



A Soldier sews on a U.S. Army service tape for an individual turn-in customer. (Photo by Capt. Michael J. Watkins)

The Post Fabric Renovation and Sewing Shop

The Joint Base Lewis-McChord Post Fabric Renovation and Sewing Shop offers a convenient and cost saving service for units, Soldiers, and Airmen.

■ By Capt. Michael J. Watkins

As the Department of Defense faces difficult fiscal times, every organization must scrutinize its spending regardless of its mission. Many service members are also looking for means to conserve their personal funds. The Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., (JBLM) Post Fabric Renovation and Sewing Shop supports those efforts.

Operated by the 295th Quartermaster Company, 13th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion (CSSB), 593rd Sustainment Brigade, the JBLM Post Fabric Renovation and Sewing Shop comprises military occupational specialty (MOS) 92S (shower, laundry, and clothing repair specialist) Soldiers. MOS 92S Soldiers repair uniforms and sew on

ranks, badges, skill identifiers, and name tapes.

This support capability is seldom employed in the Army because of the small size of the 92S MOS and the lack of awareness among service members at each installation. But when it is provided, it proves to be cost effective. This service is especially beneficial for units preparing

to deploy; the differed contract costs that would have been used for fabric renovation and sewing services are freed for training and equipment.

Establishing the Shop

In 2012, the leaders of the 593rd Sustainment Brigade and 13th CSSB formulated a plan to take advantage of the MOS 92S Soldiers within the brigade and use their skills to provide no-cost fabric renovation and sewing services to all service members and units of I Corps and JBLM. The result of this initiative was the first-ever fabric renovation and sewing shop at JBLM.

The 295th Quartermaster Company established the Post Fabric Renovation and Sewing Shop on North Fort Lewis in March 2012 inside a 1,200-square-foot facility.

The shop staff consists of one lieutenant, one noncommissioned officer (NCO), and 15 MOS 92S Soldiers. The mission of the shop is to provide quality fabric renovation and sewing services to Soldiers, Airmen, and units of I Corps and JBLM on an individual or bulk turn-in basis.

The intent established by the 295th Quartermaster Company's leaders is to allow units and individual service members to save money that they would normally spend on tailoring services off the installation or through the Army and Air Force Exchange Service. To set up the shop, the 295th Quartermaster Company and its higher headquarters completed four critical tasks in order to execute the mission and meet its intent.

Critical Task 1: Select the Facility

While selecting the most conducive location for the fabric renovation and sewing shop, the 295th Quartermaster Company identified the following criteria as necessary:

- Easy access to the facility.
- A parking area.
- Visibility from primary roads.
- Enough square footage to accommodate multiple sewing and embroidery machines.

- Separate customer service and work areas.
- A secure storage space.

Critical Task 2: Acquire Equipment

The JBLM Post Fabric Renovation and Sewing Shop needed embroidery and sewing machines to produce and sew military name tapes on uniforms and military professional gear. The sewing machines were easy to purchase because they were already authorized on the 295th Quartermaster Company's modified table of organization and equipment.

The concept of establishing a functional fabric renovation and sewing shop is not complex, and the benefits far outweigh the risks if supported and resourced properly.

Acquiring the embroidery machines proved to be more challenging. The 593rd Sustainment Brigade and 13th CSSB support operations cells conducted joint research and analysis to determine which specific type of embroidery machine would satisfy renovation requirements.

Once both support operations cells determined the choice of vendor and the specific embroidery machine, the 593rd Sustainment Brigade S-4 section forwarded the request to the I Corps G-8 contracting office for procurement.

The two embroidery machines cost roughly \$30,000 total and provided a 600-percent return on investment during the shop's first 14 months of operation.

Critical Task 3: Acquire Supplies

The 295th Quartermaster Company leaders wanted the Post Fabric Renovation and Sewing Shop to have a year's worth of supplies and materials for its initial shop stock. The company also wanted to establish a system to replenish supplies and materials when levels reached a designated reordering point.

These two goals were achieved by the 295th Quartermaster Company

through the installation Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) representative and the General Services Administration (GSA) vendor.

Both the DLA representative and the GSA vendor played critical roles in overcoming the challenges the unit faced when obtaining materials and supplies for the shop. One challenge that the unit experienced with acquiring supplies was that certain materials had outdated national stock numbers (NSNs) or no NSNs at all.

Another problem was that the unit supply sergeant could not requisition

some of the supplies through the Army supply system. For those items, the supply sergeant had to use a government purchase card to buy from local vendors online. To overcome some of the challenges with obtaining materials and supplies, the company followed certain practices.

Identify all required materials and supplies. The main supplies and materials needed by the Post Fabric and Renovation and Sewing Shop were needles, bobbins, MultiCam and Army combat uniform (ACU) digital name tape rolls, hook and pile, and foliage green, black, and tan thread.

Create NSNs for supplies and materials. The main supplies that were the most difficult to obtain through the unit supply sergeant were the MultiCam and ACU digital name tape rolls, hook and pile, and foliage fabric because those items did not have NSNs and the amount needed by the shop could not be purchased on the company's government purchase card because of spending limits. The only way to obtain large amounts of these materials is through the Standard Army Retail Supply System.

The GSA vendor and the senior supply systems technician worked together to establish NSNs or part

numbers so that the materials could be ordered. The unit supply sergeant provided the supply support activity with the NSNs created by the GSA vendor and the senior supply systems technician. Once the unit's supply support activity received the established NSNs, the materials were placed on requisition.

Contact the DLA representative. Once the unit's supply support activity placed the needed materials and supplies on requisition, it forwarded the corresponding document numbers to the installation DLA representative to track and expedite the requisition.

This method assisted the process immensely. The representative ensured that the supplies and materials were purchased and received by the

unit in a timely manner.

Critical Task 4: Advertise

When the JBLM Post Fabric Renovation and Sewing Shop initially opened, many service members and units at JBLM were unaware of the shop and its services.

The 295th Quartermaster Company created a flyer that was distributed by the company's Soldiers, NCOs, and officers and the 13th CSSB support operations cell.

Flyers were posted at the JBLM in-processing center, post exchange, dining facilities, and post education centers. Additionally, during logistics synchronization meetings, the 13th CSSB and 593rd Sustainment Brigade support operations cells sought out units that would benefit

from fabric renovation and sewing services.

Executing Operations

The JBLM Post Fabric Renovation and Sewing Shop receives orders or requests in two ways. The most common way is through individual service member walk-ins. These orders have a turnaround time of between 48 and 72 hours.

For an individual turn-in, uniforms or gear are brought directly to the shop's customer service counter during hours of operation. A Soldier working at the customer service desk greets each customer who enters the facility. The customer's request is annotated on a service request form, and the items are labeled and processed for the specific service



Soldiers work at their sewing machines at the Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., Post Fabric Renovation and Sewing Shop. (Photo by Capt. Michael J. Watkins)

requested. The shop averages more than 100 individual service member requests weekly.

While an average work order would cost more than \$30 off the installation, the JBLM shop provides a quality product at no cost to the service member.

The second method is unit bulk turn-ins coordinated by the 13th CSSB support operations cell and customer units. Once a customer unit makes a request, the cell schedules a synchronization meeting with the customer, the shop officer-in-charge and NCO-in-charge, and both the 295th Quartermaster Company first sergeant and commander.

The purpose of this meeting is to schedule unit bulk turn-ins and to specify all terms of the order. The customer units, the 295th Quartermaster Company leaders, and the shop officer-in-charge and NCO-in-charge must have a clear understanding of what to expect.

Specific topics of discussion at the synchronization meeting include the number of personnel, priority of units, turn-in and pick-up dates, procedures for lost items, and specific services required. Depending on the size of the fabric renovation and sewing mission, a synchronization meeting can occur regularly until the project is complete.

Within a 14-month period, the Post Fabric and Renovation and Sewing Shop provided services on a bulk turn-in basis to 11 deploying units ranging in size from a Stryker brigade to a finance detachment. Those units avoided having to contract for the same services and saw a combined cost savings of \$120,000.

Long-Arm Sewing Machine Services

Not only does the JBLM Post Fabric Renovation and Sewing Shop perform sewing services on uniforms and military gear; the shop also repairs tears in the seams of the windows of humvee doors and rips in tents. The machine used to make these repairs is the long-arm sewing machine. Repairing the tears provides an alterna-



A Soldier repairs tears on a humvee door using a long-arm sewing machine. (Photo by Capt. Michael J. Watkins)

tive to ordering brand new humvee doors and tents.

Without realizing the cost, many units requisition new humvee doors and tents because of slight window tears that are found during preventive maintenance checks. Such requisitions are not cheap: A front left or right door of an M998 humvee costs \$93.55 for tan, \$82.27 for camouflage, and \$66.55 for green. An A-frame tent that is requisitioned costs \$2,635.85 and a lightweight maintenance enclosure costs \$15,920.62.

The Post Fabric Renovation and Sewing Shop can repair tears in the seams around the humvee windows or replace the entire zipper of the door in less than 15 minutes and with no more than 10 cents' worth of thread. The shop can also repair tears in the A-frame tents and lightweight maintenance enclosures in less than one hour with no more than 75 cents' worth of thread.

The JBLM Post Fabric Renovation

and Sewing Shop provides MOS 92S Soldiers with a rare opportunity to remain trained and proficient at fabric renovation and sewing. The shop also provides quality, free services that units and individual service members at JBLM can request on a daily basis.

The shop and the 92S Soldiers responsible for its success are incredibly valuable. The concept of establishing a functional fabric renovation and sewing shop is not complex, and the benefits far outweigh the risks if supported and resourced properly.

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