The Canadian Army Trophy, the CAT Sheet, is the premier NATO Main Battle Tank competition. It is described as the Olympics and World Series of Armoured Fighting Vehicles. The world-class event, held bi-annually in Germany, pits elite armored units in a tank battle to determine NATO's top ground army group and the top gun of tank platoons.

The CAT competition was originally created in 1988 by the Canadians as a means to hone individual tank gunnery skills as well as foster cooperation between NATO army groups. CAT 97 was hosted by NATO's Central Army Group (CENTAG) at a tank range in Grafenwöhr, West Germany. The Northern Army Group (NORTHAG), representing the visiting teams, was coming off the heels of an impressive victory in CAT 95 and was in possession of the coveted CAT trophy.

The one week of intensive competition requires each team to put their hand-earned skills and hard-earned reputations on the line. For months, positions have trained rigorously on their equipment, demanding routine, but crucial, in the pursuit of victory.

The spirit of camaraderie was evident in the daily interaction of soldiers from different nations. They were continuously exchanging ideas, comparing each other's tank systems and discussing common interests...a unique gathering of warriors eager to demonstrate their specialized skills.

The gunnery expertise of these competitors was displayed each day of the competition. NATO teams gained much respect for skills exhibited by their NATO partners...and a satisfying confidence in the performance of their sides.
Enthusiastic welcomes greeted each unit at the approach to the first firing position. Much was expected of these units, who were the best of the best. Each platoon would have to display expert teamwork and a great deal of confidence in the quality and performance of their tank system under a scenario of realistic combat actions. The CAT competition requires firing at machine gun and moving main gun targets, from both stationary positions and on the move. Point values, totaling a possible 22,000 points, are assigned to all targets. Evaluation of the crews is based not only on accuracy but also on speed and tactics. The first round hits are a plus. Each crew must have confidence that engaged targets have been hit. Wasted ammo means a possible loss of bonus points.

Action was spirited and scoring among competing British, Belgian, German, Dutch, Canadian, and U.S. units was very tight. These scores were intensely monitored by a team of international judges. Going into the final day, the German 124th Panzer Battalion forged ahead of the pack with 19,659 points, 1,400 more than the closest competitor.

The pressure was on the 1st Platoon of Company D, 4th Battalion 8th Cavalry, the last competitor of CAT '87.
Quality Competitors

Tabulation of scoring had been completed just before the closing ceremony began. Scores of the final run of the 1st Platoon, 8th Cavalry were not yet posted. CENLAG was announced as the overall CAT winner, but the high precision score was still unannounced. Everyone knew the team's performance by the 8th Cavalry in their Abrams Tanks was a good one ... but was it good enough to pass the seemingly insurmountable German score? The announcer proclaimed what everyone was eager to hear: "The high precision score is 208.2." The 1st Platoon, 8th Cavalry, had captured the day. The Abrams Tanks provided the winning edge for this world class event, setting new standards for tank gunnery. The men and women of General Dynamics Land Systems Division are proud to have produced the tanks that made this victory possible ... and salute the crews that made it happen.

Through some impressive team interaction and quick thinking, the 1st Platoon finished with 154,650 points - a display of flawless teamwork and precise system operation.

The top gun accomplishment of the 8th Cavalry, combined with the performances of American 3rd/4th and German 124th Panzer teams, helped make CENLAG the victor in CAT '77. The 8th Cav in their M1 Abrams Tanks provided the winning edge for this world class event, setting new standards for tank gunnery. The men and women of General Dynamics Land Systems Division are proud to have produced the tanks that made this victory possible ... and salute the crews that made it happen.

The U.S. 8th Cavalry, 1st Platoon, Company D, in their Improved Performance M1A1s, had the high platoon score at CAT '77.

The 3-64 Armor, Company A, had the third highest platoon score in the CAT competition, an impressive gunnery performance.

The 2-66 Armor, Company D, led team NORTHAM in consistency of performance, with all 2-66 platoons firing over 17,000 points, amassing a team high 13,629 points.

The commander of CENLAG took great pride in accepting the CAT Trophy on behalf of his German, U.S. and Canadian CENLAG teammates. But none seemed to savor the moment as much as General O. O. O., the Commander of the U.S. Army Forces, Europe, as he presented the high platoon award to the 8th of the 8th Cavalry.