

# 1-21 FA takes to field to conduct live-fire exercise

**BY RACHEL PARKS**  
Sentinel Staff

With a massive display of firepower, members of the 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery unit, honed their skills on a complex multiple launch rocket and missile artillery system from July 19-21. Soldiers headed to the range on Fort Hood to work with the M-270A1 Multiple Launch Rocket System, firing 108 rockets in the course of the three-day exercise, the most rockets fired by one battalion at the Great Place.

Captain Marcus A. Harrison, commander, A Battery, 1-21FA, ran the battery operations center during the extensive exercise. He said the mission is to ramp up the training for the Soldiers and get everyone used to working together on the system.

"We are treating this field experience as a real deployment. We got to stand up the rear detachment and exercise all our systems in the course of this exercise," Harrison said.

He added that he was excited about the experience the Soldiers

were getting on the weapons system. "This training is going strong. It's really unbelievable. The training we're doing now hasn't been done before, so it's kind of new for everyone," he said.

Harrison said the entire battalion was working hard to ensure the exercise was a success. "It's a realistic, real-time mission scenario and every Soldier out here is getting a lot of bang for their buck," he said.

First Lt. Jordan Swears, executive officer, A Battery, 1-21 FA, said the exercise was the closest members of the unit have been to normal operations in quite a while. During the last deployment for 1-21 FA, Soldiers in the unit were handling detainee operations.

Swears added that the Soldiers were able to adjust and excel at the training.

"With this system you have to communicate vocally and with digital data. You need to communicate well over a long distance and that's a skill set that can get rusty if you don't practice," he said.

In addition to working on that skill set, the Soldiers were gaining hands-on experience with one of the most technologically advanced systems in the U.S. Army. "This weapon system gives you a lot of range and lots of precision, but it's pretty much the most complex weapons system in the Army," he



A rocket is fired from the M-270A1 MLRS, one of the most complex systems used by the Army. Soldiers said the exercise tested their ability to fire quickly and accurately while maintaining operational status.



Photos by Rachel Parks, Sentinel Staff

Soldiers with 1-21 FA work in the battery operations center gathering information vital to the operation of the M-270A1 multiple launch rocket system. The unit fired 108 rockets in the course of the three-day field exercise.



Members of 1-21 FA move the M-270A1 MLRS into position on the range. The unit fired more rockets than any other battalion on Fort Hood during the field exercise.

added.

Swears said the team was working well together, especially since there were many members of the company who are new to the military.

Private 1st Class Edward Barut, A Battery, 1-21 FA, who joined the Army in Nov. 2009, said he appreciated the chance to practice with the surface-to-surface rocket and missile artillery system.

"This field exercise that we're doing is all about shooting as fast as we can and as accurately as we can at different points. We're always on the move," he said.

"I've never experienced training like this, but I like it," Barut added.

In addition to new Soldiers in the

unit, students from the U.S. Military Academy were on hand to train with the team.

"We're down here to shadow 1st Lt. Swears as we prepare to graduate. It's been very interesting to get a look at this field exercise," Cadet Rob McCallion said.

Cadet Joe Krusee, also from West Point, was happy with the experience. "It's been interesting seeing how complex the system is and it's good to see how the Soldiers interact and how much work goes into an exercise like this," he said.

The cadets are required to do military training each summer in preparation for their graduation ceremony and to become a commissioned officer in the Army, but McCallion said training this extensive was a first for them both.

"Joe and I haven't been exposed to training like this unit is doing. This is the first real field experience," he said.

Swears summed up the exercise by saying the work is hard and can be stressful but the Soldiers get the chance to do what they love.

"There isn't much more that we find enjoyable than when the rockets start going and are just ripping across the sky," he said.

Following this exercise, the 1-21 FA, which is commanded by Lt. Col. James Davel, will be back at it in the fall, firing another round of rockets for a battalion certification.

## Wranglers attend Mobile Retention training

**BY PFC. AMY M. LANE**  
4th Sust. Bde. Public Affairs

Throughout the week of July 12-16, retention noncommissioned officers from the 4th Sustainment Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and other III Corps units spent their workdays in training to brush up their skills and learn about policy and procedure updates.

About 400 retention NCOs attended the Mobile Retention training, crowding into the ballroom at the Plaza Hotel in Killeen. They learned about counseling, eligibility, options, bonuses and other important topics intended to make

their re-enlistment programs more efficient.

"We're giving them everything we can to make them stronger and more effective at their jobs," Staff Sgt. Jason Menocal, III Corps retention NCO, said. "We're giving them the tools to take better care of the Soldiers."

Menocal said two instructors from the Soldier Support Institute at Fort Jackson, S.C., led the 40-hour training week, which is conducted yearly.

Jason Lapin, a retention NCO for the 546th Area Support Medical Company, 1st Medical Brigade, 13th ESC, said he felt very fortunate to participate in the training.

A year ago, when he first began the position, he learned by training on the job.

"I wish this was available when I first started my job," he said. "This really goes into great detail with some important subjects."

Lapin said he always had another NCO available to help him with tougher questions, but it was helpful to participate in the training, which clarified some details for him.

"This has been very informative," he said. "I think it will help me improve my skills, and it will help me do a better job of helping Soldiers explore their re-enlistment options."



Photo by Pfc. Amy M. Lane, 4th Sust. Bde. Public Affairs

Approximately 400 retention noncommissioned officers from the 4th Sust. Bde., 13th SUSTCOM (Expeditionary), and other III Corps units crowded inside the ballroom at the Plaza Hotel in Killeen for a Mobile Retention training July 12-16.

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