

MILAN-BASED FIELD ARTILLERY UNIT RAINS DOWN ROUNDS IN WISCONSIN

Written by Sgt. Charlie Helmholt, 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
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FORT MCCOY, WIS. (07/22/2013)(readMedia)-- Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery Regiment, with units based in **Milan, Macomb and Galesburg** headed north for several weeks in July to conduct their annual training at Fort McCoy and to field the M777 Howitzer, a new weapon for Illinois National Guard Soldiers.

The M777 replaced the M198. It's smaller than its predecessor and weighs much less, mainly due to the use of titanium, and takes nearly a third less time to set up.

"The only comparison is they are both 155mm and they're both pulled by a truck. This one (M777) is half the weight and is all digital," said Sgt. 1st Class John D. Feehan, of **Kirkwood, Ill.**, a platoon sergeant with Battery C, 2nd Battalion (Bn.), 123rd Field Artillery (FA) in **Galesburg**.

The effective range on the M777 is approximately 15 miles. However, this weapon system can also be combined with Excalibur GPS-guided rounds which then increase the effective range to nearly 25 miles.

"The great thing about this system is not only can you fire it off the computer, you can fire it manually as well," said Sgt. Brandon T. Hornung, of **Utica, Ill.**, a gunner with Battery C, 2nd

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Bn., 123rd FA. Hornung was originally a cavalry scout from Dixon, Ill. who volunteered for mobilization and was deployed with Battery C. "I think it's one of the most valuable pieces of equipment the Army's got because we can attack from such a distance."

The training gives the unit ample time and space to work on the new system and become proficient with it, allowing for multiple fire missions over the course of the two-week exercise.

"It's great because it gives all the Soldiers a chance to work on their specific jobs and then rotate so guys can become proficient in other areas. Simulations just don't afford us the training that this does," said 2nd Lt. Chandler Wescott, of **Springfield, Ill.**, a platoon leader with Battery C, 2nd Bn., 123rd FA.

With National Guard and Reserve units being relied on heavily for deployments over the past decade, it is fitting that their units receive equipment of this caliber in such a timely fashion.

"The guys really enjoy using this weapon. It's a privilege to have it because not many National Guard units do. It's outstanding. Especially as this is what we'll use in theater," said Wescott.