

THAAD certifies at McGregor Range

story and photos by SGT William Bolderson / 11th ADA Bde / Public Affairs / October 2009

MCGREGOR, N.M. - In the air defense artillery world, A Battery, 4th Regiment Air Defense Artillery (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense), made history once again through its crew certifications at McGregor Range, N.M., Oct 14 and 15.



Photo Left: 1LT Eugene Muniz briefs Soldiers of A Battery, 4th Regiment, Air Defense Artillery (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense), before they transport equipment for Table VIII certifications at McGregor Range, N.M.

After two weeks of intense training, A-4 THAAD received movement orders beginning their Table VIII certifications. 11th ADA Brigade evaluators verified all procedures were followed in accordance with stated requirements and that the crews did not commit any safety violations.

First Lt. Eugene Muniz gave a convoy brief; shortly thereafter convoy personnel loaded into vehicles ready to transport equipment and thus initiating system emplacement. A Reconnaissance, Selection and Occupation of Position team led the crews to predetermined areas. The crews drove light-medium tactical vehicles with M-2 .50 caliber machine guns and quickly established a parameter guard. The radar halting indicated the beginning of the drill. Immediately all launchers were emplaced and operational within 13 minutes. The Soldiers also established a battery command post.



Photo above:
SPC Sergio Arana and Ryan Lemecha of A Battery, 4th Regiment, Air Defense Artillery (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense), bring a launcher to full operation during Table VIII certifications at McGregor Range, N.M.

THAAD subject matter experts are contributing to the system's evolving evaluation techniques. SSG Mike Whalen and Chrystal Crawley, former noncommissioned officers with A-4 THAAD, assessed the unit at brigade level.

"I was a launcher platoon sergeant for two years, I pretty much had to write these guidelines for them to certify," said Whalen who evaluated launcher crew three. "These guys really know their drill, they just have to careful not to commit any safety violations."

Many who have been with A-4 from the beginning are making history by applying theory and making it a reality. SPC Robert Pepperling and SSG Nicholas Wicks, the system's power production unit operators, are the first Soldiers to work on the equipment while in testing.

“This is the first and only crew ever to certify on a PPU,” said Crawley. “Their mechanical expertise can't be beat. Now, they are the subject matter experts.”



Photo above: SPC Robert Pepperling and SSG Nicholas Wicks of A Battery, 4th Regiment, Air Defense Artillery (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense), operate the power production unit that provides power to the radar set and cooling system.