



Keep the wheels moving

Huntsville employee knows what ‘clean’ means on battlefield

BY AMY REAGAN

Some of us love our cars. We wash and wax the outside until it gleams, and fanatically clean out the cookie crumbs every night. But on the battlefield an ultra-clean vehicle is not a fetish. It can be a matter of life or death.

For vehicles on the battlefield, “clean” means more than “free from dirt.” It also means “in optimum working order.” Boeing Product Support Specialist Jerry Wilson knows what clean means when it comes to battle-bound Humvee vehicles carrying the Avenger, the U.S. Army’s premier mobile, short-range air-defense system. As the Avenger’s prime systems integrator, Boeing integrates the Avenger on the Humvee.

Last year, in Kuwait, Wilson led a team to install gun kits on eight Avengers and en-

sure the vehicles were in good working order. This year, he returned to Kuwait on a team assigned to reset those same Avengers. A reset is basically cleaning the vehicle and repairing or replacing damaged or missing parts. Wilson said even though they were electronically functional, the vehicles were in dire need of a good cleaning.

Besides shoveling mud and ammunition from the inside of the vehicles, team members added new seats, replaced worn-out components and loaded software onto the vehicles’ computer systems.

During the reset process, Wilson noticed a potential safety hazard. Avengers have remote control units that can control the weapons system from 50 meters (160 feet) away. The units typically are mounted on the floor inside the Avenger, but in these eight vehicles, they had been moved to accommodate air conditioning units and were no longer secured. Encountering bumpy roads or coming under enemy fire, the Avengers’ unsecured remote control units would be a serious safety hazard.

To fix the problem, Wilson, with help from a local support team, reworked the brackets

Jerry Wilson, an Integrated Missile Defense product-support specialist, works to reset an Avenger in Kuwait.

and installed them so that the remote control units were secure but left adequate space for the air conditioning units. Wilson didn’t leave until he was satisfied the vehicles were “clean” in every sense of the word.

“This was an effort that doesn’t necessarily make the headlines,” said Phil Hillman, Avenger/Force Protection program manager. “Jerry caught a problem that could easily have been ignored, chose not to ignore it, and in the end provided a top-notch vehicle for warfighters to do their job as safely as possible.”

For his efforts, Wilson was named the June 2006 Integrated Missile Defense Star of the Month—an award given to Huntsville, Ala., employees who provide outstanding support for the Integrated Missile Defense program and its customers.

And Wilson’s response to the recognition? “Just part of the job,” he said. ■

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