



Photo courtesy of Capt. Scott D. Applegate

Sgt. Joseph Martin, an MLRS crew member with Battery B, 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery Regiment, fires an MK-19 grenade launcher down range as 1st Lt. Joshua Pritchett, a Battery B platoon leader, looks on during one of the early phases of the Operation Deep Forge exercise.

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — Rockets blazing into the sky above is not an unusual sight at the Grafenwoehr Training Center, Germany. But the ones fired April 17 through May 7, during Operation Deep Forge held special significance as they signaled the final step in the process of certifying the 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery Regiment (Multiple Launch Rocket System), as a battle-ready unit.

“The unit was formed last July and activated Sept. 15,” said 1st Lt.

Michael J. Pelkey, assistant S-3 for the 1-94 FA (MLRS). “Since then we have been doing a variety of exercises and training to prepare us for this operation. The exercise went very well. We really kicked some butt. All of the commanders were really pleased. We completed all of our goals and then some. Most of the battalion had done this kind of stuff before, but this was the first time they did it all

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together at the same time.”

Most of the training leading up to the exercise and the earlier stages of the exercise itself were geared toward getting the smaller units within the battalion prepared and certified on their own separate roles within the battalion. They conducted individual and crew-served weapons ranges and table exercises designed to prepare each soldier for every kind of mission they could face as part of a battle-ready unit. Soldiers fired M-16A2 rifles, M-2 machine guns, and MK-19 grenade launchers during the exercises.

“The soldiers got to go to a new training area that they had not been to before,” said Staff Sgt. William J. Olenick, positioning azimuth determining system team chief. “They got to do more training and training on a larger scale than they had ever done. Before this exercise, most of the batteries pretty much just worked alone. This exercise had them meshed together. It showed them how all the pieces fit and work together in a wartime effort.”

The earlier, smaller-scaled

exercises during the operation were designed to train and prepare the soldiers for the final graded live-fire portion of the exercise. The soldiers trained on everything from joint-unit raid strategies to operational vehicle decontamination. The battalion scored the highest fire mission percentage in U.S. Army, Europe, completing 89 percent of the missions they went on, according to Pelkey.

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could do,” said Pelkey. “Now that we have been certified operational, we are the second largest [source of fire-power] in the 1st Armored Division.”

A lot of the soldiers had been looking forward to the live-fire exercise for a long time, according to Pfc. Ervin E. Beisch, an MLRS crew member with Battery B, 1-94 FA (MLRS).

“This was my first live-fire exercise,” said Beisch. “It was exciting and exhilarating. It was a real rush to finally fire actual live rockets. More than anything else, I think this exer-

cise was a real confidence boost. We did everything we set out to do, and we did it well. I am really looking forward to our next mission or exercise so we can do it again and maybe even do it better.”

The significance of the rocket launchers’ effectiveness was not lost on the soldiers.

“We are now combat ready,” said Olenick. “We are prepared for any mission we might face in the future. We are ready to do our part for the 1st Armored Division.”



Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st. Class Thomas Miller

A 1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery Regiment, Multiple Launch Rocket System, known as a “Gridsmasher,” launches a rocket into the Grafenwoehr sky during the live-fire portion of the Operation Deep Forge Exercise. The system earned the nickname for its ability to take out a 1,000-square-meter grid.

Operation 1-94FA battle ready  
Deep Forge certifies

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