

Life at SWA Patriot site told

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What just months ago must have seemed like a daily routine on a Patriot battery tactical site, can now mean the difference between life and death for air defenders deployed to the gulf region. There are certain checks, tasks, training and attitudes that must transpire at a Patriot site to ensure the combat survival of air defense soldiers.

"We wake up before 5:30 a.m. and take care of personal hygiene. We eat breakfast around 6:00 a.m.," said Staff Sgt. Robert Griggs, headquarters platoon sergeant, Battery B, 5th Battalion, 52nd Air Defense Artillery Regiment.

"After breakfast we perform Preventative Maintenance Checks and Services, PMCS's on vehicles," said Griggs.

"Later in the day we spend time filling sand bags to build bunkers for protection," said Griggs.



Soldiers from 5-52 ADA stack cases of Meals Ready to Eat at an undisclosed Patriot battery tactical site in Southwest Asia.

"Sandbags placed on a bunker help protect us from missile debris falling from the sky and small arms fire from the enemy," said Capt. Moises Castillo, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery Brigade.

Classes in first aid and nuclear biological and chemical survival are given to soldiers on a regular basis.

"Redundant NBC training causes a soldier to perform an NBC task as second nature and thus improves his survivability," said Sgt. 1st Class Mark W. Klaers, 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command.

"We spend a lot of time training on the 11 critical NBC tasks along with classes in first aid, which are essential to survival during combat operations," said Griggs.

"Soldiers practice the 11 critical NBC tasks in order to perform their jobs under NBC conditions. Soldiers learn to drink water, decontaminate, exchange NBC suits, and other essential survival tasks," said Klaers.

In addition to classes, Patriot soldiers hone their navigation skills with modern positioning technology. Conventional referencing with a map and compass in a flat desert can limit a soldier's cross-referencing ability, if he has no terrain reference to correct his bearings, he can get lost.

"We conduct global positioning receiver, 'Plugger', training and practice applying it to land navigation in the desert. We teach soldiers to set waypoints to be used as references when navigating," said Griggs.

Not only is training important but so is the maintenance and operational



PHOTOS BY CAPT. ENRIQUE VASQUEZ

Soldiers from TF 2-1 ADA perform Patriot launcher system checks.

readiness of the Patriot system.

"Our unit has several launcher crews that go out every morning and perform equipment checks on the Patriot launchers. They ensure the Patriot system has no faults," said Staff Sgt. Larry Poole, Patriot launcher platoon sergeant, Battery B, 5-52nd ADA.

"We change out our launcher crews every 24 hours," added Poole.

"Soldiers in the fire control platoon also run self test diagnostic daily checks on the Patriot Engagement Control Station ECS and Radar. Maintenance of the ECS and Radar includes cleaning the air intake filters on a periodic basis," said Sgt. 1st Class Curtis Hobson, fire control platoon sergeant, Battery B, 5-52 ADA.

"Patriot maintenance is where the rubber meets the road, if a maintainer does not keep the Patriot system clean

and operational the system could fail. The end result could be a SCUD missile impact, causing a devastating loss of life," said Master Sgt. Gina Myers, Patriot launcher crewmember, 32nd AAMDC.

"Living on a Patriot site with just a few simple things like good meals and the steady flow of mail can keep air defenders highly motivated and produce a battle-ready attitude.

"Soldiers are fed two hot meals a day (breakfast and dinner) and one Meal Ready to Eat MRE," said Pfc. Shirley Sanchez, food service specialist, Battery B, 5-52 ADA.

"Soldiers are very motivated, I think because they have access to showers, a small Post Exchange, morale phone calls and hot meals," said 1st Sgt. John Ezell, first sergeant, Battery B, 5-52 ADA.

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