



Pfc. Brittany Smith of A Battery, 1st Battalion, 78th Field Artillery Regiment, 428th Field Artillery Brigade, unhooks a Multiple Launch Rocket System ammunition pod April 16, 2013, at Fort Sill, Okla. Smith is one of four women in the first 13M MLRS crewmember class to have female Soldiers. (Photo by Marie Berberera)

Field Artillery Training Integrates Women into Combat Specialties

By Marie Berberera

Fort Sill Cannoneer

The loud booms from the fields of Fort Sill, Okla., will sound the same. But for the first time, women will also be responsible for launching the artillery.

The first class of female Soldiers joined A Battery, 1st Battalion, 78th Field Artillery Regiment, 428th Field Artillery Brigade, to learn the 13M Multiple Launch Rocket System crewmember military occupational specialty, an MOS that was previously closed to women.

In their fourth week of training, the Soldiers took turns near Critz Hall on April 16, learning how to load and unload ammo pods off a transportation vehicle.

So far, it's business as usual.

"It's something I'll be able to tell my grandkids someday, but at the same token, I'm still a Soldier," said Pvt. Alexandra Seccareccio. "I'm here with my battle buddies still doing the same old thing, living another day in the Army."

Women have worked with men in field artillery before, serving in supply, mechanic and communication roles. But this is the first time they're getting their boots

literally inside the doors of the Multiple Launch Rocket System.

"I wanted to take a chance to do something big," Seccareccio said. "It was just more of an adrenaline sort of thing. Just being able to hopefully be out on the line someday and actually get to experience what it is like to fire the launchers."

Six combat support MOSs opened up to women including three for MLRS and High Mobility Artillery Rocket System units. The MOSs are: 13M MLRS crewmember, 13P MLRS operations fire detection specialist and 13R field artillery Firefinder radar operator specialist.

Sgt. 1st Class Michael Reese, 13M school chief, said the instructors have done a great job integrating women into the class, and the students have shown they are qualified for the job.

"For us actually here in this MOS, it's not really a big deal because we've been serving with females all of our careers," he said. "But, as far as society and the rest of the Army, it is a big deal. It's a landmark."

Seccareccio said her family was expecting her to enlist in a job that was a little more settled and calm, so they were taken back when she told them she would be working with heavy artillery.

“When they found out that I was going to be involved with something with rockets, I remember speaking with my grandmother. She sounded extremely surprised and shocked,” Seccareccio said. “But, they understand how much I really want to do this and that it’s going to be a great experience for me. And, now that I’m in it and I’ve made it this far, they’re really proud of me. They just want me to keep going and strive for success.”

Reese said the instructors did have additional training to prepare for females to be part of the student population, but it wasn’t a major adjustment.

“They were aware that we were going to be coming here,” Seccareccio said. “We don’t need any extra attention because we’re females in the class. The males know

that we’re females, and that’s all it needs to be — we’re just Soldiers.”

For Pfc. Brittany Smith, joining the first class of women in a field artillery combat MOS was a relief. She originally signed up to be an explosive ordnance disposal specialist, but failed the course.

“As a re-class, they can put you pretty much anywhere, and I was really nervous that I was going to get a desk job or a paperwork job,” she said. “So I was super excited when I heard that females were just introduced [here].”

Though the women join the ranks of many others who have made history, they are carrying on as if it is any other day in the Army.

“It’s not something that gets in our heads too much,” Seccareccio said. “We know that we’re the first and it’s a good feeling. But we’re just here to do our job and learn.” ■



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

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

<https://twitter.com/NCOJournal>

<https://www.instagram.com/ncojournalofficial/>

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.

