CWC 713 continues to set new records

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MARINE CORPS LOGISTICS BASE BARSTOW, Calif.(Dec. 1, 2005) -- "When these vehicles come in here with whole sides blown out, we know that chances are, a Marine died in it during combat. Seeing the seat where the driver sat, blown up, can really put a face onto why we do our job," said Robert Cardenas, supervisor of Cost Work Center 713, the Light Armored Vehicle repair shop at Maintenance Center Barstow.

CWC 713 receives LAVs from the Fleet Marine Corps that are damaged and in need of repair, typically from the normal wear and tear of training, but growing more common, from the damage received in battle.

After the Maintenance Center receives the vehicles the process of repair begins with evaluation and disassembly, explained Gibby Sena, program coordinator for the LAV repair shop. The next step is the steam cleaning to clear away the built up oil and grease from the vehicle parts and blasting it with minute pieces of garnet to wear away all stages of corrosion.

Non-destructive testing, or NDT, which is a large X-ray system, is used to detect cracks or damage to the parts and then they are sent to the welding shop to repair any damage found.

After cleaning, refurbishing and repairing, the parts are primed and painted before reassembly.

But before going back to the Marines the vehicles are put through strenuous testing and a Final Support Operation Quality Control Inspection to ensure that the vehicles are fully restored.

These tests include a road test where the vehicles are operated for a minimum of 20 miles testing the speed, brakes, suspension and performance on various obstacles and multiple levels of incline.

The process of an LAV repair is elaborate but this year there was a new challenge, which CWC 713 had never faced: 27 battle damaged LAVs.

Before the current world conflict, Maintenance Center Barstow had not seen battle damaged vehicles since the Vietnam War, said CWC 713 program coordinator Bob Fogle.

"There were no LAVs in Vietnam so this produced many new challenges for the LAV shop to overcome," Fogle said.

Despite the challenge of repairing vehicles that had received severe battle damage, the LAV shop still managed to continue streamlining the repair process and produce a record breaking amount of repaired vehicles in the Fiscal Year 2005.

In FY04, the LAV shop broke records in the vehicle repair cycle time and completed 54 vehicles. This year, the shop was slated to repair 56 vehicles, but completed 98 vehicle repairs.

To continue to speed up the process, three more cells, or work stations, were added to equal six vehicles being repaired at a time, said Fogle.

The Theory of Constraints, which is the organization and tracking of every step in each individual project, has also continuously helped to reduce repair cycle time, added Sena.

"The shop has improved by leaps and bounds," said Cardenas.

"Better communication with the support shop, cross training the artisans and hiring more employees has also contributed."

Another factor that cannot be over looked is the dedication and motivation of the 64 artisans that work in the LAV shop, Cardenas added sincerely.

The past fiscal year has been a challenging one for the LAV shop with new employees working on battle damaged LAVs while trying to reduce repair time, but through the challenges, the LAV shop has been successful and it is due in large part to the employees focusing on why they do their job, Cardenas explained

"Our crew, our shop knows what our vehicles are used for and that Marines are depending on us to do our job," Cardenas explained.

"We want them to come home safely so we put out the best product possible."

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Photos included with story:

After being repaired, LAVs are road tested on MCB's test track to ensure combat readiness. The LAVs must navigate several obstacles to ensure that under like conditions they will perform correctly. There is a small pond, hills at various inclines and this obstacle which tests the LAV's ability to climb over large rocks and uneven land. Photo by: Cpl. Jenna Cook