



Members of the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing (AEW) receive a tour of a Patriot site operated by the 1st Battalion, 62nd Air Defense Artillery (1-62 ADA) Regiment at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia on 14 June 2013. 1-62 ADA's mission is to intercept tactical ballistic missiles in defense of the base, which is integrated into operations with the Air Force. The tour of 1-62 ADA's Patriot site was part of the Army's 238th Birthday celebration.

JOINT MISSION SHOWCASED ON ARMY'S BIRTHDAY

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SOUTHWEST ASIA – On 14 June 2013, the U.S. Army's 238th Birthday, members of the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing (AEW) were shown exactly what it takes to keep two Patriot missile sites running during a tour of the site here. Twenty-four-seven operations and drop-of-a-hat readiness are just a few features of the 1st Battalion, 62nd Air Defense Artillery (1-62 ADA) Regiment whose mission affects all service members serving in the region.

Heavily integrated with both the U.S. Air Force and Navy, 1-62 ADA's mission is to defend against tactical ballistic missiles, or short- to medium-range missiles, by engaging them in the air.

"We all work together. This is a no-fail, one-team, one-fight mission," said U.S. Army Spc. Thomas Elo, an ADA fire control assistant assigned to the 69th AADA Brigade home based at Fort Hood, Texas, currently attached to the 727th Expeditionary Air Control Squadron (EACS) here. "It doesn't matter what uniform we wear. We see the same things and communicate with each other well."



A launching station trainer, left, and a guided-missile transport trainer were used to show members of the 380th AEW the mission of 1-62 ADA during a guided tour of a Patriot site, as part of the Army's 238th Birthday celebration, at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia on 14 June 2013.

The joint mission starts with shared radar feed. While in non-alert status, 1-62 ADA shares a radar system controlled and operated by the 727th EACS. The system can scan up to 200 nautical miles in

diameter and up to 99,000 feet for unidentified tracks of flying objects. Working hand-in-hand and passing information back and forth, 1-62 ADA and the 727th EACS are constantly monitoring the airspace in the region. The information flow also goes through the E-3 Sentry and can be passed on to any of the 380th AEW aircraft in the region.

When it comes to detection and tracking of enemy and friendly targets, both the Sentry and 1-62 ADA contribute to the air defense system, said Lt. Col. Chauncey Houston, 380th AEW chief of safety and a Sentry pilot with 14 years of experience.

“My most unique experience with the Patriot missile guys came during Operation Iraqi Freedom – I gained a tremendous amount of respect for and fear of this system,” said Houston.

At right, U.S. Army Spc. Steven LaPointe, a 1-62 ADA Patriot Launcher Station Enhanced Operator/ Maintainer, shows members of the 380th AEW the generator of a guided-missile launcher during a tour of a Patriot missile site on 14 June 2013, as part of the Army’s 238th Birthday celebration.



Without his defensive system operable and the possibility of enemy fire, Houston was forced to divert to a safe zone. After considering the location of a Patriot missile site for protection, he knew exactly where to land.

“In emergency situations, the locations and operation of a Patriot missile site is always a top five consideration,” said Houston. “They provide a layer of protection that is unprecedented.”

Houston, who went on a tour of 1-62 ADA’s Patriot site during the Army’s birthday, said he feels very comfortable here because of the professionalism, training, teamwork and protection the unit provides to the 380th AEW.

The 1-62 ADA’s protection level of the 380th AEW is driven by their state of readiness, decided by higher headquarters. In steady-state, or non-alert status, they maintain two Patriot sites and train at least half of each day to operate them.



Their mission encompasses five specialties split between operating in a tactical operations center and the field; they include: Patriot fire control enhanced operator/maintainer, Patriot launcher station enhanced operator/maintainer, early warning systems operator, tactical control officer, and tactical control assistant.

At left, U.S. Army 1st Lt. Ryan Thompson, a 1-62 ADA Tactical Control Officer, briefs members of the 380th AEW during a tour of the missile site on 14 June 2013, as part of the Army’s 238th Birthday celebration in Southwest Asia.

The ADA fire control officer attached to the 727th EACS provides direction to 1-62. Higher headquarters assesses the target and the fire control officer tells 1-62 ADA where to find it.

“We spend most of the day training to be ready to go when we are called,” said 1st Lt. Thomas Bentley, a 1-62 ADA tactical director. “We are always ready to go when the air control squadron tells us what, when and where we are engaging.”

The Patriot missiles, which are defensive in nature, can shoot down surface-to-surface and some air-to-surface missiles protecting aircraft, personnel and radars on the ground.

“It’s great being here, we are all on the same communication level,” said Elo. “It’s amazing to feel like part of the team contributing to a larger mission.”



Above, members of the 380th AEW tour a 1-62 ADA Patriot missile site in Southwest Asia on 14 June 2013.