

Shake, rattle, roll: 4-27 FA rocks Gnjilane

Story and photos by
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CAMP MONTEITH, Kosovo—Thunderous 155mm guns interrupted the night sky and rained down illumination rounds miles away during a live fire exercise, Jan. 2. The mission was a display of Kosovo Forces firepower and cooperation between U.S. and Russian soldiers.

Outside Gjilan/Gnjilane, cannon crews from 1st Platoon, Battery

C, 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment, Baumholder, Germany, fired the M-109A6 Paladin's 155mm guns. Each one of about 20 rounds exploded out of the barrel with a yellow ball of fire and a concussion that shook the ground.

The rounds illuminated the sky above U.S. and Russian soldiers working together at Observation Post Gun-

ner and Checkpoint 75. The operation took place after a week of reported fighting between Serb and Albanian forces just east of the checkpoint in the Ground Safety Zone. In a separate incident, suspected UCPMB forces engaged a joint U.S. and Russian patrol Dec. 17.

It took more than 60 seconds for the illumination rounds to reach



Pfc. Chris Aguilar, cannon crew member, 4-27 FA, secures illumination rounds inside an M-109A6 Paladin.

their target and light up the sky about 10 kilometers downrange, said Sgt. 1st Class Lawrence Maynard, platoon sergeant.

Each of the rounds, which were continuously fired, was propelled by about 40 pounds of gun powder, he said.

Four-man Paladin crews worked together to harness the power of the machine and direct it as needed. The Paladin chief uses the Automatic Fire Control

System to command the gun, said Staff Sgt. Charles Burden, Paladin chief.

The AFCS helps the chief communicate, track the Paladin's position on the earth and identify friendly positions as well as potential targets.

"Everyone knows their role and that we have to work together to get the job done," said Spc. Kevin Cassidy, Paladin driver.

While the unit had an earlier live fire scratched, this mission went off without a hitch for the Paladin crews.

"This mission shows we have a job here and we're ready to do it," said Sgt. Carlos Colon, Paladin gunner.

"The high-intensity training environment at Baumholder has prepared our soldiers to complete any

mission," said Capt. Thomas C. Hawn, battery commander, Battery C, 4-27 FA.

"Soldiers are motivated when they have a purpose," he said. "We're here to do our part to encourage peace in the region," he added.

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