

Arkansas National Guard



At a glance

Industry: Government

Application: Task Order Management

Program Results: National Guard Unit reduces the time required to view vital field data from ten hours to two minutes and saves over 1 million dollars in labor and printing costs

Arkansas National Guard Automates and Improves Pre-Mobilization Training with the Intermec CK61G Mobile Computer

The Army National Guard is a component of the U.S. Army which is composed primarily of traditional Guardsmen, civilians who serve their country, state, and community on a part-time basis. Each state, territory and the District of Columbia has its own National Guard, as provided for by the Constitution of the United States.

When a unit of the National Guard is alerted for active duty deployment, it is critical that soldiers are properly trained and equipped before mobilization to war. The National Guard Bureau created a Pre-Mobilization Training Assistance Element (PTAE) program to conduct, observe, document, and assist with the pre-mobilization training of deploying units at home stations. This type of training ensures soldiers are trained to standard. Each soldier must pass more than 300 pre-mobilization tasks in order to be fully prepared and eligible. These tasks cover a broad range of duties which include first aid, land navigation and weapon qualification. The tasks are monitored by three witnesses, an evaluator, trainer and commander. Upon completion, The Adjutant General, the highest ranking officer in the state, is required to certify that each soldier completed and passed the training before being deployed.

Recognizing the Need to Automate

For years, the Arkansas National Guard operated the PTAE process through a paper-based manual solution. For each task, soldiers were required to complete a sign-in roster to prove they were present for training. In addition, the date, task, evaluator, trainer, commander and the soldier's identification number had to be documented on a sheet of paper. Once the data was collected, it was then scanned and logged into a Microsoft Excel document. With more than 300 tasks and an average brigade of 3,000 - 4,000 soldiers, it was typical for more than 900,000 pieces of paper to be used for just one training period.

"Our manual process used an abundance of resources including printer ink, paper, and man hours to document all tasks performed," said Major Richard Garringer, Arkansas PTAE Commander. "Following one particular two week annual training period, it took us six weeks to upload all of the sign-in rosters and know where each soldier stood in their pre-mobilization training. After that long process, we envisioned an automated PTAE program that would eliminate unnecessary waste and allow us to upload data in real time to ensure that training is documented quickly and efficiently."

A Smooth Search for a Fitting Solution

Under the leadership of Colonel Henry Davis, The Arkansas Inspector General (IG), the Arkansas National Guard appointed a task force to automate the documentation process. Captain Dewayne Page and other PTAE staff created a Microsoft Excel Training Tracker Workbook and bar codes for the tasks required for Pre-Mobilization. Sergeant Billy Whitener developed an in-house software system that could identify each task's bar code and personal Common Access Card (CAC). Next, they searched for a handheld mobile computer that could survive in the field, had an efficient operating system, and could last throughout the day to meet their data capture needs. Lieutenant Colonel Donald Bridges discovered the Intermec CK61G mobile computer. The Arkansas National Guard conducted field tests and selected the Intermec CK61G mobile computer. They received them within 30 days and deployed 50 units quickly over the course of a weekend. It was an ideal choice because it operates on Microsoft Windows Mobile® 5.0, has a rugged design to endure all weather conditions and has an extended battery life. Also, its compact edition of Microsoft SQL Server is critical because it allows all the training data to be synchronized through Microsoft Activesync into a SQL database in real time.

Further, the U.S. Department of the Army has a five-year Automatic Identification Technology (AIT) contract with Intermec, known as the AIT-III contract, which provides a complete line of data collection systems and integration services. Because this contract was in place, the Arkansas National Guard was able to purchase the CK61G mobile computers easily, without having to go through multiple bids to purchase a solution.

"The AIT-III contract was very helpful in our selection process because the CK61G was already Army approved," explained Major Garringer. "The situation was ideal because the CK61G contained the functionality we needed, while the AIT-III contract eliminated the hassle and extensive research involved in a typical bidding process."

Ensuring Uncompromised Data and Reducing Costs

Since implementing the automated solution, the Arkansas National Guard has improved data accuracy immensely and reduced labor and printing costs. The CACs of the evaluator, trainer, commander, and soldier along with the task number are scanned into the mobile computer in order to successfully complete a task. Scanning CACs verifies that each person is present for training. Users do not have the ability to manually key in an identification code if a party isn't present. This critical feature ensures that data will not be compromised as some soldiers would sign other soldier's names who were not present for training; this feature ensures the authenticity of every soldier and that each soldier is trained to standard and prepared for mobilization. The CK61G also allowed key personnel to be freed up for other assigned duties. Before the CK61G solution was implemented, it took approximately six training assistants to complete the PTAE training process, costing the Arkansas National Guard approximately \$300,000 in labor costs. Now, those same training assistants are being used in more critical areas that support the mission. In addition, the CK61G has allowed the Arkansas National Guard to save over \$1 million dollars in printing costs by eliminating their manual paper process, in which approximately 900,000 sheets of paper

were used for just one training period at a cost per copy of one to three cents. "The CK61G has made the PTAE process much more effective," added Major Garringer. "Soldiers no longer have to repeat training if documents are lost or misfiled. More importantly, this solution ensures that each soldier is armed with the proper training, resources and certifications necessary before being deployed for active duty."

Visibility to a Soldier's Status in Real Time

"In addition, the ability to upload data to reports in real time has enabled the Arkansas National Guard to save a significant amount of man hours. For example, it used to take ten hours to scan all the sign-in rosters, track data and build hyperlinks to the information for 131 soldiers completing 27 tasks. Now, in the same scenario, the process only takes minutes," stated Captain Dewayne Page, Arkansas PTAE Operations Officer.

This real time capability also provides commanders with visibility to each soldier's individual training status on the spot, no longer having to wait hours or sometimes weeks for the data to be uploaded and available. Further, if a soldier is wounded or killed while on duty, it is common to investigate the training history of that soldier. Now, the Arkansas National Guard can provide accurate documentation immediately to show that the pre-mobilization training was completed.

"We are very pleased with the instant benefits the CK61G has provided," said Major Garringer. "The solution is intuitive, easy-to-use and follows a similar methodology to our manual approach. This was critical in making the migration an uncomplicated, seamless process. We have achieved our goal of implementing an automated solution that provides a smoother, more effective training process for everyone involved."

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