

DRAGON'S DIGEST

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1



Second Lt. Clinton Keeley, an air defense officer assigned to 2nd Battalion, 1st Air Defense Artillery Regiment, monitors a simulated air space picture utilizing netted remote terminal battle lab in the 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade headquarters, August 13, 2015. Keeley is a native of Madeira Beach, Florida. *For the full story, see PAGE 14.*



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A Message from the Command Team

Col. Mark Holler and Command Sgt. Maj. Jose Villarreal



Welcome to our first edition of Dragon's Digest, our quarterly magazine highlighting the brigade's mission on the Peninsula. CSM Villarreal and I wanted to take the time this issue to let you know how very proud we are of the brigade's accomplishments over the last several months. Throughout this edition, you will see articles that echo our Brigade's Lines of Effort: "Fight Tonight" Readiness, Building Partner Capacity and Interoperability and Strategic Communications. From our Combined Interoperability Exercise in July to the ADX/CPX and Ulchi Freedom Guardian '15 in August, the performance of Dragon Soldiers drew praise from our joint and combined Air Defense partners. We look forward to building upon our unit's legacy and we truly appreciate all your hard work over the last few months. Enjoy this edition of Dragon's Digest and continue to focus on honing your craft as an Air Defender and as a Soldier. Your commitment to our mission is critical to the brigade's overall readiness and directly enables our ability to remain... "Ready in Defense!"



Sgt. Lucas Hampton, 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade air defense artillery fire coordination assistant, trains new Soldiers on radar capabilities during a Patriot missile system tactical seminar Sept. 23, 2015. Hampton has served as a U.S. Army air defender for nearly five years.

Air defense leaders mentor Soldiers in tactical seminar

Story by: Staff Sgt. Heather A. Denby
35th ADA Public Affairs

Air Defense Artillery Fire Coordination officers from the 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade held a tactical seminar Sept. 23-24 at Camp Carroll and Suwon Air Base to brief Information and Coordination Central/Engagement Control Station/Battery Command Post crews on theater-specific tactics and to generate discussion on Patriot system performance.

Topics of discussion included North Korean threat assessments and current capabilities, reporting and troubleshooting procedures, simulated engagement training.

"Both of our battalions had a great turn out of Patriot operators from many Military Occupation Specialties and roles," said Sgt. Lucas Hampton, 35th ADA Brigade air defense artillery fire coordination assistant. "It was great to witness the enthusiasm and thirst for knowledge from these young air defenders."

All the feedback received will build into the brigade's tactical review board slated for October where tacticians within the ADA field

will be updating and publishing all of the refined tactical documents.

"The seminar wasn't just for our senior leaders," said Spc. William Smith, a Patriot fire control enhanced operator/maintainer assigned to 2nd Battalion, 1st Air Defense Artillery Regiment. "A lot of Soldiers arrive to the brigade fresh out of Advanced Individual Training so this forum provided leaders with an opportunity to throw a little knowledge their way."

"The topics were well chosen," he said. "The information ties directly into our requirement to qualify as a crew on the Patriot missile system and, eventually, qualify as a crew in the advanced adverse conditions certification."

ADA Soldiers are required to certify as part of a Patriot missile system crew on a semi-annual basis with advanced certifications authorized at the command level.

As seen on the official homepage of the U.S. Army at www.army.mil



Soul Food

Chaplains and Soldiers bond over burgers

Story by: Staff Sgt. Heather A. Denby
35th ADA Public Affairs

Many people bond while sharing a meal together, the U.S. and Republic of Korea Armies are no different in that aspect.

The 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade Unit Ministry Team partnered with ROK Army Buddhist, Korean Monk, Catholic, Methodist and Protestant chaplains July 7-8 at a ROK Army 12th Division outpost just South of the Demilitarized Zone.

The group met at a Buddhist temple before grabbing a bite to eat.

"The temple was really peaceful with a giant traditional Korean bell out front," said Maj. Christopher Offen, 35th ADA chaplain. "I joked with the other chaplains by asking if this was the restaurant they had chosen for us to go to."

The U.S. and ROK chaplains toured the temple and then headed to a diner where they bought cheeseburgers and drinks for some of the Soldiers that are responsible for patrolling the DMZ.

"We drove up the mountain to meet with this platoon of infantrymen," said Spc. Kyle Koby, 35th ADA chaplain assistant. "They were coming off several hours of DMZ patrol and were prepared to eat what they eat every other day."

"Their eyes lit up when we showed them what we had brought and it was literally gone in seconds," said Koby. "They seemed genuinely happy that we had visited them and maybe even more so that we brought burgers."

After their meal, one Soldier took the chaplains on patrol.

"A ROK Soldier took us out along the DMZ where he was required to inspect the fence line for any breaches," said Offen. "Every so often we could hear someone shout a challenge and our guide would respond with the appropriate pass code before continuing his inspection."

It was a unique experience to see Soldiers defending and protecting their country with such pride and honor," he said.

Offen said that the visit embodied the Korean motto of "Kapshi Kapshi Da" or as it translates to English: "We go together."

The ROK chaplains also said they cherished this shared experience.

"Overall the experience was simply extraordinary," said ROK Army Capt. Jong Min Lee, a Buddhist monk assigned to 12th Division. "We led a joint ministry and shared some good food; it's definitely a memory I shall never forget."

CSP adds new opportunities for families in Korea

Story by: Staff Sgt. Heather Denby
35th ADA Public Affairs

One of the biggest decisions a Soldier must make when on assignment to South Korea is whether to apply for command sponsorship for their family.

The U. S. Forces – Korea Command Sponsorship Program provides a systematic method of allocating CSP among Priority 1 (Key Billet), Priority 2 (Component Commander Mission Continuity Requirements), and Priority 3 (Component Commander-Managed CS billets) to enhance mission readiness throughout Korea and promote continuity, predictability and stability. It also supports the tour length change and incentives in the Joint Federal Travel Regulations allowing more families the opportunity to conduct a Permanent Change of Station to Korea.

However, based on current infrastructure limitations, all USFK installations are at or near CS capacity. As a result, CSP allocations must be managed very closely and be synchronized with mission requirements, until full tour normalization has been achieved.

According to the Eighth Army CSP website, there are three main reasons why command sponsorship could be disapproved: priority fill requirements within command (must fill assignments requiring multi-year commitment), non-availability of command sponsorship positions within the command during the time of request, and medical issues identified by the Exceptional Family Member Program that cannot be supported in a certain area or throughout Korea.

But the possibility of CSP disapproval should not deter applicants, according to the Eighth Army CSP program manager.

"We often see the same names pop up on the list of pending CSP applicants," said David Campbell. "And that's okay."

Soldiers who are denied command sponsorship of their dependents may resubmit their request throughout the duration of their tour in Korea.

Campbell cautions Soldiers who apply late in their tour.

"Basically, it's a change of tour type and that incurs a 24-month tour obligation," he said.

Some Soldiers who have command-sponsored families in country can also opt to continue serving in Korea with their families in another unit.

Capt. Bill Leasure's wife and their five children received their command sponsorship under the 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade and lived at Camp Humphreys for five months until he received assignment instructions to report to the 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade just 12 miles south of their home.

"The command sponsorship process was a little tricky to navigate at first," said Leasure. "I had to call individuals in Korea to check on the status and there were communications challenges which created some misunderstanding. However, the issues were resolved and in the end the process was a lot less painful than I thought it was going to be, especially for my wife."

The command sponsorship program offers opportunities not just for spouses but for their children as well.

"I definitely feel like we've had a lot more opportunities here than I would have had in the continental U.S.," said Amanda. "I've been to Hawaii, Japan and all over Korea; it's nothing like I've ever experienced before."

The Leasure family was previously assigned to a unit in Oklahoma and said that the opportunities to interact with others, get involved in the community and attend advanced schooling were incomparable to what they've seen during their tour in Korea.

"I'm really happy with my decision to bring my family here," Leasure said. "The opportunities they've had here in Korea are unlike anywhere else and their experiences have truly changed their lives for the better."



Photo courtesy of Korea Independent Hockey League

Soldier takes fiery passion to the ice

Story by: Staff Sgt. Heather A. Denby, 35th ADA Public Affairs

At the age of five, Joseph Spracklen attended his first hockey game and from that moment on Joseph's love of the sport became the focal point of his childhood; a decision that would sculpt his youth and the rest of his adult life.

Joe spent his teenage years with "billet" families in Iowa, Minnesota, and even Canada so that he could play under the tutelage of nationally renowned coaches who could fuel his passion for the sport.

"I've always loved the feeling of just getting out there on the ice," he said. "I'm naturally competitive and hockey is one of those sports that invigorated me to be my best."

Eighteen years after he watched his first game, Spracklen was given the opportunity to play for the same team and eventually, his performance on the ice would land him a scholarship with the elite military academy, West Point.

"Prior to the coach talking to me I didn't really know much about [West Point], so it had never even been a consideration for me," Spracklen said. "But after I learned more about the school and visited the campus, I was thrilled to be given the chance to go there."

West Point athletes must meet rigorous academic, military, and physical standards to maintain eligibility to compete in their sport.

The West Point Hockey team is a National Collegiate Athletic Association Division 1 program.

"Hockey and military service go hand-in-hand," he said. "You've got to work as a team to succeed in both."

Spracklen served as a goalie for the West Point Hockey team for four years while earning his undergraduate degree in Computer Science.

In 2010, he was commissioned as an air defense artillery officer and was assigned to Fort Bliss, Texas where he continued to play hockey for a local adult league and coached junior hockey team "El Paso Rhinos" until he deployed to Qatar in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

After his deployment, Spracklen served at Fort Bliss and then Fort Sill, Oklahoma where he was an active member of the local hockey community.

During professional development training, he received orders to South Korea.

"When the movers came to pack out, I almost had them store my gear but I just couldn't bring myself to do it," he said.

And he said he's glad that he made that choice.

One month after arriving to Korea, Spracklen was in Itaewon where he saw a man walking down the street carrying a hockey bag.

"I literally ran him down," Spracklen said. "He got me into contact with a local team and the next week I was on the ice."

Five months later, Spracklen still laces up his skates...as the team's starting goalie.

The team, known as the Scelido "Titans," is part of South Korea's newest semi-professional hockey league headquartered out of Seoul.

Korean sportswriters praised Spracklen for his performance in the league.

Hockey News -- Korea described Spracklen's defense as "spotless" and described how Spracklen's goal tending prowess brought the crowd to their feet as he saved a rebound puck from the net in a recent game.

Spracklen's performance on the ice is matched by his performance in the U.S. Army as he will soon transition from serving as a battle captain for the 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade in Korea to training for an assignment in one of the Army's newest branches under Army Cyber Command.

Regardless of where Spracklen's service will take him, there's one thing for certain.

"I'll definitely be looking to get back out on the ice," he said. "It's important to find that balance between work and play in order to perform at your best."

"Hockey has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember," he said. "I'll skate for as long as I can and even after that I'll definitely be active in the hockey community."

Learn more about ice hockey in South Korea by visiting their website at www.koreaicehockey.com.



US/ROK Patriot crews seal the gaps in combined air defense

Story by: Staff Sgt. Heather A. Denby
35th ADA Public Affairs

Air defenders, from Republic of Korea Air Force's, or ROKAF's, 199th Air Defense Artillery Battalion and U.S. Army 2nd Battalion, 1st Air Defense Artillery Regiment, joined forces for a week-long exercise linking U.S. and ROK air defense systems on Jungwon Air Base, July 13-16.

This is the second time the two countries have conducted this type of exercise.

"The sister battalion to 2-1 ADA [Air Defense Artillery], 6th Battalion, 52nd Air and Missile Defense Regiment conducted a combined interoperability exercise last June with the ROKAF 177th Air Defense Artillery Battalion, where they were able to successfully transfer digital data between Patriot missile systems for the first time," said Chief Warrant Officer 3 Ronald Brotherton, 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade air defense artillery fire control officer.

"During this iteration, we expanded upon that concept by increasing the distance between the two systems and linking our communications equipment," Brotherton said. "We had many objectives for this exercise but the bottom line is that we set out to validate the software and hardware configurations between the U.S. and ROK Patriot systems."

During the exercise, both ADA commanders were able to combine their shared mission of defending South Korea against an air or missile threat.

"We talked about the composition of our organizations and the multitude of ways that we can work together in air defense," said Lt. Col. Tony Dedmond, 2-1 ADA commander. "We achieved every objective established prior to the exercise."

"It was a good combined effort," he said.

Soldiers observed ROKAF 199th ADA airmen conduct march-order emplacement, then the two units went head-to-head to see which unit could conduct the fastest missile reload drill.

"The [missile reload] concept was the same, but our equipment is slightly different," said Staff Sgt. Anthony Heaps, launcher section chief for Charlie Battery, 2-1 ADA. "It was a great opportunity to train with each other."

"The ROKAF airmen were really impressed with our system, its efficiency and our teamwork," he said.

Teamwork galvanized the bond between the two country's air defenders during the exercise, Brotherton said.

"It was amazing to see our Soldiers and the ROK airmen work together," Brotherton said.

"When the exercise began, there was an obvious uncertainty between the two," he said. "But during the exercise, there were many challenges that required both country's air defenders to work together in order to succeed and by the end of the day, they were giving each other high-fives and joking like old friends."

The exercise culminated with a tactical seminar on best practices of U.S. and ROK air defense.

The 199th ADA commander said there was a perfect balance of building relationships through friendly competitions and building knowledge through shared air defense expertise.

"This exercise was a historic first," said ROKAF Lt. Col. Jin Gi Kwon, 199th ADA commander. "U.S. and ROK Patriot battalions exchanged digital data remotely utilizing communication relay systems."

"This proof of principle demonstrates our ability to be interoperable in a configuration replicating how we would fight alongside our allies using the Patriot system in a contingency operation," he said.

The ROKAF began upgrading its Patriot missile systems this month with full implementation of their equipment expected by 2020.

Brotherton said that with the upgrades and combined interoperability of Patriot missile systems, U.S. and ROK forces will be able to reduce the number of missiles fired and increase engagement accuracy of potential threats.



As seen in *The Morning Calm!*

Sixty five years ago, on June 25, 1950, North Korean Forces attacked south across the 38th Parallel igniting the Korean War. The United States entered the war six days later and the U.S. and ROK militaries have been committed to preserving the freedom of the Republic of Korea ever since. The articles you are about to read are part of a six-part series on Korean War veterans living in the Republic of Korea today. Through the eyes of these veterans, we got a glimpse into an important chapter in Korean history.

-Capt. William Leasure, 35th ADA Public Affairs

Remembering the “6-25” War

Story and photos by: Staff Sgt. Heather A. Denby
35th ADA Public Affairs



Focus On: Young Myeon

At 15 years old, Young Myeon Yeo made a pact with his childhood friends: to defend his country against the unexpected North Korean invasion that occurred June 1950. Little did the boy know, this conflict would rage on three more years before an armistice could be brokered.

As the Korean War erupted, the teenage boy travelled to Daegu to train for just three days before he would be assigned to the commander of the French Battalion of 2nd Infantry Division on the casualty-stricken front lines.

Yeo was no stranger to loss.

His parents passed away when he was 14 years old leaving him to apprentice for a surgeon before voluntarily joining the ranks of his countrymen.

“There were many French Soldiers killed in action while I was with them,” said Yeo. “But I wasn’t afraid of death,” he said.

The commander of the French Battalion, Lt. Col. Ralph Monclar, was no stranger to casualties either having served in World War I and World War II where he garnered the rank of Lt. Gen.

An old war horse, Monclar took a demotion in order to lead the troops of the French Battalion in the Korean conflict.

The French Battalion was attached to the 23rd Regiment under Col. Paul Freeman and is best known for their triumph in the Battle of Chipyong-ni. This battle was the U.N. Command’s first victory over enemy forces after the Chinese entered the war and is often referred to as the “Gettysburg of the Korean War.”

At the end of the war, Yeo said Monclar asked him to return to France as his adopted son.

“I wanted to go,” said Yeo. “But my country was still in danger and I couldn’t leave my family and friends behind.”

Instead of leaving the country, Yeo enlisted in the Republic of Korea Army to complete his obligated three-year service now that he was of age.

“I was finally issued a pair of dog tags,” said Yeo. “Now, I was a real Soldier.”

Yeo served as a K-43 truck driver for a signal brigade in I Corps.

On a routine trip through the mountains of Sokcho, Yeo’s truck hit a mine. He was medically evacuated to Jeongyang Hospital in Daejeon where he would remain for an entire year before being discharged from the hospital and from military service.

Despite heavy losses on the battlefield and significant internal injuries, Yeo said he was grateful for the opportunity to serve his nation and defend the ROK democracy alongside its allies.

“Without the help of our Allies, South Korea wouldn’t exist,” he said. “It’s imperative that we share our stories of struggle and triumph with others so they know the impact made by their ancestors.”

Sixty-five years later, Yeo feels that he has made good on the promise he struck so long ago with his friends.

Focus On: O Jae Kwon

On his right forearm, an elderly Korean War veteran bears faded ink that traces the outline of an ascending phoenix. From the ashes of what was the South Korea of his youth a new Republic of Korea rose from the remnants of war and now soars like the 4.27 mm mortar rounds this old artilleryman lobbed at his North Korean foes over 60 years ago.

The son of a rice farmer, O Jae Kwon was born in the small town of Dongtan and with five brothers he said his family lived a hard life before the war.

Finding a job was a challenge so Kwon went into construction assisting with the development of the Nonsan military training site, which provided support to the 28th Training Regiment.

As war broke out, Kwon was called to service in the ROK Army as an artilleryman. He was trained to retrieve weapons that had become damaged during combat. He would later serve as a forward observer.

He recalls his personal struggle with the realization of his own mortality caused by a war brought to his country by foreign invaders.

“We were directed to cut strands of hair and cut the nails of our fallen comrades to return to the families because the Korean government was unable to transport the bodies back home,” Kwon said with his eyes lowered to the ground.

Kwon said that despite the carnage of war, he did not fear death for two reasons: he didn’t feel that his life was very valuable as the son of a rice farmer, and he knew that there were American Soldiers that were right behind him, willing to die for his country and he could not be fearful when faced with their sacrifices.

He said he was also impressed by U.S. weapons systems, particularly the claymore.

“When the claymore exploded, the entire mountain shook,” he said. “It was most impressive.”

Kwon served in the ROK military for four years before returning to the rice fields he had waded through prior to his wartime service where he continued to work until his retirement. As a member of the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs – Osan branch, he rests comfortably today in the company of other heroes of the war known in the ROK as the “6-25 War.”



Read the rest of this series at <http://korea.stripes.com> and search for the key words “6-25 War”

Soldiers hone skills to forge 'Strong Bonds' for life



Story and photos by: Staff Sgt. Heather A. Denby
35th ADA Public Affairs

Army leaders encourage their Soldiers to consistently train on operating their assigned weapon, conducting tactical movements and increasing their physical fitness to ensure successful execution of necessary tasks when they are in combat.

But how do leaders encourage their Soldiers to interact with others in a way that fosters healthy relationships that last?

"Well, one way we are able to develop Soldiers is by giving them a better understanding of the characteristics of a person that they would like to spend time with," said Maj. Christopher Offen, 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade chaplain and Strong Bonds retreat facilitator. "We also challenge our Soldiers to self-reflect and possibly identify some of their own characteristics that could be improved to help nurture the things they give and the things they need when interacting with other people."

More than 50 Soldiers from 35th ADA Brigade participated in a three-day, single-Soldier Strong Bonds retreat at the Hartell House on U.S. Army Garrison -- Yongsan September 9-11.

The Strong Bonds single Soldier program is designed to help Soldiers establish relationship goals and gain essential skills that can help them make informed choices prior to picking a partner for life. About 50 percent of the Army's Soldiers are single and most will get married while on active duty.

During the retreat, Soldiers participate in small group activities that reveal common bonds and nurture friendships.

"These revelations are vitally important to Soldiers stationed in Korea," said Capt. Tim Sheperd, 6-52 Air Defense Artillery Battalion chaplain. "The tools that they learn during the retreat allow Soldiers to reinforce the bonds they have with their friends and family back home."

"It can be so much easier to serve overseas when you know you've got the support of your loved ones at home," Sheperd said.

Chaplains also use the retreat time to provide awareness of additional community resources that can assist with concerns about health, overall wellness and even crisis intervention.

"The key thing that I learned was that no one is perfect," said Pfc. Kayla Chihon, a human resource specialist assigned to 35th ADA. "It's important to understand that everyone is going to have differences and the only way to understand them is through effectively communicating with each other."

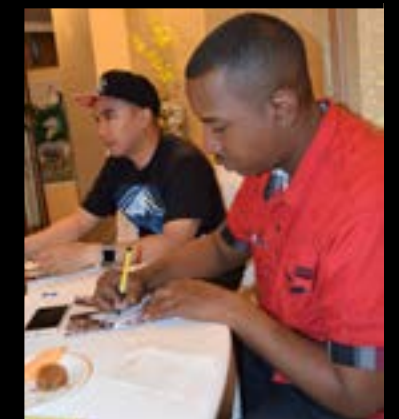
Chihon said she spoke with her parents about the retreat and what she learned.

"My parents were really impressed with the overall experience I shared with them," she said. "They both said that they wished this type of training had been offered when they served together in the military because it can really be challenging to try and communicate the unique experience we have in the military to someone who hasn't necessarily served."

More than 90 percent of the Strong Bonds retreat attendees reported that, as a result of the program, they will approach selecting and bonding with a potential partner differently.

"If you don't take the opportunity to attend one of these retreats, you're missing out," Chihon said. "It is the chance to learn more about yourself and learn more about your peers."

Soldiers interested in attending a Strong Bonds retreat should contact their unit chaplain for information on the different programs they offer and to find out when the next retreat will take place.



Air Defenders test 'support and report' of simulated missile fight

Story and photo by: Staff Sgt. Heather A. Denby
35th ADA Public Affairs

Soldiers of 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade conducted their second world-wide defense simulation exercise utilizing netted remote terminal battle labs Aug. 9-14.

"The focus of the training was to conduct air-battle management and engagement operations while simultaneously training the brigade and battalion level staff functions," said Maj. Eric Soler, 35th ADA Brigade operations officer. "This exercise validated our proof of concept of incorporating [Continental U.S.] based Patriot units into a realistic wartime scenario optimizing our readiness to defeat an air or missile threat."

More than 300 Soldiers took part in the Missile Defense Agency-generated air battle simulation.

Additionally, about 30 MDA personnel from War Games and Exercises Directorate, a part of the Directorate for Test, maintained and operated the air battle simulation designed to replicate realistic threats for air defense Soldiers to detect through the Patriot missile system.

Patriot missile system crews organically assigned to the brigade consolidated at Osan Air Base to share institutional knowledge between firing units and to build unit cohesion.

"This exercise provided us the opportunity to conduct a tactics review and to standardize engagement operations across the brigade," said 2nd Lt. Clinton Keeley, an air defense officer assigned to 2nd Battalion, 1st Air Defense Artillery Regiment headquartered more than 250 km south of the brigade.

Keeley said that line units often do not see operations at a higher echelon until they are promoted and fill that role themselves.

"It provided my crew the opportunity to get a bigger picture of air and missile defense," said Keeley.

"It really provides the Soldiers with a better understanding of how each staff section supports and reports the missile fight," he said.

During the exercise, Soldiers from South Korea, Texas and Okinawa, Japan worked around-the-clock monitoring their designated air space and engaging simulated air and missile threats.

"I am extremely proud of the outcome of this exercise," said Col. Mark Holler, 35th ADA Brigade commander. "The Patriot crews were tested on their ability to defend their assigned assets against a significant threat and the staff streamlined operations to support that mission."

Holler said that he expects the brigade's world-wide defense simulation exercises to continue and only get more refined with time and practice.



As seen in The Fort Bliss Bugle!