

6-52 Soldiers showcase air defense capabilities

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214th Fires Brigade Public Affairs

FORT KNOX, Ky. – Soldiers from B Battery, 6th Battalion, 52nd Air Defense Artillery, demonstrated what air defense is all about to West Point cadets during Mounted Maneuver Training at Fort Knox, Ky., July 23.

The battery, along with Soldiers from its sister unit, 4th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery, from Fort Hood, Texas, spent a month at Fort Knox demonstrating the capabilities of the Patriot missile system and demonstrating their expertise to the groups of cadets rotating through the training.

Because little is known about the field of air defense to most outsiders, branch officials saw this as an opportunity to try and change that, said Capt. Joseph Westerman, commander, B Btry.

“The office of the Air Defense Artillery decided it wanted to showcase the branch here during West Point’s annual training,” said Westerman. “The 6-52 was tasked with the mission and B Battery was lucky enough to be able to support that.”

“The West Point cadets come to Fort Knox for four days to really see the heavy pieces of equipment that the Army has to offer,” he said. “They focus a lot of the time on armor and cavalry and how those pieces of equipment maneuver on the battlefield. Because air defense is

considered a heavier type of force rather than light infantry and those types of things, we come here and showcase our branch as well. We don’t really have the opportunity to do that anywhere else.”

6-52 Bn. Operations Officer Maj. Lisa Bartel said technology and equipment are not the only things the air defense branch has to offer those who join its ranks.

“We’re showcasing not only the branch, but we’re showcasing the knowledge of our Soldiers to the cadets to say this is the level of intelligence you’re getting when you come into air defense and this is what the Soldiers can offer and what the branch can offer as a whole,” Bartel said. “They may not have a good idea of what air defense does. I think it’s a good opportunity for us to come out here and showcase the branch and what our Soldiers can do and their level of knowledge and training and discipline.”

Pfc. Issac Castleberry is trained to operate and maintain the Patriot launching station and briefed cadets on its mechanisms and operation. The cadets also received some hands-on training during a presentation. With launcher crewmembers by their side, cadets were able to maneuver missile canisters using the guided missile transporter.

“We’re out here to inform the cadets about air defense and our capabilities,” said Castleberry. “We



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With the help of B Battery crewmembers, cadets maneuver an empty missile container through the air. Although only certified personnel are permitted to actually load or unload missiles from the equipment, the cadets were able to get a feel for the power behind it and the actual strength required to hold it in a steady position.

give them some insight into our job and what we do, our equipment, and how we operate on a day-to-day basis.

“I love what I do. It’s one of the best jobs in the Army,” said Castleberry, who said his first choice in Army careers was military intelligence. “Protecting the air space is really an important job.”

Although all positions within the air defense branch are open to women, it is still predominantly

male. Pfc. Krysti DeThomas, one of six women in a battery of more than 70 Soldiers, said she can’t understand why. She said she has never faced any additional challenges or adversity as a female air defender.

DeThomas has been with the battery only five months and has already completed two certification exercises. Along with her crew partner, she earned the highest score in the battalion on Table VIII certification, and

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