



E-62 Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), Picture taken upon first historical Gunnery Certification, completed at Fort Hood, Texas, Sept. 21, 2017.

# E-62nd THAAD and Patriot interop success

By Sgt. 1st Class Sergio Arana and Sgt. 1st Class Marcus Wofford

During their first ever Missile Defense Agency Flight Test, Soldiers from Battery E, 62nd Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 69th Air Defense Artillery Brigade and 4th Battalion, 5th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 69th Air Defense Artillery Brigade conducted a Congressionally mandated interoperability test between the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense and Patriot weapons at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico April 6, 2018. The test was designated Flight Test Other-35 (FTX-35) and was executed by MDA as an operational test with Army Test and Evaluation Command and Director of Operational Test and Evaluation oversight.

While the Army has plans to further integrate the two weapon systems within the next two years, this testing focused on what can be done now. Prior to the test, E-62nd THAAD made history while stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. They were the first THAAD unit to qualify on the weapon system, breaking in their new site on West Fort Hood. After receiving equipment, the unit was designated as the test battery for the Army's THAAD program which prompted them to assume the mission of FTX-35.

FTX-35 progressed in three phases, which led to the culminating live-fire event. The success of the mission ultimately means a more layered defense for the air defense community and is slowly shaping the future of the way air defense fights.

"Conducting tests such as FTX-35 in an operational environment utilizing trained and certified THAAD Soldiers is absolutely vital to understanding both the strengths

and weakness of the new hardware and software before it is fielded to the Army. Without these type of tests, Army leaders cannot accurately assess the effectiveness, suitability and survivability of the systems to accomplish their assigned air and missile defense missions," said Chief Warrant Officer 5 John Fallin, ATEC.

During the test, Soldiers using the THAAD and Patriot were able to detect the short-range Lynx target and exchange Link 16 messages with data produced by each of the weapon systems. This created a common air picture and supported situational awareness of the target and what asset it was threatening. The Link 16 information was constantly exchanged between both weapon systems and allowed Soldiers operating them to conduct simulated engagements.

Not only did this test prove THAAD and Patriot could work concurrently, but it also gave THAAD Soldiers the ability to test THAAD 3.0 software upgrades, making E-62nd THAAD the first unit to use such software. The upgrades are crucial to not only improving THAAD radar capabilities but also strengthening the THAAD interceptor arsenal.

"This was an excellent training experience to give our Soldiers the opportunity to grow tactically and become more efficient on their weapon system. Being a part of these software upgrades gives our operators direct influence on what is crucial to the warfighter during real world applications," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Benjamin Schunn, E-62nd battery trainer.

The success of this mission is just a small taste of the potential working relationship that both THAAD and Patriot have together. With the most recent THAAD deployment to South Korea, alongside Patriot, this test gives way to the possibility of other such deployments not only to the Pacific Command theater but to other operations around the world.

Read more here: [https://www.army.mil/article/195987/69th\\_adas\\_thaad\\_battery\\_is\\_mission\\_qualified](https://www.army.mil/article/195987/69th_adas_thaad_battery_is_mission_qualified)

Sgt. 1st Class Sergio Arana is currently the E Battery, 62nd Air Defense Artillery Regiment fire control platoon sergeant at Fort Hood, Texas. Arana has served as a launcher crewmember, team leader, Terminal High Altitude Area Defense System maintenance noncommissioned officer, sensor platoon sergeant, launcher platoon sergeant and fire control platoon sergeant. He was part of the first THAAD deployment to Guam in 2013 as the system maintenance NCOIC, the unit movement NCOIC and the forward base evaluations and training NCOIC.

Sgt. 1st Class Marcus Wofford is the E Battery, 62nd Air Defense Artillery Regiment launcher platoon sergeant at Fort Hood, Texas. Wofford served as a Patriot launcher crewmember, team chief, section chief, Patriot launcher platoon sergeant, Advanced Individual Training instructor/writer, and Patriot Training Assistance field team liaison. He has deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2012 and was part of the first mobile training team to Taiwan in 2015 where he served as a primary instructor for the Patriot Launcher Station Enhanced Operator/Maintainer Course.