

Air Defense

Fires Stinger

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With a squeeze of the trigger, the round slides violently out of the tube and arcs smoothly toward the sky, honing in on its target. As the missile nears the target, the gunner and the crowd wait to see the round intercept and destroy its target.

Batteries C, 1st Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery and 4th Battalion, 3rd Air Defense Artillery, recently found a way to train, entertain and show family members what they do.

During training July 7, family members and friends of the soldiers from both Fort Riley ADA batteries were given the opportunity to see the equipment soldiers use and also see them in action.

Guests were provided the opportunity to view static displays such as the Stinger anti-aircraft weapon, the Bradley Fighting Vehicle, and one of the drone airplanes used as target for the missile teams.

The purpose of the displays according to 1st Lt. Richard Downs, executive officer for Battery C, 4th Bn., 3rd ADA, were to show the

families the equipment the soldiers use.

“We want the families to see what the soldiers are going to be using out there,” said Downs. “That way they understand what’s going to happen.”

After family members and friends had an opportunity to learn about the equipment, the show began.

Over the hill, the sounds of two Bradley Fighting Vehicle engines roared to life. Shortly after the thunderous roar, the Bradleys came over the hill stopping at a predetermined firing point, enabling the Stinger crew to exit from the back of the vehicle.

Poised with weapon in hand, the crew eagerly awaited the arrival of their target. The target for this mission was a remote-controlled airplane. Downs explained to onlookers the purpose of using the airplane.

“Sometimes we use what’s called a Ballistic Aerial Target,” said Downs. “It’s a missile which is fired into the air emitting a heat signature

which is similar to an airplane’s. The heat signature is important because the Stinger is a heat-seeking missile.

The airplane is beneficial because it mimics the flight patterns of a real airplane.”

The small engine of a remote-controlled airplane doesn’t put out anywhere near as much heat as an enemy jet would, so flares are strapped to the rear of the aircraft to make it more realistic.

As the aircraft moves through the sky, mimicking the flight of an enemy pilot, the gunner aims the weapon at it and waits to hear a tone indicating that the missile is locked on. When the tone sounds, the gunner raises the weapon slightly higher than the target. Raising the weapon compensates for the missile’s engine, said Downs.

“The missile is shot out of the weapon 17 feet before the engine comes on. This is so the gunner

doesn’t get overwhelmed by the exhaust of it,” said Downs.

“The missile drops slightly before the engine engages, that’s why they raise the weapon before firing it,” he said.

After the weapon is raised, the fireworks begin.

The Stinger launches its intercept path towards the enemy as the crowd cheers, hoping the two will come together in a destructive meeting.

The cheers intensify when, with a flash and an explosion, the two objects meet each other, marking destruction of the target.

Downs said that both of the batteries get the opportunity to conduct a live fire each year, but doing it together is a twist.

“Normally one battery fires at National Training Center and the other one conducts this exercise,” Downs said. “This year we are firing together . . . I’m sure we’ll learn from each other.”