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Camp Anaconda gun techs keep troops clicking

Service center works hard to keep GIs' weapons working

By [Jeff Schogol](#), Stars and Stripes

Mideast edition, Tuesday, March 28, 2006

CAMP ANACONDA, Iraq — When it comes to lubing weapons, more is better, say the guys who work in the small-arms repair shop at Camp Anaconda, where thousands of jammed and malfunctioning weapons get fixed.

"This is not back in the States. You're not going down on the range," said Samuel Harder, a civilian who helps run the shop.

Harder repairs between 400 and 500 weapons a month, about 75 percent of which have not had enough lubricant applied to them.

The best way to prevent weapons from gumming is to "over-lube" them, Harder said.

"A dry weapon will attract dust and when you fire it, it will gum up," he said.

Another way to keep your weapon working is to avoid doing any repairs beyond your skill level, Harder said.

"We get M-16s with the trigger spring upside down. It only fires two shots," he said.

Bill Jensen, who works as a team leader in the repair shop, said about half the problems the shop deals with comes from the people who operate weapons and the other half comes from the way the weapons are designed.



Jeff Schogol / S&S
Pfc. Dustin Shugren, left, of St. Francis, Minn., and Spc. Kurtis King, of New Lexington, Ohio, both with the 322nd Maintenance Company, work on a weapon at the small-arms repair shop at Camp Anaconda, Iraq.



Jeff Schogol / S&S
Pfc. Dustin Shugren works on a weapon at the repair shop.

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One problem he sees repeatedly is Humvee gunners banging their .50-caliber machine guns against the sides of their gun turrets, to the point where they bend the barrels, he said. The repair shop now has one technician working full time to improve the mounts for .50-caliber machine guns on Humvee turrets, Jensen said.

He said technicians at the shop are also working on ways to improve the new transparent gunshields, which give gunners more visibility but less protection. But they can do only so much and a lot depends on the experts in the U.S.

"We can't wait for the people back in the States to come up with a solution," Jensen said.

U.S. troops have come to the small-arms repair shop at Anaconda from as far away as Kuwait and Afghanistan, Jensen said.

Officially known as the Small Arms Service Center, the shop is the only place in the theater where troops can exchange an inoperable weapon for one that works, said Jensen.

"SASC is more a triage: fix it quick, get it back in their hands and get them back on the road," Jensen said.

Jensen said his shop also specializes in having hard-to-find parts for weapons.

"If I don't have it, nobody does," he said.

Another plus: Harder said he makes sure that U.S. troops don't have to come back to the shop for follow-up repairs.

"If your stuff [expletive] up in the field, you might die," he explained.

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