

# M1A2 NET Team Combines Military and Civilians In a First for the Army

by Tom Werth and Specialist Randy Hughes  
Photo by Major Brian Rafferty



Tank moves from deprocessing site to unit's motor pool.

Because of the reduction in military manpower within the Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), the command had to withdraw its support of the Army Materiel Command's New Equipment Training (NET) mission. Soldiers previously assigned to NET have been reassigned to divisional units. In a "first" for the Army, this function will be assumed by private industry, which showed interest in conducting contractor new equipment training through presentations made to the Department of the Army (DA) staff.

Due to the reduction in force and a hiring freeze, AMC could no longer support adding DA civilians or increasing the military NET TDA strength at the Tank-automotive and Armaments Command (TACOM) to sustain operator, crew, and unit maintenance training on the M1A2. Direct Support (DS) and General Support (GS) training for the M1A2 NET and NET management continues to be accomplished at TACOM with DA civilians providing matrix support to the Program Manager (PM).

In order for the PM to meet fielding goals and continue hands-on training for the M1A2 tank system, a new NET team (NETT) was formed consisting of 14 military instructors and 30 contractors. Their mission is to provide M1A2 training for officers, warrant officers, and enlisted soldiers in armor, cavalry, and support units.

The decision to augment the NETT with contractor instructors was made by the Abrams PM in February 1996. The existing basic order agreement contract was used to speed up the contracting process. A statement of work was completed by the PM, TACOM, and Ft. Knox's NET personnel.

The contract was awarded to General Dynamics in May 1996. GDLS hired

instructors from within that were M1A2 qualified, and brought in additional GDLS personnel from the M1A2 Saudi tank program, who were re-qualified on the U.S. M1A2 tank at Ft. Knox. All of the new combined NET instructors were relocated to Ft. Hood in August 1996 for final certification, and the first integrated NET team started in October 1996 with organizational maintenance training for the 2/12 Cav, 1st Cavalry Division.

The 44 personnel of the current combined NETT consists of 13 senior instructors and a NETT NCOIC from Ft. Knox's 16th Cav, 29 instructors, and one site manager from General Dynamics, plus augmentees from the unit receiving the training.

The training consists of three parts — classroom, motor pool, and TTI-VIII. In the classroom, students are taught the difference between all the components on the M1A1 and the M1A2, with the help of Crew Station Trainers or CSTs. NET training starts during tank issue week. The tanks have been previously deprocessed, inventoried, and repaired by TACOM's Materiel Fielding Team. During issue week, each company/troop reports to the fielding site and, with the help of an instructor, performs PMCS and inventories BII. The instructor then drives the tank to the unit's motor pool. In the week following issue week, units report for the classroom phase of training.

The Crew Station Trainer is a valuable, flexible training tool, which allows a large student-to-instructor ratio during NET. The CST provides a Driver's Integrated Display (DID), Commander's Integrated Display (CID), Gunner's Control Display Panel (GCDDP) and all the screens and menus required to teach the student the M1A2 tank systems. It is also valuable in training the unit mechanic, who can access valuable fault data from

the DID. The CST will allow platoon, company, and battalion exercises without actually using the tank, saving OP-TEMPO costs and reducing training time. After the classroom phase is complete, students are taken to the motor pool where they perform hands-on training. It's here that the students are tested on all classroom instructions, including any new training learned in the motor pool. Every student must qualify on the Tank Crew Gunnery Skills Test before going down range on any qualification table. The course length is a total of 59 days for a battalion. TTI-VIII is also accomplished at this time, with NETT assistance running ranges, providing direction, and conducting after-action reviews for each crew. This ensures the crew uses the M1A2 tank to its maximum capacity.

A combined team of military and civilian instructors train the hull (63E) and turret (45E) mechanics for three weeks. The students are trained and certified prior to the unit taking delivery of their new tanks. The instructors then visit each unit during the gunnery portion of NET to further train and assist mechanics if they have a vehicle breakdown during gunnery.

The joint military and civilian NETT completed OP/CREW and UM/NET for the ICD in July 1997. Comments from the field on the combined military and contractor NETT were all positive, and soldiers say that this new combined NETT gives them the training they need to operate and maintain the M1A2.

According to the Abrams Tank NET Manager, the evaluation of the combined NETT is excellent. The structure and expertise of both the military and civilian team members is providing soldiers with exceptional training and is ensuring that we have the "best tankers for the best tank in the world." Each company or

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troop is interviewed upon completion of NET by the NETT manager, NETT NCOIC, General Dynamics Site Manager, and the 16th Cav Deputy Gun Div Chief to ensure that training is improved wherever possible.

After completion of NET at Ft. Hood, the entire team relocated to Ft. Carson, where training has started for leaders and maintainers, and OPNET, which was to start in Jan 99 for the 3d ACR. After August 1999, the NETT relocates to the first unit to receive the M1A2 SEP to accomplish training for that battalion.

The PM continues to use the basic order agreement contract to keep the NETT up to strength with contract instructors so units can be trained to the best possible level.

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