

Air Defense Artillery School Graduates Final Classes at Fort Bliss

Story by Sgt. LaSonya Morales and Staff Sgt. Jason Stadel / 16th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment / December 2009

FORT BLISS, Texas - Dec. 15, 2009, marked the last time a United States Army Air Defense Artillery School Soldier will graduate from the school at Fort Bliss, Texas. Because of the Department of Defense's Base Realignment and Closure recommendations in 2005 the ADA school has moved to Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

The ADA branch encompasses six enlisted military occupation specialties, three for warrant officers, and one officer MOS. All will be taught at Fort Sill.

The 6th Air Defense Artillery Brigade, the brigade that runs the ADA school, uncased its colors at Fort Sill in June 2009 but moving an entire school and its Soldiers takes time; which is the reason the last advanced individual training, officer basic course, and warrant officer basic course students graduated five months after the brigade moved to Fort Sill.



The last class for the Patriot Launching Station Enhanced Operator/Maintainer course (14T) graduated from the Air Defense School Dec. 2. The Air Defense Artillery School is now located at Fort Sill, Okla. (Photo by Sgt. LaSonya Morales, 16th MPAD)

Although there are some that would like the ADA school to continue to be a part of Fort Bliss history, some think the move is a step forward for the Army.

"We're just merging with the field artillery, change is good, and I think it's great," CSM. Evaristo Torres, 2nd Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery command sergeant major said during the Patriot fire control enhanced operator/maintainer course (14E) graduation Dec. 8.

Torres' colleague in 3-43 ADA, CSM Kenneth Joseph, shared the same sentiment.

"[With] the relocation of the school to Fort Sill, ADA can look forward to new endeavors," Joseph said during the Patriot Launching Station Enhanced Operation/Maintainer course (14T) graduation Dec. 2.

Both Torres and Joseph enlisted in the U.S Army in 1989 and attended the ADA school. After enlisting in the Army in 1989, Torres graduated from the ADA school as a forward area air defense operator, while Joseph graduated as a man portable air defense system crewmember.

In 1940, the Army's Anti-Aircraft Training Center was established at Fort Bliss which officially became the Army Anti-Aircraft Artillery and Guided Missile Center in 1946. When ADA became a combine arms branch of the Army in 1968, the ADA school was founded the same year.

The graduates of the final classes said they knew they were apart of ADA history at Fort Bliss.

SGT. Jason Goodwin, who graduated in the final Patriot fire control enhanced operator/maintainer course (14E), said he took pride in being in the course's final Fort Bliss class.

"ADA has been here so long and it is an end of an era for ADA at Fort Bliss, but they're starting a new era at Fort Sill," Goodwin said, who re-classified from being a generator mechanic.

The 14E distinguished honor graduate, PFC Joseph Cole, graduated the course with a 98 percent average. He said his class was a close-knit group of Soldiers that helped each other to succeed.

"We are a strong group of individuals," said Cole. "We weren't like a normal class we were like family, and I think we ended [14E course at Fort Bliss] with a bang."

Torres said the Soldiers should be proud to be a part of the last classes, but now the graduates should focus on starting their careers.

"They need to learn for their sergeants and continue their education because nowhere in the world will you get 100 percent tuition like in the Army; by the time you get to where I am they can be completing a master's degree," he said.