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V CORPS COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST LEARNS WAYS OF PATRIOT MISSILE SYSTEM 'FROM THE GROUND UP'

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GIEBELSTADT ARMY AIRFIELD, Germany — Pfc. Jesse J. Castro never expected to be assigned to a Patriot missile system unit when he joined the Army two years ago. Now he operates communications equipment – and does a whole lot more -- for B Battery of V Corps' 6th Battalion, 52nd Air Defense Artillery at Shipton Kaserne in Ansbach, Germany.



PHOTO COURTESY 69TH ADA BRIGADE
Pfc. Jesse J. Castro, a communications specialist with B Battery of V Corps' 6th Battalion, 52nd Air Defense Artillery, makes adjustments to an antenna mast group during a battalion field training exercise July 22.

"I didn't even know about Patriot before," said Castro. But since he arrived eight months ago, the communications specialist has learned.

"The equipment we have here is very different than what we learned in (Advanced Individual Training) ... It was all brand new, but that was fine with me because I got the opportunity to diversify my skills," said Castro.

Each of the three communications specialists in the battery must operate slightly outside his Military Occupational Specialty, and they perform a variety of missions for the battery.

“We learned straight communications in AIT. But we're assigned to ECS (Engagement Control Station) crews, where we learn a bit of the 14-Echos' (Patriot operator and maintainer) job while assisting the crew in establishing and maintaining communications. My performance has a direct impact in the success of the battery's air defense mission,” said Castro.

Castro's impact has not gone unnoticed.

“Castro makes sure that our crew can shoot, move and communicate. He is technically proficient and has a great attitude — an outstanding Soldier,” said 2nd Lt. Chauncey M. Chappelle, the battery's launcher platoon leader and the tactical control officer of Castro's ECS crew.

Sgt. 1st Class Michael S. Bowlin, Castro's platoon sergeant, explained that in addition to being a member of an ECS crew, Castro is also cross-training with the antenna mast group crew that provides secure voice and data communications to adjacent Patriot units and higher headquarters. He's the radio operator for the RSOP (reconnaissance, selection and occupation of position) team as well. The RSOP team

conducts route and site reconnaissance prior to the battery's movement to ensure a site is suitable for occupation.

"I received Pfc. Castro about three months ago ... We dumped a lot of training on him, but he came out on top of everything we threw at him — stuff he'd never seen and had no experience with before. He really had to learn new communications systems from the ground up and he's given a hundred percent throughout. There's nothing that I cannot task him with that he cannot accomplish," said Bowlin.

