



# The Rail Gunner Newsletter

## July 2013

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THE RAIL GUNNER NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 3

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**41st Fires Brigade**

**"Rail Gunners!!"**



### The Rail Gunner Monthly Staff

**Commander**  
**COL William E. McRae**  
**Command Sgt. Maj.**  
**CSM Antonio Dunston**  
**Rail Gunner PAO**  
**CPT John Farmer**  
**NCOIC**  
**SGT Garrett Hernandez**



Soldiers and their families of the 41st Fires Brigade go on a "free shopping spree" for goods donated by the Leon County, Texas chapter of the Association of the United States Army on Fort Hood, Texas, May 4. The local AUSA Chapter came together to donate diapers, formula, blankets, toys and other supplies for soldiers and their families in the brigade with young children or women who are expecting (U.S. Army photo by Capt. John Farmer, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

## Rail Gunners showered with gifts

Story by  
 Sgt. Garrett Hernandez  
 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs

The 41st Fires Brigade held a baby shower at the Brigade's headquarters on Fort Hood for Soldiers and spouses that were expecting or had children fewer than two years of age.

Members of the Leon County, Texas chapter of the Association of the United States Army helped collect and donate baby items to roughly 75 Families from the Rail Gunner brigade.

Residents from the city of Center-ville in Leon County drove 120 miles to Fort Hood in order to participate in the event.

"It's amazing, just getting help from anybody, when you have a new baby you need all the help you can get," said Shayla Neyman, whose husband is in B Battery, 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Bde. The Neyman family has two children: one 21-month-old and the newest at 3 months.

The families "shopped" for items

# RAIL GUNNER 6 & 9 SEND



**Colonel  
William E. McRae  
41st Fires Brigade CDR**



**Command Sergeant Major  
Antonio Dunston  
41st Fires Brigade CSM**

Rail Gunners,

Happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July! It is always a pleasure to commemorate this wonderful holiday and our Nation's birth.

Our Soldiers carry the torch of freedom, liberty and justice that was lit over 200 years ago.

On this 4<sup>th</sup> of July, I ask you all to take a moment to reflect on the sacrifices our Soldiers have made to protect our way of life and to keep our freedom alive.

Safety must be at the forefront of our minds as we go in to this summer, whether we are training or relaxing in the backyard with our Families.

For those of you new to Fort Hood, the heat can be relentless and hot weather injuries will creep up faster than you might expect. Take extra precautions when spending long periods of time outdoors.

Every single Soldier is vital to our Brigade's success and we can't afford preventable injuries.

Take care of each other and take care of your Families.

Despite the hot weather and summer thunderstorms, we will continue to train. As you know, training is the foundation for everything we do. It is paramount to our success as a unit that we maintain a high level of proficiency in our Warrior Tasks.

It is an honor to serve with you, and I am proud of our Soldiers' determined resolve to train regardless of the blazing temperatures and howling winds.

Finally, CSM Dunston and I urge you to take advantage of the beautiful weather we've been enjoying and spend time with your Families and friends.

As always - Be safe! There is no sadder occasion than losing a friend, Family member or teammate. The Belton Lake Outdoor Recreation Area is a great spot for swimming, boating, fishing, hiking, biking and barbecuing. Austin is only an hour away and there are several wonderful parks and trails down there where you can enjoy some well-earned time off during the summer.

Look out for one another, have fun, and enjoy the amazing state of Texas.

- Rail Gunner 6

Rail Gunners,

I am extremely proud of who you are and all that you stand for. Every day I see professionalism is action and every day I am reminded why we are such an outstanding unit.

The July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday is an excellent time for us to reflect on what it means to be a professional.

Over 200 years ago, our forefathers bled and sacrificed for something in which they truly believed, and we continue to do the same.

Our forefathers fought for freedom from oppression and tyranny, and we are fighting to keep those same forces at bay.

Take pride in what you do, exceed the standard and be a shining example of what it means to be an American Soldier.

Thank you for what you do on a daily basis. Thank you for your hard-work, your dedication, and your selfless service.

I would like to echo what the commander said about getting outdoors. Enjoy yourself! Have fun, be safe and enjoy spending time with your Families.

- Rail Gunner 9



# Rail Gunners showered with gifts (cont'd)



such as baby formula, diapers, blankets, clothing, and toys for the new addition to their family.

"This is amazing because they are doing this for the brigade," Neyman said.

Centerville residents are no strangers to donating items to Brigade Soldiers and Families. Throughout the years town residents have given turkeys during Thanksgiving and toys during Christmas to show their sup-

port.

The residents of Centerville and Leon County have been supporting the 41st Fires Brigade for about five years, said Susan Maples, a Veterans Service Officer for Leon County.

This is the second baby shower the community has sponsored for the Rail Gunner brigade.

"We just try to help," Maples said

Col. William McRae, the 41st Fires Brigade commander, helps bring in goods donated by the Leon County, Texas chapter of the Association of the United States Army on Fort Hood, Texas, May 4. The local AUSA Chapter came together to donate diapers, formula, blankets, toys and other supplies for Soldiers and their families in the brigade with young children or women who are expecting (U.S. Army photo by Capt. John Farmer, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).



Soldiers and their families of the 41st Fires Brigade go on a "free shopping spree" for goods donated by the Leon County, Texas chapter of the Association of the United States Army on Fort Hood, Texas, May 4. (U.S. Army photo by Capt. John Farmer, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

## Expert Field Medic Badge



Capt. Antony Hensel, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, enters a cloud of purple smoke as he traverses obstacles during Fort Hood's Expert Field Medic Badge test, May 1. 260 medics from across Fort Hood started the week long test for the EFMB and only 44 Soldiers received the highly prized badge at the end (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).



Capt. Antony Hensel, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, places a spinal splt on a simulated neck injury with the help of another Soldier during Fort Hood's Expert Field Medic Badge test, May 1. 260 medics from across Fort Hood started the week long test for the EFMB and only 44 Soldiers received the highly prized badge at the end (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).



# 41st Fires Bde take part in joint exercise

Story by  
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez  
41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs

The 41st Fires Brigade tested its mission readiness and ability to work with the Navy and the Air Force by participating in a joint exercise this spring, known as Fleet Synthetic Training-Joint.

A Fleet Synthetic Training-Joint is a virtual exercise designed to test a joint task force's ability to respond to a wartime situation. The training originally started in 2005 as a U.S. Navy exercise and over the years participants from the Army and the Air Force were brought onboard.

The 41st Fires Brigade sent a detachment of soldiers to Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, Calif., to participate in the exercise while the

rest of the brigade headquarters remained at Fort Hood.

From Fort Hood, the brigade was responsible for coordinating fires missions, while the Ronald Reagan Strike Group executed the mission in California.

As fire missions came in, the brigade was responsible for clearing air space for the path of the round, checking weather conditions and ensuring no friendly forces were in the targeted area, said Spc. Raymond Griffin, an advanced field automated tactical data system specialist with the brigade's Headquarters and Headquarters Battery.

Each day brought new challenges for the brigade as new events demanded a timely response. Soldiers behind the scenes input

scenarios to keep the brigade staff on its toes during the simulated combat environment. Brigade headquarters Soldiers were able to see, in a tactical sense, how their jobs fit into the brigade commander's decision making process, said Maj. Charles Kean, the brigade executive officer.

In addition, the brigade coordinated fire missions with its two subordinate artillery battalions, 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, and 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment.

"This training event allowed our brigade to exercise numerous technical solutions to communicating in a joint environment that we would otherwise have not been able to test," Kean said.

## HHB takes to the field



A Soldier from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 41st Fires Brigade, pulls security during the CBRN lane at the unit's field training at Fort Hood, Texas, June 19. Soldiers were trained on battle drills, CBRN, CASEVAC and other Common Soldier Tasks (U.S. Army photo by Capt. John Farmer, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).



Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 41st Fires Brigade, evacuate a simulated casualty during the CASEVAC lane at the unit's field training at Fort Hood, Texas, June 19. Soldiers were trained on battle drills, CBRN, CASEVAC and other Common Soldier Tasks (U.S. Army photo by Capt. John Farmer, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

# *'First Strike' hosts event for Families, friends*

Story and photos by  
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez  
41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs

On a grey, misty morning, Families and friends of the 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, "First Strike," 41st Fires Brigade, gathered at Trapnell sniper range on Fort Hood, Texas, May 9, to watch a live fire exercise and learn what the Soldiers do on a day-to-day basis.

In attendance were Soldiers' Families, students from Manor Middle School, Army recruits from the Harker Heights, Texas recruiting station, and members of American Legion Post 335 from Centerville, Texas.

"It's just a good opportunity to incorporate our community partners," said Lt. Col Ken McDaniel, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 21<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery Regiment commander.

Despite the cloudy day and the brief spring shower, the audience was treated to an M270 Multiple Launch Rocket System firing its rockets at targets more than nine kilometers away. For most, this was the first time they had ever heard the loud "boom" as the rockets left their pods and watched as they flew off into the distance, puffy white smoke trails following in their wake.

The audience received a short, instructional demonstration about the communication that goes on between the battery operations center and the crew of the MLRS prior to firing their rockets. The battery operations center must first provide the MLRS crew with the coordinates for the target at which point the MLRS can move from its hiding spot and into the firing position.

Many families have only heard about what their Soldiers do for the Army and were excited to finally have a chance to see them in action.

"He talks about it all the time, so it's nice to see it," said Taylor Hadley about her husband, who is an MLRS crewmember for 21st FAR.



Sgt. Corey Garrell, 575th Forward Support Company, 1st Battalion, 21st Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, helps the Army's newest crane operator as she moves the boom on the back of an M948 HEMTT. First Strike invited Soldiers' families, members of the local community and members of the American Legion, Post 335, Centerville, Texas to the exercise to help give them a better understanding of what the battalion does as a whole (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

Not only did those in attendance get a chance to see the lethal rocket launchers but they had a chance to interact with them, along with other pieces of equipment, as well.

A lucky few, mostly children, had the chance to work the crane controls on the back of a Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck, used for loading and unloading rocket pods.

Army recruits from the local recruiting station received a short course on the proper use of a medical litter and were able to get some "hands-on" training when they strapped a simulated patient in and loaded them into the back of a humvee ambulance.

"It's a great experience for all of us [Army recruits] to be out here and to see how they [the Soldiers] actually do their jobs," said Gerald Mitchell, 26, who is joining the Army to be an infantryman.

A handful of members from the American Legion ost 335 made the 120 mile journey from Centerville, Texas to watch the spectacle. Through-

out the years, the American Legion in Centerville has sponsored the battalion by donating items such as toys, baby blankets and turkeys for Thanksgiving.

"It sure has changed a lot," said Jesse Carrington, a former artilleryman with the American Legion from Centerville, Texas.

The event helped illustrated how the Army has changed over the years for many of the veterans present at the live fire exercise.

"Just to have them [the Centerville American Legion] come two and half hours shows the huge amount of commitment to the country, the Army and this organization," said McDaniel.



# 20th FA honors unit history; takes up challenge

Story and photo by  
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez  
41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs

In 1968, the “Blue Max” moniker was given to 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment to honor a tradition of excellence that dates back to World War I. Thirty years later, “Blue Max” is the namesake of the Regiment’s annual competition: the Blue Max Challenge.

“Even though we are a Multi-Launch Rocket System battalion, we had a bunch of different incarnations throughout our existence,” said Lt. Col. Ernest Karlberg, commander, 2-20th FAR “In the Vietnam (War) ... , where Blue Max comes from, we were the first aerial rocket artillery battalion, which is now attack aviation.”

The battalion held the “Blue Max” Challenge at Fort Hood May 20-21, a team-building exercise held to honor the battalion’s lineage and test Soldiers’ physical and mental abilities.

The event started with the teams setting off on a ruck march from the battalion’s area to the Black Gap rifle range where the Soldiers qualified with their M16 rifles before marching another six miles to the event site.

Once at the training site, the teams were expected to complete several tasks, such as rescuing a simulated downed pilot and conducting key leader engagements. Each event entailed additional implied tasks: pulling security, land navigation, calling for a medical evacuation, and going through the eight steps of troop leading procedures.

“Even though these are more infantry-type tasks, it builds teamwork and pays homage to the basic soldiering skills that have been in the battalion since it was formed,” Karlberg said.

“Being able to rely on your battle buddies, to know that when your life is on the line, that they have your back and that you have their back,”



1st Lt. Brian Laborde, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, 41st Fires Brigade, radios to the tactical operations center during the Blue Max challenge at Fort Hood, Texas, May 21. The Blue Max Challenge tests Soldiers’ basic warrior skills and celebrates the history of the 20th Field Artillery Regiment (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

said Sgt. Kevin James, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2-20th FAR, 41st Fires Bde.

“Blue Max” soon became the radio call sign of the 2-20th when it transformed into an aviation unit during World War I. In 1957, the battalion was assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division as the 2nd Rocket Howitzer, 20th Field Artillery, becoming the first aerial rocket artillery battalion during the Vietnam War.

Many units throughout the Army have their own distinguished histories. Few of those units can claim to be the first at something new to the Army, but the 2-20th FAR can make such a claim.

The battalion started off with UH-1B and UH-1C Huey helicopters before transitioning to the AH-1G Cobra. The UH-1 helicopters carried two rocket pods mounted on either side for a total capacity of 48 rockets.

Aerial rocket artillery played a critical role throughout the Vietnam War, from some of the first major battles through to the end of the war.

“Any time you get to honor those that came before you, it’s a great thing,” said Spc. Christopher Welter, a medic with HHB, 2-20th FAR “They did great things in Vietnam, so we are going to recognize it for as long as 2-20th exists.”

# Rail Gunner teens get extreme day of Army life

Story and photos by  
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez  
41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs

Early summer is a time when kids start their long vacation from the demands and rigors of school. For one group of teens their summer vacation kicked off with a closer look into Army life.

On June 14, a group of 23 teens from across the 41st Fires Brigade participated in the brigade's second annual Teen Extreme Day here at Fort Hood, Texas.

The teens started off trying to conquer the leadership reaction course. They were split into three groups. Each team took turns attempting to overcome different obstacles, competing to have the best time for each challenge.

One of the more daunting obstacles the teams faced was one that required them to use boards to get across a pool of water.

Each team received four boards to connect three pillars to make a bridge. The teams then needed to across the water while transporting metal polls and a wooden crate.

"This has shown me the importance of team work and how to work with others," said Joseph Plata, a 14-year-old, who is contemplating joining the Marine Corps.

Along with tackling the leadership reaction course, the teens marched over to the Call for Fire Trainer where they learned how to call indirect fire down on a target. They also had the opportunity to use the Engagement Skills Trainer where they were able to learn a little about using an M-4 carbine rifle and the Reconfigurable Vehicle System where they were able to experience a virtual convoy.

"This will defiantly open his eyes to what the military life style is about," said Sgt. 1st Class Shaun Delgado, noncommissioned officer in charge of the Fires and Effects Cell, 41st Fires Bde. about his nephew Joseph Plata.

The day ended when the teens received thanks and a certificate from the 41st Fires Bde. leadership, Col.



Teens work together to move a crate across a pool of water at Fort Hood's Leader Reaction Course, June 14, at the 41st Fires Brigade's 2nd Annual Teen Extreme Day. Teenage family members from across the brigade were given the opportunity to take part in some military training. (Photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).

William McRae and Command Sgt. Maj. Antonio Dunston.

"Hopefully they take away an appreciation for some of the difficult task their parents have to do or service-members have to do and bottom line they have a good time," said Capt. Ross Cargile the brigade fire control officer.



Tony Nunez throws a dummy grenade towards a target during the 41st Fires Brigade's 2nd Annual Teen Extreme event at Fort Hood, Texas, June 14. During the event, teenage family members from across the brigade were given the opportunity to take part in some military training. (Photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).



Teens help each other over an obstacle at the Fort Hood Leaders Reaction Course June 14 at the 41st Fires Brigade's 2nd Annual Teen Extreme; where teenage family members from across the brigade were given the opportunity to take part in some military training. The teens had a chance to overcome several obstacles at the leader reaction course, learn how to throw a dummy grenade and use the Engagement Skills Trainer (Photo by Sgt. Garrett Hernandez, 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs).



# *Across the Brigade*



Blue Max Challenge



Jane Wayne Day



1-21 FAR Family and Friends Live Fire



Spouse Blue Max Challenge



Hay Branch Elementary Field Day



1st CAV Best Warrior Competition

## ***Rail Gunners***



# 66th Annual 1st CAV Reunion



The 1st Cavalry Division Association reunion brings in Troopers from every era of the First Team's history so they can spend time with old friends and pay homage to those who have come before.



# REENLISTMENTS

30 Rail Gunners reenlisted during the months of May and June:

## 1-21st FAR

Sgt. Fischer, Michael  
Spc. Stone, Fredrick  
Spc. Ayers, Caleb  
Sgt. Gary, Brey  
Spc. Chagualf, Patrick  
Spc. Garcia, Alexis  
Spc. Franklin, Derrick  
Spc. Azzoto, Jeffrey  
Spc. Hopkins, Alexander

## 2-20th FAR

Spc. Ross, Gary  
Spc. Dickson, Zachary  
Spc. Ellis, Amos  
Spc. Dennehy, Sean  
Spc. Uchiyama, Brent  
Spc. Branes, Christopher  
Spc. Smigielski, Adam  
Spc. Puff, Fredeick  
Staff Sgt. Jones, Tony  
Spc. Gillard, Cordara  
Spc. Elizardo, Ricardo

## 589th BSB

Spc. Gazaway, Jaimeca  
Staff Sgt. Kotey, Samuel  
Spc. Thicklin, Kristopher  
Spc. Bennett, Keith  
Spc. Losavio, Donnamarie

## HNB

Spc. Kling, James  
Spc. Rutherford, Justin

## A/26

Spc. Orand, Michael

## 324th NSC

Spc. Dunn, Marcus  
Spc. Struble, Derick



# PROMOTIONS

We would like to congratulate all of the Rail Gunners that were promoted during the months of May and June:

## May

Pfc. Mooar, James  
Pfc. Irvin, Amber

## June

Sgt. Martini, Amanda  
Sgt. Melo, Kelvis  
Sgt. Munoz, Jorge  
Sgt. Panyard, John  
Sgt. Smith, David  
Sgt. Wyatt, Eddie  
Staff Sgt. Evans, Robert  
Staff Sgt. Kotey, Samuel  
Staff Sgt. Kress, William  
Staff Sgt. Tyree, Octavious  
Staff Sgt. Vanmeter, Henry

Sgt. Martini, Amanda  
Sgt. Melo, Kelvis  
Sgt. Munoz, Jorge  
Sgt. Panyard, John  
Sgt. Smith, David  
Sgt. Wyatt, Eddie  
Staff Sgt. Evans, Robert  
Staff Sgt. Kotey, Samuel  
Staff Sgt. Kress, William  
Staff Sgt. Tyree, Octavious  
Staff Sgt. Vanmeter, Henry

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*All editorial content of this publication is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs Office. If you have any questions, comments, concerns or suggestions contact the 41st Fires Brigade Public Affaris office at 254-287-0739 or email [john.a.farmer24.mil@mail.mil](mailto:john.a.farmer24.mil@mail.mil).*

*Check out the unit's Website at [www.hood.army.mil/41stFires](http://www.hood.army.mil/41stFires), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/41stFiresBrigade](http://www.facebook.com/41stFiresBrigade), or Flickr at [www.flickr.com/41stfiresbrigade](http://www.flickr.com/41stfiresbrigade) for additional information.*





To send your story ideas and pictures to the 41st Fires Brigade  
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