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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## Engineers conduct Best Sapper competition

Story by Pfc. David Huddleston, 18th Eng. Bde. Public Affairs

BAMBERG, Germany – Soldiers from the 42<sup>nd</sup> Clearance Company, 54<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion battled it out in an intense Best Sapper Competition March 15-17 here.

All of the 18 volunteers competed in two-Soldier teams, putting their skills to the test on various engineer tasks including knot tying, mine detection and demolitions ranges.

Everyone agreed that building a strong relationship with their fellow Soldiers was essential to succeeding.

“Teamwork was the most important thing,” said Pfc. Darrion Hicks, a 54<sup>th</sup> Eng. Bn. combat engineer from Raleigh, N.C.

Leading up to the competition, Soldiers trained on demolitions and troop movement techniques. They focused on physical training twice a day and frequently went on foot marches to build up endurance.

The competition started off with an X-mile ruck march, a stress shoot range and demolitions testing on the first day. An X-mile march is a ruck march where the competitors have no idea how far they will be required to go.

The second day was no easier than the first, beginning well before sunrise with a nonstandard Army Physical Fitness Test. The teams were required to complete three minutes of pull-ups, five minutes each of pushups and situps, and a 3-mile run wearing their combat equipment and gear.

Hicks described the competition as an intense test of will, which was physically and mentally demanding.

Pfc. Christopher Bidwell, a 54<sup>th</sup> Eng. Bn. combat engineer from Everett, Wash., said exhaustion was a huge factor during the competition.

Following the physical fitness test, Soldiers were tested for 10 hours on various Sapper tasks, such as demolitions, timber and steel cutting, construction of a poncho raft, and rappelling. The second day carried well into the early morning hours of day three, as the competitors completed a night land navigation course.

“It physically pushed me to a limit I never thought I could achieve,” said Hicks, “as well as kept us motivated.”

To finish off the competition the Soldiers completed an X-mile buddy run while traversing several obstacles. Stations throughout the run required teams to carry simulated casualties and bangalore torpedo boxes as well as force fence posts into the ground using fence post drivers, flip large tires and handsaw through logs.

“The competition was great and by far some of the best training I’ve done since arriving in Germany,” said Bidwell.

Pfc. Jermaine Gregory of Shirley, Mass., and Pfc. Neal Hendrickson of Longview, Wash., took first place in the competition. Pfc. Brian Siwek from Pequannock, N.J., and Pfc. Richard Weir from Atlantic City, N.J., took home second place honors.

Six Soldiers from the 42<sup>nd</sup> Clearance Co. were selected to compete in the U.S. Army Best Sapper Competition at Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo., scheduled for April 5-10.



Pfc. Brian Siwek from Pequannock, N.J., and Pfc. Richard Weir from Atlantic City, N.J., who are both combat engineers assigned to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Clearance Company, 54<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, compete in a Best Sapper Competition March 15-17 in Bamberg, Germany. (Photo by Pfc. David Huddleston, 18<sup>th</sup> Eng. Bde. Public Affairs)



Pfc. Sean Meyer from Walnut Creek, Calif., and Pfc. Michael Parson from Chicago, who are both combat engineers assigned to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Clearance Company, 54<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, carry a bangalore torpedo box during the final day of the Best Sapper Competition March 15-17 in Bamberg, Germany. (Photo by Pfc. David Huddleston, 18<sup>th</sup> Eng. Bde. Public Affairs)





Pfc. Nathaniel Williamson from Norfolk, Va., and Pfc. Christopher Bidwell from Everett, Wash., who are both combat engineers assigned to the 42<sup>nd</sup> Clearance Company, 54<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, cut a log just before running it to the finish line during the final day of the Best Sapper Competition March 15-17 in Bamberg, Germany. (Photo by Pfc. David Huddleston, 18<sup>th</sup> Eng. Bde. Public Affairs)