

Pre-Patriot Mater Gunners Course

By Capt Robertson 31st ADA PAO



FORT SILL, Okla. - Striving for excellence is something for which the noncommissioned officers of 31st Air Defense Artillery Brigade are known. A shining example of this is the two-week Pre-Patriot Master Gunner Course offered to aspiring Patriot Master Gunners. In September of 2010, 4-3rd ADA Battalion took note of the 65 percent graduation rate of students going through the Patriot Master Gunner Course held on Fort Sill. The leadership wanted to be proactive in ensuring their students had the best training available prior to the course so they developed the pre-course. The pre-course is a two-week course which is usually taught by the Battalion Patriot Master Gunner, but due to the high op-tempo of 31st ADA, the current course is being taught by the Brigade Patriot Master Gunner, Master Sgt. Jeremy Chapman.

When asked about the benefits of the course, Chapman said, "This course offers an in-depth introduction to the Patriot weapons systems and better prepares the student for the 10 week course taught by the Fires Center of Excellence here at Fort Sill." The current average graduation rate of the course is 72 percent, but since the inception of the pre-course, 31st ADA Soldiers have achieved an 85 percent graduation rate at the FCOE course. Both courses are open to all Staff Sgt through Master Sgt. who hold the Military Occupation Skill of 14T, Patriot launching station enhanced operator/maintainer or 14E, Patriot fire control enhanced operator/maintainer.

The Patriot Master Gunner Course offers three basic advantages to the student: each graduating NCO becomes a system expert -- a more technically competent, confident, and agile leader; they become

better trainers for their Soldiers within their firing units: and they earn the additional skill identifier of T4, which advantages them for promotions and other sought-after duty positions. A big portion of the pre-course is taught on the reconfigurable table-top trainer or RT3, which allows for various scenario-based simulations to be conducted and immerse the student with the Patriot system and its intricacies. Staff Sgt. Garret, a launcher platoon sergeant in D Battery 3-2nd ADA, is currently in the pre-course. When asked why he decided to attend the course he said, "I wanted to get a better understanding of how the Patriot system worked and functioned down-range.

Before this course I had a vague understanding of the processes. It really has made me appreciate and respect the system and its capabilities a lot more." The course begins and ends with a written test designed to establish a preliminary knowledge baseline of the student's understanding of the systems and provide an assessment of the skills learned and retained. The students will finish the pre-course on April 5 and begin the Patriot Masters Gunner Course on April 8.