

1-1 ADA Soldiers get training in field

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During the last two weeks of October, several batteries in 1st Battalion, 1st Air Defense Artillery, to include Echo, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, and 518th Maintenance Company, deployed to the field for field training exercises.

The batteries and companies operated individually from each other with different training objectives, but joined forces at the end of the exercise in a collective Family Day in which the Soldiers' family members visited the sites and saw what exactly their Soldier did at work.

Each battery focused on tasks their respective commanders felt necessary in order to keep the Soldiers proficient at all tasks. For instance, E Btry. focused on air and missile defense operations and common Soldier tasks, which enabled the battery to complete all Gunnery Table training and all of first quarter's Common Task Training for 75 percent of the battery.

HNB focused on "getting back to the basics," as Capt. Monica Gupta, HNB commander, put it. HNB took the opportunity to focus on Soldier skills such



Spc. Darius Nipple scans his section of the perimeter during the HNB, 1-1 ADA field exercise.

as land navigation, building and perfecting individual fighting positions and force-on-force squad maneuver tactics.

The 518th focused on basic Soldier skills, which they tested at a range conducted during their stay in the field, and perfecting maintenance operations, which must be conducted in order to support the battalion in a field environment. They also participated in force-on-force tactics, which were tested on HNB and vice versa. All three batteries also completed the semi-annual III (U.S.) Corps requirement of an eight-mile road march carrying a ruck sack.

For many of the Soldiers, the field problem was fast-paced but beneficial. Spc. Jerad Stokes of HNB said there were several missions and a lot of force-on-force training with the 518th.

"It was comparable to the [external evaluation] in May," said Stokes.

The EXEVAL was a culminating event in May, which tested the entire battalion's readiness to fight both as an air and missile defense battalion and as a security force. Spc. Wesley Lisska, E Btry. said there was an abundance of Gunnery Table training, but the entire battery got to train hard and move sites every day.

"The [operational tempo] was high, and we got to train as we fight," said Lisska.

Capt. Tex Soto of the 518th said this was the longest field exercise the unit had ever completed. Soto said the Soldiers were highly motivated and accomplished the mission at hand while having fun.

Toward the end of the field exercise, each unit moved to a site outside Tobin Wells in order to conduct a more relaxed type of training. Oct. 22, the three units sponsored a Family Day in which the Soldiers' spouses and family members joined the battery on site to see what exactly the Soldiers do in the field. The daily activities conducted on site continued, but at a more relaxed pace so the families could learn more about them. For instance, on HNB's site, the Soldiers donned their Mission Oriented Protective Posture suits, which gave the families a chance to see up close the rigors each Soldier must endure during a chemical attack. Chow



PHOTOS BY 1ST LT. SABRINA SMITH

Imad Odeh, 1-1 ADA, digs his individual fighting position during the October field exercise.

was also served while the families were on site, giving them the chance to see the field kitchen and what the Soldiers were served while in the field. The 518th Maint. Co. used an open house-type forum in which the families visited each section within the company and learned what each Soldier did.

"Family Day was fun. It was a great chance to show the families what we do, and the kids had a great time," said Stokes.

The battery-level field training exercises conducted by the "First Among Equals" battalion at the end of October proved to be beneficial for many Soldiers. The exercises gave each unit the chance to hone in on and practice tasks needed in order to be proficient in a wartime scenario, while also giving families the chance to see the Soldiers and the environment in which they train.

'No Fear' battalion gears up for busy winter

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It's been more than six months since the 1st Battalion, 7th Air Defense Artillery has conducted a major field exercise. Last winter and spring was filled with ranges and field problems, and this winter will be more of the same for the "No Fear" battalion as they plan to certify and acclimate new crews and Soldiers.

The unit has four new batteries after a Korean Theater of Operations rotation with 35th ADA. The battalion's top enlisted Soldier said it's important for the new Soldiers to get used to the battalion, 108th ADA and Fort Bliss.

"Basically, all we're trying to do is get a good concept of what it's like [for the new Soldiers] to be stationed here in El Paso," said Command Sgt. Major James Carr.

To start with the transition of being in Korea and moving to Fort Bliss, 1-7 ADA had a five-day field exercise last week to prepare for the major field exercises coming in December, January and February.

"Our major goals for this exercise are teamwork and communications," said Carr. "Putting all those pieces together will help because we do

things a little different here [than in Korea]."

For the Soldiers, the small field exercise was a learning experience, especially for those who have never been to Fort Bliss.

"We're not used to having this terrain," said Pfc. Jeremiah Pierce, B Battery. "We need to adapt and think on our feet. Everything is a little different here, but we were very proficient in Korea, and we will be proficient here."

The battalion's noncommissioned officers took advantage of the opportunity to train their Soldiers in the unfamiliar terrain.

"We're training on basic Soldier skills along with [Patriot] crew drills," said Sgt. Jonathan Ross, B Btry.. "Most of these Soldiers have never been to the field here at Fort Bliss. This way, they get used to the terrain."

Non-air defense Soldiers also took the advantage of the quality training opportunity. The 51st Maintenance Company wasn't part of the Korea rotation. However, the company has a new chain of command that hasn't yet been to the field with the company or battalion. "This has been a good exercise. We have a new commander and a new first sergeant, and we learn how they like to do things. Plus, they can



SPC. JASON STADEL

Pfc. Joseph Casterson, B Btry., 1-7 ADA, performs a crew drill during a field training exercise.

also see how we work in the field," said Sgt. Chris Mullins.

Mullins is a new NCO but has been in the company for about two years. He said the small FTX was a good train-up for his unit.

"It's a benefit because it gets the new Soldiers trained up and when we come back everyone should know

what's going on."

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 108th ADA and 208th Signal Co. also supported the field exercise. Carr said there were a few problems, but everything was worked out and the battalion should be prepared for upcoming field exercises.