tory functions for the depot. In addition to the replacement of ESSEX, the first phase of APCS will provide the hardware and software platform on which other functional modules will eventually be inserted.

These modules are tailored to meet the remaining priorities necessary for the depots to manage their operations, such as shop floor control, inventory management, hazardous material control, bid costing and budgeting, capacity analysis, production planning, and workload forecasting. APCS will perform these modular functions without DMMS modifications. APCS does not replace DMMS, however, it works in conjunction with it to supplement and enhance it. DMMS will continue to process the data, but any shortcomings it experiences will be addressed by APCS. For example, the material subsystem of DMMS limits management's use of the resident inventory control capability because information is batch processed and not readily available in a resident database for use by managers. APCS will fill that void by establishing a relational database available to supervisors and work center managers via a local area network.

APCS's inventory control will consist of a modular software insert to the APCS platform. Once APCS has been inserted, the data collected on the shop floor will be transparent to DMMS. This enables information to be up/downloaded to DMMS without any changes to the Class I system data format. Therefore, the information provided by APCS is available for management use without disruption to those functions still controlled by DMMS. If the corporate information management effort dictates another Class I system, APCS can readily adapt due to its modular construction and its transparency to the Class I system.

As in everything else, automation enhances productivity, a fact now dawning on Marine Corps supply depots as they seek to keep pace in an ever-more sophisticated environment.

Past *Gazette* articles have given the impression that the Corps' depots are in jeopardy of being unable to support Marine Corps fleet units and that the MC3s are unable to remain competitive in the open market place. APCS, however, when fully integrated, is expected to end this problem, as it will tie together and unite the MC3s. The depots are rapidly becoming state-of-the-art and should be retained as key components of DoD's depot maintenance community. USMC

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The Corps' Depot Maintenance Support Centers and the MPF

by Maj William R. Hestir

Few Marines realize the important role played by the Marine Corps Logistic Bases at Barstow and Albany with regard to the Maritime Prepositioning Force Program.

The industrious and highly professional efforts of the Blount Island Command in supporting the Corps' maritime prepositioning forces (MPF) have been well reported over the last few years. The Blount Island Command has been and will continue to be the focal point for support to the MPF. The purpose of this article, however, is to explain the role of the two Marine Corps multicommodity maintenance centers, or MC3s (formerly known as depot maintenance activities) located at Marine Corps Logistics Bases (MCLBs) Albany, GA, and Barstow, CA, in support of the Blount Island Command and the MPF.

The mission of the two MC3s is to provide depot-level maintenance support for all types of ground combat, command support, and combat service support equipment for the Fleet Marine Force (FMF). This includes supplying the FMF and the MPF with fully operational equipment through rebuilding programs, the inspect and repair only as necessary (IROAN) program, and through technical assistance. Supporting functions of the two MC3s include preparation-for-shipment and care-in-storage support to the remote storage activities at Albany and Barstow.

The bulk of the work performed at Albany and Barstow is preprogrammed months or years in advance. In the wake of DESERT STORM, the repair and return program was instituted to address specific requirements that the FMF had for the repair time of a specific end item.

The work schedule and repair and return workload, however, takes a backseat to the requirements of the MPF. Few Marines realize the flexibil-

ity depot maintenance affords the MPF. With little or no notice, the MC3s can alter their production schedules to accommodate those immediate needs of the MPF that cannot be met by Blount Island. In addition to this quick reaction capability, the two MC3s are capable of handling intricate configuration changes at the last minute while a vehicle or system is being worked on and diverting that item to the MPF.

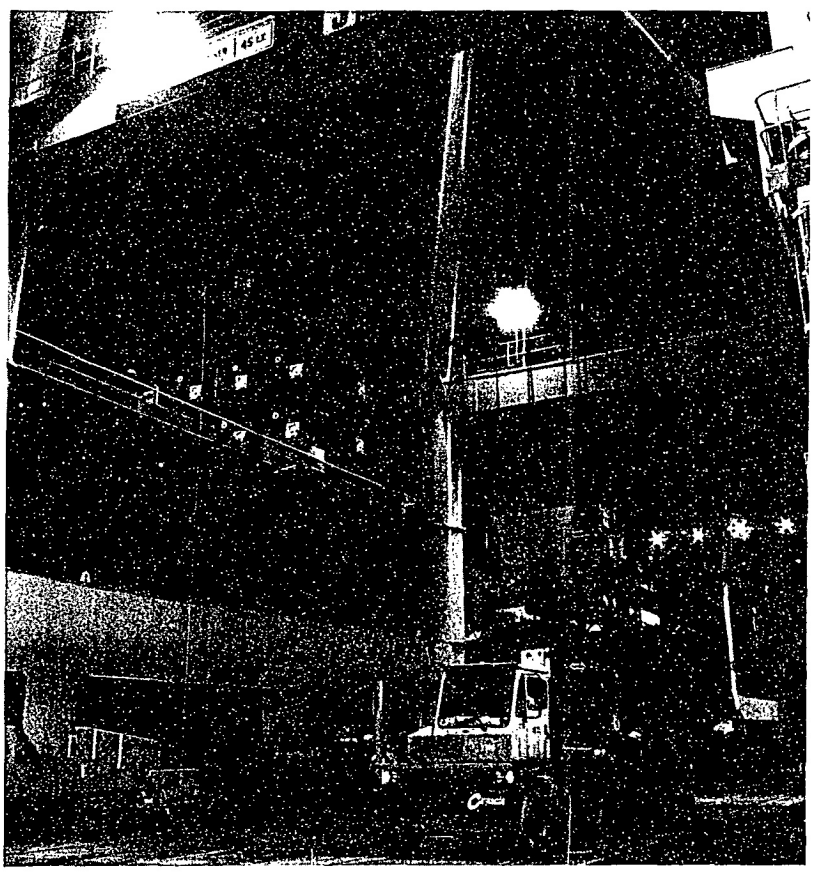
This combination of responsiveness and flexibility is not possible when dealing with civilian contractors. Civilian contractors require rigid statements of work that require constant renegotiation for even the smallest changes. These changes, of course, come at a price. Indeed, many civilian contractors make more money on their charges for contract changes than they do from the profit margin on the original contract.

The MC3s, unlike Blount Island, which has approximately 100 permanent military and civilian personnel assigned, are large industrial concerns. Each of the two MC3s has approximately 1,000 employees and large facilities for sand blasting, chemical coating, painting, undercoating, cleaning and degreasing equipment, rebuilding engines and transmissions dynamometer testing, oil analysis, optics and night vision equipment repair, communications systems repair, ground radar system repair, and material testing. These facilities are two of the most important assets that the Corps has in its logistics system, since they participate in every major MPF maintenance evolution, and they are constantly vigilant to the changing needs of the Marine Corps. After working as the operations officer and industrial engineer at one of the MC3s for the last 2 years, I have concluded that the Corps will never receive this same responsiveness to MPF requirements from civilian contractors or other Government depots.

The reduced level of responsiveness from the depot maintenance activities of the other Services has nothing to do with their professionalism, but rather with the way they do business. The depot maintenance activities of the other Services, particularly the Army, are organized around a few product lines, and Army depots typically do not repair all of the subsystems of a major weapons system at a single depot. The optics, communications, and weapons systems on major end items are removed at an Army depot and sent out to other depots for repair. These subsystems are reinstalled when they eventually return to the central depot. The Army approach allows for organizational streamlining, but greatly complicates system integration and lengthens the turnaround time for overall system repair. If the Marine Corps is forced to send MPF depot maintenance requirements to Army depots, the readiness of the MPF will likely suffer.

Few Marines have had the opportunity to visit the MC3s at Albany and Barstow. For this reason, their experience in dealing with the MC3s is slight. Few know, for example, that at Barstow, the average employee is 38 years old and has worked in Marine Corps depot maintenance for over 15 years. A large number of Barstow's 1,000 employees are also former Marines who while serving on active duty worked on the same systems they now repair. These veteran employees not only understand the technical nature of the system, but also how the system is employed within the FMF. This level of expertise cannot be duplicated by civilian contractors or even by Army depot personnel who neither have the knowledge nor the experience in working on Marine Corps peculiar systems, such as the assault amphibious vehicle or the light armored vehicle.

In the midst of the many reorganization studies going on within the Department of Defense, including plans to consolidate depot maintenance activities Service-wide, it is important to remember the contribution MC3s make to the MPF—a role they have been supporting since the early days of the Near-Term Prepositioning Force (MPF's predecessor). If the MPF is to continue receiving the responsive maintenance support it deserves, then the MC3s must be sustained. USMC



Although the role of Blount Island Command (pictured here) is fairly well understood within the Fleet today, what is less widely known is the support it receives from the MCLBs at Barstow and Albany.

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