

TAMMS

let's work smarter

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Do you remember the last time your unit stood its Annual General Inspection (AGI)? Did your once proud unit degenerate into a mob of panic-stricken soldiers preparing to defend themselves against a seemingly unbeatable foe? Were there sleepless nights, tensions in the air, and feelings of utter and complete relief when it was over?

If so, these hectic preparations and the degeneration of your organizational structure were indicators that your systems were not working as well as they should have been. And in all probability, these indicators were associated with your maintenance and maintenance management efforts.

Most of us would agree that the AGI is a fair indicator of a unit's status regarding maintenance management. Opinions may differ regarding the usefulness of roadside spot checks, roll out inspections, maintenance assistance and instruction team (MAIT) visits, and the numerous other maintenance inspection techniques used in the Army. But such inspections do indicate how well The Army's Maintenance Management System (TAMMS) is working — or more correctly, has been working — in a unit during a particular period of time.

It seems safe to say that since most units successfully complete these inspections, visits, and checks, TAMMS does work at company level. But as any company or battalion commander will tell you, there are more than enough counseling sessions, "bloodlettings," and reply-by-indorsement letters to indicate that the system is not working as well as it could.

Some people have suggested that the combat arms should be relieved of their maintenance and maintenance management responsibilities. They propose that the Army do away with the organizational maintenance structure as we now know it and turn the job over to service teams from the direct support units. Maintenance in the unit would be limited essentially to operator maintenance. At the organizational level, the combat arms units would no longer need their mechanics, tools, and diagnostic equipment. The commanders would be free to concentrate on their combat and mission-oriented training. During war time, the mobility of a combat unit would not be hindered by a need to transport maintenance shops and unserviceable vehicles.

As attractive as this concept may sound, I don't think it is feasible. For example, who would sign for and control a unit's vehicles? Who would insure that the support teams were always responsive to the combat unit's requirements as dictated by its operational and training schedules?

Even if these problems could be solved, a company commander could still expect to have certain maintenance management responsibilities. In fact, barring any revolutionary change in Army policy, maintenance and maintenance management will continue to be a command responsibility right down to the company level.

Accordingly, one of the first things we can do to make TAMMS work better in our companies is to take advantage of every learning opportunity. The opportunities

vary from post to post, but the soldiers can learn about TAMMS from courtesy Inspector General visits, diagnostic evaluations, and maintenance evaluation team visits. An overwhelming majority of units sincerely appreciate visits of a courtesy or instructional nature. Unfortunately, too many companies do not make a real effort to learn from such visits.

A company commander might also consider his interpretation of the 11th Commandment in an infantry unit — "Training is top priority." Too often, commanders interpret this to mean field training involving only the tactical maneuver elements. If they think about maintenance at all, it usually means that their maintenance sections will get a workout at performing in the rain, mud, snow, or sleet. While this is important, there is a lot more to it than meets the eye, especially the eye of a company commander whose only contact with his maintenance section in the field may be to check on the status of his jeep. His maintenance section may be letting the TAMMS paperwork slide until the field training period is over; it may be stockpiling unserviceable equipment instead of evacuating it quickly. Although the section may shine in the commander's eyes for the support it renders on a particular field exercise, it may not be building the right kind of working habits that would let it support the company over the long haul. And he should also look at the maintenance work being done by his arms people, his communications people, and his CBR people in the field.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In garrison, certain other considerations have to be taken into account. Does the unit's training schedule allow time for any maintenance training? If it does, is the training actually conducted, or are the maintenance people too busy doing their jobs to learn how to do them correctly? Virtually everyone in a company needs to know something about maintenance, because nearly all of them have some responsibilities under TAMMS. The vehicle driver and the rifleman, for instance, must report any problems with their vehicles, weapons, communication gear, and CBR equipment. They must know whom to report to and which forms to use. The people who receive this information must know how to record it, assign priorities for its maintenance work and any needed repair parts, and, most important, they must know how to follow up on the needed actions. And the company commander must understand TAMMS so that he can make certain the system is working from bottom to top.

There are some things the Army can do better that would help out in the area of TAMMS training. All of the TAMMS "implementors" — the E-3s and E-4s who do the stubby pencil work and the actual nut tightening or oil changing — must know that, in the Army, maintenance management is a system. PLL clerks, for example, often do not know when they should use a high priority designator or a lower one on their requisitions. They have never really learned the reasons for the various

priorities. And they often do not realize that this one simple entry can affect all of the support channels and eventually determine the mode of transportation used to ship the repair parts they have requisitioned.

It is probably too much to expect our training centers to make system managers out of new recruits. But it is true that the U.S. soldier does his job better if he understands why he is doing it.

This need to understand TAMMS as a system should not be limited solely to the PLL clerk and the dispatcher, because it also applies to our 11Bs and 11Cs; they are the ones who have to do the required organizational maintenance on their weapons and other equipment. And in spite of the authorizations on most modified tables of organization and equipment (MTOE), the job of unit armorer usually goes to an 11B or an 11C. When this happens, that soldier's introduction to TAMMS is likely to be a confusing stack of forms left behind by the previous armorer, which is not the way to convince him that we have a good system of maintenance.

TAMMS supervisors within the unit should also be well educated about the system. The company executive officer, for example, should be an expert on it.

HELP

In recent years, the Army has provided a considerable amount of help on TAMMS to personnel at the company level. Some log book forms have been eliminated, and many of the administrative recording and reporting requirements have been shifted from the operator level. But it is still difficult for many people to grasp the idea that maintenance management is a system. They are often intimidated by the number and complexity of the forms still being used. To these people, unfortunately, learning TAMMS is comparable to learning a foreign language.

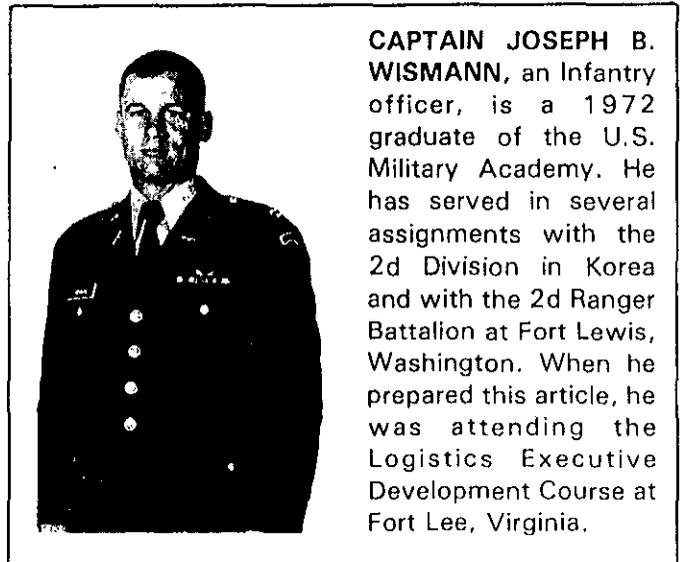
We may have to wait a while for the Army to come up with some training programs that will help our TAMMS implementors interpret that language. We may also have to wait for an updated version of TM 38-750, which explains the forms and how to fill them out. But while we are waiting, commanders can help their units overcome these difficulties, at least partially, by using the programs that are available more efficiently. Most installations have established short courses to instruct TAMMS implementors and supervisors in the system, in the PLL, and in a number of other skills. Some even have courses for the unit armorer and the CBR NCO. A company commander should send as many soldiers as he can to these courses; doing without a few of his soldiers in the unit for a week or two can pay off in the long run.

Personnel turbulence, of course, is also hazardous to the health of TAMMS at the company level. The Army is well aware of this problem and is actively seeking ways to stabilize its personnel.

In the meantime, a company commander can ease the problem by forecasting his needs for a new armorer, or a new CBR NCO, or a new PLL clerk, or for a new communications chief and get the new people into the available courses of instruction as early as he can. He must also provide as much overlap as possible in the various jobs.

But leadership is probably the most complex problem any company commander faces in dealing with TAMMS. He should first review the technical capabilities and the quality of his company's leaders. If the leaders are not up to par in TAMMS, the commander must correct this problem before going on. Then he and his leaders need to apply their knowledge to instructing and supervising the TAMMS implementors and to establishing a system of reward and punishment. His one goal should be to motivate his people to excel in TAMMS.

Making TAMMS work well at the company level is not an easy task. It requires the careful attention of everyone in the unit, from the company commander to the newly arrived private. Everyone must accept the fact that maintenance management is the unit's responsibility, and they must realize that that responsibility will remain at the company level for a while. The unit is going to have to put up with less than enough people, with a high turnover among those it does have, and with conflicting training and other priorities. But if everyone keeps TAMMS in mind when they address these problems, the improved readiness of their equipment and a sterling performance on their next AGI will be well worth the effort.



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