

# AIR DEFENDERS DEPLOY TO CENTCOM

Article and photos by Sgt. Maria L. Kappell, 69th ADA Brigade Public Affairs

**FORT HOOD, Texas** – The past week has been a historic one for the 69th Air Defense Artillery (ADA) Brigade. Soldiers assigned to the unit have been undergoing a large amount of preparation and training, in a short amount of time, ensuring readiness for their upcoming deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF).

The 1st Battalion, 62nd Air Defense Artillery (1-62 ADA) Regiment had only 96 hours after receipt of orders to get approximately 100 Soldiers boarded onto an aircraft, leaving “The Great Place” and their families behind and embarking on the mission of “guarding the skies” in the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of operations.

“The Soldiers and leadership had a lot to accomplish before getting on the planes to cross the ocean, and the timeline to take care of business was very short. It was a step-by-step process in which Soldiers were given a task to complete, completed it, and then moved on to the next task,” said Sgt. Jonny Lane, a food service sergeant deploying with 1-62 ADA.

Soldiers had to make sure their online training certificates were up to date, go through medical and dental check-ups, gather necessary equipment, and pack their bags. Additionally, some Soldiers needed to store household goods and privately owned vehicles, as well as ensure their finances were in order. Soldiers with families had to make certain their loved ones were prepared for their departure.

Elizabeth Olaes, the wife of Staff Sgt. Carlos Olaes, an air defender assigned to 1-62 ADA, said that the experience has been very emotional, and it’s challenging to explain the situation to their children, who are 4 years old and 20 months old.

“I’ve been trying to hold on to [my husband] as much as I can – any second, any minute,” Elizabeth said.

*At left, Staff Sgt. Carlos Olaes, an air defender assigned to 1-62 ADA, spends time with his 20 month old son before heading to the airfield on 9 June 2013.*

Some of the families, like Lane’s, prefer to say their goodbyes at home rather than just before getting on the busses shuttling them to the airfield. Lane is leaving behind a wife, Jessica, and four children, ages 3, 8, 9 and 11 years old.

Even though the family knew Lane was deploying, it was important to “carry on with life and do the little things, like fishing and playing in the yard with the kids,” up until the very last minute, Lane said.

Families are an important part of mission success, and it is important for Soldiers to know there are people here at Fort Hood taking care of them, said Maj. Vernon Shackelford, the Brigade

Chaplain for 69th ADA Brigade.

For many Soldiers, like Lane and Olaes, this is not their first deployment, however, for many others it is.



It is important for the Soldiers to remember what they were trained to do, and they will be successful, said Brig. Gen. James Dickinson, the Commanding General of the 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command (AAMDC) at Fort Bliss, as he spoke to the Soldiers prior to them boarding the aircraft.

“Patriot is a team. In the end it’s you taking care of each other and doing what you were trained to do,” Dickinson said.

69th ADA Brigade is a part of the 32nd AAMDC. Its mission is to rapidly deploy forces worldwide to conduct joint and combined/coalition integrated air and missile defense operations in support of CENTCOM and other combatant commanders providing protection of critical assets and support regional security.

At right, 32d Army Air and Missile Defense Command (AAMDC) Commanding General, Brig. Gen. James Dickinson, speaks to Soldiers assigned to the 1st Battalion, 62nd Air Defense Artillery (1-62 ADA) Regiment before they boarded an aircraft at Fort Hood on 7 June 2013.



At left, Air Defense Artillery Regimental Command Sergeant Major, Command Sgt. Maj. Jerome Wiggins, spends time with 1-62 ADA deploying prior to their flight on 11 June 2013.

\*\* (Background photo) On 11 June 2013, air defenders assigned to 1-62 ADA embark on their latest mission as they board an outbound aircraft.

