Case study

# Anniston Army Depot

**At a glance**

**Industry:** Government

**Applications:** Parts Tracking/WIP

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## Anniston Army Depot Tracks Parts, Saves Time and Money with Intermec Technologies, HL Group and HighJump

Anniston Army Depot, located in Anniston, Alabama, is a major United States Army facility that employs more than 7,000 people. The site's primary responsibility is the repair and rebuilding of tracked vehicles such as armored personnel carriers, tanks and tank retriever vehicles for the Army and Marines.

Gigantic machines such as the 60-ton M1 Abrams tank – comprised of as many as 27,000 parts – are shipped to Anniston, then completely disassembled. There, the parts are cleaned, repaired, refurbished or replaced, then reassembled into a complete vehicle that is returned to the fighting force.

It is an enormous challenge to keep track of the millions of parts as they move throughout the refurbishment processes across the Anniston Nichols Industrial Complex. Depending upon the part, items may go through washing, sandblasting, painting, acid bath, welding, etc.– up to thirty possible processes in all. These processes are conducted in over 50 buildings on the complex.

The previous manual parts tracking process was costly to the Army in both labor and lost parts. What they needed was an automated work in process (WIP) solution to help track each part as it moves through the refurbishing processes and the enormous Industrial Complex. Since Anniston will soon migrate to an SAP-based system, the new solution had to be SAP-compatible.

### Deploying Efficiency

Intermec Technologies was enlisted to provide a turn-key solution that would bring Anniston to the forefront of the Army Depot Overhaul facilities. This solution began with the implementation of a state-of-the-art wireless network.

The wireless infrastructure is comprised of approximately 50 Cisco Routers and 109 Access Points in 50 buildings within the Industrial Complex. The wired network infrastructure was also expanded to support wireless communication with the addition of over 10 miles of cable and over one mile of fiber. Finally, more than 80 Intermec CK31 handheld computers and 40 Intermec PM4i printers were implemented to support the WIP solution.

Intermec called on its partner, integrator HL Group, to create the Automated Identification Technology (AIT) WIP

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solution to provide tracking and real-time visibility to the location status of parts across the Industrial Complex. HL Group Project Manager Anne Hale comments on the implementation.

"For the Anniston solution, HL Group leveraged the Advantage Platform from HighJump Software," Hale said. "The Advantage Platform provides a comprehensive supply chain execution platform that provides real-time information capture, activity direction, validation and reporting. Additionally, the Advantage Platform has the flexibility to interface with legacy host systems as well as certified interfaces into ERPs such as SAP."

"This solution was a good choice for Anniston, as it includes standard material handling, shop floor management, and warehouse functions, for example, – all residing on a single platform." Hale continued. "Additionally, the user interfaces are designed with the busy material handler in mind providing clean interfaces, real-time validation and powerful queries to streamline their activities on the floor and eliminate cumbersome paperwork."

## Armed with Technology

With the new system, as each vehicle part follows a predetermined route in the remanufacture process – movement activity and material status are captured by the combined Intermec/HL Group WIP solution.

Tracking activity begins with a bar code tag. The tag is a tear-and-weather resistant tag to endure the often harsh Alabama weather. Once printed by the Intermec hardware, it is attached to a basket that holds like parts and is used by the Anniston team to move the material through to completion.

As baskets complete the process steps within the route, the activity completion is confirmed by Material Handlers by scanning the bar coded route tag as it is staged for delivery to the next process building. Once moved, the Material Handlers at the receiving building scan the tag to acknowledge the receipt, thus tracking the material progress throughout the Industrial Complex. The scanned information is immediately communicated to the AIT server via the wireless network.

AIT-tracking of the material progression continues until all parts are reassembled onto a completed vehicle ready to be returned to the war fighter.

## Results Oriented

As a result of the real time data capture afforded by the Intermec and HL Group solution, staff needing a specific part need only enter a stock number into the AIT system to find its location. This real-time information – along with other valuable queries – is available from the handhelds, presented at a workstation or periodically printed at planned intervals.

### Benefits of AIT to Anniston Army Depot

- Material location and status Parts are easily located, as system provides visibility to items as they move through each step of the refurbishment proces
- Replenishment part planning Army can determine which parts have "washed out" or are unusable, and can budget and plan to purchase replacements
- **Lean engineering**
  AIT streamlines business processes by amplifying the Army's current lean engineering activities
- **SAP compatible**
  Both Intermec and the HighJump solution are fully SAP-ready, and will provide a means to implement SAP with little or no disruption to personnel
- **Focuses staff**
  Real-time data provided by AIT allows staff to focus on refurbishing vehicles, not searching for parts
- **Supports future technologies**
  The Intermec and HighJump solution can be expanded into other work centers. Additionally, the architecture was planned to accommodate future system requirements such as UID or RFID


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