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Fort Sill's 2-18th Field Artillery fires a first in Wyoming

CHEYENNE, Wyo. – The open range of the north training area at the Wyoming National Guard's Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center provided the Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 18th Field Artillery Regiment, from Fort Sill, Okla., a chance to shoot live fire missions in a way that only their most senior noncommissioned officers (NCO) have done in the past.

"Here, instead of other posts dictating the safety for us, we get to shoot our own safety and make our own safety boxes – which is going back to the old school, you could say, in the field artillery," said Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Ferguson, the battalion's operations NCO.

Once the camp verifies a unit is capable of calculating their own safety, the formulas used to ensure the weapons fire safely and land in the camp's designated impact areas, units are left to train. Camp Guernsey allows units to focus on the training value of all aspects of live fire missions. The camp also allows for increased space for units to maneuver, further simulating combat conditions.

"There's a few senior NCO's that we have and some of the staff officers do it, but not the young lieutenants down at the line level," Ferguson said. "It enhances the training. Like I said, it makes us go back to the old school, where we're not relying on range control, or anybody. We're relying on ourselves to make sure the rockets land safely."

April 28 marked the first time the 2-18th FAR fired rockets from their M270A1 Multiple Launch Rocket System launchers at Camp Guernsey. The unit fired again the following morning.

SUGGESTED CUTLINES:

110429-A-L0000-217 – Sgt. Jesus Ayala, an M270A1 Multiple Launch Rocket System section chief, conducts a safety check, and M270A1 gunner Spc. Kenneth Fake keeps watch through the gunner's hatch, before reloading the launcher, while another Soldier ensures training is conducted properly, during a live fire exercise, April 29, 2011, at the Wyoming National Guard's Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center. Ayala and Fake are assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 18th Field Artillery Regiment, an active duty unit, based at Fort Sill, Okla. The unit is spending a month training in Wyoming. (U.S. Army Photo/Sgt. 1st Class Glen Lorenz)

110429-A-L0000-217 – Pfc. Alex Smith, an M270A1 Multiple Launch Rocket System driver, checks the launcher, while Sgt. Jesus Ayala, an M270A1 section chief, conducts a safety check, and M270A1 gunner Spc. Kenneth Fake keeps watch through the gunner's hatch, while another Soldier ensures training is conducted properly, before reloading the launcher, during a live fire exercise, April 29, 2011, at the Wyoming National Guard's Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center. All three Soldiers are assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 18th Field Artillery Regiment, an active duty unit, based at Fort Sill, Okla. The unit is spending a month training in Wyoming. (U.S. Army Photo/Sgt. 1st Class Glen Lorenz)

110429-A-L0000-219 – M270A1 Multiple Launch Rocket System gunner Spc. Kenneth Fake eases out of a mud caked M270A1 cabin, before his crew begins reloading the launcher, during a live fire exercise, April 29, 2011, at the Wyoming National Guard's Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center. Fake is assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 18th Field Artillery Regiment, an active duty unit, based at Fort Sill, Okla. The unit is spending a month training in Wyoming. (U.S. Army Photo/Sgt. 1st Class Glen Lorenz)

110429-A-L0000-221 – From left, Pfc. Alex Smith, an M270A1 Multiple Launch Rocket System driver, M270A1 gunner Spc. Kenneth Fake, and Sgt. Jesus Ayala, an M270A1 section chief, stand with their launcher, during a pause in a live fire exercise, April 29, 2011, at the Wyoming National Guard's Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center. All three Soldiers are assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 18th Field Artillery Regiment, an active duty unit, based at Fort Sill, Okla. The unit is spending a month training in Wyoming. (U.S. Army Photo/Sgt. 1st Class Glen Lorenz)