Aviation hotline team corrects data, improves safety

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REDSTONE ARSENAL, Ala. – For nearly 40 years, Army aviation experts have manned a helpdesk dedicated to aircraft safety. Soldiers and maintainers know it as the "2410 hotline" -- the place to turn for data corrections that mitigate risk and future errors.

U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Command employees from the Customer Support Branch for The Army Maintenance Management System-Aviation (TAMMS-A) answer hotline calls and emails regarding lifecycle items on Army aircraft, including the critical safety items that keep them flying. The term 2410 refers to the Department of Army form that records and reports aircraft maintenance data.

The 20-member AMCOM hotline team answers calls and emails regarding lifecycle items on Army aircraft and continually scrubs data to identify errors. (Photo by Gina Baltrusch, AMCOM)

Automated data from various sources continually flows into AMCOM's systems -- and sometimes that data is wrong.

"Any time there's a human in the loop or fingers on a keyboard, there are going to be errors," said Alex Brock, chief of the TAMMS-A Customer Support Branch.

Support branch logisticians stay on the lookout for inaccuracies. The 20-member team continually scrubs data to identify errors -- which resulted in more than 454,000 corrections last year. The team supports helicopters, unmanned aerial vehicles and most of the fixed-wing aircraft that remain in the Army's inventory.

"Every part has a history. From the time it comes into the Army, we start calculating," Brock said.
The Army tracks each item as it comes on and off airframes, goes through a repair cycle, or processes out of the Army system. If aircraft or parts are ultimately sold to other agencies or countries, those owners often reach back to the hotline with questions.

Hundreds of routine checks help identify anomalies that flag items for review. That, combined with the team's extensive military and aviation expertise, provides a collaborative approach to ensuring the accuracy of limited lifecycle component history.

The team also handles the Freedom of Information requests concerning aircraft and components. These requests come from a variety of sources, including government and non-government agencies, and sometimes from historical societies interested in the background of Army parts they have acquired.

"If the Army touched it, we know its history," Brock said.

The vast amount of history and data also helps the team mitigate the risk of purchasing retired parts and identifying potential counterfeit parts. AMCOM produced its own Standard Operating Procedure for counterfeit mitigation which now serves as a basis for other organizations to develop their policies.

When the team identifies errors, it locates the aircraft's unit and reaches out to quality control Soldiers to correct the data on their end in the Aircraft Notebook system, Brock said. When data must be corrected by the AMCOM team, it requires a photo or visual proof in order to make a change in the system.

"Regardless of who initiates the hotline contact, the team uses the opportunity for on-the-spot data corrections and records management training to mitigate future errors," Brock said.

The AMCOM hotline supports Soldiers like Pfc. Charles Knight with Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 214th Aviation Regiment, 12th Combat Aviation Brigade, preparing to perform routine maintenance on a CH-47 Chinook Dec. 4, 2019, at Katterbach Army Airfield in Germany. (U.S. Army photo by Charles Rosemond)

The team also assists Combat Aviation Brigade commanders with unit data-record scrubs and onsite record-management training.

"The result are safer aircraft supporting unit missions," he said.

While most requests come during regular business hours, the team provides continuous customer support with its after-hours hotline, available when aircraft are not mission capable or are grounded due to missing or incorrect component data.

Besides serving as a resource to Soldiers, the hotline supports the Original Equipment Manufacturers, ensuring approved serial numbers and proper documentation accompanies new components, and maintenance depots and commercial shops that repair or remanufacture parts.

The team also works in concert with contracting officials, ensuring serial number reporting requirements are correctly placed in contract solicitations. The team also brings new serial numbered components into the system, creating more than 150,000 new item actions each year.

When components show data gaps, the team calculates missing data and can often mitigate its removal or replacement, at a cost to the unit. Using cost avoidance measures, the team provides an average annual savings of more than $9 million. In Fiscal Year 2019, the team's cost avoidance hit a record high $11.9 million.

"Our hotline team supports more than 5,750 active aircraft and their respective systems," said Tom Somers, chief of AMCOM's Continued Airworthiness and Materiel Readiness Division. "Besides serving as a direct support to Soldiers, the team's data-cleansing efforts have a direct impact on increasing safety and readiness."