

11th ADA BDE Leads the Way with

Tactical Data Link University

By CW3 Travon Graves

Army Air Defense Artillery brigades continue to face significant challenges synchronizing training across the brigade, Army Air and Missile Defense Command and installation. A well-developed training initiative increases combat effectiveness by producing safe, proficient and flexible Soldiers who can operate and win on the battlefields of today and tomorrow. With the creation and implementation of Tactical Data Link University, the *Imperial* Brigade is now able to foster an effective training environment within the brigade and continue to extend our influence across the AAMDC and the installation. During FY22, the *Imperial* team coordinated and executed a series of tactical data link training events that included elements from the 1st Armored Division, 32nd AAMDC, and units organic to the 11th ADA BDE. These events are aimed primarily at 14-series Soldiers and leaders as it is an Air Defense-driven glide path. Still, it was necessary to incorporate maneuver elements into the training with the resurgence of large-scale combat operations.



Left: CW3 Travon Graves, 11th Air Defense Artillery Brigade Systems Integrator, is pictured teaching the basics of communication troubleshooting in his Tactical Data Link University class. Center: Tactical Data Link University students from 1st Armored Division, 32d Air and Missile Defense Command, and 11th Air Defense Artillery Brigade are pictured learning about establishing a secure connection. Right: Tactical Data Link University students from 1st Armored Division, 32d Air and Missile Defense Command, and 11th Air Defense Artillery Brigade gather for a picture upon completion of the challenging course. (Photos by 1LT Mariah Love, HHB 11th ADA BDE)

Train as You Fight

TDL-U arrived through the 11th ADA BDE commander's priority to train as you fight. Often within the ADA ranks, our command post nodes are not properly trained and lack the emphasis necessary to mitigate training barriers. Such is the observation throughout Patriot organizations wherein Soldiers within the Tactical Control Stations and battery command posts are often task-saturated with requirements outside their organic job responsibilities. This issue, coupled with a vague understanding of interoperability, leads to insufficiently trained CPs. Based on these observations, the 11th ADA BDE Air and Missile Defense Systems Integrator incorporated a series of training seminars and opportunities to fill those training shortfalls. The training focused mainly on integrating tactical data links and mission command information systems.

Additionally, the training extended hands-on experience of legacy tactical data links such as Tactical Data Information Link J or Satellite. SAT J is a protocol primarily used by the U.S. Navy in maritime operations but still relevant to the U.S. Army platforms in a joint environment. Air Defenders often deploy to joint environments that are difficult to replicate in garrison. With the Army's Global Agile Integrated Transport (GAIT), the 11th ADA BDE could extend its tactical network to facilitate a lab environment for Soldiers to practice operating within a live network. GAIT was established to facilitate distributed mission command for Army organizations to help establish a "train-as-you-fight environment." It is critical that units exploit all available resources such as GAIT, home station mission training center capabilities, and units available across the installation.

Fight to Train

Without a replicated home station training experience, ADA BDEs and subordinate units would continue laboring through training roadblocks that degrade the graduate level of mastery that the *Imperial Brigade* is pursuing. Commanders must understand the importance of fighting to train, along with the second and third-order effects of not training to support the evolving,

complex warfighter environment. The more units incorporate digital sustainment initiatives such as TDL-U into their training glide paths, the better prepared that organization will be to integrate into a joint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational environment. The 11th ADA BDE witnessed the benefits of utilizing TDL-U during Roving Sands 22, one of the most extensive CONUS Air Defense-centric exercises. During Roving Sands, the Patriot units who had completed TDL-U were noticeably more effective and efficient in executing Air Battle Management and establishing and maintaining tactical data links. It is critical to note the focus of the fight is not solely on tactical data link-equipped systems but a fight to ensure ADA units maintain the requisite knowledge to exploit their organic capabilities regarding mission command information systems.

Summary

During subordinate units' evaluations, the BDE AMD Systems Integrator saw firsthand an increase in operator proficiency. TDL-U also provided more contacts to Air Defenders considering transitioning into the Warrant Officer Cohort. The 11th ADA BDE 140A also noticed a direct correlation between TDL-U implementation and an increase in packet submission for 140A. Several potential 140A candidates felt after participating in TDL-U, they were more engaged in their job and wanted to pursue more opportunities for responsibility. This article aimed to share lessons learned from 11th ADA BDE during our recent Roving Sands 2022 iteration and highlight the TDL-U digital sustainment initiative. Interoperability and the pursuit of shared situational awareness will continue to be integral to the 11th ADA BDE's ability to fight and win. The proper integration of TDL-equipped systems and missile and space intelligence training can dramatically impact operations at the BDE level and beyond.

CW3 Travon Graves is currently the 11th ADA BDE 140A Air and Missile Defense Systems Integrator. Before joining the Warrant Officer Corps in 2014, Graves was a 14S Air and Missile Defense Crewmember. He became a 140A due to his interest in tactics and desire to have more impact.