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Army Logistician is devoted to the publication of timely, authoritative information on Army and Defense logistics for the Active Army, Army National Guard, Army Reserve, civilian employees of the Army, and the public. Our purpose is to increase knowledge and understanding of logistics and to encourage and stimulate innovative thought in areas of logistics by providing a forum for those ideas. The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department of Defense or the Department of the Army.

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Articles, photographs, illustrations, and items of interest on any facet of Army logistics are invited. Direct communication is authorized to: Editor, Army Logistician, Army Logistics Management Center, Fort Lee, Va. 23801.

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Way to Improve Maintenance

“W

ithout flyable, shootable aircraft, this
brigade can neither train for, nor accomplish its combat
mission. Accordingly, I must place aircraft maintenance
at the top of the brigade’s priority list.”

These words formed the first paragraph of a two-page
letter directive to the troops of the 6th Cavalry Brigade
(Air Combat), at Fort Hood, Texas. They were written
by Colonel Wayne C. Knudson, the brigade com-
mmander. They left no doubt in the minds of the recipi-
ents that their commander will be “focusing command
emphasis” on maintenance—one of the five primary ob-
jectives of the Army’s maintenance management im-
provement program. Colonel Knudson’s directive spells
out the maintenance effort he expects from his troops
and what his troops may expect from him.

While the 6th Cavalry Brigade’s primary concern is
with readiness and deployability, a strong maintenance
program must have number one priority to meet those
objectives. Other commanders may find that Colonel
Knudson’s philosophy and techniques can be used or
adapted for use in their units.

The key to good maintenance, Colonel Knudson
says, is the crew chief’s daily inspection. He must find
and record faults, order parts, and continuously “push”
for immediate correction of problems. A good crew
chief can shorten the time his aircraft is in phase main-
tenance. For phase maintenance, the brigade has set
goals that are attainable using good maintenance man-
agement and practices. These goals will be adjusted to
achieve required mission capability operating under
combat conditions and combat flying hours. The crew
chief is to remain with his aircraft throughout the phase
inspection.

The brigade commander has established a quarterly
competition to promote good crew chief maintenance
efforts. Each squadron and the headquarters troop may
nominate one aircraft of each type for competition. One
aircraft of each type will be selected as the best main-
tained and its crew chief will be awarded a 3-day pass, a
Department of the Army certificate, and a letter of com-
mendation. Squadrons are encouraged to establish
monthly competitions on the same basis.

Fleet management is a critical element in the bri-
gade’s maintenance program. Maintenance priorities
must be established and enforced by the chain of com-
mand. To strengthen fleet management, the brigade
commander has given unit maintenance officers the au-
thority to select which aircraft will fly, subject to veto
only by the troop or company commander. Along with
this authority is also the responsibility to manage the
flow of aircraft into phase maintenance and minimize
downtime.

Pilots, platoon leaders, and squadron commanders
have all been given responsibilities in the brigade’s air-
craft maintenance program. When an aircraft is down
for unscheduled maintenance, the pilot is expected to
“over-watch” the entire maintenance process. Platoon
leaders are responsible for training and managing the
maintenance efforts of their pilots and crews. Squadron
commanders are to monitor the maintenance program
by platoon and reward superior performance and elimi-
nate substandard performance. The brigade commander
will review each platoon leader’s officer evaluation re-
port to be sure it reflects maintenance performance.

The maintenance and use of records and forms is also
emphasized in the brigade’s program. Both mainte-
nance and flight personnel are given training in main-
taining log books, forms, and records.

Colonel Knudson established a goal of having 75 per-
cent of the brigade’s aircraft “fully mission capable” at
all times. To help achieve this, he has authorized inter-
changing components and “black boxes” from un-
flyable aircraft to aircraft that would become fully mis-
sion capable except for that particular component or
“black box.” All flyable aircraft will be preflighted and
an engine run-up performed every third day, and not
less than twice each week. Weapon systems on non-
flyable aircraft will be energized and exercised by using
an auxiliary power unit following the same schedule.

Colonel Knudson concluded his directive to his
troops with these words, “We must set the pace in air-
craft maintenance. Our ability to train and deploy de-
pends upon the quality of our aircraft and their weapon
systems. We will meet the challenge.”