Theater Security Cooperation Week
Patriot battalion forges bonds with UAE air defenders

By 1st Lt. Jessica Beatty

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The concept of Theater Security Cooperation seeks to integrate key U.S. and partner nation capabilities to create a much stronger defense capability with less reliance on U.S. assets and resources. The 1st Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery Regiment hosted a Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) Week with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Air Defense Forces from April 30 to May 2 in Abu Dhabi. The Cobra Strike Battalion’s TSC Week involved events that incorporated tactics, maintenance and social events. This week strengthened relationships, built interoperability and further developed combined tactics, all to enhance mutual readiness within the theater.

With the changing geopolitical landscape and subsequent refocus of U.S. military posturing towards near-peer adversaries such as Russia and China, the Central Command area of responsibility is in transition. For the past decade, U.S. forces have maintained a robust and constant presence throughout the Middle East. United States Army Air and Missile Defense battalions have continued to deploy to the CENTCOM theater regularly with no reduction in operation tempo despite the overall drawdown of Army forces in the region. Patriot units are a low-density force and the demand for their capabilities to defend against air and missile threats is increasing, which means that they will continue to deploy across the globe.

In the past decade the increase of Patriot foreign military sales has resulted in many of our partner nations being able to provide for their own defense, potentially lessening the strain on U.S. Air and Missile Defense (AMD) systems. TSC Week contributed to this effort by furthering tactical and maintenance knowledge while executing key leader engagements and numerous combined social events.

The Cobra Strike Battalion’s tactical operations section hosted an Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) working group early in the week. During the IAMD working group, tacticians from both nations discussed the potential of bilateral cooperation and the advantages of effective theater security cooperation through mutual defense. They also agreed to regular tactics seminars and exchanges, designed to expose each side to tactics, techniques and procedures used by each force, as well as discuss lessons learned.

“I think the working group helped us find a common ground with our counterparts, and helped us build off each other’s successes,” said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Ron Steeg, 1-43rd ADA standardization officer in charge, as he explained the success of the IAMD working group. “In the future, we plan to conduct combined Reconfigurable Table Top Trainer exercises, tactical seminars and defense design sessions in order to maintain efficient theater security cooperation established with the Emirati Air Force.”

Extending integration to the operator, Cobra Strike held a launching station reload and maintenance competition on the U.S. Patriot site. The event consisted of two teams mixed with Emirati and U.S. launcher operators working together to accomplish missile reloads and conduct maintenance checks and conventional repairs. The Soldiers demonstrated their proficiency on fault identification and movement of canisters on and off the launching station while comparing tactics, techniques and procedures unique to both sides.

“The combined reload exercise was an awesome experience for our Soldiers to build relationships with our Emirati counterparts, an opportunity that the average Soldier would not otherwise have,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jared Pointer, 1-43rd ADA battalion master evaluator. “This friendly competition helped the Soldiers gain different perspectives on training while also improving the readiness of both organizations.”

A key objective of TSC Week was developing and finalizing a plan that continues to increase the frequency of combined events and knowledge exchanges. To this end, key leaders participated in a combined Senior Leader Forum (SLF) in order to discuss the way forward for this partnership. U.S. leaders that participated in this forum were Maj. Gen. Benjamin Corell, commander, 34th Infantry Division, Brig. Gen. Clement Coward, commander, 32nd Air and Missile Defense, Col. Jason Hokaj, commander, AFCENT Air Warfare Center, and Lt. Col. Michael Rodick and Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur Jones, the 1st Battalion 43rd Air Defense Artillery Battalion commander and command sergeant major. The command-
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Rodick commented that the SLF was “true progress toward combined enhancement of our air and missile defense readiness. I believe that this week of security theater cooperation with our Emirati Air Force counterparts is paramount to the legacy of combined partnership within theater.”

In addition to tactical exchanges and working groups, a priority was improving social interaction and esprit de corps of all air defenders, regardless of nationality. To that end, Cobra Strike hosted a combined Noncommissioned Officer Induction Ceremony, as well as a Sports Day and Saint Barbara’s Dining In for U.S. and Emirati Soldiers alike. The NCO Induction Ceremony celebrate 20 newly promoted U.S. Army NCOs while emphasizing the future leadership within the Air Defense Artillery Branch. The unique facet of this ceremony was the recognition of 10 Emirati NCOs in a ceremony that has no counterpart in their organization.

“The NCO Induction Ceremony was a great success in not only recognizing our new junior non-commissioned officers, but also in sharing the tradition with our Emirati counterparts and coalition forces,” said Sgt. Maj. Albert Fletcher, 1-43rd ADA operations sergeant major. “The ceremony is meant to express that there is more of a crossroad to becoming a noncommissioned officer than just a rank. It is a transition to a higher level of responsibility and duties to our formation. I believe that this combined induction ceremony will pave the way for the Emirati Air Force and Air Defense to adapt in the future.”

The Sports Day, held at the UAE Air Defense Headquarters, was the epitome of a team-building exercise. Volleyball and soccer matches featured combined teams that learned to work together on the field. Additionally, the U.S. forces introduced their Emirati counterparts to Ultimate Frisbee and participated in a joint Jiu Jitsu training session and demonstration.

Pfc. Clarence Allen, who played volleyball with the Emirati team, said “I enjoyed playing with the Soldiers and getting to know them on a personal level. I also received an awesome gift at the end of the game. The gift was very sentimental, which showed me the importance of our relationship here in the UAE.”

The capstone event was the St. Barbara’s Dining In, where 1-43rd ADA exposed the UAE forces to all the customs and traditions of a formal U.S. Army celebration. In turn, Emirati cuisine was served, with U.S. attendees raving about the great taste and plentiful quantity. Coward served as the guest speaker and host for the evening. After an entertaining grog ceremony celebrating the 43rd ADA Regiment’s lineage, a Regimental Affiliation and Honorable Order of St. Barbara Induction Ceremony capped off the evening, with many U.S. Army, Air Force and UAE contributors being presented their medals.

“The [St. Barbara’s Day] dining in was an event that exceeded our expectations. It was the culmination of a groundbreaking TSC week working with our Emirati counterparts and everyone had a great time and enjoyed the terrific food,” said Capt. Derek Sanchez, 1-43rd’s TSC officer.

The 1-43rd ADA “Cobra Strike” Battalion’s Theater Security Week was a remarkable opportunity for leaders and Soldiers to gain a better understanding of the importance of their allied partnership in UAE. From friendly competition on the Patriot System and sports fields, the Cobra Strike and Emirati Soldiers shared the experiences and laughter that solidified relationships and enhanced tactical readiness in theater. Through this successful “TSC Week” and increased interoperability with partner AMD forces, the lethality and operational readiness of the Air Defense Artillery Branch will only become stronger across the globe.

1st Lt. Jessica Beatty is an Air Defense officer currently stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas. She has served as a fire control platoon leader and a Patriot battery executive officer. She currently serves as the Headquarters and Headquarters battery executive officer for the 1-43rd Air Defense Artillery battalion.