The 'ICE' man has helped to increase depot responsiveness to customer demands at the U.S. Army Base Command, Okinawa.

The ICE man cometh

by Colonel James F. Burckert

ICE has come to Okinawa.

The sight of an 'ICE' man making his rounds at the U.S. Army Base Command (USARBCO) has become as familiar to depot personnel as bikini-clad sunbathers on the beaches of this semitropical island.

Actually, it's not the kind of ice you cut figures on nor the small cubes that you swirl with a swizzle stick. ICE is the acronym for Inventory Control Effectiveness, a program developed to improve management controls at Army depots throughout the world. The aim of the program is to insure that the Army receives maximum benefit from supply expenditures through improved responsiveness to customer demands. The use of an 'ICE' man—or inspector—to check items of stock selected at random is an important part of the program.

Although the ICE program has been in existence in the continental United States since 1970, it was only recently extended to Okinawa. At that time, the ICE Project Office was established as an interim organization within the Directorate for Supply Operations (DSO) at USARBCO. The project office was the pilot model for the Inventory Control Division, which became an integral part of DSO in April 1973.

The ICE program was developed to measure the adequacy and accuracy of stock records through a system of inventories, stock location audits, cataloging services, and quality control checks. One of the program features is the Condition/Count 5 project, designed to promote managerial participation in the verification of stock record accuracy. A special Department of the Army project, Condition/Count 5 was established to provide a mechanism for stimulating interest and participation by supply managers in improving inventory control effectiveness.

Under the Condition/Count 5 procedures, supply managers selected on a roster basis physically inspect and count five line items of stock selected at random, including one selected item management system (SIMS) item. Their findings are reconciled with the depot's master locator file and accountability records. Follow-up research and adjustment of records, if required, are performed by the permanently assigned ICE staff. Participation in the Condition/Count 5 program is now an Army-wide depot requirement and is one of several programs being used to continuously improve and upgrade the responsiveness of the Army supply system.

The USARBCO depot has approximately 200,000 line items of stock, valued in excess of $300 million. The depot processes an average of 70,000 requisitions per month for customers throughout the Far East. The sheer volume of stocks and workload necessitates the

use of a computer and associated data processing equipment for the processing of supply transactions. As with any automated data system, the validity of the end product is no greater than that of the data input. Through Condition/Count 5 and similar programs, the depot supply staff seeks to insure that accurate and timely data are fed to the computer. This data permits the computer to determine whether a requested item is in stock, how many are on hand, and where they are located. Automated instructions can then be issued for the picking, packing, and shipping of the stock to the customer.

Condition/Count 5 inspectors are selected on a rotational basis to inspect stock locator records, stock condition, and stock quantity. The inspector receives his notice of selection for participation in the project and advance information on his duties. On the appointed date, he reports to the Condition/Count 5 project officer for a briefing. The inspector goes to the depot area, accompanied by a Condition/Count 5 representative, and makes a physical count at all recorded locations for each item. He also notes the condition of the stock and discrepancies in stock number or nomenclature. After checking all listed storage locations of his five stock numbers, he proceeds to the receiving branch. There he checks the quantity, condition, and nomenclature of five items of incoming stock against the accompanying packing lists.

After completing his tour, the inspector files his report. The results of inspection are reconciled against the computer's records and, if necessary, the records are adjusted. After the reconciliation process is completed, the inspector receives a followup report that outlines the benefits the Government has realized as a result of his Condition/Count 5 assignment.

Condition/Count 5 has contributed significantly to inventory control effectiveness since its inception at the U.S. Army Base Command, Okinawa. Not only has the accuracy of stock records improved but also the interest and attitude of participants in the program have improved. The educational and motivational aspects of the program are as important as the gains that have been realized through stock record verification.

After a tour as a Condition/Count 5 inspector, a participant usually has a better insight into the potential problems inherent in the use of an automated data system and a better understanding of how to avoid them. He becomes, to some extent, a missionary for better supply practices. Much of this enthusiasm seems to overflow into other areas of mission performance.

The 'ICE' man has come to USARBCO. And, he's come to stay. ALOG

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'ICE' men look over randomly selected stock locator cards.

An inspector verifies the data on selected items.

The inspection team checks five incoming stock items.