



Army Aviation Sustainment Initiatives Update

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The Aviation sustainment enterprise has been busy this past year working on initiatives to lower sustainment costs, improve operational availability, and put in place processes that support a more agile and adaptive expeditionary aviation force in the future. Many of you have participated in our Aviation Sustainment Working Group bi-monthly sessions over the past year, and for that we are thankful. Collaboration across the sustainment enterprise has produced some short-term gains, for sure, but more importantly, our collaborative efforts are setting the conditions for long-term Aviation sustainment viability – for both the legacy fleets and the future vertical lift aircraft.

The **Army Aviation Enterprise Sustainment Strategy** (AAESS) was signed (by the Aviation Branch Chief, AMCOM Commander, and PEO Aviation) and published this past year, a major accomplishment in itself. This seminal document has been the guiding force around which we are changing how we approach and overcome

A Soldier from the 1-214th Aviation Regiment checks his aircraft during a simulated crash exercise Nov. 6 in the Wackernheim training area near Mainz, Germany.

obstacles that previously thwarted our efforts to improve aviation sustainment operations. Using the AAESS as our guide, we are putting in place governance processes that drive constant “organizational self-assessment” – processes that force us all to evaluate every aspect of how the sustainment business “gets done” and consider alternative, non-traditional solutions and methodologies. Through our actions consistent with the AAESS, we seek to design fully integrated Army Aviation sustainment and maintenance capabilities supporting unified land operations, leveraging the Army Aviation Enterprise and its partners’ equities to provide effective expeditionary readiness, and increased reliability aligned with future force development.

We recognize that expeditionary forces must be heavily self-reliant, and to that end we seek to assist Army units as they endeavor to reduce their reliance on contractor maintenance, and return our soldiers to their rightful place as the primary maintainers of their assigned weapon systems. For our part, we are in deliberations with HQDA G-3/5/7 DAMO-AV to finalize a plan to standardize (and minimize) the manning and skill sets of contractor maintenance teams supporting the combat aviation brigades (CABs). Through some restructuring of those contractor maintenance support teams, we can help units ensure Soldiers only “fall back on” contractor maintenance support when the work cannot be accomplished by the units’ Soldiers. There are related initiatives being worked by TRADOC, USAACE, and HQDA G-3/5/7 that address future soldier training, performance management, and skill assessments that will surely bolster the soldiers’ ability and capacity to perform at a higher level and thus become more expeditionary.

Repair Parts Challenges

Most aviation units are experiencing some level of Class IX inventory losses due to corrosion – there are many contributing factors within this problem, and AMCOM is working hard to eliminate as many of the contributing factors as we can. Our Corrosion Prevention/Control Office and our AMCOM G-4 team have been hard at work assessing the situation at each CAB SSA location, and we are keenly aware of the conditions (the magnitude of the problem) at each location. We have provided our assessment and recommendations to HQDA G-4 and G-3/5/7, and DAMO-AV is currently working through HQDA G-8 channels to fund the associated minor MILCON required to “put under roof” the Class IX items that will remain outdoors, exposed to the elements if we don’t act decisively. The solutions, and related costs, are different for each location, but we are committed to providing the additional protection necessary, location by location, to prevent future Class IX losses due to corrosion. We plan to include funding for additional storage space for Class IX parts in the FY20-24 POM, and we also have a “contingency plan” to build additional storage should funds be made available prior to FY20. We will adjust our plans based on installation-specific future building plans, to minimize losses due to corrosion where we can, all with an eye on lowering sustainment costs.

Condition Based Maintenance Plus

Team Redstone has been an Army leader in many ways regarding CBM+ efforts over the past ten years, and those efforts are paying dividends to the Army today. During that time, the aircraft Program Manager Offices have put on a “full-court CBM press,” and today over 90% of the Army’s rotary wing fleet is equipped with condition and health monitoring digital source collectors (DSCs). Those DSCs are providing a wealth of information – data with which we can review, revise and optimize inspection and maintenance schedules and programs. Mr. Tom Somers, AMCOM lead, will be telling you all about our CBM+ vision in his article found in this issue of *ARMY AVIATION* magazine.

A logical progression of continuously monitoring the operation of aircraft components and systems using DSCs is to use the data DSCs collect to improve maintenance practices and

procedures. One of our objectives is to “Optimize Scheduled Maintenance programs” – this objective is really a subset of every prime objective described in the AAESS – drawing from the “CBM+ data” we have collected over the last ten years, and the data we continue to collect going forward. We are energizing the Aviation Sustainment Enterprise to analyze and understand how we can optimize our scheduled maintenance programs. As we better understand the operational stresses and interaction between components, systems and the airframe (through continuous monitoring and recording by the DSCs), we will be able to reevaluate and revise (optimize) how, when and where we conduct maintenance. This is an engineering-intensive effort, and Team Redstone has world-class engineers on our team. We must be successful in order to set the conditions for Future Vertical Lift (FVL). We have to start today to develop a mind-set that will ultimately prepare us all for the operational environment in which the future concepts of FVL will manifest.

Logging/Tracking Flight Time

Another initiative we are working is to lay the foundation for more accurate tracking/recording and logging of flight time. Studies have determined our current system for tracking/recording and logging of flight time has contributed to a 12-22% “over-logging” of flight time as a result of cumulative rounding when calculating flight time following procedures outlined in AR 95-1. As a result of this rounding, the Army spends more money and time performing maintenance more frequently than would be necessary if we had a better way to record flight time. Well, we do have a better way to record flight time with greater accuracy via DSCs. The DSCs already record this information, down to the second with no “rounding,” but we currently do not pull this information out of the data because we had not previously devised a methodology for switching to the “digitally recorded” flight time. Switching to the more accurate method is fraught with issues/concerns for pilot flight records, flight training and flying hour funding computations, but we have to first separate the “flight issues” from the “over-maintaining” problem. By moving to the digital recording of flight time we can solve for the “over-maintaining problem”, and we can do that in conjunction with the fielding of Aircraft Notebook

(ACN) and GCSS-Army. This can be done independent of solving the “flight issues,” giving the flight records folks and the training folks time to figure out what this all means to them. In solving for the “over-maintaining problem,” we are achieving most of our primary objectives – we will reduce our logistics footprint, decrease life-cycle costs, decrease soldier burden, and improve operational availability.

We made this initiative a topic at this year’s Worldwide Aviation Logistics Conference (WALC), and the assigned working group was made up of representatives from HQDA, TRADOC, USAACE, FORSCOM, USARPAC, USAREUR, AMCOM, PEO AVN, AMRDEC, and the aviation platform PMs. That working group body, with all its experience and expertise, overwhelmingly recommended the Army adopt digital recording of flight time to solve the “over-maintaining as a result of rounding” problem. The working group made that recommendation to the WALC 2-star general officer steering committee (GOSC), which in turn approved the recommendation to be advanced to the Army Campaign Plan (ACP) GOSC for final approval. The recommendation has since been presented to a nHQDA 2-star GOSC, and that GOSC panel determined they have sufficient understanding and authority to approve the recommendation at the 2-star level. The HQDA GOSC approved the recommendation and action plan for implementation in conjunction with the fielding of ACN and GCSS-Army.

The entire Army Aviation Sustainment Enterprise is focused on the future, informed by the past, and learning in present time. With commitment, the entire Aviation community can set the conditions for the future – a future in which we realize adaptive aviation leaders of all ranks, in every formation, taking full advantage of the technological advances and the modernization we know must come. We want to help the Army develop that agile, adaptive expeditionary force needed to perform successfully in the complex world we see coming full-speed toward us.

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