

BEST RANGER & BEST SAPPER Competitions

THE NCO JOURNAL

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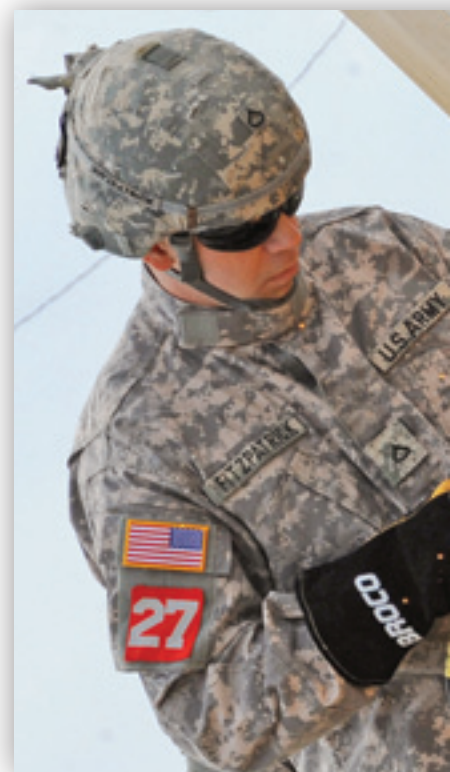
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MONTHLY FORUM FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT





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ON THE COVER

Staff Sgt. Jeremiah Waggoner scales the Prusik climb during day two of the Best Ranger Competition 2011.

Waggoner and his teammate, Sgt. Jonathon Morgan, represented the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C.

Photo illustration by Linda Crippen and Spc. David M. Gafford

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THE NCO JOURNAL

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ROLL CALL
We honor the men and women who have sacrificed their lives in current operations around the world.



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During Iraq visit with troops, Army's new chief discusses NCO development

By Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy
29th MPAD

Leader development is key to the ongoing success of the Army, said the Army's new chief of staff during an April 19 visit with troops with United States Division-Center at Camp Liberty, Iraq.

"I'm personally involved with leader development at every level, because that's what really makes us who we are," Gen. Martin E. Dempsey said. "I like to describe the Army as the nation's pre-eminent leadership experience."

As part of that, the Army is reviewing the promotion process to ensure that only the most qualified move on to the next rank, Dempsey said.

"We're promoting 95 to 98 percent of captains to major, 93 or 95 percent of majors to lieutenant colonel," Martin said. "We're not really separating out the true high performers that we should aspire to have. We shouldn't be satisfied that 98 percent of captains are being promoted to major, because 98 percent of captains don't deserve to be promoted to major. Statistically, that's an infeasible percentage. And we've got to do the same thing on the noncommissioned officer side."

Expanding on the capabilities and education of Soldiers — especially noncommissioned officers — is one of the things Dempsey said he and his staff are focusing on.

"The new sergeant major of the Army ... has a couple things he's working on for the NCO Corps," Dempsey said. "One of them is to give you the same kind of developmental opportunities that, heretofore, were really [only in the realm of] the officer corps."

Part of that means a central selection board for sergeants major, Dempsey said.

However, the role and overall abilities of the NCO Corps is something Dempsey said he doesn't want to see change.

"I've watched, personally, the Noncommissioned Officer Corps grow into what it is today," he said. "My first noncommissioned officer in the Army was an alcoholic, and when he picked me up at the train station in Germany to go up and grab

my [gear], he stopped and had six beers at a guest house. I'm not making that up. Here I am, a 22-year-old second lieutenant thinking, 'Is this what [the Army] is?' I didn't even know how to react to it."

NCOs today are leaps and bounds beyond that first encounter, Dempsey said.

"The Noncommissioned Officer Corps now is better trained, but it's not focused just on training," he said. "They're better educated. They're more versatile. They're developing [future NCOs] differently, and we have to keep that up."

Maintaining the professionalism of the NCO Corps is part of Dempsey's plan for the future of the Army, which also



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy

Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, the 37th chief of staff of the Army, speaks to Soldiers with United States Division-Center during an April 19 visit to Camp Liberty in Baghdad.

includes keeping up the experience level from downrange.

"I think we have to make sure that, as the demand goes down in Iraq and Afghanistan, we've got to maintain what it means to be a Soldier, what it means to be a professional and what it means to be a warrior," Dempsey said. "We've got to preserve that Warrior Ethos. That's who we are."

In the end, for Dempsey, it all comes back to leadership.

"I believe the Army should celebrate the fact that it is the nation's pre-eminent leadership experience," he said. "We've got to push ourselves to understand how we develop leaders."

On May 30, President Barack Obama announced he was nominating Dempsey as the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Once confirmed by the Senate, Dempsey would replace the current chairman, Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, when his term ends Sept. 30.

Enlisted leaders focus on families

By Elaine Sanchez
American Forces Press Service →

Building resilience in families and ensuring they have access to effective support programs are just a few of the steps the services are taking to ensure a high quality of life for troops and their families, the services' senior enlisted leaders said during a town hall meeting April 28 in Chicago, Ill..

"At the end of the day, we as a nation don't do well promoting resiliency — that ability to bounce back," Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III said. "If we can instill [resilience] in our Soldiers and in families, we believe we're going to have a stronger force, and we need a stronger force to get through these challenges."

Chandler was joined by Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Rick D. West, Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps Carlton W. Kent, Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force James A. Roy and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Michael P. Leavitt for the meeting at the 2011 Family Resilience Conference, hosted by the Defense and Agriculture departments. Their wives also attended the meeting, with the exception of West's wife, who is working for the Navy in Afghanistan.

The leaders stressed the importance of leadership when working to build resilience in service members and their families.

"It starts at the top and has to work itself down," West told the audience of family support professionals.

Marines often are reluctant to get help, Kent noted, which underscores the importance of strong leadership.

"Marines see the horrors of combat each and every day," Kent said. However, many Marines believe they'll be considered weak if they ask for help, Kent added.

"But if they're hearing from the leadership and up, the families and the Marines will come forward," he said. "We're breaking that mold right now. We're getting away from that stigma. If you've got a problem, come forward. We're going to get you fixed and keep you in the fight."

Chandler lauded the Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program, which is designed to build resilience in Soldiers and family members through tools such as an online assessment and modules tailored for specific needs.

Building on that program's success, the Air Force has adopted a version called Comprehensive Airman Fitness, Roy said. The Air Force also is looking at its support programs to see which ones are effective and which aren't working, he added.

Roy acknowledged concerns about support programs being cut because of budget constraints.

"I will tell you, on behalf of all of us, we're out to protect



Photo by Elaine Sanchez

As other senior enlisted advisors and spouses look on, Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Rick D. West addresses an audience of family support professionals during a town hall meeting April 28 at the 2011 Family Resilience Conference in Chicago.

some of those things, too, because we know how important they are," he said.

"But the fact of the matter is, we're not going to be able to protect everything," Roy continued. "We've got to select the right programs for our people — military members and the family members. We've got to make sure those programs are sustainable throughout time."

West said he has spoken to families who are "overwhelmed with support." Chandler agreed, noting it's an issue he often runs into in his meetings with families.

"There's so much information. Where do you find it?" he said. "How do we have a clearing house where you go to one place that you can get to all the information, that it's easily navigable? What's out there, and how do I get access to it?"

While too much support is better than not enough, West noted the services, particularly in this time of "jointness," need to work together to consolidate support programs.

"[There are] some things that we can't bring together — they're service-specific. But where we can, we will," he said. "We're going to look at our programs and utilize the ones that will be good for our families as we go forward."

The senior leaders and their wives took several questions from the audience during the session, which ranged from the need to spread the word about family support professionals to the importance of reaching out and connecting to geographically separated families.

The leaders wrapped up the session by reiterating their commitment to military families.

"We recruit Marines, but we retain families — that's a fact," Kent said. "They are important because they sacrifice so much."

Soldier breaks record running marathon in gas mask

By Capt. Ozzie Santiago Smith III, 25th CAB

People run marathons for all kinds of reasons — for a personal challenge, because they're competitive or because it's a great way to stay fit. But, none of those are the primary reasons why Staff Sgt. Marc Dibernardo pounds pavement.

A member of E Company, 2nd Battalion, 25th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 25th Combat Aviation Brigade, Dibernardo runs to raise cash for the support and recovery of wounded warriors. He's been running in shorts, shoes, T-shirt — and gas mask — since 2003.

Though he runs for all wounded warriors, Dibernardo's participation in Hawaii's North Shore Marathon on May 1 was in memory of 10 friends he lost in Afghanistan or who succumbed to their wounds at home.

After crossing the finish line, Dibernardo was unofficially informed he finished the course in 3 hours, 49 minutes and 42 seconds, breaking the previous world record by five minutes for an individual running a marathon in a gas mask.

"I'm not a hero. They're heroes," Dibernardo said of the wounded warriors who are his inspiration. "This is the best way I know how to let the world know about the sacrifices being made by our Soldiers."

"I'm very proud of him," said 1st Sgt. Henry Wood. "It's an outstanding thing he's doing and a great reason why he's doing it."



Photo by Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown

Sgt. Timothy Heater, a medic with the National Guard's Warrior Training Center, completes the rower exercise May 10 as part of testing for the Army's new Physical Readiness Test at Fort Benning, Ga.

Soldiers try out new PT test

By Alexandra Hemmerly-Brown
Army News Service

The Army's new physical fitness test was administered to a group of Fort Benning, Ga., Soldiers in May as part of the Army's pilot program.

The goal of the U.S. Army Physical Fitness School, which is based at Fort Jackson, S.C., is to test 15,000 to 20,000 Soldiers by September to establish standards for the new test, officials said.

The Army Physical Readiness Test has been administered so far to groups of Soldiers at Fort Jackson; Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.; and Fort Sill, Okla.

About 30 National Guard Soldiers took the APRT on May 10 at Fort Benning. Testing at Fort Stewart, Ga.; Fort Bragg, N.C.; and Fort Bliss, Texas, is scheduled for July.

The new APRT includes five events: a 60-yard shuttle run, one minute of the rower, the standing long jump, one minute of push-ups and a 1.5-mile run.

Master Sgt. Robert Hoskins, chief training manager at the Physical Fitness School, said the previous Army Physical Fitness Test, developed in the 1980s, is outdated.

"Science has changed since then,"

Hoskins said. "Science has matured, and we now know that there are better ways to give a commander an indication of a Soldier's physical abilities."

Hoskins explained that, from a medical standpoint, the tests' five exercises provide a more comprehensive report of a Soldier's overall fitness.

He also noted that one of the ways the new test is more effective is not giving a rest period during the push-up or rower events. Letting Soldiers rest doesn't give a true appraisal of their muscular fitness; muscle failure is usually achieved in about 1 minute of continuous exercise.

"I think the test works," Hoskins said. "You have to believe in it, and you have to try it."

Sgt. Michael Mateo, a support Soldier for the National Guard's Warrior Training Center at Fort Benning, said he didn't think the new test was very hard, but it was harder than the previous APFT.

"I think with more practice, it would be fairly easy to get a good score," Mateo said.

And practice is exactly what Hoskins wants Soldiers to do.

"If you actually do the new Physical Readiness Training, the training will drive the test," Hoskins said.

TECHNOLOGY

Army accelerates app innovation, delivery

By Margaret McBride
Army News Service

The Army is now developing another “Apps for the Army” challenge, which will be the next increment of the Army Application Marketplace for smartphones and other mobile devices.

The challenge is expected to launch in 2012 with expanded participation, to include both public and industry developers.

“In 2010, the ‘Apps for the Army’ challenge provided a venue for internal Army early adopters and innovators,” said Gary Blohm, lead for software transformation within the Army Chief Information Office/G-6. “This time, the Army wants to tap into industry, and not just for its well-known application development capabilities, but to help them look at new ways to broaden third-party participation in the marketplace.”

In preparation for the next “Apps for the Army,” or A4A, the CIO/G-6 is designing prototype business models and addressing intellectual property rights, Blohm said.

Army CIO/G-6 efforts to accelerate innovation and speed delivery of applications include conducting a number of events that engage industry in changing the business models, practices

and processes used to respond to warfighter needs.

The events will help refine the existing prototype Army Application Marketplace and its capabilities and provide the foundation for next year’s A4A challenge.

“Our ability to adopt more agile practices and processes is based on the ongoing collapse and standardization of computing environments,” Blohm said. “This means we are looking to establish an online capability that can support applications that are accessed by a variety of devices across diverse mission areas.”

While many think apps and app marketplaces are only for smartphones, the Army wants to use the marketplace for all types of applications.

In 2010, the Army kicked off its application innovation initiative by launching “Apps for the Army,” a challenge directed at unleashing the creativity of Soldiers and Army civilians to develop solutions to enhance operational effectiveness and increase business productivity.

Parallel efforts were conducted to establish a supporting proof-of-concept application marketplace with streamlined processes and nascent capabilities provided by the Department of Defense, such as the DoD Storefront and *forge.mil*. Its initial capabilities supported the distribution of the A4A’s winning apps.



Image courtesy U.S. Army CIO/G-6

A screen capture depicts the U.S. Army Marketplace, which will bring developers and end-users together to collaborate on innovative solutions to Army problems, level the playing field for all vendors and increase competition to provide the best and most relevant apps.

TRICARE Online improves Soldiers’ access to health data

By TRICARE

New TRICARE Online features give users access to expanded personal health data including lab results, patient history, diagnoses and provider visits.

The military health plan’s new online features, available at <https://www.tricareonline.com>, expand the website’s “Blue Button” capability, which already allowed beneficiaries to safely and securely access and print or save their

demographic information and allergy and medication profiles, officials said.

The level of data available depends on where treatment occurs with the most data available to those who regularly get care at military hospitals and clinics.

“These new capabilities are a major step forward in engaging military health system patients as partners in their own health care,” said Navy Rear Adm. (Dr.) Christine Hunter, TRICARE Management Activity deputy director.

“Personal electronic health records can also improve care by conveying accurate patient information between providers and reducing delays in treatment.”

The Blue Button was fielded by TRICARE and was made available by other federal health care providers last year. With more than 250,000 users, officials said, it is the result of a close partnership among the Defense and Veterans Affairs departments and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

DoD issues new Purple Heart standards for brain injuries

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

U.S. service members have long been eligible to receive the Purple Heart Medal for the signature wounds of the current wars — mild traumatic brain injuries and concussions. But now, there is more clarity on how medical criteria for the award are applied, Defense Department officials said April 27.

The criteria for the Purple Heart state that the injury must have been caused by enemy action or in action against the enemy, and has to be of a degree requiring treatment by a medical officer.

But, it may be difficult to determine when a mild traumatic brain injury or a concussive injury that does not result in a loss of consciousness is severe enough to require treatment by a medical officer. “This is why we created this baseline standard,” Department of Defense spokeswoman Eileen Lainez said.

DoD now allows the award of the Purple Heart even if a service member was not treated by a medical officer, as long as a medical officer certifies that the injury would have required treatment by a medical officer had one been available.

DoD officials said that as the science of traumatic brain injuries becomes better understood, guidance for award of the medal will evolve.



“The services are not able to speculate as to how many service members may have received a mild TBI or concussion but did not seek or receive medical treatment,” Lainez said. “Therefore, each military department will establish its retroactive review procedures to ensure deserving service members are appropriately recognized.” Retroactive reviews would cover injuries suffered since Sept. 11, 2001, she added.

The Marine Corps has issued clarifying guidance to ensure commanders in the field understand when the Purple Heart is appropriate for concussions.

Army officials are preparing their guidance and ask Soldiers to wait until submission requirements are published through command channels and on the Human Resources Command website at www.hrc.army.mil before submitting or resubmitting nominations for the Purple Heart.

Once the Army publishes its requirements, officials said, Soldiers should resubmit requests through their chains of command.

Army veterans should resubmit to the U.S. Army Human Resources Command at: Commander, USAHRC, ATTN: Awards and Decorations Branch (AHRC-PDP-A), 1600 Spearhead Division Ave., Fort Knox, KY 40122. Vets also can call 1-888-276-9472 or e-mail hrc.tagd.awards@conus.army.mil.

Nominations sought for Greatest Invention awards

By RDECOM

Since 2003, the Army Materiel Command has conducted the Army Greatest Inventions program to encourage and reward those fighting from research labs throughout the Army by developing the best technology solutions for the Soldier.

This year, AMC is also proud to promote the Soldier Greatest Inventions, or SGI, awards in order to recognize Soldiers for their exemplary effort to enhance their fellow warfighters' equipment and performance.

SGI nominations are now being accepted for practical extensions, applications and game-changing new products

initiated by one or more active-duty Soldiers.

Winners will be selected by fellow warfighters based on the invention's impact on Army capabilities breadth of use and magnitude of improvement over existing systems, inventiveness and potential benefit outside the Army.

This program's unique nomination and selection process reflects the voice of the warfighter and insight into the future of Army equipment.

Previous AGI award winners include the 40 mm M320 grenade launcher, Counter Radio Controlled Improvised Explosive Device Electronic Warfare Duke V3 (CREW DUKE V3) and mine-resistant, ambush-protected

vehicle overhead wire mitigation kit.

Nomination criteria:

- ▶ Nominated inventions for SGI must have been “first fielded” during calendar year 2010.
- ▶ The SGI “fielding” definition can include traditional and other expedited fielding methods used to put a new mission critical product, device or process in to use by Soldiers at any level.

Technology nomination criteria for each award are available through the U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command, which is executing on behalf of AMC. Nomination packages must be submitted by email to AGI-Awards@us.army.mil by July 1.

Iraq molding NCO corps after U.S.

By Erin O. Stattel
Army News Service

The noncommissioned officer corps of the U.S. Army has become something of a model, lending its structure, organization and strong backbone as examples to other militaries around the world, including Iraq.

Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph R. Allen, of United States Forces-Iraq, recently hosted a bloggers' roundtable to discuss the progress in Iraq and the importance of the professionalism of U.S. Army NCOs during the training of the Iraqi Army.

"One thing I noticed was that the young Iraqi soldiers have a lot in common with our young junior Soldiers," Allen said after a recent trip to Mosul, Iraq. "I have noticed that a lot of Iraqi soldiers have befriended our Soldiers. A lot of bonds and professional development have occurred, and they want to look exactly like us. They see how we conduct business, especially noncommissioned officers and troop-leading procedures, and they try hard to emulate that."

Allen pointed out that this is the first time the Iraqi Army has had an NCO corps.

"The reason that it's so important for us to grow the Iraqi Army — and that's our primary mission right now — is to train the Iraqi security force, mainly because we destroyed the Iraqi Army," he said.

"Because Iraq is important to the United States and important to this region, it's important for us to rebuild the Iraqi force. If Iraq doesn't have the capabilities of protecting itself, then, you know, we probably didn't finish our mission here. So the intent right now is to just continue to train the Iraq security force and partner with them until such time as we receive orders to leave Iraq."

With the withdrawal from Iraq approaching at the end of the year, Allen said Soldiers need to remain vigilant and on alert.

"The Soldiers are still very, very busy here in Iraq, and we tell them all the time that we've got to keep our dukes up at all times," he said. "Iraq still remains a very, very dangerous place, and as Soldiers travel around the battlefield, they have to keep their heads on a swivel. We constantly preach those kinds of things."

Allen also alluded to the difficulties associated with building an NCO corps from scratch, especially when education plays a dividing role.

"I think the biggest sticking point now is trying to build a

noncommissioned officer corps to better enhance the command and control of the Iraqi army, which they're trying to do," Allen said.

"But again, there are plenty of growing pains in establishing a noncommissioned officer corps, because they didn't have one. They didn't utilize them the way we [utilize] noncommissioned officers in the United States Army."

As the Army prepares to complete its mission in Iraq, more



Photo by Spc. Terence Ewings, 4th AAB, 1st Cav. Div.

A U.S. Soldier mentors Iraqi Army soldiers on a piece of communications equipment. U.S. Army NCOs are instrumental in helping the Iraqi army develop its NCO corps.

Soldiers will be furthering their education. Allen, who is in the process of completing his bachelor's degree, said he couldn't be more proud of the professionalism of troops and where the Army is today compared with when he first enlisted.

"Here in Iraq, I don't think there are very many [U.S.] Soldiers who [are] not involved in some kind of college program. I think for the most part, most Soldiers and definitely most noncommissioned officers have either a college degree or are working on a college degree," he said. "So, we've got some pretty smart guys and gals out there in our force."

Allen acknowledged the more difficult parts of the mission remain to be seen but said he believes Iraqis are ready to take control of their own security efforts.

"Iraq is a very complex environment, and I think that they're ready for the change. I think that not until some of the older officers and noncommissioned officers retire out of the military will the Iraqi Army fully adopt to some of the changes," he said.

"They're all for it, especially the younger Iraqi soldiers."



BEST of the **BEST**

Teams blaze through
Best Ranger Competition

STORY & PHOTOS BY LINDA CRIPPEN



BEST RANGER COMPE





Victory can be described in many different ways. For the competitors in this year's Best Ranger Competition at Fort Benning, Ga., qualifying to compete is a victory itself — most units conduct their own competitions to identify teams to represent them in the real deal. The competition covers more than 60 miles in 72 hours, and just getting to the finish line is considered a form of victory, too.

Some spectators compare the competition to those of the Spartans and gladiators, minus the part of fighting to the death. In the case of the Best Ranger Competition, camaraderie and sportsmanship are integral, and it is an ideal way to bring together the Ranger community.

The 2011 competition welcomed the return of some familiar faces, including this year's top winning team: Sgt. Maj. Walter Zajkowski and Master Sgt. Eric Turk, from the U.S. Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, N.C. With a historic finish, both men now have two BRC victories under their belts —

Turk won last year with his partner, Master Sgt. Eric Ross, also with USASOC; and Zajkowski won in 2007 with his USASOC partner, Maj. Liam Collins.

Zajkowski said winning a second time is “a chance to lead from the front and show people things they might think are impossible are indeed achievable. You just have to believe in yourself, your teammates and commit yourself for the greater good.”

“He believed in me a whole lot more than I did,” Turk, who wasn't planning on competing this year, said of his teammate. “It was kind of a last-minute decision, and I'm glad he twisted my arm to come out here and compete with him.”

Only one other man has two Best Ranger titles to his name: Sgt. Paul Scurka, who was with the 75th Ranger Regiment, won in 1985 (with Staff Sgt. Harvey Moore Jr.) and 1986 (with Sgt. Bart Sexton).

From beginning to end, the top three teams vied for first place. The beginning of day two saw team 14, Staff Sgt. Charles Cogle and Spc. Christopher Broussard of the 75th Ranger Regiment at Fort Benning, in the lead. In the end, they finished in second place, trailing the leaders by only 30 points. Third place went to team 42, Sgts. 1st Class Raymond Santiago and Mason Riepe, from the Ranger Training Brigade at Fort Benning.

While the hosts of the competition, the Ranger Training Brigade, said they would love to see its men bring home the glory each year, nothing but praise was shared for the winners. “Both men are great Americans, very well-spoken, very professional and extremely good-hearted,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Dennis Smith, the RTB command sergeant major.

Smith said the winners are humble and did not act above anybody, talking to all the other men, giving helpful hints.

Left: Sgt. Maj. Walter Zajkowski and Master Sgt. Eric Turk, from the U.S. Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, N.C., make their way through the canoe event on day one during the Best Ranger Competition 2011. The team took first place, earning a second title for both men.

Right: Master Sgt. Jamie Newman and Sgt. 1st Class Jonathon Biltz, from the Ranger Training Brigade, Fort Benning, Ga., climb to a roof-top during the urban assault course on day one.

“They did everything that a Ranger buddy should do. At the end of the day, they did the most number of tasks correctly — with the fastest times.”

Gutting it out

Day one was kinder than past years, and claimed only 16 teams. Sgt. 1st Class John Rhoten, who teamed up with Maj. Edward Arntson from 3rd Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Va., said he almost didn’t make it through the first event, foot movement 1.

“The night before, I was sick and throwing up,” he said. “I was pretty much running on empty all the way to the canoes. Our coach, who was there at the transition into the canoes, said I looked yellow and generally unwell. He and my wife didn’t expect me to keep going. They thought I was going to fall out.”

Transitioning from the 13-mile foot movement to the canoe event wasn’t without challenges. Several teams toppled over at the beginning of the course, as shallow rapids made maneuvering tricky business. The 8-mile course had other shallow spots, forcing teams to wade through the water and pull their weight until reaching adequate depths again.

“Having my buddy with me is what helped me drive on,” Rhoten said. “Really, my partner was kind of dragging me along, but I just kept moving. I knew it would end at some point and that I’d be able to move on to something else and bounce back.”

Rhoten’s team did hang on to finish the competition in 13th place. This was the Old Guard’s third time to compete at BRC, but the first for Rhoten and his colleagues.

MODERN RANGERS

The elite Ranger community has a historic legacy that can be traced as far back as the French and Indian War (1754-1763). But, the creation of the “modern Rangers” is credited to Gen. Creighton Abrams, former Army chief of staff who worked to reform the current-day 75th Ranger Regiment. Known as “Abram’s Own,” these battalions were stood up in 1973 because the rest of the Army was undisciplined, Ranger Training Brigade officials said. The NCO Corps lacked leadership, and Abrams was set to improve it. The plan was to train up the best Rangers, who would eventually go back out into the general Army population and share their knowledge. That plan is still the driving force behind Ranger training and Ranger leadership.





Rhoten, the platoon sergeant of the caskets platoon, C Company, 1st Battalion, said both Old Guard teams have been focused on training for the competition since January. And the officer-NCO teams seemed to work out well.

“Maj. Arnston was actually my company commander during our [2009-2010] deployment to Iraq, so we had a pretty good working relationship. We both brought something a little different to the table. I think it worked well, having that kind of dynamic in this type of competition.” Rhoten added that his practical skills mixed well with Arnston’s technical skills. “We were able to feed off of each other. Even training with the other team, we were able to incorporate all of our experiences and bring them all together.”

A spectator-friendly day of competition, the majority of events on day two took place at Todd Field. Day Stakes are round-robin events in which teams advance through multiple stations, performing technical tasks and arduous obstacles. Many events are old staples, but each year the RTB introduces some new ones. For example, this year, competitors did a Prusik climb, a technique that uses a series of ropes and knots that disperse the climber’s weight at the waist and foot hitches, and also rappelled,

fired in a virtual shoot house and tackled the mystery event: writing the Ranger Creed.

Day two spilled into the final day of the competition with another foot movement; Camp Darby was the destination. Competitors managed a little bit of rest before conquering the infamous Darby Queen obstacle course, a mere warm up for the rest of the day’s events: helocasting into Victory Pond, the water confidence course and the final buddy run to the finish line. By the time teams crossed the finish line, they had covered more than 60 miles and completed more than 25 specific military objectives and tasks — all within three days.

Planning BRC

On the surface, fans and spectators may think hosting the Best Ranger Competition is easy, but the magnitude of planning, orchestrating and executing is immeasurable.

From evaluators to safety and checkpoint coordinators, Ranger Training Brigade personnel create history-making competitions year after year. The experience and professionalism of the cadre, along with their attention to detail, are some of the





ingredients that distinguish this rugged event from all other “Best of” Army competitions.

In planning the competition, Smith said the events allow the brigade to showcase and demonstrate some of the techniques used by airborne Rangers.

“We try to reach back to our roots; some are historical, and some are more modern. We had a knot-tying event, as well as a virtual shoot house, an interactive event that employed the latest technology. It’s old and new mixed together, with physically fit, mentally tough men showing just what it takes to be an airborne Ranger,” he said.

Smith said he’s not surprised that other competitions strive to achieve the same prestige as the BRC. In fact, one of the founding ideals behind the creation of the Rangers was to effect change throughout the rest of the Army. The fact that other competitions are chasing the Ranger legacy and prestige is just another manifestation of this plan in action, Smith said.

The Best Ranger Competition “allows the Army to come together to feel the magic and touch the dragon,” he said. “Everybody wants to be the best. I don’t hate them for doing it. That’s

Left and center: Sgt. Joshua Rolfes and 1st Lt. Benjamin Franklin, with the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Carson, Colo., perform a helocast into Victory Pond on day three of the competition. **Right:** Rolfes gives a thumbs up to the aircraft crew after the team hits the water.

great. I can’t really comment on other competitions, because I don’t know much about them. But, it’s kind of flattering that everyone else wants to catch up and be like the Rangers,” he said.

Aside from leadership at the Ranger Training Brigade planning the individual, physical events, there is a great deal more that goes into making the Best Ranger Competition happen. And, there are far more people involved than just RTB personnel.

Behind the scenes are teams of people working tirelessly all year to produce the three-day event. One person in particular is responsible for generating sponsors and donations that keep the competition going.

Ten years ago, Candysy Bryant was invited by then-Col. Hazen Baron, RTB commander, to discuss the Best Ranger Competition. As a consultant, Bryant forges relationships on behalf of the Ranger community, and her efforts pay off in numerous ways.





BRC 2011: 50 TEAMS, 60+ MILES, 3 DAYS

Friday, April 15

- Foot movement 1
- Canoe race
- Shooting events:
 - Machine gun
 - Moving target
- Day orienteering
- Fast rope insertion and extraction
- Urban assault course
- Night orienteering

Saturday, April 16

- Night orienteering
- Day Stakes:
 - Prusik climb and rappel
 - Laser shoot house
 - Ranger first responder
 - Grenade assault course
 - Assemble and operate a multiband inter-/intra-team radio and advanced system improvement program radio
 - Stress shoot
 - Mystery event: Write the Ranger Creed
- Foot movement 2

Sunday, April 17

- Foot movement 2 continued
- Night Stakes
- Weapons assembly:
 - M9 pistol
 - M4 rifle
 - M14 rifle
 - M249 light machine gun
 - M240B machine gun
- Darby Queen obstacle course
- Helocast and swim
- Water confidence course:
 - Log walk
 - Rope drop
 - 75-foot tower climb
 - Zip line suspension
- Buddy run to finish line

All events are run continuously without any planned rest. This year, a record 31 teams crossed the finish line.

To view more photos of the 2011 Best Ranger Competition, see our Flickr page at www.flickr.com/photos/ncojournal/.

Providing communication, continuity and fundraising efforts, Bryant works year-round to ensure the Ranger message has the widest dissemination while securing some very tangible results — donors and donations. The majority of support comes from individuals with small donations rather than large corporations. People just want to be part of the event in some way, she said.

Bryant said the foundational element in getting people to believe in what you're doing is trust. "There's a great deal of communication involved, even taking it a step further and befriending many of our donors. They really become part of the family," she said. And, support can begin with as little as \$1.

RTB officials emphasized that every item winners receive is donated. Loaned or donated products are also used during the competition — this year's canoe race is a perfect example.

"The brigade doesn't typically keep 50 canoes on hand, so we rented the canoes for the competition," Bryant explained.

Streaming live

This year, the Best Ranger Competition broadcasted events online through streaming live video at www.bestrangerlive.com. Smith said a huge number of people tuned in to watch online — and they're still watching.

The RTB was careful to not advertise the live stream before the competition, afraid it wouldn't work. Viewers discovered the coverage by word of mouth and on Twitter and Facebook. Smith said he thinks the social media aspect will be even bigger next year, because the RTB's usage of it will continue to increase.

"Next year, we plan to broadcast live online again from day one all the way through," Smith said. "We will also set up a big television outside the Ranger Training Brigade headquarters.

Some of the old-timers won't have to drive around Fort Benning. They can just come here and watch everything in one place."

The National Ranger Association commissioned the on-line live stream project. Bryant said the strategy behind the live stream was to allow Soldiers and leaders overseas or in different parts of the country to be part of what is happening at the BRC.

In the past, unless spectators attended the events in person, it was difficult to track teams' progress and results. Competition personnel keep scores secret, and video from years' past would not be released to the public for a month. Essentially, news of the final outcome was the best that distant fans could hope for.

The calling of a Ranger

Some consider being a professional Ranger to be a vocation — a calling. Perhaps the calling is defined the moment obligation evolves into commitment. Smith said he believes the vocation of a Ranger sets him apart from the average Soldier in that he must volunteer for something bigger — yet again. It takes an additional step, another commitment, to be a Ranger.

"Knowing it's going to be more difficult, knowing you're not going to get paid any more money for doing it, knowing you're going to go into harm's way even more often..." Smith said these are the aspects that differentiate Rangers.

"Recognizing that I volunteered as a Ranger," are the very first words of the Ranger Creed.

When Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III visited this year's competition, he commented, "This is how training should be. It's about leader development and promoting excellence in our Army."

The way Ranger School builds its leaders is through "stress inoculation," a term Smith is very fond of.

"We only give you about 2,000 calories a day to eat, give you limited sleep, and everybody working with you is under those same conditions," he emphasized. "We're going to put you in charge of a platoon, and you have to move them from point A to point B while accomplishing other tasks along the way. That's pretty difficult to do when people are tired, hungry and just want to drag."

Being a great leader is also part of being a professional, said the winning team, Turk and Zajkowski. And in the case of Rangers — the Best Rangers — they put the focus on doing the basics and doing them well.

"By doing the basics well, by being leaders, by knowing the skill sets that are required of us, we're able to apply ourselves and win," Zajkowski said. "As long as noncommissioned officers out there are focused on their jobs, doing the right things for the right reasons and being leaders — not sitting back but stepping

forward, taking charge when they need to, willing to risk failure in order to achieve great things — that summarizes what being a great noncommissioned officer is all about."

The Army needs Rangers. The latest Army statistics show a deficit of NCOs throughout the branch, especially in staff sergeant and sergeant first class positions. The Ranger Training Brigade wants units to send their sergeants and specialists to Ranger School to build up future leaders and strengthen these numbers.

RTB command is working to reallocate authorized slots throughout the Army so more Soldiers can attend Ranger School. Leadership emphasized *when* units send Soldiers to Ranger School is also important — send them before they deploy.

"At the end of their train up, right before a unit deploys, send your specialists and sergeants to Ranger School," Smith said. "We'll take care of them, get them squared away and tabbed. The benefits of going to school first far outweigh deploying them first. If they go to school first, they'll deploy with some much-needed, new skills. Besides, these are the guys units are going to want to rely on. With a tab on their shoulder, the other Soldiers are going to look at them with more respect." ❏

To contact Linda Crippen, visit the NCO Journal website at <https://usasma.bliss.army.mil/NCOJournal/>.



Left: Competitors make their way to the finish line during the final buddy run.

Right: Sgt. 1st Class Conrad Kaluzny and Cpt. Nathan Lokker of the 198th Infantry Brigade at Fort Benning, Ga., maneuver through the stress shoot course during the Day Stakes events on day two.

POWERING THROUGH

The Army's toughest combat engineers battle to discover who deserves to be called **BEST SAPPER**





Staff Sgt. Jacob Matson uses a battering ram to open a bolted door as his teammate, Capt. Douglas Droesch, offers encouragement at the end of the X-Mile Run, the last event of the competition. The team represented the 425th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

STORY & PHOTOS BY SGT. SAMUEL J. PHILLIPS

Every year, two-man teams of combat engineers from throughout the Army storm Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., and run, walk, crawl, swim and blast their way through a three-day competition in hopes of earning the title “Best Sapper.” This year, 37 teams answered the call to prove their skills through tasks including a harrowing helocast and the mystery-shrouded X-Mile Run – over 56 continuous hours of grueling events that would force them to use every ounce of their skills and push them to the limits, both physically and mentally.

During the competition, participants cleared mine fields, destroyed road blocks, breached doors, evacuated casualties and marched more than 52 miles. When the smoke cleared and the last door was breached, only one team had the right to call themselves Best Sappers: Capt. Joe Riley and Capt. John Chambers of the 554th Engineer Battalion at Fort Leonard Wood.

“It was a hard competition,” Riley said. “If it hadn’t been for the other teams giving it everything they had and motivating us to push ourselves beyond our limits, we would have never made it.”

“That’s the purpose of the competition,” said Sgt. 1st Class Steven W. Laire Jr., the senior training management NCO with the Sapper Leader Course, which is taught at Fort Leonard Wood. The course’s cadre is responsible for running the competition. “We want the competitors to leave everything out on the course.”

In the early morning hours of April 7, competitors donned their individual body armor — weighing more than 16 pounds — and grabbed their rifles. Winding down a path through the woods, the teams emerged onto a street to find graders standing ready with clipboards in hand. In short order, the 37 teams were broken into three groups, and the first was sent to the starting line of the first event — a 3-mile run. After a grader shouted, “Begin,” the Soldiers tore down the street. The first phase of Best Sapper — a nonstandard physical fitness test — had begun.

“Truthfully, ‘nonstandard’ is an understatement,” Laire said. “We wanted to incorporate exercises from the new [Army Physical Readiness Training] manual and, at the same time, design a test that would push the competitors to near exhaustion.”

The first group of Soldiers trudged up and over hill after hill, disappearing into the distance. Moments later, the second group took to the course, and as they vanished over the last hill, the third group followed. Graders and spectators alike were left behind, eagerly awaiting their return.

As the first team came into sight, cresting the farthest hill, murmurs broke out among those at the finish line. Everyone strained their eyes, trying to be the first to identify the Soldiers laboring toward them. Once in view, it was clear that the run had taken its toll on the teams. As their faces twisted in pain, team members gasped for air as sweat streamed down their faces.

“This is the first year that we have put the run before the other events in the nonstandard PT test,” Laire said. “We wanted to keep the competitors guessing and shake them up a bit.”


“I like the way they threw the curve ball at us,” said Staff Sgt. Steven M. Herman of the 11th Engineer Battalion out of Fort Benning, Ga. “Everyone has been training for the tests that they have given in the past and, instead of doing the standard run, they threw something a little different at us.”

The looks on the competitors’ faces as they crossed the finish line was all the proof needed to see the run was successful in “shaking up” the competitors. In fact, from the finish line, spectators could hear Soldiers being sick after pushing themselves further than their bodies could handle. However, three more PT test events awaited the teams after they crossed the finish line.

“Of course, there were the standard push-ups and sit-ups. But to change it up, we gave them 5 minutes for each event instead of 2,” Laire said. “Then, we added an additional 3 minutes of heel hooks to finish off the competitors.”

After the test, however, there was no time to rest or prepare for Phase II of the competition, a round-robin of events that kicked off with a helocast. Competitors, wearing a full combat load and short wet suits under their uniforms, lined the side of a landing zone for the UH-60 Black Hawk that would carry them to their destination, a man-made lake used to train sappers.

As the Black Hawk approached the drop zone, competitors started to stir and the 5-minute warning was given. When the 1-minute warning sounded, competitors prepared themselves for the task ahead: With their weapons and rucksacks, they were to



Right: Two teammates jump from a UH-60 Black Hawk into a lake during the first day of the 2011 Best Sapper Competition. Teams then had to swim with all their gear to the shoreline.

Below left: A competitor performs heel hooks during the nonstandard physical training test on the first day of the competition.

Below right: Sgt. 1st Class Oscar Rodriguez and 1st Lt. Patrick Benitez of the 4th Engineer Battalion, Fort Carson, Colo., emerge from the lake after successfully completing the helocast event.





“That’s the purpose of the competition. We want the competitors to leave everything out on the course.”

— SGT 1ST CLASS STEVEN W. LAIRE JR.



Above: Pfc. Jason Fitzpatrick uses an arc cutter to cut through the hinges of a door during the round-robin portion of the competition. Fitzpatrick and his partner, Pfc. Allen Copeland, represented the 27th Engineer Battalion from Fort Bragg, N.C.

Right top: Spc. Michael Wheeler jumps through a window in the casualty evacuation lane of the round-robin phase.

Right bottom: Wheeler's teammate, Sgt. Maj. Reginald Maxwell, looks at the path ahead as the two pull a stretcher under a web of barbed wire. Wheeler represented the 94th Engineer Battalion from Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., and Maxwell represented United States Army Central and Third Army from Atlanta, Ga.



jump out of the helicopter into 49-degree water. The helicopter arrived at the drop site and, in under a minute, the competitors were out the doors, and the bird headed back up into the sky.

Once in the water, the competitors had a nearly 100-yard swim to the shore. Once they arrived, they took a minute to haul their water-laden gear to dry land before rushing to the finish line.

“The water was cold at first. But once you’re in there for a while, working your way to shore, it’s not so bad,” said Sgt. 1st Class Davien Houchin, a competitor representing the 1457th Engineer Battalion, a National Guard unit out of Riverton, Utah.

Seven more tasks faced competitors in Phase II, including thermal breaching. Soldiers arrived at the station to find an arc cutter and three obstacles. Their mission was to cut through all of them – a rack of 10 pieces of rebar, three door hinges and a 3-inch-thick steel bar, Laire said.

The round-robin phase also included the destruction of an improvised explosive device. This lane required the competitors to operate a Talon robot through a mock village in search of an IED. The teams then had to construct a charge and use the robot to place the charge within inches of the IED without touching it. To top it off, they had only 10 minutes to accomplish the task.

The rest of Phase II consisted of the call for fire, forward reconnaissance, expedient devices, casualty evacuation and hybrid systems events. Afterward, competitors headed into Phase III, a 6-hour night land navigation course. Each team was given a map and six points to find as they traversed the thickly wooded landscape dotted with bodies of water. Since it had rained just days before the competition, the task was that much harder, Laire said.

“Every year, the land navigation course claims its share of teams during the competition. We’ve had teams get lost, give up looking and literally fall asleep from exhaustion,” Laire said.

However, even if a team doesn’t succumb to the land navigation course, it still has to make the cutoff, Laire added. At the end of Phase III, only the top 20 teams advanced to Phase IV, cutting the number of competitors almost in half. For those teams that made the cutoff, Phase IV challenged them with Sapper Stakes.

An explosive event, military operations in urban terrain breach was designed to test each team in its ability to construct and deploy simple explosive devices in the field, Laire said. At the beginning of the task, each team was given a shotgun, a detonation cord, two bags of water and various other supplies.

The task was to construct two charges — one a simple double-length of detonation cord, the other a water charge. The teams then used these charges, along with the shotgun, to breach three doors. First, with well-placed shotgun blasts at the hinges, the door went down without much of a fight. The next door was not as lucky and was blown off its hinges with the det-cord charge. Lastly, a well-constructed water charge blasted into the door with such tremendous force, it left behind a crater in the door.

Another event in the Sapper Stakes was the unoccupied search. This task also required competitors to operate a Talon robot. This time, however, they had to use the robot to enter a building that was reported to house IEDs and IED-making material. After entering the building, each team had to find as many high-value items as possible while avoiding any booby traps.

Later in the in-stride breach event, teams constructed charges to clear a roadway of simulated mines and a double-stacked wall



of concertina wire. After 15 minutes to prep their charges, it was time to place them. Since safety is the first thing on everyone's mind when moving through a mine field, the sappers had a unique way of avoiding the mines.

As one member of the team stood back, another used a grappling hook to find a safe route to advance by swinging and tossing the hook in the direction of travel and pulling it back to ensure there were no mines in that path. The second member advanced to just behind where the hook last landed and repeated the process until both members of the team reached their destination safely to place the charges and clear the wire.

Other Phase IV events included field expedient charges, knots, room entry and clear, weapons assembly and reflexive fire.

"All events throughout the competition focus on either sapper-specific skills or basic soldiering skills. Either way, competitors should be ready for whatever we throw at them," Laire said.

Phase V was the X-Mile Road March. Competitors had 4 hours to complete a course designated "X-Mile" because they were not told the total distance in advance.

"A road march in full gear is bad enough. But when you factor in lack of sleep, physical exhaustion and the fact that you don't know how far you are going, it turns into a whole new beast," Laire said.

There was another twist to this march, however. As soon as the event ended, another cut was made. This halved the number of teams once more, and only the top 10 found their way to the sixth and final phase of the competition.

Phase VI, the X-Mile Run, began at 4 a.m. April 9, more than 53 hours after the competition began. This was each team's last chance to leave everything it had out on the course, Laire said. With whatever energy they could muster, the competitors faced off against what would be an 8-mile run. They had the additional tasks of running with a protective mask, a spike drive, a humvee pull, a relay while carrying dummy M15 mines, a tire flip, carrying concertina wire, a chain drag, expedient rigging and a crater-charge carry.

After all of this, there was but one obstacle left before the teams could storm a replica of engineers' castle insignia and cross the finish line: two doors. However, these doors were bolted and the teams had only a small battering ram to bust them down.

"After everything we had been through, the only thing that kept me going was the fact that I knew once I got through those doors, it was all over," Herman said.

"This whole competition has been a learning experience," Houchin said. "I love having the opportunity to participate in events like this. You couldn't ask for better training."

Additionally, Laire issued two challenges — first, he wants more combat engineer NCOs to lead by example by participating in the competition, and second, he would like for Marines in the combat engineer career field to try their hand in Best Sapper.

"Best Sapper not only gives us a chance to recognize the best combat engineers, it allows us to showcase what sappers can do," Laire said. "Sappers are a vital asset, and this competition is our chance to show it." 📷

To contact Sgt. Samuel J. Phillips, visit the NCO Journal website at <https://usasma.bliss.army.mil/NCOJournal/>.

“This whole competition has been a learning experience. ... You couldn't ask for better training.”

— SGT 1ST CLASS DAVIEN HOUCHIN





Top left: Sgt. 1st Class Davien Houchin carries a dummy M15 mine through a metal tunnel during the X-Mile Run, the competition's final event. Houchin and his partner, Capt. Michael Ditto, represented the 1457th Engineer Battalion from Riverton, Utah.

Top right: Staff Sgt. Robert Smith (front) and 1st Lt. John Case carry a bundle of concertina wire during the X-Mile Run. They represented the 14th Engineer Battalion from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

Left: Staff Sgt. Steven M. Herman (left) points out features of their objective to 1st Lt. Jay Beeman as they carry shaped charges they constructed during the field expedient charges event. The team was representing the 11th Engineer Battalion from Fort Benning, Ga.

NCOS

KEEP



One of several cells in the pre-trial confinement unit of the Joint Regional Correctional Facility at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., that hold prisoners before being tried.

U.S. Army photo

AT LEAVENWORTH

LIFE

BY JONATHAN (JAY) KOESTER

Walking through the United States Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., is unlike any Hollywood depiction of a prison. There is no yelling, no cursing, no fights and, frankly, no excitement. The Hollywood voiceover might say it is “quiet ... too quiet.”

But as any Soldier who works there will tell you, working at the USDB is nothing like Hollywood would have you believe.

“Though most days are quiet, you have to remain vigilant at all times,” said Staff Sgt. Anthony Smith, assistant opera-

tions sergeant. “To keep things calm, you have to get out there and do your job. You can’t be a timid person.”

Dropping any bravado is one of the first things Sgt. 1st Class Mamie Williams, operations sergeant, tells young Soldiers to do when they come to work at the USDB.

“Take everything that you learned from the movies or any books you have read and toss it out of the window. It won’t do you any good here,” Williams said. “We have a lot of junior Soldiers who come in thinking that they’re supposed to be the hard, tough guy who is mean and yells at the inmates. That’s really not the correct approach.”

It may not be dramatic or exciting, but what you will find at the USDB is a group of professionals working hard to keep inmates and the public safe in an atmosphere centered on rehabilitation.

“If you are looking for a [military occupational specialty] where there is a whole lot of excitement, you are going to be sadly disappointed if you come to this field,” Williams said. “It has its days that

WHAT IT TAKES

MATURITY

“If the place caught on fire, it was my job to get them out. ... That was my first day in the Army. I was responsible for 40 grown men, and I was 18 years old. I grew up fast and learned fast.”

— Master Sgt. Michael Bennett, battalion operations NCO

are exciting and challenging, but more importantly, you get up close and personal with Soldiers. We deal a lot with mentoring our junior leaders and junior Soldiers. It’s a good job if you want to develop your leadership skills as an NCO or learn what it takes to be a leader.”

THE PRISONS

Although the USDB has a long and storied history at Fort Leavenworth, a new prison building, the Midwest Joint Regional Correctional Facility, opened in October after being built as part of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure recommendations. Because of BRAC, correctional facilities were closed at Fort Sill, Okla.; Fort Knox, Ky.; and Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

The JRCF cost \$95 million to build. It has 512 beds with an operational capacity of 460 inmates. The facility currently holds about 150 inmates, leaving some wings empty.

In September, the 15th Military Police Brigade was reactivated after 34 years. Under its command are the 40th Military Police Internment and Resettlement Battalion, which oversees the USDB, and the 705th MP I/R Battalion, which oversees the JRCF.

The JRCF houses inmates who are serving terms of five years or fewer, while the USDB holds inmates serving terms of more than five years, including those serving life sentences and those who have



Photo courtesy Fort Leavenworth Public Affairs

The original United States Disciplinary Barracks was built by prisoners and opened in 1921. The building, dubbed “The Castle,” was made of stone and brick, and was operational until September 2002. The Castle in the center has been torn down, but the outside walls of the complex remain.

been sentenced to death. The JRCF also holds Soldiers who are in pre-trial detention, like Pfc. Bradley Manning, who is being held on charges of leaking classified information to WikiLeaks. Manning was transferred to the JRCF in April.

Pre-trial inmates are held in the maximum-security wing of JRCF so they can be segregated from those already convicted. Because of the presumption of innocence, pre-trial inmates are treated as regular Soldiers as much as possible, said Master Sgt. Patrick Manning, noncommissioned officer in charge of the directorate of operations at the JRCF.

The USDB has six inmates on death

row, though the last execution by the U.S. military was in 1961. On April 13 of that year, Pfc. John Bennett was hanged for the rape and attempted murder of an 11-year-old girl in 1954 in Allied-occupied Austria. The most recent person sent to the USDB death row was Hasan Akbar, a former sergeant convicted in 2005 of killing two officers in March 2003 during a grenade and rifle attack inside Camp Pennsylvania, Kuwait.

Though the JRCF is a new facility at Fort Leavenworth, the USDB’s history on the post goes back to 1875, when construction of the first prison began. The building was erected by prisoners and

opened in 1921. The facility, dubbed “The Castle,” was made of stone and brick and was operational until September 2002. The new USDB facility, which opened that same month, is about a mile north of the old location.

Most of the old USDB was torn down, though the outside walls of the complex remain. The area has been converted to other uses, including a small deli called The 12th Brick Grille, which refers to the inmate-produced bricks used to build the prison. Every 12th brick was stamped “USMP,” as the original name of the facility was the United States Military Prison.

The new USDB facility cost \$67.8 million to build and has three housing sections that can hold 140 inmates each, for a total of 420. Both the JRCF and USDB reflect a design strategy that eliminates cell bars. Each cell, instead, has a solid door with a small window that looks into the prisoners’ common area. Each common area is provided natural sunlight from high windows and skylights.

Minimum- and medium-security inmates have some freedom inside prison walls. They have jobs, and educational opportunities are available. Inmates also have access to telephones, though all conversations are monitored. Inmates are allowed to make a list of up to 20 phone numbers they may call.

Inmate common areas have TVs with satellite cable. However, prison directors monitor the satellite feed, censoring objectionable content. For instance, inmates at the JRCF recently went a period of time without the Fox network (and, perhaps more importantly, its NFL football game telecasts) because directors blocked the channel when the series *Prison Break* was on air.



Photo by Sgt. Vincent Daly, Fort Leavenworth Public Affairs
Staff Sgt. Dawn Shields searches a cell at the USDB. Shields, who works in a housing unit at the USDB, said the key to doing her job and staying safe is being “firm, fair and consistent” with inmates.

LEARNING THE SKILLS

The skills Soldiers and NCOs need to work inside the walls of the USDB and JRCF include maturity, patience, discipline, a calm demeanor and a thick skin.

Young Soldiers have to be immediately ready to deal with inmates who are older and often previously were authority figures in the Army. Those inmates will use every trick in the book to manipulate

the young guards, prison officials say.

Meanwhile, those young Soldiers must treat each inmate firmly but fairly, no matter what abuse is thrown at the Soldiers and no matter what crime the inmates may have committed. Being nonjudgmental toward the inmates’ crimes is one of the first hurdles young Soldiers must overcome, senior NCOs said.

“It’s not really a physically demanding job but more of a mentally demanding job,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Steven

WHAT IT TAKES

DETERMINATION

“You have to be a person who is really, really headstrong and is not easily persuaded — a person who is more naturally a leader than a follower.”

— Sgt. 1st Class Steven Varnado, training NCO for the 705th MP I/R Battalion

WHAT IT TAKES

A CALM DEMEANOR

“You have to ignore the games that go on. Don’t respond in kind. People are going to push your buttons, and you have to let it roll off your back.”

— Sgt. 1st Class Warren Freeman, JRCF housing unit NCOIC

Raines, command sergeant major of the 705th MP I/R Battalion. “You have to be a very diverse noncommissioned officer to be able to handle not only the physical stuff that comes with the Army, but also the mental stuff that comes with working with inmates.”

“It has different stressors,” said Sgt. 1st Class Steven Varnado, training NCO for the 705th MP I/R Battalion. “It’s not like the combat stress of getting shot at every day, but it does have its stressors that wear and tear on the body. You feel just as exhausted after four or five days of working in that facility as you would going out on a mission.”

And make no mistake, 31E internment/resettlement specialists do go downrange. They deploy and usually focus on detainee operations on the battlefield. Senior 31E NCOs have worked hard to make sure that is the case.

“This MOS previously was only garrison duty,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Jonathan Godwin, command sergeant major of the USDB and 15th MP Brigade. “We are now a deployable organization based upon the skill sets we bring to the table.”

A NEEDED MOS

The Army was close to discarding that skill set until its importance was demonstrated by the abuses at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. When the world saw the abuse some military police personnel had inflicted on foreign detainees, the need for a professional group of well-trained internment specialists became very clear. The Army’s internment

specialists went from being on the chopping block to growing to the point where the 15th MP Brigade now includes nearly all 31E Soldiers.

“I remember when I first got here in 2000, the secretary of defense said, ‘We’re shutting you down. We don’t even need your MOS,’” said 1st Sgt. Charles Clements, first sergeant of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, USDB. “But then Abu Ghraib kicked off, and they said, ‘Oh, we have guys who can do this for real? That’s their job?’”

Although 31B military police and 31E Soldiers often train together and progress

through the NCO Education System together, the mindset each must bring to his or her job is completely different.

While military police are trained to be aggressive and often need to be aggressive to complete their mission, internment specialists learn to use interpersonal communication skills to control a situation, said Master Sgt. Michael Bennett, battalion operations NCO.

“When the [31Bs] deploy, they go and close with the enemy. They’re out there ... getting in firefights,” Bennett said. “We already know that the bad guy is right in front of us, behind the door. Our job is



Photo by Prudence Siebert, Fort Leavenworth Lamp

Command Sgt. Maj. Jonathan Godwin, 15th MP Brigade and USDB command sergeant major (left), and Col. Eric Belcher, 15th MP Brigade commander and USDB commandant, present a road sign to Elizabeth Sabalu to honor her brother, Master Sgt. Wilberto Sabalu Jr., during a ceremony dedicating a road in the fallen Soldier’s name Sept. 28 near the USDB. Master Sgt. Sabalu, who served several years as a corrections specialist at Fort Leavenworth, was killed in Afghanistan in 2007.



Photo courtesy Fort Leavenworth Public Affairs

Cells at the Midwest Joint Regional Correctional Facility do not have bars. The two-person cells have solid doors with thick windows. The cells open to a common area where inmates can sit or watch television. The JRCF cost \$95 million and was built to comply with American Correctional Association Standards.

just to keep them locked up and to provide them with the basic human rights that they deserve.”

REHABILITATION

A recent Pew Center study released in April indicated that more than four in 10 state prisoners return to prison within three years of being released. Meanwhile, officials at the USDB and JRCF said they rarely see their inmates re-offend after release.

The motto at the USDB is “Our Mis-

sion, Your Future” and is meant to focus on the balance the military and civilian staff bring to making sure inmates are prepared for life on the outside.

“We try to have a mindset knowing that, for the majority of the inmates, eventually they are going to be released. We would like for them to get the social skills and a job skill set that will allow them to be productive members of society,” said Sgt. Maj. Joseph Fowler, of the directorate of operations at USDB. “Eventually, they are going to be your neighbor, my

neighbor, your family’s neighbor. ... So, we take pride in the vocational and educational training that we provide for the inmates.”

The different atmosphere also stems from the inmates having military backgrounds and few prior offenses, Fowler added.

“We are dealing with only military prisoners, and they all have some level of training and a level of discipline,” Fowler said. “Though they committed a crime, most of them have a love of their country

WHAT IT TAKES

A THICK SKIN

“They’ll try to find that one nitpicky thing, that one name that you don’t like being called. ... There are a lot of mental games inmates play with females that a male might not have to go through.”

— Sgt. 1st Class Mamie Williams, operations sergeant

and really respect the rank that people are wearing. ... The environment is much different than what is portrayed on all the TV shows.”

Each inmate has a job to do during the day, and the skills learned in that job are meant to serve them later. Some of the first jobs inmates do upon arrival, such as laundry or kitchen duty, are unpaid. The inmates must work their way up to jobs in textiles, embroidery or woodworking that pay up to about \$1 an hour.

One of the more competitive jobs to get is at the licensed barber college. Five inmates work there at any given time, and if they complete their training, they'll receive barber's licenses. Those five inmates cut the hair of all the other inmates every two weeks. For Soldiers or NCOs who work there, the haircuts cost \$4.

In addition to the inmate work details, the correctional facilities at Fort Leavenworth provide medical and dental services, religious activities, workout facilities and libraries to their inmates.

That all adds up to a mini-post behind the prisons' walls. From the 68X mental health specialists to the 92G food service specialists, 32 different MOSs work together in this unique environment.

“The brigade comprises Soldiers from 32 MOSs that, just by their reaction, just by them coming to work with an attitude, could very well spark a situation that could escalate out of control,” Godwin said. “The type of Soldier who works here is someone who is mature, someone who has foresight and knowledge of how to de-escalate.”

NO SPOTLIGHT

Just as important as knowing what kind of NCO can succeed in the 31E occupational specialty is knowing who is better suited serving the nation elsewhere.

“We don't need someone in this MOS who is looking for the spotlight,” Godwin said. “This is not a self-serving MOS. We are servants to the people, the community and the nation.

“The objectives of Army correctives are to protect the community from offenders, provide a safe and secure environment for the incarceration of military offenders, and prepare inmates for eventual release so they will be productive members of society. We do our jobs efficiently and effectively, but in a low-key manner.”

Soldiers and NCOs often learn they need to tone things down when they arrive in the 31E field.

“One of the biggest things, if you

were to switch over from a different MOS like infantry, you need to take the mindset of that MOS, that Type-A personality and switch it to, not necessarily Type B, but somewhere in between,” said Staff Sgt. Michael Dayus, brigade operations NCO.

So, why take on this difficult job — one where you won't receive accolades for good work, but if anything goes wrong, it could become national news? The teamwork of an outstanding group of NCOs is the key for many.

“Having held a prior MOS and this one, I think the NCO corps in the 31E field is better than any NCO corps I've been around,” said Sgt. 1st Class Brian Wildman, operations sergeant for JRCF. “I've



U.S. Army photo

This common area in the pre-trial confinement unit of the JRCF at Fort Leavenworth serves to keep pre-trial inmates segregated from convicted inmates in an attempt to treat them like regular Soldiers as much as possible.

LEADERSHIP & TRAINING

“We're outnumbered 10-to-1. When you are a lone NCO on a tier of 60 inmates, that's when your training from your leadership really kicks in. Or, that's when your mentorship of that Soldier kicks in.”

— Staff Sgt. Michael Dayus, brigade operations NCO

WHAT IT TAKES

VIGILANCE

“You could go years and nothing ever happens. Then there goes that one time when a Soldier is taken hostage, and it’s everything you can do to get in and get that Soldier out.”

— Master Sgt. Michael Bennett, battalion operations NCO

met many, many amazing NCOs as a 31E that I never met in my prior one, which I held for almost four years. I think the loyalty that is really instilled in the 31E field plays a crucial part.”

And joining the 31E specialty doesn’t necessarily mean you’re destined to go to Fort Leavenworth, Wildman added.

“There are only three or four prisons that you can go work at, but there are a ton of BCT [brigade combat team] slots that you can go to all over the United States, or OCONUS [outside the continental United

States].” Wildman said. “There are always people looking for subject-matter experts with detainee operations. You could deploy. It’s actually limitless as to where you could go as a 31E NCO.”

The training and experience Soldiers receive as 31Es create NCOs who know how to lead, Master Sgt. Bennett said.

“We force a great amount of responsibility on our young Soldiers right off the top,” Bennett said. “When we get a brand-new Soldier in from AIT [Advanced Individual Training], they’re charged with

watching 80 to 100 individuals. ... If we do it right, then they will grow into a great NCO.”

The opposite is true, as well, he said.

“It kind of helps us weed out those who don’t need to be an NCO,” Bennett added. “If they can’t take care of the guys in the cell block, maybe they’re not ready for a team or a squad.”

The experience helps Soldiers and NCOs prepare for a future outside the Army, said Sgt. Maj. Stephen Hansen, brigade operations sergeant major. Most stay in the law enforcement arena, though not necessarily at correctional facilities.

“Just around here in the area, there are a lot of retired 31Es who have taken over prison systems or sheriffs’ departments because of their knowledge in corrections,” Hansen said. “So, it’s definitely an asset to be in this MOS after you retire or ETS [expiration term of service] from the military.”

Though you could spend months — even years — at the USDB and JRCF and witness nothing that would raise your pulse, the 31E Soldiers know they have to stay vigilant at all times. Godwin said guards eventually develop a sixth sense to anticipate when trouble is brewing.

“The biggest thing we fight here is complacency, because rarely does anything happen,” Godwin said. “But we have to be prepared for something to happen at a moment’s notice.”

Because it isn’t Hollywood, those in the 31E field know fame doesn’t await them at the end of another tough day. Their rewards are less exciting, more quiet — just like they keep the USDB and JRCF. 🇺🇸



Photo by Sgt. Vincent Daly, Fort Leavenworth Public Affairs

A USDB Force Cell Move Team gets briefed before entering the maximum-security housing unit to move an inmate. Inmates in USDB’s maximum-security unit are locked down 23 hours a day, with 50 minutes for recreation and 10 minutes to shower.

To contact Jonathan (Jay) Koester, visit the NCO Journal website at <https://usasma.bliss.army.mil/NCOJournal/>.



Jordanian NCOs

Learn to be

Warrior Leaders

STORY BY SGT. SAMUEL J. PHILLIPS
PHOTOS BY SPC. DAVID M. GAFFORD

As Jordanian military officials attempt to transform their country's military, they are looking for guidance from the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy and the professionalism of the U.S. Army NCO Corps. "NCOs in the U.S. Army carry a lot of responsibility," said Jordanian Sgt. Sadam Bani Salameh, a member of the Jordanian armor corps. "This is not something that we have in my country; officers have most of the responsibilities."



Left: Jordanian Staff Sgt. Abu Sbeh Abeer Mahmoud Moha patrols with her squad to the next training site during an April 25 field training exercise for Warrior Leader Course Class 07-11 at Fort Bliss, Texas.

Opposite Page: Moha helps control security after an improvised explosive device training aid exploded during the training exercise.

Staff Sgt. Edgar Zatarain instructs Jordanian Staff Sgt. Alashoush Rami Fayyad Abedr before the next training mission during the training exercise.



Senior enlisted personnel from Jordan have attended the Sergeants Major Course at USASMA at Fort Bliss, Texas, in the past. In fact, the current Jordanian sergeant major of the army was a graduate of Class 59. Those early experiences with the U.S. Army NCO Corps is what led the Jordanian army to begin transforming its own NCO corps.

“Right now, the [Jordanian SMA] is trying to facilitate this transformation with the aid of five or six other [Jordanian] graduates of our Sergeants Major Academy,” said Michael R. Huffman, director of the International Military Student Office at USASMA. “They are trying to project their vision down to their junior noncommissioned officers. However, that vision is better understood if those junior NCOs already have an idea of what their leadership is trying to achieve.”

When Fort Bliss’ Warrior Leader Course began allowing international military students to attend in October 2010, the Jordanian army was the first to jump at the opportunity, Huffman said. However, Jordan wanted more for its soldiers than WLC. They wanted an additional two weeks of on-the-job training immediately after the course to do “right-seat rides” with junior U.S. Army NCOs and get a first-hand look at how they function.

An agreement was made, and on Jan. 26, 10 Jordanian NCOs stood on the Fort Bliss NCO Academy’s “Green Monster” physical training field, awaiting in-processing. For the next 17 days, the Jordanians were immersed in a course that is the first step in the U.S. Army’s NCO Education System and defines its junior NCOs, Huffman said.

Throughout the course, the Jordanians were shown a glimpse of all the responsibilities that fall on the juniormost members of the U.S. Army NCO Corps. With lessons rang-

ing from taking care of Soldiers and equipment, to conducting Physical Readiness Training and battle drills, the course demonstrates why NCOs are regarded as “the backbone of the Army.”

This knowledge is one of the reasons that Jordan is sending its junior NCOs through WLC, said Jordanian 1st Sgt. Ala

Alyasjeen, a communication technician and the equivalent of a U.S. Army staff sergeant. After learning about the responsibilities placed on junior NCOs in the course, the Jordanians got to experience it first-hand as they accompanied their sponsors to their units within the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division.

“Things that we do every day and take for granted as part of our job often seem out of place to the Jordanians,” said Sgt. Edward Valois, an unmanned aerial

vehicle operator with B Company, Special Troops Battalion, 3rd BCT. “It has really been an interesting experience, and I have enjoyed sharing our way of doing things with the Jordanian NCOs.”

Huffman said these interactions are a secondary benefit of the program. “In the process of trying to help develop the Jordanian NCO corps, we are also building a much stronger relationship with one of our coalition partners,” he said. “And we are doing that in two ways.”

First, most of these Jordanians will soon deploy to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. “With

“Your NCOs have the ability to work on their own. They know what is expected of them and can accomplish the mission with little to no guidance from their officers.”

— JORDANIAN 1ST SGT. ALA ALYASJEEN

the knowledge of how our NCO Corps works, it will be a lot easier for the Jordanians to work with the United States on joint operations and further their efforts within the coalition,” Huffman said.

Second, not only do the Jordanians get to experience the U.S. military and American culture, the junior U.S. NCOs also get to experience the Jordanians’ culture. “This experience with a Muslim culture is a vital asset to our young leaders given our current areas of operations,” Huffman said.

Many U.S. Soldiers are not well-versed in the religious beliefs of Muslims, Huffman said. When that awareness is increased, the United States’ ability to work alongside countries like Jordan, grows exponentially.

“It’s all about knowing how to co-exist,” he said. “The last thing that we want to do is be offensive because we are ignorant of the beliefs of those we fight alongside.”


Valois said being a sponsor for one of the Jordanian NCOs was a shared learning experience. “Honestly, I learned a lot about the Jordanian army and their culture during this process,” he said. “I look forward to working with Jordanians again in the future.”

The program has been a tremendous success, Huffman said. “We are now able to touch two different generations of Jordanians. Instead of just trying to drive the changes the Jordanian NCO corps wanted from the top down, we are able to help influence changes starting at a lower level.”

Alyasjeen said that he is eager to bring what he has learned back to Jordan.

“I will take everything that I’ve learned and pass it on,” he said. “I’m excited to see where our NCO corps is heading as we work with the U.S. and transform into a more responsible, serious and self-reliant organization.”

However, the transition of the Jordanian NCO corps is likely to be a long-term effort, Huffman said. Throughout the year, a total of 100 Jordanian NCOs will attend the Fort Bliss WLC and then continue to on-the-job training. In the years to come, there will be many more, he said.

Huffman also said his office is looking at the possibility of allowing international students into, more courses such as the Advanced Leader Course, Senior Leader Course and the Battle Staff Course. 

To contact Sgt. Samuel J. Phillips, visit the NCO Journal website at <https://usasma.bliss.army.mil/NCOJournal/>.



Above: Spc. Stephanie Shirley and Jordanian Sgt. Tawalbeh Jihad Abdallah Ahm listen to their instructor while preparing for the next training mission during the field training exercise.

Left: Moha watches a “suspect” before he is searched during a field training exercise.

The Law of War

When preparing for a deployment, Soldiers train as they will fight — the tactics, techniques and procedures they learn change depending on the environment they'll soon find themselves in.

However, the Law of War is a constant that applies whenever U.S. military personnel are in a position to use force. Learning the limits and bounds of that authority and how to always do the right thing are key to not committing a war crime. Junior leaders are taught in the Warrior Leader Course why the Law of War is important, how to apply it and the rules of engagement, and how to use escalation of force techniques.

WHY COMPLIANCE MATTERS: War crimes are not only morally wrong and illegal according to U.S. and international law, they are counterproductive. In the Internet Age, news of U.S. Soldiers committing abuse can travel in an instant, and years' worth of efforts to establish goodwill and cooperation can vanish overnight.

Just as a map guides Soldiers to their destination, the "MAP" framework is an easy way for service members to remember the core tenets of the Hague and Geneva conventions, the complex treaties that form the basis of international law regarding military activities. MAP requires Soldiers to ensure their actions have Military necessity, Avoid unnecessary suffering and are Proportional.

Sometimes, Soldiers will be ordered to do something that violates these principles. In those cases, the Soldier is obligated to persuade the person giving the unlawful order to rescind it and, if unsuccessful, not follow the order. In any case, violations must be reported. Good leadership and proper reporting



Photo by Pfc. Cameron Boyd

Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, return fire during a March 31 firefight with Taliban forces in the Barawala Kalay Valley in Kunar province, Afghanistan.

prevent cover-ups, protect law-abiding Soldiers, and discourage poor discipline and impropriety.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT: Issued by competent military authorities, these rules delineate the circumstances and limitations under which U.S. forces initiate or continue combat engagements. These corollaries to the Law of War tell Soldiers when, where and how they can engage targets and which targets they can engage.

Standard Rules of Engagement guide commanders when developing their own rules of engagement. The rules spell out "RAMP:" Return fire with aimed fire, Anticipate attack, Measure the amount of force and Protect with deadly force only human life and property designated by commander.

ESCALATION OF FORCE: These measures are part of the rules of engagement and consist of sequential actions that begin with nonlethal force measures and may graduate to lethal measures. Often employed with approaching people or vehicles, successful EOF procedures protect both noncombatants and Soldiers. They include giving early warning for approaching people, providing a clear intent of what those approaching should do and delineating clear triggers for when Soldiers should escalate force.

The Law of War, rules of engagement and escalation of force procedures are aids to completing the mission. Their intent is not to limit Soldiers, but provide them a means to complete missions legally, morally and within the commander's intent.



Basic principles: How to avoid committing a war crime

M

MILITARY NECESSITY

Attacks must be intended to help bring about the **complete submission** of the enemy **as soon as possible**. They must be attacks on **lawful targets**, and any harm caused to civilians **must not be excessive** in relation to the military advantage anticipated.

Examples: Shooting an armed adversary who is trying to shoot you is acceptable. Bombing a hospital is not.

A

AVOIDANCE OF UNNECESSARY SUFFERING

The law of war **does not preclude** inflicting **any suffering**; Soldiers have the **right to subdue their adversary**, which may involve killing or wounding the person. However, this principle **forbids** doing anything **calculated to cause unnecessary suffering**.

Examples: Setting up punji-stick booby traps is OK. Smearing the sticks with infectious material is not.

P

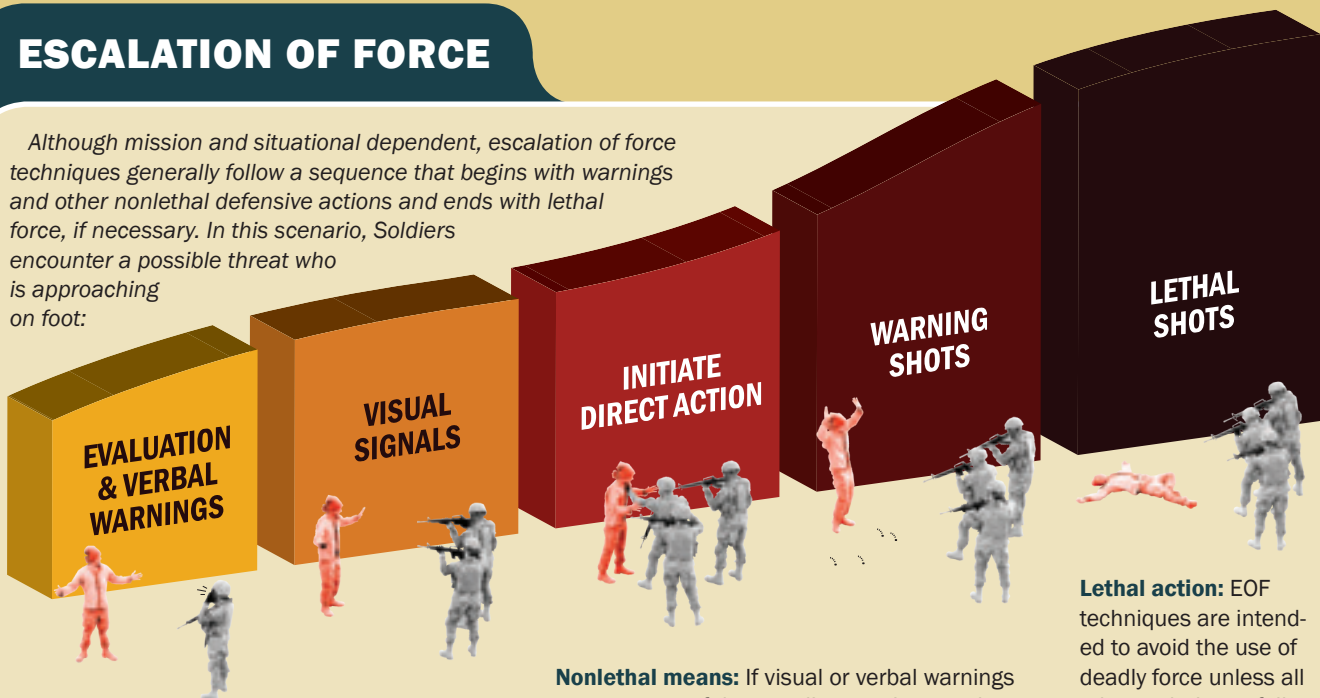
PROPORTIONALITY

This principle dictates that the **loss of life** and **damage to property** must **not be out of proportion** to the **military advantage gained**. Even lawful equipment may not be appropriate in certain situations.

Examples: Firing at combatants taking shelter in one part of a hospital is acceptable. Destroying the entire building is not.

ESCALATION OF FORCE

Although mission and situational dependent, escalation of force techniques generally follow a sequence that begins with warnings and other nonlethal defensive actions and ends with lethal force, if necessary. In this scenario, Soldiers encounter a possible threat who is approaching on foot:



Warnings: Signals, such as shouting, flags, lights, lasers or pyrotechnics, must give clear intent of what approaching people should do.

Nonlethal means: If visual or verbal warnings are unsuccessful, more direct action may be needed, including shoving a person approaching on foot, or firing warning or disabling shots at an approaching vehicle.

Lethal action: EOF techniques are intended to avoid the use of deadly force unless all other techniques fail. If used, lethal action must still adhere to the "MAP" principles.

Graphic by Michael L. Lewis

NCO Stories

A selection of Valor



Soldier honored with Silver Star for combat actions in Iraq

By Staff Sgt. Gary A. Witte
Army News Service

A Soldier who helped pull his wounded men from a burning vehicle and ran alone through the streets of Ramadi, Iraq, to evacuate them was awarded the Silver Star Jan. 27, 2007.

Staff Sgt. David S. Anderson, a section leader with 1st Platoon, B Company, 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment under 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, was also presented the Army Commendation Medal with "V" device during a ceremony at Camp Ramadi.

Two other Soldiers from the same unit, Staff Sgt. Jason P.

Trumpower of Norwalk, Ohio, and Spc. Edward Reyes of Coral Springs, Fla., distinguished themselves in the same Sept. 24, 2006, incident and were awarded Bronze Stars with "V" devices for valor.

Anderson, who is from Batesville, Miss., said he doesn't care for the publicity surrounding his award.

"I'm just glad I was there to take care of my Soldiers and bring them home safely," he said. "To me, I was just doing my job and what I was trained to do."

The incident began when a dismounted team was attacked during an operation, and several men were wounded. Trumpower, a section leader, led his M2 Bradley fighting vehicle in an attempt

to evacuate the Soldiers after a tank accompanying him had trouble negotiating the narrow streets.

The vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device, disabling it and critically wounding the driver. Trumpower, pinned in the vehicle, maintained security and notified higher headquarters of the situation.

Anderson, who was also responding to the call for aid in his Bradley, linked up with Trumpower and began evacuating the crew as another vehicle dealt with the casualties. Anderson was directing his vehicle back to Camp Ramadi when it, too, was disabled by an IED, wounding five inside.

The explosion knocked out communications and caused a fire in the rear compartment. Anderson, who had been outside checking his gunner and driver, attempted to let down the rear ramp and the troop door, but both were jammed.

Trumpower, with severe wounds to his hands and face, tried to get the cargo hatch open. With Anderson's help, the two men were able to open it wide enough to evacuate the vehicle. Reyes, although also wounded and disoriented by the flames, found the fire-suppression handle and doused the blaze long enough for everyone to escape.

Once everyone was out, Anderson took a rifle from the vehicle and single-handedly made sure there were no insurgents within a nearby building, while Trumpower guarded the wounded and Reyes, a medic, evaluated and stabilized them.

After they moved the wounded into the building, Anderson attempted to retrieve a radio and smoke grenade to signal their location, only to find both destroyed in the vehicle. Knowing the wounded driver was going into shock and could bleed to death without immediate evacuation, Anderson ran about 400 meters to try to get the attention of a nearby tank crew.

Unable to get the attention of the tank, he ran farther down the road to wave down a Bradley. He then led it back to the wounded Soldiers and, subsequently, supervised the loading of his men.

Col. Sean MacFarland, then the commander of 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, presented each of the men their awards and praised the heroism they exhibited. He cited their actions as examples of living the Warrior Ethos.

"They didn't give up," MacFarland said. "They did not leave their comrades behind."



U.S. Army Photo

(From right to left) On Jan. 27, 2007, Staff Sgt. David S. Anderson of 1st Platoon, B Company, 1st Battalion, 36th Infantry Regiment under 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Armored Division, was awarded the Silver Star for his actions in a Sept. 24, 2006, incident in Ramadi, Iraq. Spc. Edward Reyes and Staff Sgt. Jason P. Trumpower distinguished themselves in the same Iraq incident and were awarded Bronze Stars with "V" devices for valor.

Trumpower said after the ceremony that he counted himself thankful for the other Soldiers present who helped take care of the casualties. He said he remembers the incident "like it just happened yesterday."

"Sometimes, I guess I would rather not have the award and not have those things happen," Trumpower said.

Reyes said he hasn't thought much about the incident, but he was grateful his actions were held in high regard.

"We were pretty much alone out there," Reyes said. "It could have gone dramatically different than it did."

Casey awards Strike Soldiers

By Sgt. Joe Padula
101st Airborne Division

Army chief of staff, Gen. George W. Casey Jr., awarded medals to Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), during a visit Oct. 12 to Forward Operating Base Wilson, Kandahar province, Afghanistan.

Casey pinned five awards: two Army Commendation Medals with "V" devices for valor and three Purple Hearts. The Soldiers commented on receiving the awards from the Army's highest-ranking officer.

"It was really great to have Gen. Casey at the ceremony," said Staff Sgt. Joseph Perminas, a 32-year-old native of Antiock, Ill., who was given the Purple Heart for the shrapnel wounds he received when a hand grenade exploded Oct. 2 in the Zharay district. "To meet him face to face was an honor, and what he said was good to hear."

Casey spoke to a crowd of Strike Soldiers attending the ceremony and talked about the importance of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team's operation in Kandahar.

"You all know that you are the main effort in Afghanistan, which is really the main effort in the war on terror," Casey said. "You all got put into a tough fight, and you are carrying a fight to the enemy in a way that I'm sure they never expected."

Before pinning the medals, Casey told the Soldiers their actions were impacting the International Security Assistance Force's progress in Operation Enduring Freedom.

"What's happening here right now is going to make a difference in ISAF's main effort, and you're on the point," Casey said.

The following individuals received awards:

Army Commendation Medal with "V" device

Pfc. Andrew Maxfield of Company C, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, ran with disregard to his own safety across an open field to his fallen comrades while taking enemy fire. He provided medical aid and stabilized all of the wounded for medical evacuation.

Pfc. Jose Rosario of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, diligently worked



Photo by Spc. Joe Padula

Gen. George W. Casey Jr., then the Army chief of staff, shakes hands with Staff Sgt. Joseph Perminas of Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), during an awards ceremony Oct. 12 at Forward Operating Base Wilson, Kandahar province, Afghanistan. Casey pinned Perminas with a Purple Heart for shrapnel wounds he received when a hand grenade exploded Oct. 2 in the Zharay district.

without hesitation and with complete disregard for his own safety, to stop the bleeding of Master Sgt. Robert Pittman until further help and assistance could be provided.

Purple Heart

Second Lt. Taylor Murphy of Company B, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, received wounds from a gunshot Sept. 16 in the Zharay district.

Staff Sgt. Joseph Perminas of Company A, 1st Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment, received shrapnel wounds Oct. 2 when a grenade exploded in the Zharay district.

Sgt. Michael Turner of Company A, 526th Brigade Support Battalion, received shrapnel wounds Sept. 2 in the Zharay district.

Paratrooper awarded Army's second-highest award for valor

By Sgt. Neil W. McCabe
XVIII Airborne Corps

Surrounded by civic leaders, comrades, veterans and relatives, and more than three years after his heroics in Afghanistan's Hindu Kush mountains, a Mooresville, N.C., paratrooper was presented in a ceremony at Fort Bragg, N.C., Jan. 22 with the Distinguished Service Cross, the nation's second-highest award for valor.

"Many talk about being in the company of heroes. Today, we are truly in their company, and today we celebrate and recognize one of our very best, Staff Sgt. James M. Takes," said Col. William Ostlund, who commanded Takes' battalion, the 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, during that deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Standing with Ostlund, Maj. Gen. Rodney O. Anderson, the commanding general of Task Force Bragg, pinned the medal on Takes.

"This is a big deal. This is a really big deal. So let me just say: All the way, Army strong, America strong," said Anderson, who, as the 82nd Airborne Division's deputy commanding general for support, deployed as the command group for Joint Task Force-82 in Afghanistan.

"I remember the majority of it, and I am glad I do. It was the pivotal moment in my life," Takes said. "Some people might want to put it away and get rid of it and put those feelings and those memories behind them.

"I embrace those moments; they changed my life," Takes added. "When you think about the guys who paid the sacrifice that day, I don't want to forget them or their memories or their actions or anything that they had done. They are my people, and I don't want to forget any part of them."

Maj. Matthew R. Myers, who was Takes' commander, said the attack came Nov. 9, 2007, as the 30-soldier column, which included a squad of soldiers of the Afghanistan National army, moved on foot from a key leader engagement in the village of Aranas.

"They were returning from that mission after they had stayed at the village overnight," Myers said. The troopers traveled by foot because the area was inaccessible to vehicles.

Myers, who was also awarded the Silver Star, said he was in

the company command post at Camp Blessing when the ambush started. He then organized and led the movement to support and relieve his men.

With the command, "Follow me!" Takes ordered his men to seek cover on a slope below the road. It was during this movement that the squad automatic weapon gunner tumbled down the hill, losing both his weapon and helmet, he said.

Before he went down to check on the gunner, Takes had already been temporarily knocked unconscious from a rocket-propelled grenade blast and a gunshot wound to the arm, he said.

Takes, who gave his own helmet to the gunner, said he was hit in the other arm at the bottom of the slope.

At the time, Takes said he was applying a combat tourniquet to the gunner's leg with his left arm while firing his M4 with his right arm.

The gunner tells it the best, he said. "He said he was looking up at me from the ground and saw it go through, and I kinda jumped a little bit. He said I got a really upset look on my face like I was mad. He said, 'Man, that really had to hurt.'"

Just before the ambush, Takes said he and the other squad leader had stopped to discuss the terrain they were about to enter.

"You could not have asked for a better place to set up an ambush," he said. The unit they had replaced had also been ambushed in almost the same place. "It was called 'Ambush Alley.' We all knew it was coming. We had an odd feeling. The night before, nobody wanted to go

out on this mission. We just knew."

Although he was wounded, Takes stayed in Afghanistan and returned to duty after a brief hospital stay. It was not until January 2008 that he was reunited with his mother. "He was in the hospital for one week and then went back to the field," said Cindy M. Anderson, Takes' mother.

Anderson said she refused to watch the news one month before he left. "But, I had a sense from the time he left for Afghanistan to the time he came home that he was in a very dangerous place, and so — I just prayed, and prayed and prayed."

The reunion was at the airport in Charlotte, N.C., Cindy Anderson said.

"I really did not say anything. I just gave him a big old hug," she said. "It was so nice just to see him and touch his face."



Photo by Sgt. Neil W. McCabe

Maj. Gen. Rodney O. Anderson, left, commanding general of Task Force Bragg, pins the Distinguished Service Cross on Staff Sgt. James M. Takes as Col. William Ostlund, Takes' former commander, looks on.

GREEN TO GOLD

Program offers path for enlisted Soldiers to become officers

By Sgt. Fabian Ortega
U.S. Army Europe

Enlisted Soldiers interested in becoming officers may want to look into what the Army's Green to Gold program has to offer. The program puts those in the enlisted ranks on a path to become commissioned officers by taking them off active duty and sending them to school as full-time students.

Green to Gold is a unique program that allows enlisted Soldiers to complete a degree and earn a commission. "You can also do Green to Gold while pursuing a

master's degree," said Capt. Scott Smith, the Green to Gold advisor for the U.S. Army Cadet Command at Fort Drum, N.Y.

Soldiers seeking to trade their current military obligation for a degree and the responsibility of being an Army officer can choose from three Green to Gold options: the scholarship option, the nonscholarship option, and the nonscholarship, active-duty option.

With the most-competitive option, the Green to Gold scholarship, the Army pays for tuition, books and other expenses.

The most-commonly used Green to Gold program is the two-year, nonschol-

arship option. It is widely used because Soldiers who have completed at least two years of college can enter the program without having to compete for a slot. It can also be more financially beneficial, Smith said.

"Believe it or not, with the post-9/11 GI Bill combined with other programs, it is the option that gives the cadet the most financial gain," Smith said.

The last is the nonscholarship, active-duty option. Soldiers remain on active duty and make permanent change-of-station moves to a university as full-time Army ROTC cadets.

GREEN TO GOLD AT A GLANCE

SCHOLARSHIP OPTION: Scholarships are awarded for two, three or four years depending on the amount of time Soldiers need to complete their degrees. Those who win scholarships receive

- Tuition or room and board support.
- Additional money for textbooks, supplies and equipment.
- A monthly stipend for up to 10 months each school year.
- Pay for attending the Leader Development and Assessment Course between the junior and senior years of college.
- If qualified, GI Bill and Army College Fund benefits.

NONSCHOLARSHIP OPTION: This is available to Soldiers who have completed two years of college, and who can complete their degree requirements in two years. Individuals receive

- A monthly stipend for up to 10 months each school year.
- Pay for attending the Leader Development and Assessment

Course between the junior and senior years of college.

- If qualified, GI Bill and Army College Fund benefits.
- Nonscholarship participants can also participate in the Simultaneous Membership Program (SMP). As SMPs, Soldiers are members of either a drilling Reserve or Guard unit and ROTC.

NONSCHOLARSHIP, ACTIVE-DUTY OPTION: This two-year program provides eligible active-duty enlisted Soldiers the opportunity to complete a baccalaureate degree or obtain a two-year master's degree and be commissioned as an Army officer upon receiving the appropriate degree. Soldiers selected will

- Continue to receive their current pay and allowances while in the program (up to a maximum of 24 consecutive months).
- If qualified, GI Bill and Army College Fund benefits.
- Normal permanent change-of-station entitlements.

Soldiers who choose this option receive current pay and allowances while they go to college, Smith said. Those eligible for the Montgomery GI Bill or Army College Fund can use those entitlements to offset the cost of tuition. To qualify for this option, Soldiers must be within 21 months of completing their bachelor's or master's degrees.

There is also another opportunity for a scholarship — the Division Commander's Hip Pocket Scholarship. The option still falls under the two- to four-year Green to Gold scholarship program, but the discretion to grant the scholarship is up to the applicant's commanding general. Soldiers apply and submit their Green to Gold Hip Pocket Scholarship packets through their divisions' personnel offices, and the division commander subsequently reviews the packet.

"Last year, V Corps received five (Hip Pocket Scholarship) packets, and all five were approved," said James Miller, a personnel officer with the U.S. Army Europe human resources division. V Corps is one of four USAREUR units authorized to grant Hip Pocket Scholarships. The 21st Theater Support Command, 1st Armored Division and Joint Multinational Training Command are other USAREUR units that have been participating in the Green to Gold Hip Pocket program.

Jonathan Sheehan, a Green to Gold ROTC cadet and former infantryman with 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood, Texas, encouraged Soldiers to apply, just as he did almost four years ago.

"Apply if you have the opportunity. It is one of the most invaluable experiences that I have had the good fortune to



Photo by Mark E. Lewis

Jonathan Sheehan was an infantryman with 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division at Fort Hood, Texas, before beginning studies toward a history degree at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. He graduated and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in May.

be a part of," said Sheehan, who graduated in May with a history degree from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, Texas. He attended TCU with a four-year Green to Gold ROTC scholarship.

"After talking with my platoon leader and company commander, we decided I should get my degree and earn a commission," Sheehan said.

Sheehan's active-duty and deployment experience gave him an advantage over other cadets during his freshman and sophomore years of school, he said.

"An enlisted background is an extremely valuable thing," Sheehan said. "I guarantee, as prior enlisted, you will be shown a great amount of respect when you walk in, something that your peers will not have. Also, a lot of the stuff we learned in ROTC the first two years is second nature to you. ... By your third and fourth year, it gets challenging. But, you still have a great leg up."

As an ROTC cadet, Sheehan's daily schedule included physical training, classes and homework. Other than that, he said, "the time is pretty much yours."

"You're just another student but with the benefit of having school paid for up front," he said. "I have to admit, it's a pretty cushy life."

Getting in the Green to Gold program can be challenging, but Sheehan said the benefits outweigh the sometimes frustrating process.

"Keep working at it," he said. "Even if you don't get accepted the first time, keep trying. It may be a pain to get in, but once you are, it is very much worth it."

Sheehan was commissioned as a second lieutenant in May and expected to be stationed at Fort Sill, Okla.

For information on Green to Gold eligibility and service requirements see your local personnel office or visit www.goarmy.com/rotc/enlisted-soldiers.html.

PHOTO JOURNAL



Staff Sgt. Hector Hoyas (right), an aerial delivery field service department instructor, and Air Force Senior Airman Matthew Phillips, an airborne pavements and equipment operator from the 820th Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineer (RED HORSE) Squadron, turn away from the rotor wash as a Nevada National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter takes off with a humvee April 15 at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., during sling-load training.

Photo by Tech. Sgt. Michael R. Holzworth



PHOTO JOURNAL



▲ U.S. Army Soldiers with 6th Squadron, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, prepare to search Starkats village, Khowst province, Afghanistan, April 2.

Photo by Pfc. Donald Watkins



► As Sgt. Albert Smith pulls security, two Afghan boys navigate their way around him in a village near Qalat, Afghanistan, April 26. Members of Provincial Reconstruction Team Zabul visited the village to discuss agriculture with the residents.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Brian Ferguson



◀ U.S. service members watch television May 2 inside the USO at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, as President Barack Obama talks about the details of the death of 9/11 mastermind Osama bin Laden.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Stephen Schester

▶ A Soldier from the 10th Mountain Division's 3rd Battalion, 6th Field Artillery Battery, 1st Brigade Combat Team, based at Combat Outpost Qaisar, Afghanistan, stands guard along a river that runs through the village of Hazara Qala, Feb. 1, 2010. The battery was there to assist the villagers by delivering barriers to help stop river erosion that had put various buildings at risk.

Photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Eric S. Dehm



◀ Relieved after a firefight with the Taliban, a Soldier from the 2nd Battalion, 327th Infantry "No Slack" Regiment, First Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, opens his mouth toward the sky to taste the snow as it falls in the valley of Barawala Kalet, Kunar province, Afghanistan.

Photo by Pfc. Cameron Boyd

Roll Call

OF THE FALLEN

Operation New Dawn

*Pfc. Robert M. Friese, 21
Chesterfield, Mich., April 29, 2011*

*Spc. Andrew E. Lara, 25
Albany, Ore., April 27, 2011*

Operation Enduring Freedom

*Sgt. 1st Class Charles L. Adkins, 36
Sandusky, Ohio, April 16, 2011*

*Spc. Paul J. Atim, 27
Green Bay, Wis., April 16, 2011*

*Master Sgt. Benjamin F. Bitner, 37
Greencastle, Pa., April 23, 2011*

*Sgt. John P. Castro, 25
Andrews, Texas, April 22, 2011*

*Spc. Joseph B. Cemper, 21
Warrensburg, Mo., April 16, 2011*

*Sgt. Adam D. Craig, 23
Cherokee, Iowa, March 4, 2011*

*Spc. Preston J. Dennis, 23
Redding, Calif., April 28, 2011*

*1st Lt. Demetrius M. Frison, 26
Lancaster, Pa., May 10, 2011*

*Sgt. Matthew D. Hermanson, 22
Appleton, Wis., April 28, 2011*

*Sgt. Ken K. Hermogino, 30
Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., May 9, 2011*

*Sgt. 1st Class Bradley S. Hughes, 41
Newark, Ohio, April 24, 2011*

*Staff Sgt. James A. Justice, 32
Grimes, Iowa, April 23, 2011*

*Spc. Joseph A. Kennedy, 25
St. Paul, Minn., April 15, 2011*

*Pfc. John F. Kijim, 19
Philadelphia, Pa., April 19, 2011*

*Sgt. Brent M. Maher, 31
Council Bluffs, Iowa, April 11, 2011*

*Capt. Joshua M. McClimans, 30
Akron, Ohio, April 22, 2011*

*Sgt. Sonny J. Moses, 22
Koror, Palau, April 18, 2011*

*Spc. Donald L. Nichols, 21
Shell Rock, Iowa, April 13, 2011*

*Pvt. Brandon T. Pickering, 21
Fort Thomas, Ky., April 10, 2011*

*Sgt. Linda L. Pierre, 28
Immokalee, Fla., April 16, 2011*

*Pfc. Joel A. Ramirez, 22
Waxahachie, Texas, April 16, 2011*

*Capt. Charles E. Ridgley Jr., 40
Baltimore, Md., April 16, 2011*

*Spc. Riley S. Spaulding, 21
Sheridan, Texas, May 4, 2011*

*Pfc. Antonio G. Stiggins, 25
Rio Rancho, N.M., April 22, 2011*

*Staff Sgt. Cynthia R. Taylor, 39
Columbus, Ga., April 16, 2011*

*Chief Warrant Officer 2 Terry L. Varnadore II, 29
Hendersonville, N.C., April 23, 2011*

*1st Lt. Omar J. Vazquez, 25
Hamilton, N.J., April 22, 2011*

*Pfc. Jonathan M. Villanueva, 19
Jacksonville, Fla., April 27, 2011*

*Cpl. Kevin W. White, 22
Westfield, N.Y., May 2, 2011*

*Spc. Charles J. Wren, 25
Beerville, Texas, April 16, 2011*

You are not forgotten

Editor's note: This is a continuation of a list that was started in the October 2003 issue of The NCO Journal and contains those names released by the Department of Defense between April 12, 2011, and May 13, 2011.

SOLDIERS
LEADERS
CIVILIANS
FAMILIES

Take 5

before the swim!

Gettin' Waterlogged

- Always swim with a buddy
- Avoid drinking alcohol before or during any water activity
- Select swimming sites that have on-duty lifeguards
- Do not use air-filled or foam toys in place of personal flotation devices; they are not designed to keep swimmers safe
- Supervise children
- Learn CPR



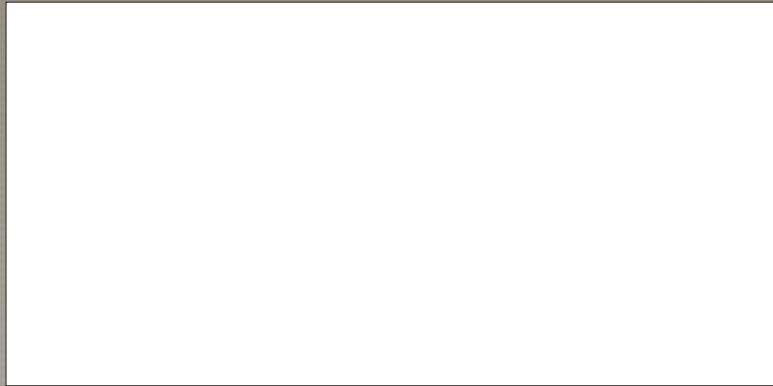
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to Save a Life Today?



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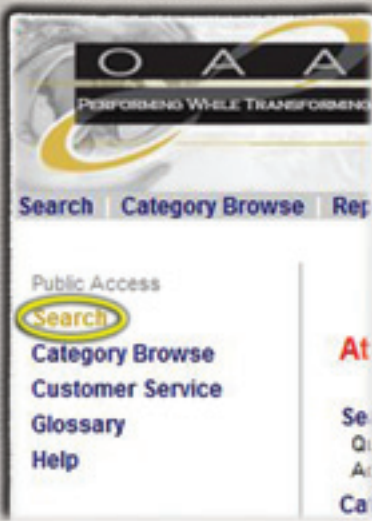
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