

him despite the failure of the rapid-fire function of his 25 mm cannon. He could still fire, but only at slow rate. McNinch kept a keen eye on the targets and plugged away until each target smashed to the ground.

“The best part [of my job] is doing this right here. It’s what we get paid for. It’s just to show that 1-4 ADA isn’t just about ground gunnery. We can come out here and take down the air, too,” McNinch said proudly.

But soldiers hit the training bull’s eye even if they missed their target. The target they hit was the experience of training and exposure to live-fire munitions, according to Putko.

“The second BAT that went off, I engaged it coming off the BAT launcher ... I just couldn’t acquire tone (the signal signifying missile lock). I got a miss,” explained Pvt. Calvin J. Burpee, 1-4 ADA MANPAD Stinger gunner. “The second team that fired acquired tone. I could just hear it screaming at my position. And if you have ever heard a Stinger missile, you know when you get tone. It just starts going off. He did a proper lead and all that and he missed as well, so we were a little disappointed about that.

[What I’m taking away from this experience is] knowing what I have to do next time when I come out in a situation like this: acquire tone.”

Developing team building and esprit de corps were also products of the aerial gunnery.

“We do a lot of training. We just had a competition to see who would fire the missiles and it just so happens that [my team] and another team in my platoon got first and second places out of the battalion,” Burpee proudly explained. “We were kind of hyped up about that and we kind of hyped ourselves up into thinking that we could come out here and do great things by hitting these targets.”

The satisfaction and training value cited by Burpee was echoed by his battalion commander.

“We will recognize the tough, rigorous training that these soldiers have endured, and [I] have been very satisfied with the way the noncommissioned officers and the officers have performed in so far as keeping the soldiers highly motivated. It has indeed been a privilege to serve by their sides,” said Putko in recognition of his battalion.

McNinch summed up the attitude and teamwork displayed by

Burpee, Putko and the rest of USAREUR’s Air Defense Artillery soldiers. “We got a top notch gunnery program going – the best, I think, in the Army,” said McNinch.



*A 1-4 ADA Avenger HMMWV crewman loads Stinger anti-aircraft missiles into his vehicle's firing pod. The pods rotate on a turret mounted in the cargo area of a HMMWV.*



*Lt. Col. Putko, 1-4 ADA battalion commander (back), observes 1st Armored Division air defense soldiers employing an Avenger HMMWV remote control firing unit. Using the remote control allows the crew to fire Stinger anti-aircraft missiles from the Avenger with an added advantage of cover away from the vehicle.*