meter to detect the off period in the transmission. This feature can be used to synchronise the power meter to the rising edge of the first pulse.
The power meter can display the results numerically or as a graph, enabling the design or manufacturing or service engineer to truly see the power profile of the Radar transmitter.

The MF241XB Frequency counters have not only outstanding CW performance, but also incorporate a burst measurement mode that is used for measuring the frequency of pulsed signals.

This application note shows how both instruments can be set up to measure frequency and power simultaneously.

Overview

This application note describes how to set up the peak power meter and frequency counter to simultaneously measure the frequency and the power of the pulsed radar signal.

Many operational Radars are provided with special test ports that provide low power outputs suitable for monitoring the performance of the transmitter or transmitter modules. This test port can be used to measure the frequency and pulse power. To measure both frequency and power then connect a splitter to the test port, and then one arm can be used for the frequency counter and the other arm for the power meter.

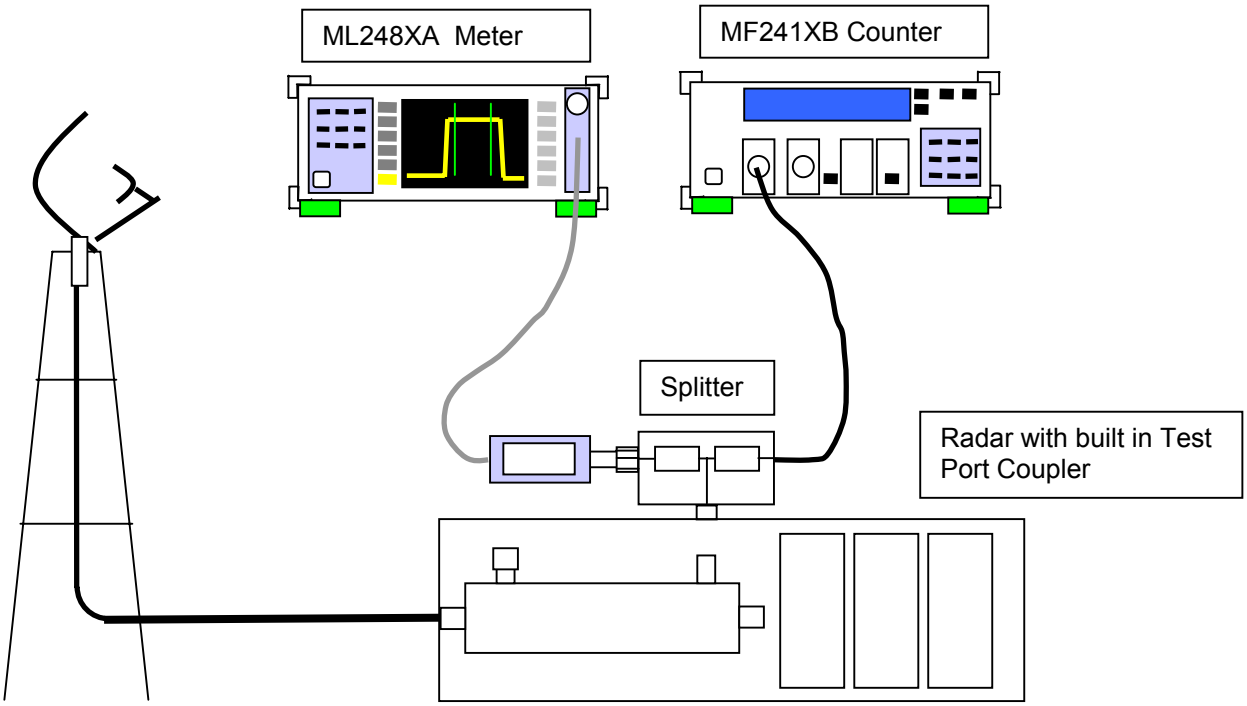

Figure 1. Typical Pulse Radar Measurement Set Up

Setting Up the Power Measurement

To make the measurement follow the sequence of actions below.

Set the measurement mode
Select the output parameter
Calibrate and zero the sensor
Set the cal factor for the sensor

Set up the trigger
Set up the timing

Set up the gates
Take the output data.

To start, press the yellow Preset key and select [Reset]

This will set Channel 1 to pulse modulated mode. Default input is set to A and the output set to Profile.

Selecting the Power Meter output parameter

The ML248XA can measure various combinations of output power parameters; the average power only, the average and the peak power or the average power, peak power and crest factor. To select which combination is required press Channel and then Set Up.

Use the down arrow to move the highlight to [Measurement] and select the appropriate softkey.

The ML248XA has two different ways of measuring the peak signal.

The first algorithm is designed to correctly measure the peak of pseudo random noise like signals such as WLAN and WCDMA, and the second is designed to reduce the effect of noise on a pulsed signal like radar.

The Avg, Peak and Avg, Peak & Crest selections automatically measure the peak of the raw data plotted on the profile display. When averaging is applied, the average of the peak value is calculated and measured.

The other selection, Average, Min & Max employs a different averaging algorithm which reduces the effect of peak impulse noise on measurements. In this case the max and minimum are calculated on the displayed averaged data, rather than the instantaneous peak data collected before display.

Select either Average or Average, Min and Max for the Radar pulse measurement.

Calibration and Zero

Connect the MA2490A to the Calibrator and the sensor lead to input A.

Press Cal/Zero and then Zero & Cal

When the cal and zero has finished press Sensor and then Cal Factor
Use the down arrow to highlight the [Frequency] field.
To enter the frequency, press [Sel] on the numeric keypad and then enter the frequency e.g. 2.9 GHz.

Mistakes can be cleared with the [Clr] key. The cal factor for that frequency will be displayed on the upper portion of the screen.

Use [Exit] to close the dialog box.

Connect the power sensor to the splitter on the test port.

Setting up the Trigger: Single Pulse Radars

To set up the trigger in a single pulse radar

Press Channel

Then press Trigger , Setup

Change [Source] from Cont to Internal

The trigger arming can remain set to automatic.

Set the trigger level for the expected test port signal.

Setting up the Trigger: Multi-Pulse Radars

Many Radars use multiple pulses. This sequence of pulses contains several rising edges that can fool the trigger settings on a conventional power meter. The ML248XA contains a special frame arming trigger setting which works as a two stage detection system to detect the off period of the frame signal.

1. The frame arming checks that the power level is below the set level for the test time. If this is true then the trigger is armed ready for the next rising edge. The test time and level are set by the user to suit the pulse conditions.
2. The trigger is activated on the next rising edge, which is the start of the Radar Pulse sequence.

Setting up the trigger and frame arming.

Press Channel

Then press Trigger , Setup

Use the down arrow to select [Arming] and change the Arming from Automatic to Frame

Use the down Arrow to select [Frame Duration] and after pressing [Sel] enter an appropriate time. For the waveform displayed in figure 3, the longest inter pulse off period is 4μs, so the minimum value for the frame arming test ought to be >4μs.

The frame duration value can be set to a larger value than the display time. For example supposing a radar pulse sequence consists of two 20μs pulses, with a 40μs interval between them and with a pulse repetition rate of 500Hz.

In this case setting the frame duration value to 50μs would ensure that the power meter always triggered on the first pulse. The trigger capture time could then be set to view the first pulse, eg a trigger capture time of 30μs and a trigger delay time of -5μs.

To view the second pulse, simply alter the trigger delay time to 55μs (20μs + 40μs, -5μs).

Close the dialog box by pressing [Exit].

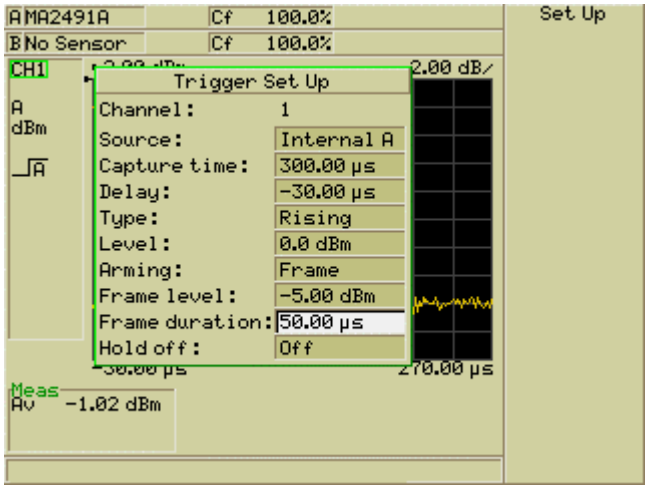

Figure 2. Trigger Set up Menu

Now exit the dialog box and set the Set Capture Time to a suitable value to display the pulses, the example below has been set to 20µs and the Trigger Delay time to -2µs. A –ve value for the delay time will show data before the trigger event and acts as pre-trigger information.

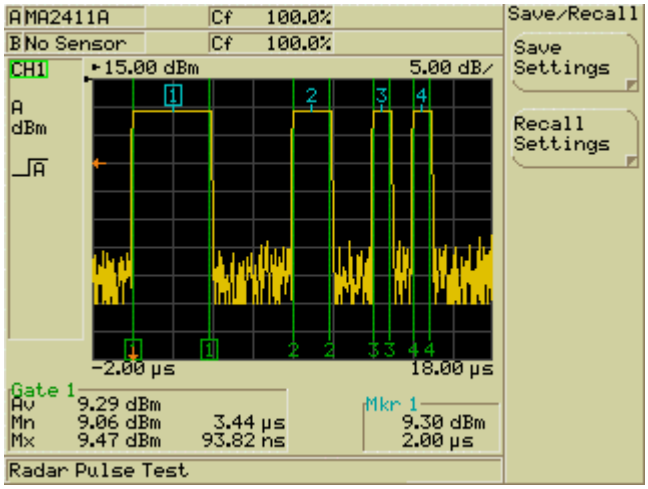

Figure 3. Multiple Pulses

If the Power Meter is not successfully triggering then the error message Chan 1 –No trigger is displayed.

The red arrows on the display show the trigger level and the trigger position. The trigger and frame arming test levels should be set to suit the output power of the device under test and the power meter range.

If the scaling factor on the display needs changing then use the scaling keys.
Press Channel , More, Scaling

Autoscale can be used to automatically scale the Y-axis of the display.

Minimum Capture Time
The ML248XA power meter uses 200 display points as its default setting. At the fastest rate, the ADC is converting samples every 16ns, so the minimum capture time is 3.2μs. A marker zoom facility can be used to digitally zoom in on the signal. This does not affect the sample rate, and the time period between samples remains the same.

Marker Zoom
To access the marker zoom function, set the active marker to the pulse of interest, then press Marker Functions , Active Zoom In

To display the results in linear Units

Press Channel and then , Set Up . Scroll down to [Units] and select W .

To set up a Gate to measure the power in the pulse

Press Channel and then Gating , Set Up .

The Gating Set Up dialog box appears, see figure 5. Use the up/down and left right keys to navigate in the fields of the gate dialog. Use [Sel] to enter the time values. Timing reference is set from the trigger point.

Press Enabled to switch the gate on. Press Set as Active to enable the display of the measurement on the screen. The Fence excludes a section of the frame from the calculation of the average and peak power. For Radar applications you do not need to set a fence.

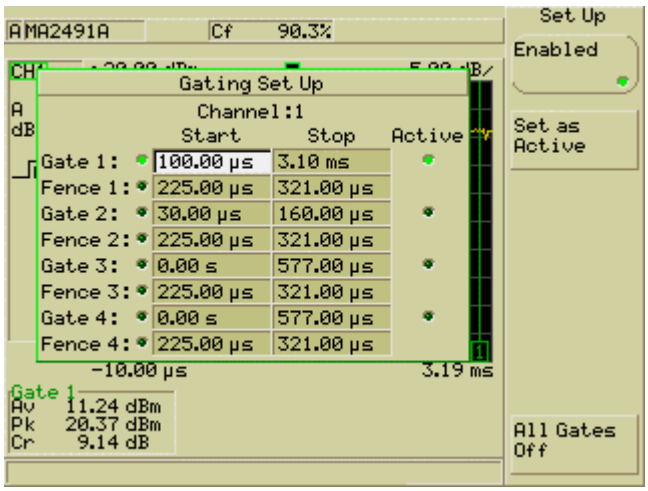

Figure 4. The Gating Set Up Dialog Box

As an alternative the average, peak and crest factor results can be displayed on their own without the graph.

To do this select Channel and then Set Up. Move down to [Meas Display] and select Readout.

Multiple Gates
To use more than one gate, set up the parameters for Gate 2, etc in the Gate Set up dialog box. All timings are from the trigger point, and not from the start of the second or third pulse.

To enable the gate, select Enabled.

The measurement values are always calculated for an enabled gate.

The Active Gate is the one selected for Display purposes, but all enabled gates are available for output over the GPIB.

To change the Gate output on the display, press Channel , Gating , Set Active Gate

Markers and Measuring Droop

The ML2487 supports 4 markers and a delta marker. The Active marker and the delta marker can be used to measure the droop on a radar pulse.

To access the marker functions press Channel, Markers .

Press Active Marker to set the active Marker on the display. By default marker 1 is the active marker, but this can be changed using Assign Act Mkr.

Positioning the Markers
1.The left and right arrow keys on the numeric keypad can be used to set the position of the active marker.

2.The position of the active marker and all the other markers can be explicitly set under the Set Up Markers key. All timings are with reference to the trigger point.

3. The active marker can be set to max or min automatically.
Press Channel, Markers , Marker Functions

To measure the droop of a pulse, set the active marker to the peak and then activate the delta marker. The active marker can then positioned at the other end of the pulse. The display will show the difference in the readings.

For more detail on the pulse droop, all 4 markers can be set to different positions on the pulse and the values read back over the GPIB interface.

Measuring the Rise Time
Set the active marker on the pulse to be measured. Then use the advanced marker functions.
Channel, Markers , Marker Functions , Advanced Marker Functions .

The rise time is calculated from 10% to 90% of the waveform in linear power.

Dual Display Mode

Both versions of the ML248XA support a dual display mode. In this mode two display channels can be displayed on the screen, or the user can switch between them using Ch1/Ch2 . This has a number of uses for example Channel 1 could be set up to look at 1 pulse in detail, and Channel 2 set up to measure the time interval between pulses.

Another application is to set up the Channel1 and Channel 2 with the same measurement, but with different display modes, Ch1 with a profile display and Ch2 with a readout display.

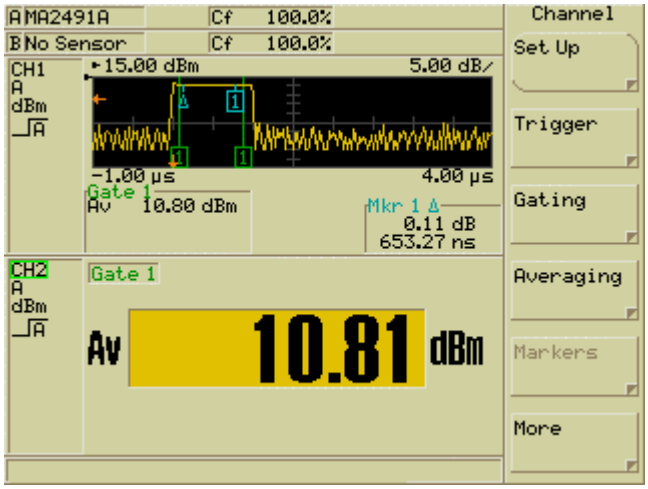

Figure 5. Dual Channel Display showing a pulse measurement

Setting an Offset

The reading on the power meter can be set to compensate for the splitter or the coupler used in the test port.

To set an offset press Sensor and then Offset . Select Fixed and use the down key to select [Offset]. Enter the value of the attenuator directly as a positive value. E.g. a 10.56dB attenuator should be entered directly as 10.56.

The power meter will now automatically correct for the value of the splitter or coupler, giving the true power reading at the test port.

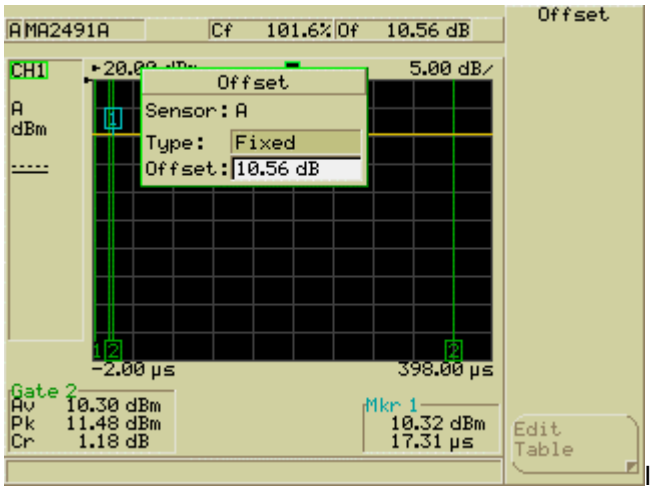

Figure 6. Entering the offset value

Saving Settings

Press System , Save/Recall and then Save Settings. Select the store and use Save as to save for the first time. The numeric keypad can be used to title the store settings. Use the Next key to set consecutive letters that are on the same key. For example ‘adg’ can be set directly by pressing keys 8,9,4 , but to set ‘abc’ requires 8, Next , 8, Next , 8.

Press Enter when finished, this will store the setting.

Setting Up the MF241XB Frequency Counter

Note: The Power on the Frequency counter input should be kept below +10dBm. If in doubt measure the power on the test port with the power meter first.

The MF241XB has two modes of operation, a CW mode and a Burst mode that can be used to measure the frequency of pulsed signals. These modes are supported on Input 1, which is used for measuring frequencies above 600MHz.

The burst mode is ideal for measuring pulsed radar signals.

Measuring Single Pulse Radar Signals.

Connect Input 1 to the splitter or test port.

Press Preset and then select Burst Mode in the Meas Mode section on the front panel.

The frequency counter should now be measuring the frequency of the transmitted pulse. The MF241XB supports two pulse measurement modes. For signals above 1 GHz, the user can choose between narrow or wide measurement modes.

Wide mode measures the frequency of pulses with widths of 1μs to 0.1s.
Narrow mode measures the frequency of pulses with widths of 100ns to 0.1s.

From 600MHz to 1GHz the frequency counter supports the wide mode only.

The counter can also be used to measure the frequency in a gated section of the pulse. Use GW (key 6) to select the gate width and TD (key 5) to alter the trigger delay for the gate.

Press the Return to Meas key to return to the measurement

Measuring Multi-Pulse Radar Signals.

The quickest way to measure multi-pulse signals is to use the manual frequency setting mode. In this mode, the approximate frequency of the transmitter can be set on the frequency counter to provide the fastest acquisition time.

To set manual mode, press Freq, Key 7 on the counter. Use the Resolution keys <> to move between choices and use the Enter key to change the setting. Use the Set Freq to set the manual frequency. Resolution is 1MHz.

Manual Frequency Value	Burst Width Setting	Input Tolerance
600 MHz to 1GHz	Wide	± 30MHz
1GHz or higher	Narrow	± 20MHz
1GHz or higher	Wide	± 40MHz

Manual Mode Burst Tolerances

Saving Settings

There are 10 settings stores on the MF241XB frequency counter. These can be accessed by pressing the Sys (. Key).

Power Meter Notation Conventions Used in this Application Note

The following conventions have been adopted in this Application Note.
Channel Hard keys on the unit are enclosed in a box with a grey background.

Set Up	Soft keys that display on the screen are enclosed in a box with a white background. Pressing a soft key provides access to menu options, toggles selections and allows data entry.
[Exit]	The text that appears on or beneath the keys on the numeric keypad is enclosed in square brackets.
[Channel Set Up]	The titles of input dialogs that appear on the screen are enclosed in square brackets.
"Meas display"	Items or text that display within the main body of the screen are enclosed in quotation marks.
ML248xA	Used throughout this application note to refer to both the ML2487A and the ML2488A power meters.

ML248XA Peak Power Meter

There are two variants of the ML248XA Peak power meter:

- ML2487A single input unit
- ML2488A dual input unit.

Both units have a video bandwidth of 20MHz which means that the peak power on even the highest data rate signal can be measured correctly with out resorting to the manual corrections required by lower bandwidth power meters. The ADC samples at 64Ms/s and the WLAN signal is captured in a single sweep. A variety of trigger facilities are available to ensure precise triggering. The power of the Radar pulse can be measured in a gate which defines precise time limits for the measurement. Up to 4 gates can be set on a single display channel set up. 4 Markers are available to measure features of the signal.

Both versions of the power meter support dual display channels. Each display channel can be thought of as a different measurement set-up and the power meter can toggle between them with the Ch1/Ch2 key or they can be displayed together on the screen. The measurement process will alternate between the two display channels.

The power meter supports 20 settings stores

MA2490A and MA2491A Wideband Sensors

Two versions of the wideband sensor are available.

- MA2490A 50MHz to 8GHz
- MA2491A 50MHz to 18GHz

Both sensors have a 20MHz bandwidth and incorporate a CW mode switch for CW applications.

The sensors' dynamic range is –60dBm to +20dBm in CW mode and –26dBm to +20dBm in pulsed modulated mode. The sensors are specified to handle 3dB over range to +23dBm. For signals with a high overshoot, the peak of the power should be kept below +20dBm for safe and accurate measurements. This may need the addition of an external attenuator and this application note describes how to automatically offset the reading for the value of the attenuator.

Further Information

For more information on the ML248XA Power Meter, the MA249XA sensor please contact your local Anritsu sales office or sales representative.

Anritsu

AUSTRALIA ANRITSU PTY. LTD. Unit 3, 170 Foster Road Mt Waverley, VIC 3149 Australia Telephone: +61-3-9558-8177 Fax: +61-3-9558--8255	**Brazil** ANRITSU ELETRONICA LTDA. Praia de Botafogo 440, Sala 2401 CEP 22250-040, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil Telephone: +55-21-5276922 Fax: +55-21-537-1456	**CANADA** 700 Silver Seven Road, Suite 120, Kanata, ON K2V 1C3, Canada Telephone: +1-613-591-2003 Fax: +1-613-591-1006
CHINA ANRITSU BEIJING SERVICE CENTER 416W Beijing Fortune Building 5 Dong San Huan Bei Lu Chao Yang Qu, Beijing 1000004, China Telephone: +86-1186-1065909237 Fax: +86-1186-1065909236	**DENMARK** Anritsu ab Tonsbakken 10 DK 2740 Skovlunde Denmark Telephone +45-44502160 Fax +45-44502170	**FINLAND** Anritsu AB Piispanportti 9, FIN-02240 Espoo, Finland Telephone: +358-9-435-522-0 Fax: +358-9-435-522-50
FRANCE 9, Avenue du Québec Z.A. de Courtabœuf 91951 Les Ulis Cedex, France Telephone: +33-1-60-92-15-50 Fax: +33-1-64-46-10-65	**GERMANY** Grafenberger Allee 54-56, 40237 Düsseldorf, Germany Telephone: +49-211-96855-0 Fax: +49-211-96855-55	**HONG KONG** ANRITSU COMPANY LTD. Suite 719, 7/F., Chinachem Golden Plaza, 77 Mody Road, Tsimshatsui East, Kowloon, Hong Kong, China Telephone: +852-2301-4980 Fax: +852-2301-3545
ITALY ANRITSU Sp.A Via Elio Vittorini, 129, 00144 Roma EUR, Italy Telephone: +39-06-509-9711 Fax: +39-06-502-24-25	**JAPAN** 1800 Onna, Atsugi-shi, Kanagawa prefecture, 243-8555 Japan Telephone: +81-462-239794	**KOREA** ANRITSU CORPORATION LTD. 14F Hyun Juk Bldg. 832-41, Yeoksam-dong, Kangnam-ku, Seoul, Korea Telephone: +82-2-553-6603 Fax: +82-2-553-6604˜ 5
SINGAPORE 10, Hoe Chiang Road, # 07-01/02 Keppel Towers Singapore 089315 Telephone: +65-282 2400 Fax : +65- 282 2533	**SWEDEN** Anritsu AB Fågelviksvägen 9A 145 84 Stockholm Sweden Telephone: +46-8-74-05-840 Fax: +46-8-71-09-960	**TAIWAN** ANRITSU CO., LTD. 7F, NO.316, Sec.1 NeiHu Rd., Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C Telephone: +886-2-8751-1816 Fax: +886-2-8751-1817
UNITED KINGDOM 200 Capability Green, Luton, Bedfordshire LU1 3LU, U.K. Telephone: +44-1582-433200 Fax: +44-1582-731303	**UNITED STATES** 1155 East Collins Blvd., Richardson, TX 75081, U.S.A. Toll Free: 1-800-ANRITSU (267-4878) Telephone: +1-972-644-1777 Fax: +1-972-671-1877	