

"Bandits" blast Kosovo

1AD's 1-37 AR sharpens gunnery skills while deployed



A cloud of smoke erupts following the blast of the main gun of an M1A1 Abrams tank at a live-fire exercise at Ramjan/Donje Range Sept. 17.

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CAMP BONDSTEEL, Kosovo – “Being a tanker is a very perishable skill. There’s a lot of moving parts inside a tank. It takes a lot of practice and drill to remain proficient. The timing is very strict; the target arrangements are very difficult. We selected our four most difficult engagements and put them in this scenario,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Jeffrey Kennedy, 1st Battalion, 37th Armored Regiment “Bandits”, about the training exercise conducted at Ramjan-Donje Ramnjane Range Sept. 17. The range was intended to help the soldiers retain their edge and high level of skill with the tanks.

“The 1-37 Bandits have been in sector in Kosovo for about three-and-a-half months. We’re just a little past our halfway point, and as you stay in sector,

we don’t lose everything while we’re on peace-support operations here in Kosovo,” said Kennedy.

“We’re down here doing a peace-keeping mission. Sometimes we get a little out of tune with our skills. So, by doing this, it helps us keep on top of our armor crew skills.”

Spc. Kenneth Lebowitz
M1A1 Abrams crewman
1-37 AR
“Bandits”

combat skills begin to degrade. Our master gunners put this range together and put this scenario together to enhance our war-fighting capabilities so



Crew members from 1-37 Armor prepare a .50 caliber machine gun to hurl rounds down range to fill simulated-enemy targets full of holes.



A ball of fire emerges from the 120mm main gun of an M1A1 Abrams as a shot tears across the countryside to intercept and destroy a simulated enemy target.

keeping mission. Sometimes we get a little out of tune with our skills. So, by doing this, it helps us keep on top of our armor crew skills,” said Spc. Kenneth Lebowitz, an M1A1 Abrams crewman with the 1-37 “Bandits”.

“We were firing from a two-tier combat position. Our first engagement was a set of troops in a BRDM (an amphibious-armored car manufactured in the former Soviet Union) we fired at with a 50 cal. and 7.62mm machine guns,” explained Kennedy. “Our second engagement was fired from a holed-out fighting position. We simulated the fire-control system having a malfunction. We used our old gunner’s artillery sight, where the gunner estimated the range, found the proper range line to engage and destroy the target.”

Later in the evening, the soldiers conducted a hasty breach supported with 120mm mortars. They also conducted a platoon-defense exercise, supported with 155mm artillery illumination/leader rounds and mortars.

During the afternoon exercise, soldiers from the Polish-Ukrainian Battalion and the Lithuanian Army watched as the crew of the M1A1 Abrams got back in their tanks and honed their talents.

“Of course, as an armor officer, you dream to see the differences in the preparation, shooting and the tactics. This is a good chance to do that. I’m really happy to see the inside of the tanks,” said Capt. Sergei Karanuchenko, a Lithuanian armor officer.

“We brought them out here to

show them the supreme fire power of the U.S. Army represented by the 1-37 Armor “Bandits”. Also, to show them how a U.S. Army unit works and how they run their training exercises. It gives them a good partnership experience and good exposure to a U.S. unit. It also gives the U.S. soldiers good exposure to Polish-Ukrainian Battalion equipment,” said 1st Lt. Todd Kremer, the Analysis and Control Team OIC and Polish-Ukrainian Battalion liaison officer for the 501st Military Intelligence Battalion.

According to Kremer, 12 Ukrainian soldiers, 12 Polish soldiers and four Lithuanian soldiers attended the exercise.

“They absolutely loved it,” Kremer said. “From the boom of the tank to being on the ground and meeting the soldiers. It’s a wonderful experience.”