Army Guard mechanics test out new trailer in western Nebraska

By David Nore
Public Information Officer

Photo by David Nore

New Equipment: Spc. Timothy Grasmick, a heavy wheeled vehicle mechanic with the 1057th Transportation Company, replaces tools in the SATS (Standard Automotive Tool Set) during a drill weekend in January. The SATS trailer will give the mechanics of the 1057th Trans. Co. a portable tool support unit that will support the new Family of Medium Tactical Vehicles (FMTVs) that the unit received recently.

"That is the SATS trailer," said Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Arellano, 1057th Transportation Company motor sergeant, as he responded to what could have been the most obvious question of 'what is that?' on a snowy January day at Field Maintenance Shop #4 in Gering, Neb.

"It stands for Standard Automotive Tool Set," he then said, answering what was probably the next most obvious question.

According to Arellano, the shop had just recently received the SATS trailer, so he and other shop technicians were eager to show it off.

The SATS is a containerized shop set system that consists of a core set of tools and supplemental modules that can be added to support a unit's specific maintenance mission. It replaces the most common organizational and direct support tool sets by providing a more deployable, mobile and mission-capable tool load that supports the Army's continuing transformation to newer vehicles while allowing Soldiers to conduct two-level maintenance, according to *"Army Logistician,"* a professional bulletin of the U.S. Army logistics.

The new trailer is now being used by 1057th unit mechanics to support the new Family of Medium Tactical Vehicles, or FMTVs, that the unit is receiving.

"We've picked up about 30 of the new MTVs and brought them back to Gering for the 1057th. We are expecting delivery of about nine or 10 more, so we will have upwards of approximately 40 new vehicles," said Warrant Officer Chad Nelson, FMS #4, shop chief and the 1057th's unit maintenance technician.

Nelson said it's easy to see why the mechanics are so excited about the new SATS trailer.

"When (these Soldiers) deployed to Iraq, they took all of their equipment (and) their own older 800- and 900-series trucks with them and then brought them back, so this is really meaningful to them," said Nelson, referring to the newly arrived SATS trailer. "The truck drivers are excited about their new trucks and the mechanics are equally excited about being able to work out of the new SATS equipment."

"It is a good thing when we get new equipment. It shows the Soldiers that the state is willing to invest in their ability to maintain their equipment," said Nelson.

According to Arellano, who was inventorying equipment on the SATS and returning each item to its particular drawer, the new tool set is well designed.

"The way this trailer is configured it makes it easy to put the equipment back," Arellano said. "All of the drawers have formed outlines of the piece that goes back in the drawers."

In fact, according to *"Army Logistician,"* the time it takes to inventory and return tools to the SATS has been reduced from a whopping 40 hours for the old maintenance sets to two hours due to the pre-formed slots in drawers located in the trailer.

The "container" that the tool set comes in is not overly large, but it is completely environmentally self-sufficient with heat and air. It also includes a 10-kilowatt tactical quiet generator, a portable air compressor, a tire set, a long ramp to operate off of trailers or a short ramp that allows equipment to be lowered to the ground, a transmission jack, jack stands, creepers and a computer system.

Nelson said the primary benefits of the SATS equipment is that it offers both better mobility and improved training opportunities.

"It is really going to enable us to do our jobs better, whether it is at annual training or a remote site or (during) a convoy. We will just take the SATS trailer with us and we will have our shop with us when we get there," Nelson said.

The trick now, said Nelson, is getting all of the other mechanics in western Nebraska exposed to the new equipment so that they can learn how to take advantage of all its capabilities.

"We try to have a consolidated maintenance training at least quarterly here at the shop for the whole battalion (Scottsbluff, Chadron, Gering) and during those consolidated training times the 267th detachment in Scottsbluff will have the opportunity to be exposed to this new equipment also and work out of that tool set," Nelson said, adding that the equipment will stay in Gering during the week, but will often be out on the road to the different armories during drill weekends.

"It is a fairly self-sufficient, mobile unit, it pretty much has everything that comes in a Number One Common tool set, plus… we can definitely repair any equipment that is in the 1057th, including all the new trucks," Nelson said.

Workshop focuses on team approach to maintenance readiness

By Chief Warrant Officer 3 Mark Roland
Unit Public Affairs Representative

Nebraska Army National Guard leaders from across the state gathered at the Kearney Readiness Center, Feb. 7-8, to learn more about the various issues affecting unit training and readiness.

Hosted by Lt. Col. Bret Allgood, state surface maintenance manager, the Maintenance Training Workshop was designed to help educate unit leaders and state maintenance personnel about the various maintenance issues that are, or could have, major impacts on helping units train for potential mobilizations.

"We hold this conference every year to educate the leadership on current trends, duties and responsibilities of the maintenance leadership," Allgood said, "to let then know that it's a team effort on equipment readiness in the state and how vital our role is in supporting our state and federal missions with their units."

"We have (company) commanders, first sergeants and even some battalion commanders and sergeant majors as well. It all starts with a command emphasis," Allgood said. "If the commander believes that maintenance is a priority and important for their unit, they'll make sure it happens."

With only 137 fulltime maintenance personnel in the Nebraska Army National Guard, the message was emphasized that units are responsible to help ensure their equipment is ready for training, activations and deployments.

The Hurricane Gustav support mission drove home the importance of maintenance when more than 1,000 Soldiers were called upon to make a three-day convoy with only a 48-hour notice.

"Maintenance ensures that the unit is able to meet the (adjutant general's) priorities," said Allgood. "Gustav is a prime example. If you do your maintenance and you do your services, your vehicles are ready when your unit is called upon."

Individual Soldiers are a key component to ensuring the equipment is ready. Proper preventive maintenance checks and services (PMCS) can go a long way to keeping equipment fully mission capable.

"Preventive maintenance saves us dollars," Allgood said. "It helps us identify maintenance deficiencies before they become catastrophic deficiencies."

"When they're doing a long haul and you stop for a break or overnight, and you do PMCS, you can identify if your vehicle has an issue, which is going to save us time and money down the road," he added.

Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 3 Mark Roland

Weapons Maintenance: Master Sgt Al Holka, senior maintenance noncommissioned officer for the Nebraska Army National Guard's Maintenance Assistance and Instruction Team, discusses modification work orders applied to the M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon with Warrant Officer Tollie Yoder, Allied Trades warrant officer for the 267th Maintenance Company. During the hands on demonstrations, Holka talked to unit leaders about maintenance issues that have occurred with weapons returning from the Iraq and Afghanistan combat zones.

During the conference leaders were shown many of the programs available for maintenance personnel. These included the Command Evaluation Team, the Maintenance Assistance and Instruction Team programs, which are on the portal through the Surface Maintenance Management Office.

On the second-day of the conference, hands-on demonstrations showed some of the issues found on units' vehicles and weapon systems when returning from deployments.

Units were also introduced to the new Standard Army Maintenance System software that will be replacing the current software used by units across the state in April.

The value of maintaining equipment can be seen at all levels of the Guard, said Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch, state command sergeant major.

"It is important that we address maintenance," said Burch as he addressed the leaders to emphasize the importance of maintenance. "As leaders, we need to make sure that the Soldiers understand that part of sustaining themselves on the battlefield, part of sustaining themselves throughout training, is the maintenance of their equipment. Their survivability is totally dependent on the equipment that we provide them and them maintaining it to operational levels."

"So, the bottom line we're looking at here is mission accomplishment," he added. "We have to maintain, sustain our operations and complete our missions to the fullest."

"As leaders we have to instill in our (Soldiers) that maintenance is training. As we practice it here stateside, good maintenance practices will follow us into theater and will result in our survivability on the battlefield."