

Needed: 76W Driver Training

by Captain Paul C. Spinler

The decisions made when a new or modified table of organization and equipment (TOE or MTOE) is developed can have unanticipated and far-reaching consequences. Often these consequences require commanders of units in the field to make adjustments that were not foreseen by the developers of the TOE or MTOE. A case in point is the reorganization of the petroleum supply company, which drastically reduced the number of trained truck drivers in that company. The lack of drivers has made petroleum transportation an inefficient, and potentially hazardous, duty. How did this come about, and what can be done to provide petroleum supply companies with the drivers they need?

The petroleum supply company, MTOE 10-4776, was restructured as MTOE 10-227H in September 1981. At that time, the unit's capability to line-haul bulk petroleum using 5,000-gallon petroleum semitrailer tank vehicles was considerably reduced. While its hauling capability was reduced, its bulk petroleum storage capacity was increased from 960,000 gallons to 1,480,000 gallons, primarily by adding 50,000-gallon collapsible storage tanks to its list of authorized equipment.

The reduction in the petroleum supply company's line-haul capacity was accompanied by a reduction in its authorized number of trained truck drivers. The unit is currently authorized only one truck driver holding military occupational specialty (MOS) 64C, motor transport operator, who is assigned as the unit dispatcher.

However, while reducing personnel, the developers of the MTOE did not delete all of the heavy wheeled vehicles authorized for the petroleum supply company. The unit still has 40 heavy vehicles and semitrailers and numerous smaller vehicles.

This situation has created a serious problem in the petroleum supply company. There is no provision for qualified, trained drivers to operate and maintain the fleet of vehicles essential to accomplish its fuel support mission. To remedy the deficiency, the petroleum supply specialists (MOS 76W) assigned to the company must learn to operate and maintain the company's vehicles as an additional duty.

Did Army planners really mean to reduce the number of trained drivers in the interest of saving personnel positions? Where are the petroleum handlers supposed to learn how to drive a vehicle properly and perform required maintenance?

To understand what has happened, some background is helpful. The Army Quartermaster School at Fort Lee, Virginia, is the proponent for the petroleum supply company TOE. In this role, the Quartermaster School advises as to which duties should be listed for each enlisted career management field and MOS in AR 611-201, the regulation describing the tasks that should be performed by each MOS.

The recent change 19 to AR 611-201 added operating and maintaining petroleum dispensing vehicles and

Drivers of petroleum vehicles, such as this M559 GOER tanker, must be skilled at cross-country driving.



related equipment to the list of duties for petroleum supply specialists. This change resulted from Quartermaster School advice. The duties listed in AR 611-201 influence the development of TOE's. Since current MOS doctrine as embodied in AR 611-201 designates the petroleum supply specialist as a petroleum vehicle driver, the developers of the TOE did not have to authorize truck drivers in the petroleum supply company.

However, eliminating truck drivers from the petroleum supply company has created training problems. The Quartermaster School does not provide vehicle operation and maintenance training as part of the advanced individual training (AIT) program of instruction for MOS 76W. Such training was not necessary in the past because every petroleum supply company, aviation unit, supply and service battalion, and supply and transport battalion had motor transport operators (MOS 64C) as well as petroleum supply specialists (MOS 76W).

The lack of driver training for petroleum supply specialists has raised questions at the Army Logistics Center, Fort Lee, Virginia, about the specialists' qualifications as drivers and their knowledge of safety requirements. There have also been questions about what drivers should be doing when they are not driving. Both the Army Transportation School, Fort Eustis, Virginia, and the Quartermaster School are studying these problems. The Transportation School is currently preparing to include 12 hours of instruction on petroleum handling in the 64C AIT program of instruction. Steps are also being taken to include a senior petroleum supply sergeant in every transportation medium truck petroleum company.

The Quartermaster School, however, has no plans to include truckdriver training in 76W AIT because a considerable amount of training would be necessary to achieve the required standard of proficiency. The official position of the Quartermaster School is that the driver skills of petroleum supply personnel should be developed as part of unit training. Driving is a secondary duty for 76W personnel, and instructors at the school believe they should concentrate on the primary MOS 76W tasks in training.

Thus, the major responsibility for training drivers rests with the petroleum supply company, which is authorized only one school-trained driver. Other drivers in the company must develop their driving skills through on-the-job training programs and experience. Developing a sound and continuing driver training program in a unit is a constant challenge for its commander because of the press of other mission requirements and high personnel turnover. Most drivers learn by experiment and practice and make numerous mistakes in the process. Their mistakes, whether they be improper vehicle operation or insufficient preventive maintenance, result in many vehicles being idled for repairs. Improper preventive

maintenance—before, during, or after operations—places a heavy burden on the unit organizational maintenance section.

There are several courses of action that could be taken to remedy the lack of training drivers in petroleum supply companies.

The TOE's of petroleum units could be changed to include a school-trained motor transport operator, MOS 64C, for each heavy wheeled vehicle the unit is authorized. However, this would require more personnel and would not solve the problem of how to employ drivers when they are not driving.

The Quartermaster School could include a driver training program for MOS 76W personnel in its petroleum and field services department. This alternative is also costly since it would lengthen AIT beyond the current 8 weeks and delay new 76W soldiers from reaching their units that much longer.

A selected percentage of 76W trainers displaying aptitude and motor skills could receive driver and maintenance training during AIT and be awarded an additional skill identifier. Although less costly to implement, this solution would require more intensive personnel management since additional skills identifiers are often ignored when assigning soldiers.

The best alternative might be for the Quartermaster School and the Transportation School to jointly establish a new MOS and develop a training program to produce petroleum vehicle drivers trained in petroleum supply and safety and in vehicle operation and maintenance. The TOE could be changed to authorize the appropriate number of personnel with the new MOS to ensure that the unit's vehicles are properly used and maintained.

The Army Training and Doctrine Command and its training centers should recognize this problem and take appropriate action to correct it. Today's highly mobile Army cannot function without effective petroleum distribution in the theater of operations. Training for MOS 76W personnel must incorporate sufficient amounts of vehicle driver and maintenance training. Solving this Army-wide problem will improve the petroleum distribution capability at all levels and contribute to successful combat operations. **ALOG**

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