



Spc. Amanda Hendrick (right) raises the outriggers on a Patriot launching station, preparing it to move, as Spc. Daniel Davis directs her Oct. 28 at Osan Air Base, South Korea, during the Missile Defender of the Year competition. Hendrick and Davis are part of B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 1st Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade at Camp Carroll, South Korea. (Photo by Jonathan (Jay) Koester)

# Air Defense Artillery Faces Real-World Mission in Korea

*By Jonathan (Jay) Koester*

NCO Journal

**W**hen Soldiers arrive to the 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade at Osan Air Base, South Korea, NCOs let them know right away they are about to engage in a real-world mission that will probably be different from anything they've experienced before in the Army.

With the Korean peninsula technically still at war 60 years after an armistice was signed, South Korea is counting on these air defenders to keep it safe from any possible attack from North Korea, said 1st Sgt. Luis E. Cruz, first sergeant for Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 35th ADA Brigade.

“Being here in Korea, in a Patriot battery, brigade or battalion, these individuals, whether it’s leaders, whether it’s Soldiers, they get a real quick understanding of what it’s like,” Cruz said. “We’re at armistice. Technically, we’re still at war, but in a timeout. There is no treaty; there’s nothing like that. So they need to be prepared, and they understand that when they get here. This is real. Because of the threat in the North and what a young leader they have, we don’t know what he’s going to do. We can only make sure we are prepared for what he will do, in case he does do something. These guys understand that.”



Spc. Daniel Davis (left) and Spc. Amanda Hendrick prepare a Patriot launching station Oct. 28 at Osan Air Base, South Korea, during the Missile Defender of the Year competition. Hendrick and Davis are part of B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 1st Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 35th ADA Brigade. (Photo by Jonathan (Jay) Koester)

Even without NCOs making sure Soldiers understand the stakes of serving in the Republic of Korea, frequent provocations and attacks from North Korea are a regular reminder of the need to be at the ready, said Master Sgt. Daniel Venton, the S-2 intelligence sergeant major for the 35th ADA Brigade. Venton has served in Korea three times during his Army career. One of his stints started soon after North Korea attacked South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island on Nov. 23, 2010, killing four people, including two civilians, and injuring 19. Tensions spiked after the artillery attack, considered one of the most serious incidents since the armistice was signed in 1953.

"[The need to be ready] is definitely something I notice," Venton said. "I arrived the same month as the Yeonpyeong attack at the end of 2010. I remember getting to the unit and the high alert everyone was on at the time. There was that very real threat that I had kind of forgotten about, because I hadn't been to Korea for about six years. I realized how real it was. That was the first time I had seen anything quite on that scale, and it brought what we do — not just in air defense, but what the entire Army is doing on the peninsula — to the forefront. You knew you had to be ready at a moment's notice. And that's why, more than any other place, Korea is kind of unique. You have that real threat up North, but

you still have family members [with you], and you still have the garrison Army down here in the South."

Master Sgt. Timothy Kinmon, NCO-in-charge of electronic missile maintenance for Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 35th ADA Brigade, said he was also reminded of the danger from North Korea during each of his four tours. He mentioned the sinking of the ROKS Cheonan, a South Korean warship, in March 2010. The torpedo attack killed 46 South Korean sailors. Though North Korea denies they were responsible for the attack, an investigation showed the torpedo was fired from a North Korean mini-submarine.

"Every time I've been to Korea, there's been some sort of provocation from North Korea where we've ended up at states of heightened alert," Kinmon said. "I've seen everything from navies exchanging fire, to mini-submarines on the coast, the sinking of the Cheonan, the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in [November] 2010. We have a real threat to the North. At any minute, we could be called upon to perform our jobs and defend our assets here in-theater."

## Training

That active threat means that when air defense Soldiers arrive in Korea, their NCOs immediately get to work making sure they are fully trained and ready to do their jobs.

New arrivals quickly learn the motto of “Fight Tonight,” and what that means for their mission, said Master Sgt. Richard Stanton, master evaluator for the 35th ADA Brigade.

“In Korea, you will be doing your job on a daily basis,” Stanton said. “There is no downtime. We have to stay mission-ready at all times, 24/7 — ‘Fight Tonight.’ If they don’t know their job when they get here, they will know it when they leave, for sure.”

Young enlisted Soldiers may show up not knowing how important the mission is in Korea, but they quickly learn. Spc. Victor Seidlertz, a Patriot advance launcher maintainer/operator for B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 1st ADA Regiment, 35th ADA Brigade at Camp Carroll, Korea, said he didn’t know what to expect when he arrived.

“When I first came to Korea, I didn’t really get the sense of urgency,” Seidlertz said. “I was like, ‘What’s the big deal?’ When we started to go to class, I learned it’s actually a big deal why we are here. We’re not just defending a few Soldiers; we’re defending the whole peninsula from North Korea. So if something goes down, we have to be ready to go at a moment’s notice. Keeping up on our training is very critical and vital.”

Though in most places Soldiers get 180 days to complete their Table 8 certification, which shows that a Soldier is ready to do their job and can prepare a Patriot missile to fire in a certain time frame, in Korea Soldiers have to complete their Table 8 Patriot certification within 90 days of arrival.

Getting Soldiers quickly trained and ready takes a huge effort from the NCOs and officers serving in Korea, Cruz said. Serving in Korea will test the training and teaching skills of noncommissioned officers.

“The training here for a Patriot unit is very in-depth, very detailed,” Cruz said. “It’s critical for these guys when they get here to do their certification process. By regulation, they have a specific time — 180 days — to get certified on these systems. Well, we don’t have that time here in Korea. We have to pack it into a 90-day period. From the moment they get here, it’s a very rigorous, very tough training.

“It takes a lot of time and a lot of effort from our leaders, from the top down, to ensure these guys are doing the right thing and meeting the gates to be certified,” Cruz said. “It’s incredible the amount of effort these Soldiers and these leaders put into it to get to that level of certification and to accomplish the mission here in Korea.”

Spc. Amanda Hendrick, of B Battery, 2nd Battalion 1st ADA Regiment, 35th ADA Brigade, said she enjoyed having an important mission and a feeling of purpose while serving in Korea.

“Here, we have a mission,” Hendrick said. “We go do our mission. We do our Table 8, and we’re ready to protect the Korean civilians. It’s really cool.”

“A lot of the platoon sergeants immediately meet up with their Soldiers who are in-bound, and they start

giving them material they need to start studying, to prepare them,” Cruz said. “It’s those engaged leaders who are going in there and making sure the Soldiers get the information they need, so they’re ready.

“I think this is a great opportunity for air defense Patriot members to come experience what it’s like to be on that short notice, learn your job to the ‘T,’” Cruz said. “I think it’s tough, realistic, and I think Soldiers and leaders soak it in and enjoy it. I wish all units and personnel would rotate through Korea to get an understanding of how operations run and how we get after getting certified.”

## Life in Korea

In addition to the professional rigors of serving in Korea, many newly arriving Soldiers worry about what life in Korea will be like during their time there. With a little time and patience, life in Korea can be very rewarding, said Staff Sgt. Parker James, a Patriot advance launcher maintainer/operator with D Battery, 6th Battalion, 52nd ADA Regiment, 35th ADA Brigade.

“It might take awhile to get used to the area, the people and the culture. But if you’re patient and accepting, it will be good,” James said. “Get out and experience Korea. It’s a fun place to be. Put in your passes, and don’t let the opportunity go to waste.”

The country offers many cultural opportunities, plus lots of fascinating history to learn, said Master Sgt. Christopher Harrison, the communications chief for the 35th ADA Brigade.

“I would tell a person coming to Korea for the first time to get out and enjoy it,” Harrison said. “Do the home visits, the tour of the Demilitarized Zone, and learn about its history, its past, its culture. Korea is one of the fastest-growing countries out there right now. Sixty years ago, there was nothing; now, big cities are built up, and communications and industry is first class. They have come a long way in 60 years.”

Serving in Korea is a unique opportunity to serve in an environment that is a mix of the garrison and deployed environments. Venton said it’s a place where Soldiers, NCOs and officers work hard, but have opportunities not available elsewhere.

“Here in Korea, you have that ability to take off your uniform, put on civilian clothes, hop on public transportation and go see some of the country,” Venton said. “You don’t get that in other deployed environments. Korea is one of those places where, though technically it is a war zone, the country we’re defending is not in a state of disarray. It’s an organized country, moving right along, and we’re here protecting them. We’re here allowing them to move on with their lives. Instead of being frozen in time like a lot of other countries that are in a war-torn state, South Korea has just been chugging along.

“Because of that, we’ve been able to say, ‘Hey, our Soldiers are doing a good job here,’” Venton said. “Let



them get some time off, let them see the country they're defending, but still be ready to go at a moment's notice. You have that dual hat here in Korea."

What it all adds up to for the NCOs and Soldiers with the 35th ADA Brigade is an experience that is enriching professionally and personally. Soldiers learn their jobs well and NCOs have many opportunities to train and lead — all serving a vital mission.

"The Soldiers over here are really some of the best Soldiers the Army has," Venton said. "I'm sure every unit says that about their Soldiers, but the air defense Soldiers over here I think are the best in the world. They are constantly training. They are ready to do their jobs at a moment's notice. They really do have that 'Fight Tonight' mentality. It's not just a cliché; it's a state of mind over here in Korea. They know what's at stake, and they know how important their jobs are."

### **Korea's Missile Defenders showcase their skills**

The 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade named their Missile Defenders of the Year after a competition Oct. 28-29 at Osan Air Base, South Korea.

The competition was an important part of reminding Soldiers and NCOs of the importance of staying prepared at all times to defend Korea. That spirit is reflected in the brigade's motto, "Ready in Defense, Always." The brigade's Soldiers work hard, and the competition is one way to recognize that hard work, said Sgt. Maj. James Brazill, the S-3 operations sergeant major for the 35th ADA Brigade.

"You always want to highlight them and their achievements because they are working so hard," said Brazill, who helped organize and run the competition.

Contestants had to participate in a physical fitness test, missile defense crew drills and a rifle marksmanship test, in addition to written tests about the Patriot missile system.

Spc. Daniel Davis said he prepared for the competition the same way he prepares for all the work he does in Korea — with lots of hard work and physical training.

"My philosophy boils down to three things: Know your job, know your weapon and do some PT," Davis said. "And that's not just PT in the morning. Do PT on your off time, too. I go to the gym six days a week, and that helps me be physically ready for anything. Just doing this drill (a Patriot crew drill for the competition) — when I first got here I'd be breaking a sweat just running a launch and doing crew drill. Now look at me: too easy."

The winners in the engagement control system portion of this year's Missile Defender of the Year competition were the team of 2nd Lt. Megan Paris, Spc. Laura Duran and Pfc. Ryan Eaton, all with D Battery, 6th Battalion, 52nd ADA Regiment, 35th ADA Brigade. Spc. Connor Moore and Spc. Vanessa Meaney with A Battery, 6th Battalion 52nd ADA Regiment, 35th ADA Brigade, were victorious in the launcher station crew portion.

The competition was a chance for Soldiers to show off all they have learned while in Korea, said Master Sgt. Daniel Venton, the S-2 intelligence sergeant major for the 35th ADA Brigade.

"It's one thing to say, 'Yeah, I'm good at my job.' It's another thing to be able to come out to an event like this, the Missile Defender of the Year, and actually prove it," Venton said as he watched the competition. "That's what these Soldiers are getting a chance to do today." ■



<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NCOJournal>

<https://twitter.com/NCOJournal>

**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NCO Journal, the U.S. Army, or the Department of Defense.

