

How Master Gunner Training Improves Unit Readiness

The company-level master gunner serves an important function in maintaining unit readiness. The foundation for the master gunner's success is set at the Master Gunner School, located at Fort Benning, GA, part of the Maneuver Center of Excellence. Most commanders are aware the master gunner can be a vital asset to unit gunnery training but may be less aware of the training the master gunner has received that prepares him to bridge the gap between crew-level knowledge of turret systems and the full capabilities of a maintenance team.

Master-gunner maintenance training begins with a basic understanding of how electricity works. Master gunners are taught the basics of electron theory and the paths electricity takes as it travels through the turret. A master gunner is taught to read schematics, and this helps lay the foundation for follow-on troubleshooting training. A master gunner is by no means an electrician, but in this case, a little knowledge goes a long way.

The next step in training is learning the functions and capabilities of the M256 guntube, breech ring and recoil system. This teaches the master gunner several important maintenance functions. When and how is the recoil exercise conducted? What is the proper

method for conducting a borescope exercise? How is a condemned guntube identified? The master gunner has the answers to all these questions and more. The master gunner has the knowledge to interpret and enter data on a Weapon Record Data Form, DA 2408-4.

The master gunner understands the hydraulic system and can rapidly identify problems. The turret must be exercised (spun around three times to the left and right), but why? The master gunner knows this rapidly forces the hydraulic fluid through the hydraulic reservoir, where a series of baffles removes air from the system.

Armament accuracy checks (AACs) are conducted once a month at crew level. The average tank commander knows how to conduct AACs. The master gunner understands that AACs ensure the fire-control system is fully operational. The master gunner is trained precisely on how to do each step and is a valuable asset in training crews to properly conduct AACs. A master gunner can identify possible reasons for AAC failures and can even construct an AAC solution board with just some plywood and paint.

When it comes time to conduct gunnery, the master gunner is in

his element. To maximize the tank's capabilities, the crew must be well versed in the employment and functional operation of the fire-control system. For example, as a general rule, when should the laser rangefinder be placed in first or last return? What happens when the tank is in emergency mode as opposed to normal mode? The master gunner knows.

The master gunner has the answers to all these questions and more because he has been trained to the highest standard at the Master Gunner School. When used properly, the master gunner is more than just a glorified land and ammo noncommissioned officer; he is a subject-matter expert. Incorporating the master gunner into unit maintenance training will improve unit readiness and assist a unit in being the most lethal on the battlefield.

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Acronym Quick-Scan

AAC – armament accuracy check