

304th Sustainment Brigade Employs Two Level Maintenance Team

RIVERSIDE, Calif. - Seven maintenance Soldiers from the Army Reserve's 304th Sustainment Brigade based at March Air Reserve Base, Calif., teamed up with Air Force C-17 Globemaster III Loadmasters to transport the team and its tools and heavy equipment to Fort Hunter Liggett (FHL) in King City, Calif., June 4. The team was sent to support the two-week Global Medic Exercise at FHL starting on June 6.

With 100,000 pounds of equipment loaded aboard the C-17, the pilots practiced conducting five "touch-and-go" landings before flying the heavy load to FHL to drop off the team and its equipment. The C-17 made a "lights out" landing on FHL's dark dirt runway at 9:30 p.m., using night vision goggles and infrared lights. The team and its tools and equipment make up the 304th's two level maintenance (TLM) element.

The 304th dispatched the TLM combat support team (CST) to provide continual ground support at the Global Medic Exercise, after transporters from the brigade moved a complete field hospital via trucks from Camp Parks to FHL, 130 miles away, the week before. The field hospital used in the exercise will be transported back to Camp Parks on June 26. The maintenance CST will provide field service to participating units throughout the exercise and convoy with the 304th's trucks back to March ARB.

"Maintenance support teams or combat support teams are employed to provide maintenance support to customer units that no longer have their own organic mechanics, yet have equipment that must be maintained," explained Chief Warrant Officer 5 Steven Dale, with the 311th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) Maintenance Division.

Two level maintenance is a recent concept in Army logistics. The TLM system combines the unit and direct support levels of maintenance into one level called field maintenance, and combines the general support and depot levels into a second level called sustainment maintenance. The TLM system enables a more streamlined response that can return repaired equipment faster.

"The 304th was the first brigade ... that went to the TLM [system] on May 1, following a detailed concept plan [we wrote]," said Lt. Col. Robert A. White, chief of the 311th ESC G4.

The old four-level maintenance system was created over 50 years ago, just before World War II. On today's battlefield, that system of maintenance uses more manpower and takes longer than necessary to repair equipment.

We are making the "switch to TLM from the old concept of four echelons of maintenance," White said. "The 311th ESC is committed to making a smooth transition."

Current operations in the combat zone require equipment to be efficiently repaired and returned quickly to the fight. The TLM system enables maintenance teams, like 304th's CST, to be a more rapid, responsive logistics element capable of meeting the needs of the modern battlefield.