

# Expeditionary Fires

## Air defense on the move

By 1st Lt. Nicholas Culbert

This past November, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War, a war which is infamous for its horrendous death tolls as well as static trench warfare tactics. As the Army reflects on warfare of the present day, we can see many parallels to warfare 100 years ago.

The past 15 years have been characterized by counter insurgency operations centered around fortified bases of operations across the Middle East. Now as the Department of Defense shifts its focus to near-peer threats from Russia and China, air defense units must be prepared to once again provide protective Fires to maneuver units and critical assets in a mobile war with fluid battle lines.

The activation of the 5th Battalion, 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment in Ansbach, Germany, on Nov. 28, 2018, was a momentous occasion for United States European Command as well as the Air Defense Artillery branch. It marks a resurgence of the Maneuver Short-Range Air Defense (M-SHORAD) mission in support of U.S. Army maneuver forces. Symbolically, 5-4th ADA's re-activation represents the heart and soul of the Air Defense Artillery mission, which as defined by the Army, is "to protect the force and selected geopolitical assets from aerial attack, missile attack and surveillance."<sup>1</sup> This is further defined by maximum protection of U.S. forces, something which in a mobile war, cannot be done by remaining comfortably behind the lines in a fixed location.

The Army's M-SHORAD plat-



*Top: An artist's conception of a Mobile Short-Range Air Defense System. (Courtesy illustration)*

*Bottom: A set of three Army Patriot missile launchers stand ready to defend the 380th Air Expeditionary Wing against airborne threats at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia. The Patriot Air and Missile Defense System is just one component planned for the future Qatar Air and Missile Defense Operations Center. (Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson/U.S. Air Force)*

<sup>1</sup> United States. United States Army. Army Publishing Directorate. Army Publishing Directorate. Nov. 2, 2015. Accessed Dec. 8, 2018. [https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR\\_pubs/DR\\_c/pdf/web/fm3\\_01.pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_c/pdf/web/fm3_01.pdf).



*Spc. Matthew Williams, a cavalry scout assigned to 2nd Cavalry Regiment, fires a Stinger missile using Man-Portable Air Defense Systems during Artemis Strike, a live fire-exercise at the NATO Missile Firing Installation at Crete, Greece, Nov. 6, 2017. (Sgt. 1st Class Jason Epperson/U.S. Army)*

form hosts a robust variety of combat capabilities from the latest generation of infrared homing and radar guided missiles, to on-board radars and a 30 mm cannon.

This newly designed Stryker's tools are designed to provide close fire support and air defense protection for infantry and armor troops in close combat with the enemy. In the same formation as these new vehicles will be man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS) batteries. These units will be comprised of dismounted Soldiers with shoulder-mounted anti-aircraft weapons embedded with infantry and ground forces to help better seize and hold terrain.

In the coming years, all across the globe, we can expect numerous more battalions like 5-4th ADA to be stood up.<sup>2</sup> This renewed capability is integral to the

air defense employment guidelines of defense in depth, overlapping Fires and mutual support. Unfortunately, there is not one air defense system that can do everything. For this reason, it is critical that we build a network of systems with complimentary capabilities which support one another and defend the force. As we strive towards this goal of integrating M-SHORAD units with the maneuver force, we must also stress the already organic expeditionary capability of other air defense systems.

A culture shift within the Army's high to medium ranged air defense (HIMAD) forces must occur. Units like 108th Air Defense Artillery Brigade have already begun a transformation centered on expeditionary operations and a 24/7 tactical mindset. This flexibility is crucial in order to appropriately defend critical assets at

the strategic level, like division or corps headquarters; whose locations will, during a war with near-peer competitors, most certainly ebb and flow with the front line.

A vast compliment of air defense systems and units on the modern battlefield will help enable victory for U.S. forces and deter aggression from America's adversaries. While other parts of the Army re-organize themselves to better protect the nation, the Air Defense Artillery Branch is no exception. By modernizing our weapon systems and transforming our culture, we will always remain "First to Fire" in defense of liberty.

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<sup>2</sup> Judson, Jen. "US Army's Interim Short-range Air Defense Solution Crystallizes." *Defense News*. June 29, 2018. Accessed Dec. 8, 2018. <https://www.defensenews.com/land/2018/06/28/us-armys-interim-short-range-air-defense-solution-crystallizes/>.