

# JOURNAL

NGO

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## THE ARMY'S BEST

2011 BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION





pg **20**



## ON THE COVER

Sgt. Christopher Side leads his team through the military operations in urban terrain event at the 2011 Department of the Army Best Warrior Competition, held Oct. 3-7 at Fort Lee, Va. The winners, pictured center right, were Spc. Thomas Hauser (left) and Sgt. Guy Mellor.

Photos by Spc. David M. Gafford

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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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# Army ensures ‘right mix’ for junior NCO promotion points

By Rob McIlvaine  
Army News Service

Because large numbers of Soldiers are attaining high promotion points without attending the appropriate schools, the Army is making changes to the semi-centralized promotion system effective Jan. 1.

“This change — which only affects the Advanced Leader Course and the Warrior Leader Course for sergeants and staff sergeants — ensures Soldiers get the right mix of developmental opportunities at the right time in their careers,” said Sgt. Maj. Debra J. Sturdivant, chief of enlisted promotions at Human Resources Command at Fort Meade, Md.

The change will also improve the Army’s ability to select the best-qualified Soldiers for promotion, increase readiness at both the grade and military occupational specialty level, and drive Soldier behavior, she said.

“We came about this because Soldiers were maxing out their military education with legitimate correspondence courses, but weren’t attending the NCO Education System schools,” Sturdivant said.

The Army has three distinct elements within the military-training category: NCOES, resident military training (including courses such as Equal Opportunity, Combatives, Bus Driver, Combat Lifesaver, etc.) and computer-based training.

To ensure Soldiers get the “right mix” of classes, ceilings have been imposed on each of these elements. The total promotion points that can be earned in military education are 260 for promotion to sergeant and 280 for promotion to staff sergeant. This remains unchanged.

A maximum of 40 percent of the points a Soldier can potentially earn are applied to the NCOES element within the military-education category (104 maximum points for Soldiers competing for sergeant and 112 maximum points for Soldiers competing for staff sergeant), Sturdivant said.



Photo by Laura Boyd

Crystal Jarrell receives her new sergeant rank from Sgt. Maj. Cy Akana, the sergeant major of Blanchfield Army Community Hospital, Fort Campbell, Ky., in September 2009 as her son Tyler stands by her side.

“This design intentionally limits a Soldier’s ability to ‘max’ promotion points in the NCOES category to those who are officially designated as ‘distinguished honor graduate’ or as the ‘distinguished leadership graduate,’” she said.

Under the NCOES category:

- Distinguished honor and leader graduates earn 104 points for sergeant and 112 points for staff sergeant.
- Commandant’s List graduates receive 92 points for sergeant and 101 points for staff sergeant.
- Graduates receive 80 points for sergeant and 90 points for staff sergeant.

Active-component Soldiers should look for revised scores, based on these

newly established ceilings, in the automated Promotion Point Worksheet beginning Dec. 5, Sturdivant said.

Soldiers recommended for promotion and integrated onto the recommended list before Dec. 8 will have these ceilings applied in determining their promotion scores for Jan. 1 selections.

A new DA Form 3355 will also soon be published, and Army Reserve and Active Guard Reserve Soldiers should use this form to record their promotion points according to the new ceilings, Sturdivant said. The new ceilings were to be implemented on promotion-board actions effective Nov. 1 to meet the timeline for Jan. 1 promotions, she said.



# Demand grows for squad-level linguists

By Donna Miles  
American Forces Press Service

Last year, 74 Soldiers at Fort Campbell, Ky., became the first to participate in a new program that provides short-term, intensive language and cultural training to deploying military members.

The general purpose-force program wasn't designed for professional linguists or interpreters, explained Sam Garzaniti, who manages it at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, Monterey, Calif.

Rather, the program provides basic Dari or Pashto instruction, taught by native Afghan speakers, to help nonlinguists — military police, medics, truck drivers and infantrymen, among them — operate more effectively on the ground in Afghanistan.

Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, when he commanded the International Security Assistance Force, came up with the concept to create what deployed forces refer to as "squad-designated linguists" who are able to communicate with the Afghan people. Graduates of the program proved so beneficial to their deployed units that the program is now growing by leaps and bounds.

Fort Carson, Colo., one of three pilot sites when the program stood up last year, sent almost 300 Soldiers to a condensed version of the training before they deployed. The vast majority studied Dari; 49 Soldiers learned Pashto. Fort Drum, N.Y., also in the pilot program, sent 55 10th Mountain Division Soldiers to its initial general purpose-force training.

"After that, it has just been a steady flow of classes," Garzaniti said. Schofield Barracks in Hawaii signed on to the program in September 2010. Fort Bragg, N.C., followed earlier this year.

The Marines jumped on board, too, with Camp Lejeune, N.C., and Camp Pendleton, Calif., joining the program last fall.

To date, about 1,000 service members have completed the program, Garzaniti said. He expects more enrollment in the program as word about it spreads.

Classes typically run 13 to 16 weeks, with students spending as much as six hours a day in the classroom and even more time in practice sessions and mandatory study halls.

Unlike other Defense Language Institute programs, the general purpose-force curriculum focuses on listening and speaking skills, Garzaniti said. Students learn vocabulary and verb tenses and how to construct sentences. They then practice using them in various scenarios similar to what they might encounter in Afghanistan.

"It's a very focused program," Garzaniti said. "We're not going for global proficiency. We are going for tactical functionality."

Graduates aren't meant to take the place of professional linguists and interpreters, he said. For example, they typically aren't able to discuss the news with local Afghans. They can, however, ask for directions or share pleasantries over tea or during key leader engagements.

They also have the skills to ask questions and understand responses at roadblocks, and read street signs and even

graffiti on walls that may provide clues about insurgent activities.

"That makes them a force multiplier," Garzaniti said. "When they go out and do their operations, whatever they may be, having somebody there in the front able to at least greet [the Afghans] and lay groundwork for something makes a huge difference. They are somebody to help."

Returning units report that even limited language and cultural skills have helped them in their mission.

"We've gotten a lot of good feedback from people who have been in-country saying, 'Hey, this works absolutely great,'" Garzaniti said. "They tell you that [when] you speak two words, you see a face light up."

A professional linguist himself who retired from the Army last year, Garzaniti said he has seen firsthand the impact language ability had on the Afghans encountered by U.S. forces.

"They know you took the time to learn at least a few words, a phrase, two phrases," he said. "It makes all the difference in the world."



Photo by Michele Vowell

Sgt. Karah Jarrett of 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, writes letters of the Pashto alphabet during a squad-level linguist class Feb. 12, 2010.



# NCOs can bring change to Army through survey

By Jonathan (Jay) Koester  
The NCO Journal

Army Soldiers are asked to fill out many surveys each year. But the Center for Army Leadership at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., wants NCOs to know that one survey coming out this month is too important to ignore.

CAL's Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL) is read at the highest levels and has brought actual changes to the Army. Although NCOs might not have heard of the CASAL, they've certainly seen the results, said Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Johndrow, the former command sergeant major for the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

For instance, all the recent discussions about "toxic leadership" in the Army started with last year's CASAL results, he said.

"That was a result of the survey, so you know your voice is being heard when you see it in the *Army Times* and all these other places," Johndrow said. "It's the talk of the town now."

The CASAL is Web-based, and invitations to participate will go out by email this month. Participants are randomly selected, and it is important that NCOs who receive the invitation take part. Last year, about 13 percent of NCOs selected filled out the survey.

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III pointed out that NCOs will see the results from the CASAL.

"The CASAL is one of the most important surveys a Soldier can take in any given year because it is one of the few surveys where the unfiltered results are released publicly," Chandler said. "It is the survey that leads to real change in our leadership doctrine, and this doctrine is the basis for how the Army develops leaders."

The Army needs honest feedback from NCOs, and the survey is one of the few ways to make sure Army leaders find



Photo by Jonathan (Jay) Koester

Master Sgt. Jason Boorn, a professional development NCO, talks to a class at the Electronic Warfare School in September at Fort Sill, Okla. The Center for Army Leadership is seeking input from NCOs on the positives and negatives of Army culture and leadership.

## CASAL REPORTS

To read about the findings of the most recent CASAL, visit <http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/digitalpublications.asp>.

Then click on the tab for "Current CASAL Reports."

out what is going right or wrong, Johndrow said.

"As a noncommissioned officer you have an obligation to give your honest assessment of how things are out there," Johndrow said. "And nobody out there really has their finger on the pulse like a noncommissioned officer, because you're down there where the rubber meets the road.

"If you see something out there that is working well or not working well, or if

we're not going in the right direction, you have to let people know there is an issue," he said. "If you don't fill the darn thing out, how is anybody going to know what is going on?"

Johndrow said he was in a meeting about six months ago with Gen. Martin Dempsey, then the chief of staff of the Army, when the CASAL and toxic leadership was the talk of the meeting.

"So you're filling out a survey and wondering if it gets to the top. Well, that's as top as it gets," Johndrow said. "Soldiers need to know: Your word is being heard at the very top, and they are concerned about what you are saying."

NCOs also need to know that changes come about because of the survey results and because top leaders pay attention to the survey. For instance, the feedback on toxic leadership led to changes in how Soldiers and NCOs are evaluated, said Col. Tom Guthrie, director of the Center for Army Leadership.



“Some of these changes are somewhat discreet, so you may not see it on the cover of the *Army Times*, but you’ll eventually notice the NCOER is changing,” Guthrie said.

“People should ask the question, ‘What drove the change?’” he said. “Well, things like the CASAL survey are driving that change. It’s not always right in your face, in 72-point type.”

The annual survey began in 2005, and although some questions stay the same each year to track changes, others change based on Army needs. After focusing on toxic leadership the past couple of years, Guthrie wants the survey this year to focus on other areas, he said.

“I want to find out what positive climates are out there and why are they deemed positive, so we can start learning from what is going good in the Army instead of taking just negative lessons and trying to berate ourselves about the 18 percent who aren’t doing the right thing,” Guthrie said.

The CASAL takes only about 15 minutes to fill out, said Sgt. Maj. Alan M. Gibson, senior NCO for initiatives and management at CAL. He said he hoped that both NCOs and their Soldiers take the time to fill out the survey. The future of Army leadership depends on it.

“From the 10 years we’ve now had in conflict, of war, somehow leader development has diminished,” Gibson said. “We need to make sure that we pick up the ball and run to the goal line with leader development.”

Gibson added, “82 percent of our leaders are doing a fine job out there. It’s the 18 percent that we’re targeting, and we need to make sure they are getting it right.”

NCOs who want a say in how Army leadership is taught and passed down need to make sure they pay attention to their inboxes and fill out the CASAL. Leadership changes in the Army are spawned from those responses.

“It’s like the lottery: You have to play to win,” Johndrow said. “If you don’t fill it out, you know nothing’s going to happen. But if you fill it out, your voice is going to be heard.” **J**

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# Army coins available only one more month

Staff and wire reports →

Time is running out to purchase three coins commemorating the Army, available until Dec. 16 from the U.S. Mint.

By law, the coins can only be sold by the mint during 2011. They feature artwork that commemorates the Army at war, the Army during peacetime, and the modern Army of today. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of the coins goes toward construction of the National Museum of the United States Army, to be built at Fort Belvoir, Va.

“What I love about these coins ... is that they celebrate Army history with their images and honor the 30 million American men and women who have worn the uniform since 1775,” said retired Brig. Gen. Creighton W. Abrams Jr., the executive director of the Army Historical Foundation, which is raising funds for the museum.

“These are great designs,” he said. “These are the first-ever Army commemorative coins, and I think they are great mementos if you have a relative who served in the Army or if you served yourself.”

The three pieces include a \$5 gold coin, a silver dollar and a clad half-dollar.

The gold coin features five Soldiers from the colonial times through the modern era. The silver coin features both a male and female bust, in front of a globe, meant to symbolize today’s worldwide deployments. Finally, the clad coin represents the peacetime contributions of the active Army, the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve Soldier.

The three coins are available for purchase on the U.S. Mint’s website and range in price from \$20 for an uncirculated clad coin to \$510 for a proof gold coin. The coins were designed by artists at the U.S. Mint, and will be struck at the mints in Denver, San Francisco, Philadelphia and West Point, N.Y.

“The men and women of the United States Mint are proud to produce these coins, not only to celebrate the Army’s exemplary history, but also to honor the dedication, courage and sacrifices of all American Soldiers,” said Daniel P. Shaver of the U.S. Mint.

The number of coins to be produced by the mint is limited by the public law that allowed them to be created in the first place. The mint will produce 100,000 gold coins, 500,000 silver coins and 750,000 half-dollar coins.

Those interested in purchasing coins can visit the U.S. Mint website at <http://catalog.usmint.gov>.





# Army launches new accident reporting software program

By Art Powell  
U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center

The Army released a new Web-based accident reporting tool Oct. 3 designed to be more accurate, timely and complete by combining several existing Army accident reporting systems.

The streamlined program, ReportIt, was tested at selected Army installations, including: Fort Benning, Ga.; Fort Campbell, Ky.; Fort Sill, Okla.; and the Army National Guard in Washington, D.C. The program will assist leaders in monitoring accident data and identifying trends across the force.

"This tool will give our leaders, at all levels, a better picture of the Army accident landscape," said Brig. Gen. William T. Wolf, director of Army safety and commander of the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center at Fort Rucker, Ala. "It empowers them to better understand the types and circumstances surrounding accidents so they can develop preventative measures."

Timely accident reporting is critical for Army leaders to promptly address accident trends that may develop anywhere in the world. It also will help leaders take steps to address them.

"ReportIt is designed to be more accurate than previous systems, and provides more timely and complete reporting," said Rae McInnis, director of current operations at the safety center.

"It will provide Army leaders with a better picture of the types of accidents we experience and the circumstances surrounding them. That capability will guide their responses for taking corrective action."

ReportIt now contains modules to address aviation and ground accidents. Future modules will guide initial notification actions, unmanned aerial system accidents, civilian reporting, smartphone applications and offline capability, among others.

"We've tested ReportIt at selected bases because, like any new software system, we wanted to work out the bugs and get user feedback so we could address known problems before going Army-wide," McInnis added. "We expect to address issues that may arise in the future as this software program evolves and makes a huge footprint across our Army."

ReportIt provides reserve components of the Army with improved accident reporting and analysis capabilities, as well.

"For the Army National Guard, ReportIt is the welcomed next evolution in the mishap reporting conduit,"

said Chief Warrant Officer 5 Mark Grapin, aviation and ground safety specialist at the National Guard Bureau, Army National Guard Directorate, Washington, D.C. "The development and implementation team has been sensitive to the statutory reporting criteria for the Guard, which should reduce our learning curve and growth pains. ReportIt is akin to a credit card swipe machine at the grocery store counter: a simplified conduit to the Army accident database of record with TurboTax-style prompting tools that largely take the pain out of the reporting process. As a result, we expect increased accuracy and decreased span-times between event and archive."

Army ReportIt developers strived to ensure it would not only be quicker and easier to use than those systems it replaced but also provide quicker user feedback.

"ReportIt is easier to use than the systems it replaced," said Melissa Johnson, director of support operations at the safety center, "We designed a very user-centric, familiar, Web-based interface. We are developing ReportIt to enable us to respond quickly to user feedback. And, of course, we are vigilant to maintain Army information assurance standards as well as Privacy Act requirements."

To see or use ReportIt, go to <https://safety.army.mil> and click on the ReportIt icon.



Photo courtesy of Fort Bragg Department of Emergency Services

ReportIt will be a centralized mechanism for collecting injury, illness and loss reports to help the Army meet regulatory requirements and effectively manage its safety and occupational health program.

# Army seeks to ID, treat those exposed to rabies

By U.S. Army Medical Command

A Soldier from Fort Drum, N.Y., who recently returned from Afghanistan, died from rabies after contracting the disease from a feral dog while deployed, Army officials said. As a result, the Army has initiated an investigation to ensure other service members who may have been exposed to rabies are identified and receive preventive treatment.

The Army Medical Department, the Department of Defense, other uniformed services and the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are working together to identify, evaluate and treat any service members, Department of Defense civilians or contractors who may have been exposed to rabies while deployed. Individuals who have already been identified as being exposed to the disease while deployed are receiving appropriate evaluation and treatment.

Medical personnel emphasize it is important to receive an appropriate medical evaluation after contact with a feral or stray animal. Rabies may not show any signs or symptoms in the infected animal until late in the disease, often just days before its death. The animal can still spread the deadly virus while appearing completely normal.

The rabies virus is transmitted to humans by the saliva of infected animals



Photo by Sgt. James P. Hunter

Though animals may not show signs of the rabies virus, they can still carry and pass it on to unsuspecting Soldiers. Soldiers should never approach stray or wild animals, especially while deployed.

through bite wounds, contact with mucous membranes or broken skin. Humans can become infected and harbor the virus for weeks to months, and in extremely rare cases, years before becoming ill.

During this 1 to 3 month incubation period, rabies can be prevented with appropriate treatment, including a series of vaccinations. Once symptoms occur, however, death is likely.

All service members previously deployed since March 2010, and Depart-

ment of Defense civilians and contractors who have had contact with a feral or stray animal while deployed should be immediately evaluated by medical personnel.

Call the Wounded Warrior and Family Hotline at 1-800-984-8523 (Overseas DSN: 312-421-3700) for information on obtaining a medical evaluation and treatment, or visit [www.cdc.gov/rabies](http://www.cdc.gov/rabies) or <http://phc.amedd.army.mil/topics/discond/aid/Pages/Rabies.aspx> for more information about the disease.

## Posts may no longer require vehicle decals

By J.D. Leipold, Army News Service

The Army provost marshal general has authorized post and garrison commanders to do away with motor vehicle registration and decals if the commander sees no added value to security.

While the requirement to register vehicles on post may soon disappear, all privately owned vehicles must continue to be licensed, registered, inspected and insured according to state and local laws. Rental vehicles are considered POVs for purposes of post entry and rental contracts serve as proof for proper licensing, registration and insurance.

Maj. Gen. David E. Quantock, who recently became the Army's provost marshal general and commander of Criminal Investigation Command, said the move to eliminate the registration

and decal display, known as DD Form 2220, came about because decals only offer a false sense of security and are redundant to the information technology systems in place at most post gates.

Quantock noted that it's the IT systems guards use at the gates of most installations that have been responsible for allowing security to catch unauthorized people trying to gain access. He said when guards make a traffic stop on an installation, they're not running decal checks, they're running license plates.

"Those automated systems are tremendously powerful. They identify outstanding warrants on individuals and they alert the guard force to those who have been barred from an installation," Quantock said. "They not only scan CAC (military ID) cards, but also state driver licenses. We have a connection to most police databases out there. It's a huge force protection improvement."



# THE ARMY'S



## After a week of competition, two Best Warriors emerge

STORY BY MICHAEL L. LEWIS

PHOTOS BY SPC. DAVID M. GAFFORD

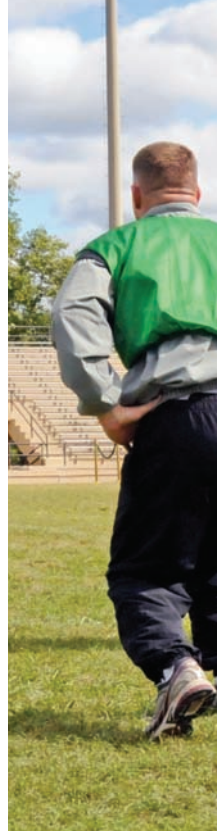


**S**oldiers and NCOs are trained “by the numbers,” so perhaps the numbers are the best way to sum up this year’s showcase of the Army’s best and brightest Soldiers and NCOs. The 2011 Department of the Army Best Warrior Competition included 26 competitors, the Soldiers of the Year and NCOs of the Year from 13 Army commands; more than 100 hours of competition, held Oct. 3–7 at Fort Lee, Va.; and two winners — Spc. Thomas Hauser, the 2011 U.S. Army Soldier of the Year, and Sgt. Guy Mellor, the 2011 U.S. Army NCO of the Year.

Now a decade old, the competition was designed to gauge the gamut of Soldier abilities, said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III. It was his first time hosting the competition.

“One of the things we look for in our Soldiers is someone who is adaptive and agile, a resource manager, culturally astute,” he said. “There’s more to being a Soldier than just being in combat. Combat is the culmination of all the things we ask them to do — the study, self-development, mentoring, leadership.”





**Above:** Spc. Ryan Lindberg, left, and other competitors begin the second event of the competition, a computer-based exam testing them on their knowledge of Army regulations and procedures.

**Right:** Sgt. John Colmenares, in yellow, leads his formation in the Preparation Drill during the Physical Readiness Training event.

## The Competitors

26 Soldiers represented 13 major commands in the 2011 Department of the Army Best Warrior Competition Oct. 3-7 at Fort Lee, Va.:

### Cpl. Ryan Barger

U.S. ARMY RESERVE SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

**AGE:** 21 **IN THE ARMY:** 2½ years **MOS:** 31B military policeman **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** 303rd Military Police Company, 97th Military Police Battalion, 89th Military Police Brigade at Jackson, Mich., and as a full-time student at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Mich.



### Sgt. Jeremy Brake

INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND NCO OF THE YEAR

**AGE:** 37 **IN THE ARMY:** 9 years **MOS:** 92A automated logistics specialist **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** U.S. Army Garrison-Daegu, South Korea



“It really does show the completeness of today’s Soldier,” Secretary of the Army John McHugh said during the competition. It was the first time the Army’s top civilian had visited the Armywide Best Warrior. “It’s not just about how great they are at being a combatant — they do that every day in Iraq and Afghanistan — but the total, thinking, flexible warrior.

“It’s not just who can shoot the straightest and who’s best at taking down a potential prisoner. It’s about thinking; it’s about writing; it’s about communicating; it’s about their ability to think on their feet,” McHugh said.

Representing major commands throughout the Army, including the U.S. Army Installation Management Command for the first time, the competitors had to survive a gauntlet of smaller competitions at the unit, battalion, brigade, division and command levels to earn their tickets to the culminating event at Fort Lee. For some, that process began even before last year’s Armywide Best Warrior Competition. The arduous progression, Chandler said, results in competitors who have been tempered by battling fellow warriors head-to-head.

“Competition is key to our Army,” Chandler said at the awards luncheon Oct. 10 during the Association of the U.S. Army’s annual meeting and exposition in Washington, D.C. “Saying, ‘I’m the best’ is an important part of being a Soldier. Aspiring to be the best is ... part of being a professional — to continue to study and hone your skills, to be pushing for and striving for something that some people will never achieve.”

The superlative honors that Hauser, a military policeman representing U.S. Army Forces Command, and Mellor, an artilleryman representing the U.S. Army National Guard, eventually took home were on the distant horizon for competitors when events began before dawn Oct. 3. In the crisp autumn darkness, the Army’s top 26 warriors began the competition with the Army Physical Fitness Test. But they weren’t alone; more than 1,000 Advanced Individual Training Soldiers studying at Fort





Lee cheered them on from the stands of Fort Lee's Williams Stadium.

"Having all the people at the PT test and making an impression on those young Soldiers is pretty cool," said Sgt. Casey Hargaden, who represented the National Capital Region.

The crowd and fellow competitors provided ideal encouragement, said Pfc. Travis Williams, who represented U.S. Army Europe. "I got under 12 minutes on my run; that's the fastest I've ever done it," he said. "Having that competition was pretty motivating. There's no way I would be able to do that back at my unit."

Because the PT test was virtually guaranteed to be a part of the competition, warriors were able to train for it, said Staff Sgt. Ilker Irmak, who represented U.S. Army Medical Command.

"Before I got here, I did some physical training, some more physical training and some more physical training," he said with a laugh. "With my sponsor, we were like the Spartans in 300. I also studied a lot, but more out of personal interest in order to develop myself."

That extra academic training would serve Irmak and his fellow competitors well in the next event that morning, a computer-based exam of "basic" Army regulations and procedures, followed by a written essay. But competitors said the questions were far from common knowledge.

"The essay was definitely different. I've never really seen anything like that," said Spc. Ryan Lindberg, who represented the U.S. Army National Guard. "There were 20 questions, and I didn't know if they wanted us to answer all 20 questions with a short, bad answer or six questions with a really good answer. Time was short."

"I know with the computer exam and written essay, there was some stuff on there that I was like, 'Man, I guess I'm just not trained up to standards,'" said Sgt. 1st Class Chad Stackpole, who represented the National Capital Region. "Sometimes

## Staff Sgt. Andrew Brown

SPACE & MISSILE DEFENSE COMMAND NCO OF THE YEAR

AGE: 26 IN THE ARMY: 8 years MOS: 14H air defense enhanced early warning operator **CURRENT**

ASSIGNMENT: Joint Tactical Ground Station training and evaluations NCO in charge at 1st Space Company, 1st Space Battalion, 1st Space Brigade, Colorado Springs, Colo.



## Sgt. James Byrnes

U.S. ARMY EUROPE NCO OF THE YEAR

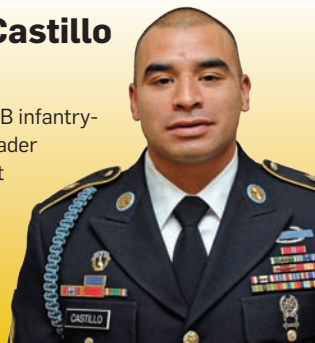
AGE: 23 IN THE ARMY: 5½ years MOS: 31B military policeman **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** 615th Military Police Company, 709th MP Battalion, 18th MP Brigade, 21st Theater Sustainment Command, Grafenwöhr, Germany



## Staff Sgt. Jonathan Castillo

FORCES COMMAND NCO OF THE YEAR

AGE: 30 IN THE ARMY: 7½ years MOS: 11B infantryman **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** Warrior Leader Course small group leader at the Fort Polk, La., NCO Academy









we get honed just to what our mission is with our specific assigned unit and what our [military occupational specialty] is. But the Army is a lot more and a lot bigger than that.”

Indeed, one new Army initiative proved to be quite problematic to competitors that afternoon as they were instructed to lead a platoon of Soldiers (Advanced Leader Course students, in fact) in the Preparation Drill from the new Physical Readiness Training program. The task stymied several warriors, though others had little difficulty.

“I had done PRT in basic training; we were one of the first groups in the Army to see how it worked. But I haven’t done it since,” Williams said.

“Still, we were told it might be here. So I took some time to read through the [training circular],” he said. “But getting out there and having to lead it? And then to find out they were all ALC students? That was kind of fun for me — ‘Do this! Do that! Do push-ups!’ They didn’t know I was a PFC.”

“PRT has been around for two years, but a lot of units still haven’t implemented it yet, so it surprised a lot of competitors,” said Spc. Blaise Corbin, who represented U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command. “People need to look ahead when it comes to this high-level competition. This is ‘All-Army’ and people need to be prepared for it.”

**Left:** Staff Sgt. Adam Connolly restrains an “insurgent” while members of his fire team keep angry “villagers” at bay during the military operations in urban terrain event.

**Below left:** Spc. Bernard Quackenbush, right, readies for his board appearance before the sergeant major of the Army as his sponsor uses a ruler to double-check his uniform.

**Below right:** At the board, Pfc. Travis Williams answers a question posed by Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond F. Chandler III, left.



## Sgt. John Colmenares

EIGHTH U.S. ARMY SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

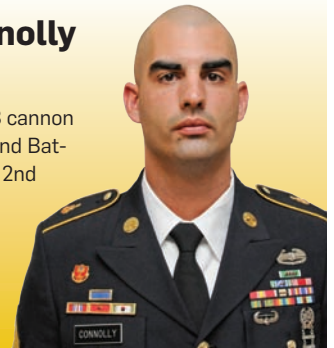
**AGE:** 22 **IN THE ARMY:** 4 years **MOS:** 31B military policeman **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** 532nd Military Intelligence Battalion, 501st MI Brigade, U.S. Army Garrison-Yongsan, South Korea



## Staff Sgt. Adam Connolly

U.S. ARMY PACIFIC NCO OF THE YEAR

**AGE:** 27 **IN THE ARMY:** 5 years **MOS:** 13B cannon crewmember **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** 2nd Battalion, 11th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii



## Spc. Blaise Corbin

TRAINING & DOCTRINE COMMAND SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

**AGE:** 20 **IN THE ARMY:** 1 year **MOS:** 11B infantryman **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Ranger Training Battalion, Ranger Training Brigade, Fort Benning, Ga.



## Sgt. Christopher Couchot

U.S. ARMY RESERVE NCO OF THE YEAR

**AGE:** 27 **IN THE ARMY:** 9 years **MOS:** 25B information systems specialist **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** senior transmission systems operator with B Company, 98th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, 505th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade, 335th Signal Command (Theater) in Mesa, Ariz.



## Spc. Dusty Edwards

U.S. ARMY MEDICAL COMMAND SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

**AGE:** 28 **IN THE ARMY:** 2½ years **MOS:** 68K medical laboratory specialist **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** Armed Services Whole Blood Processing Laboratory East, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J.





## Sgt. Casey Hargaden

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

**AGE:** 20 **IN THE ARMY:** 1½ years **MOS:** 11B infantryman **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** 1st Battalion, 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard), Fort Myer, Va.



## Staff Sgt. Ilker Irmak

U.S. ARMY MEDICAL COMMAND NCO OF THE YEAR

**AGE:** 31 **IN THE ARMY:** 7 years **MOS:** 68H optical laboratory specialist **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** General Leonard Wood Community Hospital, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.



## Sgt. Brandon Kitchen

SPACE & MISSILE DEFENSE COMMAND SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

**AGE:** 21 **IN THE ARMY:** 2½ years **MOS:** 25S1C satellite systems network coordinator **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** B Company, 53rd Signal Battalion, 1st Space Brigade, Fort Meade, Md.



## Spc. Zachary Liermann

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

**AGE:** 21 **IN THE ARMY:** 3 years **MOS:** 11B infantryman **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** automatic rifleman with A Company, 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, Fort Lewis, Wash.



## Spc. Ryan Lindberg

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

**AGE:** 23 **IN THE ARMY:** 6½ years **MOS:** 12B combat engineer **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** 817th Engineer Company (Sapper), North Dakota National Guard in Jamestown, N.D., and as a full-time student at North Dakota State University in Fargo.



Sgt. James Byrnes scans for possible threats during a daytime marksmanship event.

Awareness of the latest Army initiatives would prove to be a challenge for competitors the next day, Oct. 4, at what was viewed as the highest-stress event, a board appearance before the sergeant major of the Army and six of the Army's senior-most command sergeants major.

"I think I was surprised in some circumstances about the lack of knowledge of some things that I thought were pretty well-known," Chandler said. "I think it's always tough for Soldiers to have an idea of what the expectations are at this level. But it is the *Department of the Army* competition, so our questions are going to be about things that the entire Army is focused on right now. I think some folks had their eyes opened, and some others knew the answers very well."

The pressure was intense, Lindberg said. "It was fast and furious," he said. "It was one question after another, just back and forth, back and forth."

"Some of the questions were just shotgun blasted — eight questions are coming at you at one time," Stackpole said. "They just want to see how you would react."

"It's unnatural not to be nervous; there's senior leadership looking directly at you," said Staff Sgt. Jonathan Castillo, who represented U.S. Army Forces Command. "But how well do you demonstrate that composure, that confidence?"

Sgt. Douglas McBroom, who represented U.S. Army Materiel Command, had a simple strategy for dealing with any board-related anxiety.

"The sergeant major of the Army and the command sergeants major, they used to be in the same seat as me. They used to be a private; they used to be a young NCO. So I just imagined each of them as a young guy like me."



Hauser said he actually enjoyed the board.

“The sergeant major of the Army really wants to get to know you personally and what kind of character you have. As the president of the board, he said more than my previous boards; he spoke more, he got involved. I liked that. I was surprised they didn’t ask me to recite the Soldier’s Creed. But I guess at this level, they expect everyone to know that.”

With the board appearance out of the way, the first half of the week was over.

“Once you get the board piece over, then it’s time to execute the tactical portion,” Stackpole said. “I’ve been looking forward to that. I’m very glad that tomorrow we’ll be issued our gear, and we’ll go get our hands bloody and our boots muddy.”

The next three days would be nearly nonstop as competitors completed day and night urban orienteering courses, detainee operations lanes, day and night marksmanship qualifying, scenarios in the military operations in urban terrain range, uniform inspections, real-world combatives situations and other events designed to test the skills Soldiers need to call themselves technically and tactically proficient.

“These are the make-or-break events,” said Staff Sgt. Adam Connolly, who represented U.S. Army Pacific. “Everyone has done pretty much the same up to that point — PT, everyone’s good; the board, everyone’s good. It all comes down to discipline and the attention to detail for those warrior tasks.”

Because the competition was just as much a test of the warriors’ leadership skills as their own competency, each was assigned a fire team to guide through the various scenarios.

“My team was pretty good,” McBroom said. “They stayed in character pretty well and acted like they didn’t know any-

Staff Sgt. Raymond Santiago obtains his coordinates using a GPS device during the day orienteering event.



## Sgt. Douglas McBroom

U.S. ARMY MATERIEL COMMAND NCO OF THE YEAR

AGE: 23 IN THE ARMY: 5 years MOS: 88H cargo specialist CURRENT ASSIGNMENT: 690th Transportation Detachment, 597th Transportation Brigade, Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va.



## Sgt. Jonathan Melendez

INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

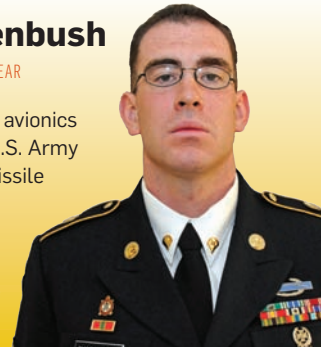
AGE: 24 IN THE ARMY: 6 years MOS: 31B military policeman CURRENT ASSIGNMENT: Provost Marshal Office, U.S. Army Garrison-Schinnen, Netherlands



## Spc. Bernard Quackenbush

U.S. ARMY MATERIEL COMMAND SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

AGE: 24 IN THE ARMY: 5 years MOS: 94R avionics radar repairer CURRENT ASSIGNMENT: U.S. Army Research Laboratory, White Sands Missile Range, N.M.



## Staff Sgt. Raymond Santiago

TRAINING & DOCTRINE COMMAND NCO OF THE YEAR

AGE: 33 IN THE ARMY: 10 years MOS: 11B infantryman CURRENT ASSIGNMENT: instructor with A Company, 4th Ranger Training Battalion, Ranger Training Brigade, Fort Benning, Ga.



## Sgt. Christopher Side

U.S. ARMY PACIFIC SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

AGE: 30 IN THE ARMY: 7½ years MOS: 14E Patriot missile system enhanced operator-maintainer CURRENT ASSIGNMENT: 1st Battalion, 1st Air Defense Artillery Regiment, Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan





thing about the Army, like they were a brand-new private on day one. All we had to do was just train them and tell them what to do: This is our mission, this is how we're going to execute it. And we carried it out pretty well. With my fire team, I don't think we got one no-go at any station."

Though there would be little sleep for them or their teams during the next 72 hours, competitors said they looked forward to the later events, even if they hadn't yet had combat experience.

"I haven't been deployed yet, but I trained up on those

tasks, so I'll probably be proficient in them," said Spc. Dusty Edwards, who represented U.S. Army Medical Command. "Of course, they always throw curve balls in there, and it's always fun to react to those curve balls to see how you perform under fire."

"Being inside and all formal, that's out of our comfort zone," said Sgt. John Colmenares, who represented Eighth U.S. Army in South Korea. "But going out to land navigation, the battle drills and shooting, that's where everybody feels at home. We were all more relaxed and efficient."

No matter what the events brought — even the dreaded "mystery event" on the final day of the competition — Castillo was prepared for whatever the Fort Lee team had for the competitors.

"I'm trained for anything," he said. "If they pull a rabbit out of the hat, I'm ready for the rabbit. If they pull a cat out, I'm ready for the cat. If they pull out a dog, I'm ready for that, too."

Williams, for one, was eager to spend himself completely in the final events.

"If I'm not tired and sore and unhappy with life at the end of the week, I've done something wrong," he said. "I want to leave here completely, utterly destroyed — mentally and physically — because that way I'll know I've done everything I could to win."

After the smoke cleared from the last event Oct. 7, there was still one last order of business, though it didn't count for any points — a double-elimination combatives tournament, which Mellor also won. Then, at last, the competitors had the weekend to rest before the winners were announced at the AUSA luncheon.

There, Chandler praised the competitors' spirit and professionalism.

"What you've accomplished is nothing short of inspiring," he said. "You've spent a week of exhausting training and rigor, tested your physical and mental skills, and performed all your battlefield missions. Regardless of the final tally, each and every one of you is a winner. Each of you represent the best of our Soldiers, and what you and your units have done to get here is nothing short of magnificent."

After their names were announced, Hauser was humble.

"I never thought I'd be the one standing here, because the competition was ridiculously tough. Any one of us could have won," he said. "It could have been just one slip-up that might have dropped me in the competition."

Mellor, too, said the level of competition made him doubt his chances — albeit briefly.

"I mean, this is the top of the Army's finest," he said. "The NCOs and professionals I was competing against, there's so much experience, so much background, so much history there. With all that experience that they have, it's hard to believe that I could come in and win. But I told myself, I'm going to do the best that I can do, then I'll walk away feeling good."

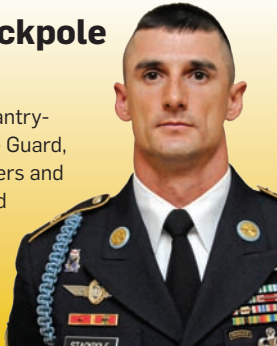
Having competed now in the Armywide competition twice (as a specialist, he competed in the 2009 Best Warrior), Mellor encouraged other NCOs to compete in future competitions.

"I hope that NCOs realize there's this great opportunity out there," he said. "The best thing I've gained from it is the

## Sgt. 1st Class Chad Stackpole

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION NCO OF THE YEAR

**AGE:** 31 **IN THE ARMY:** 13 years **MOS:** 11B infantryman **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** Sergeant of the Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Battalion, 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard), Fort Myer, Va.



## Staff Sgt. Sean Swint

EIGHTH U.S. ARMY NCO OF THE YEAR

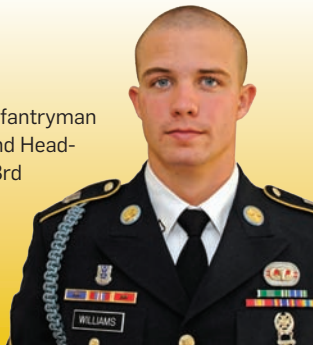
**AGE:** 24 **IN THE ARMY:** 6 years **MOS:** 13M Multiple Launch Rocket System crewmember **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** B Company, 1st Battalion, 38th Field Artillery Regiment, 210th Fires Brigade, Camp Casey, Korea



## Pfc. Travis Williams

U.S. ARMY EUROPE SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

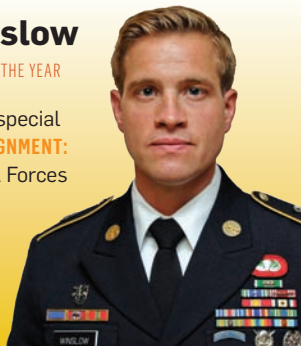
**AGE:** 19 **IN THE ARMY:** 1 year **MOS:** 11B infantryman **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 503rd Airborne Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, Vicenza, Italy



## Staff Sgt. Samuel Winslow

U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND NCO OF THE YEAR

**AGE:** 33 **IN THE ARMY:** 12 years **MOS:** 18B special forces weapons sergeant **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** C Company, 3rd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group, Fort Carson, Colo.





Sgt. 1st Class Chad Stackpole shoots at a target during the day marksmanship event.

experience. I am a better person, I am a better Soldier, I am a better civilian because of this competition. It's amazing how much it shapes and changes you and makes you a better professional. Through all the training, through all the drills, through all the studying, you go through that self-development process."

He plans to take many lessons learned from the competition back with him. "It's given me a lot of confidence and a lot of experience," he said. "That experience, I can take back to my unit and help my Soldiers better themselves. If nothing else, it can be motivation to them of what they can achieve."

Indeed, Chandler says the competition is a showcase of the

professionalism of the Army's warriors.

"You see the embodiment of our NCO Corps," he said. "You see noncommissioned officers teaching, coaching and mentoring Soldiers. You see Soldiers and noncommissioned officers pushing themselves and continuing to keep competing, no matter what, no matter how hard it gets. That is really what our Army is all about. It's about competing, it's about being victorious, it's about saying, 'No one is more professional than I.'" 🇺🇸

To contact Michael L. Lewis, email [michael.lewis73@us.army.mil](mailto:michael.lewis73@us.army.mil).

## U.S. ARMY SOLDIER OF THE YEAR 2011

### Spc. Thomas Hauser

**FORCES COMMAND** SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

**AGE:** 21 **IN THE ARMY:** 2 years **HOMETOWN:** Cincinnati, Ohio **MOS:** 31B military policeman **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** 563rd Military Police Company, 91st MP Battalion, 10th Sustainment Brigade, at Fort Drum, N.Y. **GOALS:** obtain a master's degree in business management and achieve the rank of command sergeant major. **ON WINNING:** "It was all hard. But, you've got to find that inner person in you to push yourself that little extra to keep going."

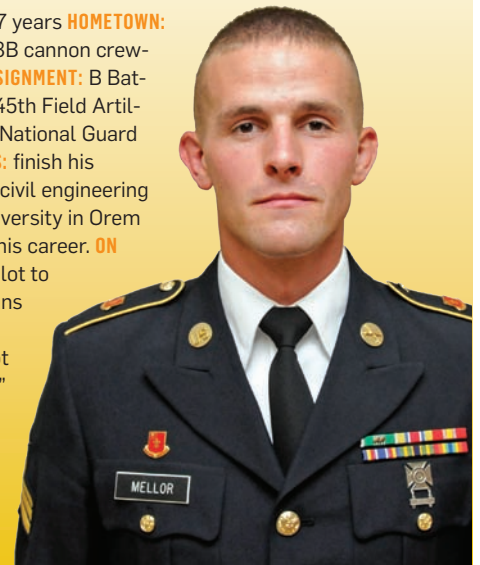


## U.S. ARMY NCO OF THE YEAR 2011

### Sgt. Guy Mellor

**ARMY NATIONAL GUARD** NCO OF THE YEAR

**AGE:** 24 **IN THE ARMY:** 7 years **HOMETOWN:** Fayette, Utah **MOS:** 13B cannon crew-member **CURRENT ASSIGNMENT:** B Battery, 1st Battalion, 145th Field Artillery Regiment, Utah National Guard at Manti, Utah. **GOALS:** finish his bachelor's degree in civil engineering from Utah Valley University in Orem and make the Army his career. **ON WINNING:** "It means a lot to [my unit], and it means a lot to me. They are what pushed me a lot through the process."







A controlled detonation set off by Soldiers from the 725th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team, 441st EOD Battalion, Task Force Troy and Iraqi soldiers with Iraqi Bomb Disposal Company, 9th Army Disposal to destroy unexploded ordnance July 13, 2010 outside Bassami, Iraq.

Photo by Pfc. Gary Silverman



# ARMY BOMB

# SQUADS

BY SHEJAL PULIVARTI

**T**he phone rings. The training halts in anticipation. The NCO in charge, a seasoned team leader, gives the other two members of the team the signal to gear up. Within moments the three-person team is en route. Adrenaline pumping, they prep for whatever could be awaiting them on the ground — the unknown ordnance they are called to safely defuse and dispose of in an effort to protect personnel and property.

This special breed of Soldiers, the Army Bomb Squad, is responsible for the identification, render safe and disposal of any hazardous unexploded munitions.

These Soldiers, in a career field that takes exceptional willpower and technical proficiency — Explosive Ordnance Disposal — see themselves as average people doing not-so-

average work.

The demand for what they do has grown consistently, and the three-person teams, which augment larger units when deployed, have been indispensable in the past 10 years of conflict. Their operational tempo is steadfast even in-garrison, however.



## EOD ELIGIBLE

Bomb techs have to volunteer for the job. “If at any time any of the guys don’t want to be a bomb tech anymore, they pull their volunteer statement,” said Staff Sgt. Brian Holmes, EOD team leader for the 745th EOD Company, 63rd EOD Battalion, 52nd Ordnance Group, stationed at Fort Drum, N.Y.

EOD Soldiers must undergo an extensive vetting process. Within their packets, they must submit volunteer statements.

“It takes someone who is adaptive, very creative in the way they think. It takes a resilient Soldier who is incredibly open-minded. Every incident is different; they have to be able to look at the situation on an individual basis and through every point of view,” said Sgt. Maj. Ruben Stoeltje, a veteran EOD professional who is now an instructor for the Sergeants Major Course at the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas.

## TRAINING

The EOD qualifying program is a three-step process. Upon submitting request packets and successfully completing the screening process, Soldiers attend a 10-week course at Fort Lee, Va. Although it’s technically phase one of their training, the Army also uses it as a pre-course to ensure applicants meet all the prerequisites of the career field.

Qualified candidates then report to Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., for an intense 28-week joint service course at the Naval School of Explosive Ordnance Disposal. All military service members, as well as local, state and federal law enforcement, attend this training as one team.

“The course is developed to put a lot of stress on them,” Stoeltje said. “There is a lot of information, and it shows us how they would react in a real-life situation.”

The course is split into nine training divisions. “We learn so much during the training, the basics of a lot of things,” Holmes said. “The foundation is learning how to use all the tools; we have a lot of specialized tools.”

Once successfully completing the training at Eglin, Soldiers return to Fort Lee for a month to cover Army-specific equipment. “We all (various EOD elements) use more or less the same equipment, but we allow the Soldiers to get more time handling the Army equipment during this time,” said Stoeltje, who recently served as the senior enlisted advisor for Army EOD training at Fort Lee.

The EOD recruit is then qualified as an Army bomb tech and awarded the 89D Military Occupation Specialty. He or she is obligated to serve two years in the Army.

## EOD STRUCTURE

Unlike most other jobs in the Army, all EOD personnel fall under one umbrella—The 20th Support Command, the Army’s chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-yield explosives headquarters at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. EOD is then broken down into two groups, the 52nd and 71st Ordnance Groups.

Battalions and companies from each group are strategically located throughout the Army. Regardless of geographical location, all EOD Soldiers wear the patch of

## EOD REQUIREMENTS

Interested Soldiers and NCOs must:

- Be a private first class through sergeant (sergeant non-promotable with less than one year time in grade)
- Have at least two years of active-duty service
- Have a General Maintenance Score (MAINT on your Enlisted Record Brief) of at least 104
- Be a U.S. citizen
- Be eligible for top secret clearance
- Have normal color vision; can’t be color blind
- Have a valid state driver’s license
- Not be allergic to explosives
- Have a physical profile serial code (PULHES) of at least 111121
- Successfully complete interview process
- Volunteer for the EOD program and sign an EOD volunteer statement
- Successfully perform a military-oriented protective posture and bomb suit performance test



An EOD team assigned to the 745th EOD Company, 63rd EOD Battalion, 52nd Ordnance Group, operates a robot to recon a mock improvised explosive device planted for training purposes Aug. 12 at Fort Drum, N.Y.

Photo by Shejal Pulivarti





Photo by Shejal Pulivarti

Staff Sgt. Brian Holmes, EOD team leader for the 745th EOD Company, 63rd EOD Battalion, 52nd Ordnance Group, is assisted into his bomb suit by his team members during a training exercise Aug. 12 at Fort Drum, N.Y.

the group they are assigned because they have a collective mission: support combatant commanders and government agencies to counter CBRNE and weapons of mass destruction threats.

In the EOD realm, three is the magic number. Each company has three platoons, each consisting of three teams. The teams are made up of three EOD personnel: One team leader — a team leader-certified staff sergeant — and two team members, both sergeants or below.

“We are able to fill every role. The team members, they switch positions between operating the robot and driving the truck. So all three of us can do everything,” Holmes said. “It’s my job as the team leader to teach. My guys get to run the robots, build the explosive charge and drive — all the fun stuff.”

The team leader also dons the bomb suit when deemed necessary. “The team leader is the first guy out of the truck and is responsible to keep them in a safe position. If we can’t do it by remote means, someone has to walk up to it. That’s my job, and it’s the only exciting part for me,” Holmes said.

## HONING THE SKILL

Though the line in the NCO Creed, “I will strive to remain technically and tactically proficient” is applicable to all NCOs, Holmes said it’s even more important for EOD NCOs to apply it

every day.

“When we aren’t responding to a call, we are training,” he said. “We have to refresh skills; we have a pretty large skill set, and they are perishable, so we are constantly training.”

EOD units practice and sharpen their skills through mock incidents.

“We put a training aid Improvised Explosive Device out and have the guys in the truck run the robot and practice using the equipment in the confined space,” Holmes said. “All my guys are pretty well-trained and are some of the smartest guys I’ve met. But we still continue to train when we can.”

To be a team leader, EOD NCOs must undergo the team leader certification process.

“It covers everything you learned through the year’s worth of school, and you have to show you are competent in those tasks and are able to direct people,” Holmes said.

For now, a sergeant first class is able to certify more junior NCOs with the battalion commander’s approval. However, the EOD branch is looking to consolidate the qualification process and certification tasks by holding quarterly team leader certification academies at several locations. The consolidation will not only further legitimize the certification process but will also allow the potential team leaders to interact and learn from each other, Stoeltje said.





Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy

Sgt. Christine Cammarota of the 731st Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company lays out ordnance to be destroyed during a combined operation with the 6th Iraqi Army Division's Bomb Disposal Company on April 11 in Baghdad, Iraq. The two units worked as partners to destroy ordnance collected to protect personnel and property.

## MISSION SET

The EOD is a branch with an unwavering mission, both in-theater and in-garrison. When deployed, EOD Soldiers augment a larger unit and support their EOD needs. When back at home station, the units rotate through a response duty cycle to support local, state and federal law enforcement, including the Secret Service and the State Department.

“It’s pretty much the same whether we are deployed or not. In the states, we support civilian law enforcement agencies with military ordnance,” Holmes said.

“We also have a mission with the Secret Service to protect — we do bomb sweeps for foreign dignitaries and anybody in the State Department. We also support the president and all the way down when requested.”

Differences between mission sets mean they have to adjust constantly. The dynamic teams have to think even further out of the box when stateside and responding to a call. The options available overseas in a deployment setting are not practical at home.

“Our best case scenario, most times, is to blow the ordnance in place. For peacetime missions, that is just not an option. So we have to train our younger guys to respond in a different way since that’s not an option in downtown San Antonio,” Stoeltje said. “There have been times we responded to munitions stuck in a tree; there’s no procedure for that, but they thought outside

the box and figured it out. That’s what it takes to be successful in EOD.”

These dynamic teams not only have to sustain their technical proficiency, but also their creativity. Complacency is an EOD Soldier’s worst enemy.

There is a saying in the EOD profession: The first time you think you know what you have before going downrange, it is time for you to get out of EOD.

Stoeltje recalls an experience early in his EOD career while stationed at Fort Sill, Okla., that reminds him to keep an impartial perspective in his line of work.

“We responded to three IEDs, and they weren’t real — they were missing something. We got a call on a fourth one and were asked to respond by the local law enforcement. It was 10 o’clock on a Friday night, we had to go out and respond to this incident, and I’m thinking, ‘It’s not real because the other three weren’t real.’ We responded, and my team leader took care of it. Once he was done, he brought me downrange and showed me that it was real. ... It was an eye-opener.

“That is what made me promise to myself that I would never think I know what we have. If I had been the team leader, I would have made a mistake, and it would have cost me my life or worse, someone else’s life.”

To contact Shejal Pulivarti, email [shejal.pulivarti@us.army.mil](mailto:shejal.pulivarti@us.army.mil).



## EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE

### DISPOSAL BADGE

Commonly known as the “crab,” the EOD Badge is awarded after successfully completing the 38-week course at the Naval School of Explosive Ordnance Disposal conducted at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. The EOD Badge is one of the only joint service badges. There are three skill levels of the badge:



**Basic** — issued upon completion of training and between 18 and 24 months of being in the career field



**Senior** — earned after 3-5 years as an EOD specialist



**Master** — awarded after 7-15 years of service in a senior supervisory position

- **The Wreath** — Symbolic of the achievements and laurels gained minimizing accident potentials through the ingenuity and devotion to duty of its members. It is in memory of those EOD personnel who gave their lives while performing EOD duties.
- **The Bomb** — Copied from the design of the World War II Bomb Disposal Badge, the bomb represents the historic and major objective of the EOD attack, the unexploded bomb. The three fins represent the major areas of nuclear, conventional, and chemical and biological interest.
- **Lightning Bolts** — Symbolize the potential destructive power of the bomb and the courage and professionalism of EOD personnel in their endeavors to reduce hazards, as well as to render explosive ordnance harmless.
- **The Shield** — Represents the EOD mission: to protect personnel and property.



Photo by Pvt. Jarrett M. Branch

Sgt. Tyler Cole, a team member with the 53rd Ordnance Company, 3rd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Battalion, heads toward simulated explosive ordnance during a team leader certification June 23, 2009, at Yakima Training Center in Yakima, Wash. This is one of the 12 lanes that the EOD techs participated in during their certification.

## NAVAL SCHOOL OF EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL TRAINING

EOD School at Eglin Air Force Base is an intense 28-week course, divided into nine divisions:

- **Core Division** — learn fundamental knowledge, explosives and explosive effects and applied physical principles
- **Air Ordnance Division** — trained on processes and procedures to deal with various aircraft explosive munitions: bombs, bomb fuses, dispensers, payloads and guided missiles
- **Demolition Division** — trained on explosive safety and techniques to destroy explosives and explosive devices
- **Underwater Ordnance Division** — learn to identify, render safe and dispose of mines, torpedoes and any other underwater devices
- **Tools and Methods Division** — learn various EOD tools and techniques to locate and render safe ordnance
- **Improvised Explosive Devices** — taught various techniques to handle improvised and clandestine explosive devices, identification and disablements of components
- **Biological/Chemical Division** — trained on knowledge and skills required to identify and deal with chemical and biological weapons and agents
- **Nuclear Ordnance Division** — studying various aspects of nuclear physics, weapon designs and effects, and proper response procedure: contamination detection, personnel protection and contamination control
- **Ground Ordnance Division** — learn processes to handle projectiles, rockets, landmines and grenades; both U.S. and foreign.



# PROTECTING THE HOMELAND





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Photos courtesy of U.S. Army North Public Affairs

**Above:** Troops and civil authorities drive through the scene of a simulated disaster during Exercise Vibrant Response 11.1 in Indiana.

**Previous pages:** Soldiers take part in a variety of training exercises coordinated by U.S. Army North.

# Army North always ready to help keep America safe

By Clifford Kyle Jones

The NCOs of U.S. Army North know their mission, but it's impossible to know when they'll be needed or exactly what they'll be called upon to do. Fortunately for citizens across the United States, they're ready for almost anything.

Army North, headquartered at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, conducts homeland defense, provides support to civil authorities and helps coordinate theater security cooperation with the United States' neighbors to its north and south. But almost every Army North NCO will tell you all that boils down to one thing: protecting the American people and their way of life.

Army North "is unique because we're doing things for our mothers, grandmothers, grandfathers, sons and daughters," said Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Henson,

who until recently was the senior enlisted advisor for Army North's Contingency Command Post, also based at Fort Sam Houston. "When we're overseas, we have a totally different focus. Overseas, it's tactical operations combat. Here, it's life-sustaining."

The CCP is essentially Army North's deployable headquarters to support civil authorities. It's one of the many lines of protection and support Army North and its higher major command, U.S. Northern Command, provide — should civilian authorities at the local, state or federal level seek assistance from the Department of Defense. Among the first lines of that support are Army North's defense coordinating elements, small teams led by an Army colonel, the defense coordinating officer.

The DCEs are the primary point of contact for federal agencies seeking Department of Defense assistance.

"The majority of the time, the lead federal agency is going to be FEMA," the Federal Emergency Management Agency, said Sgt. 1st Class Juan Hernandez, the NCO in charge for the Army North Region IX DCE, which is based in Oakland, Calif., and covers Arizona, California and Nevada. "So what Army North and NORTHCOM have done is place all the DCOs in line with FEMA, so we're all partnered with FEMA across the United States, all of us. Whenever there's a disaster, if a regional FEMA headquarters is alerted, then we're alerted. And if they deploy to a disaster area, a majority of the time we'll deploy with them to a disaster area, as well. That doesn't mean that federal troops, Title 10 troops, are going to be used; it just means that we're going to go with them so we can help anticipate any requirements that might be requested from DoD."

Title 10 is the section of the U.S. Code that outlines the role of the armed



## Working with neighboring nations

One of the ways Army North ensures that the United States stays safe is by working with our country's allies to the north and south.

Lt. Gen. Guy C. Swan III is the commanding general of Army North, and Command Sgt. Maj. David Wood, command sergeant major of Army North, said, "Swan's focus is that [North America] is not an area of responsibility, it's an area of understanding."

Army North works closely with both Canada's and Mexico's militaries.

"Canada has an army similar to ours, as in structure," said Sgt. Maj. William Smith, Army North's sergeant major for training and operations. "They have NCOs, and it pretty much mirrors ours. We have a good working relationship, and we have exchanges with officers and NCOs. It works really well with how we protect our northern border.

"Mexico, on the other hand, has a different type of military," he said. "They don't have high-ranking NCOs. The ones I've met are very professional, but when you're dealing with different countries, you're dealing with different cultures and how they do things. The different status of each — officers and enlisted.

"Many other countries — and I

believe Mexico is trying to do the same thing with us — they are trying to learn from our NCO Corps. Realistically, 86 percent of [our] Army is made up of NCOs roughly. We're actually doing everything. We can actually function without officer supervision, and generally do the right thing."

Smith recently participated in coordinating a visit for two Mexican infantry NCOs to spend two weeks with a U.S. infantry unit at Fort Bliss, Texas. The Mexican NCOs watched and mirrored the responsibilities of midlevel and senior Army NCOs at a platoon and company level. They underwent the training and preparation for a field-training exercise.

"Then in the field-training exercise, they fired our weapons, did PT tests — they did just exactly what an American NCO did for two weeks, and it was great," he said. "Now they can go back to their country and hopefully make recommendations. They were quite amazed to see the things that our NCOs were doing in El Paso and what we do daily in our NCO Corps. That's what their officers do — to inspect and make sure everything is going, whereas we [NCOs] maximize our duties to make sure the

officers have time to plan and prepare."

But the partnership works both ways.

"We're trying to do a lot of that with the Mexican military right now," Wood said. "They have their struggles, and they're dealing with some real-world events. And I keep telling them, I'm trying to learn from you guys."

As Mexico's military has struggled to combat drug cartels and maintain order in that country, Wood noted that their struggles could provide valuable lessons if the U.S. military ever had to deal with terrorist attacks or other domestic threats.

"What are some of their best practices that we can learn from based off of their laws? What we can adapt or not adapt to be able to facilitate what the national response is going to be for something like that?" he said. "So it's a sharing of information, both ways. They're asking us a lot of things about what we're doing in Iraq and Afghanistan, and what we've dealt with and some of our lessons learned, a lot of operational planning, intelligence, media, stuff that we've learned through hard knocks. They don't need to learn the same things."

forces. Active-duty and reserve troops fall under Title 10. National Guard troops are normally covered by a separate section of the code, Title 32.

DCEs and other elements of Army North are part of many disaster relief and assistance efforts — for instance, elements of Army North's CCP deployed to help FEMA prepare the northeastern states for Hurricane Irene in August. However, the Soldiers involved often don't grab the headlines, but that's by design.

Typically in the Army, "we take a situation and we take charge, and we follow it through to the objective. Not here," said Command Sgt. Maj. David Wood, Army North's command sergeant major. "Here you really have to go through the different dynamics of our country as a whole to be able to facilitate the best response possible — and not showcase yourself. You

want that civilian leadership — that first responder, that governor — to be perceived by the public as successful, because then you're successful. Then the federal government has done something of value. ... We want [the public] to understand that their lives and their livelihood are based on those first responders, and we're here to make sure they are successful."

### A different role

This mission support role, versus the mission leadership role often customary in Army units, is one of the most unusual aspects of serving in Army North. And it requires a different set of skills from Soldiers.

"I'm an infantryman by trade; that's what my [military occupational specialty] is," Hernandez said. "So growing up, the first seven or eight years of my Army life,

I was a hard-core infantryman: 'Gung ho!' 'Hooah!' Then I got selected to be a recruiter, so I kind of had to tone down, and be friendly, and become a people person and be approachable. So I did that for three years, and then I went back into the regular Army, deployed twice to Iraq, and you get back into that gung-ho mentality. Then you come out to a job like this and you kind of have to revert to what you did in previous assignments and tone things down."

That mix of experience and maturity is exactly what Army North looks for, said Sgt. Maj. Jorge Escobedo, the personnel sergeant major for Army North.

"You want to grab an individual who has been in the Army long enough and has done a diversity of jobs, so they can be able to come into the unit and be able to cope — dealing with the high senior lead-





Photos courtesy of Joint Task Force–Homeland Defense Public Affairs

Relief workers clean up after an 8.0 earthquake struck the Pacific near American Samoa in October 2009. U.S. Army North's Defense Coordinating Element Region IX and associated joint service emergency preparedness liaison officers supported the Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Pacific Command's Joint Task Force–Homeland Defense in relief efforts.

ership and with the civilians,” Escobedo said. “Especially in the [DCE] regions. . . . Those are critical because they’re going to be working by themselves, so I really take the time to screen those individuals to make sure we get the right person.”

The transition to Army North can be challenging, so Escobedo works to prepare Soldiers for what they’ll encounter.

“It’s a completely different mission than the regular Army,” he said. “So we speak to individuals and make sure that they understand that they’re going to be working with a lot of civilians and that they’re not going to be in a role where they’re going to be in charge. It’s going to be more of a supporting role. We make sure they’re going to be able to cope with that. And [for the DCEs], we make sure that they’re going to cope with working in a small group, in cell planning.”

Working with civilian agencies is only one of the unusual features of Army North’s duties. The focus on natural and manmade disasters means Soldiers have to be prepared at all times — for events that can be difficult to predict.

“You’ve got to be more flexible than the general Army,” Hernandez said. “You might go six, eight months, up to a year, without ever actually doing anything in terms of disaster response. But it’s that one time — all it takes is one flood, one tornado, one hurricane, one earthquake, any disaster like that. And you get called up and you’re expected to perform — on the spot. You’re not expected to show up and say, ‘OK, can you show me what I need to do?’ You need to be ready to execute.”

Army North Soldiers achieve that readiness through continual training and staying in constant contact with the agen-

cies with which they work.

“When I came here, it was quite eye-opening to realize how much we prepare for a disaster should the states need our help,” said Sgt. Maj. William Smith, Army North’s training and operations sergeant major. “We prepare, prepare, prepare, just in case of a catastrophic event. We’re always leaning forward.”

## Training’s importance

One of Army North’s biggest training events is its annual Vibrant Response exercise, which takes place in Indiana at the Muscatatuck Urban Training Complex, Camp Atterbury and other sites throughout the state. The exercise’s broad swath across Indiana gives Army North personnel, some of the units that can be assigned to Army North and civil authorities an opportunity to experience a training en-





vironment as near to a real-world disaster as possible. Last year's Vibrant Response included almost 4,000 personnel, and this year's, in August, had more than 6,000. In addition to Army North's staff, it included many members of units that are contingent to Army North.

"Personally, I've been to many field training exercises at both the National Training Center and at other installations across the United States," Smith said. "The training that I've experienced here in preparation for a natural disaster or a manmade disaster is probably the most first-class training I've ever seen. So near-realistic, it was like something you'd see in a movie. Like in *Independence Day*, when they just trash the city and everyone just starts to react and move. It was like that. I mean it was realistic. And the troops would come in, no notice, deploy to

these locations and start doing their jobs. Whether it was Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, fire, police — it was very, very impressive."

The CCP is heavily involved in each Vibrant Response, and Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Perez, the current command sergeant major of Army North's CCP, said, "Those exercises are like ARNORTH's Super Bowl.

"We're exercising all our systems — our life-saving capabilities, our communication, our transportation — and these guys are literally traveling all up and down the state of Indiana," Perez said. "So you're not in a training area; we have various training areas with about 30- to 50-mile gaps between them. So when we say this agency needs 20 pallets of water, then we have a support unit that is literally driving 20 pallets of water to the site where it's needed. And we're looking at a good 30 to 50 miles that they're driving up on the highway."

Henson added, "So you're looking at a joint support force, which is the main headquarters. And then you're looking at task force aviation, which requires the aerial lift. Then you're looking at task force operations, which is another total separate unit. Then you're looking at task force medical, which is life-sustaining."

As August's Vibrant Response wound down, Army North had to shift gears from training on a simulated nuclear attack to preparing for a real natural disaster when Hurricane Irene threatened the United States' East Coast. The effects of Irene were not as severe as feared, however, and the need for federal forces was light. However, the preparation work, planning and communication involved in bracing for the hurricane illustrated how ready Army North's units are whenever they are needed.

## Communication

While Vibrant Response is Army North's largest training exercise, preparation and planning are continual throughout Army North units. Much of that training focuses on the interactions among Army North and its elements, and the numerous civil agencies Army North deals with.

"That's a big part of training: communication, communication, communication," Perez said. "Because you can just imagine the distance, and you can take

some of the events that we support here: We're not going to be within 10 miles of each other; we're not going to be within 50 miles of each other; sometimes we'll probably be up to 100 miles from each other. And then you look at the area of all these elements, and we say we're command and controlling them, so you can just imagine the challenges we have. So if there's anything we can fix, it's those processes there and our communication systems, working back."

The processes — converting a civilian request into operational orders — are one aspect of that training. But even the technology and equipment used to interact can create difficulties when dealing with civil authorities.

"Keep in mind, we have systems in the Army that are secure. But we're working closely with federal agencies and civilians, and they don't have those secure assets. They don't have our type of equipment," Perez said. "So we have to deconflict a lot of those systems so we are talking to each other. It's the same thing with our downtrace units. All they work with is military-style equipment, so we are the pivot point, the link between civilians and our military forces. We don't want them to change their systems, but we have to find a way that we're all talking. And it's a big challenge."

Command Sgt. Maj. Eddie Fields, command sergeant major of Army North's Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, said, "We have to be able to talk to a first responder, local police, on our radio — versus me talking on a secure radio between one tactical unit and another tactical unit."

But communicating is more than just operating equipment, Fields noted. There's another important element addressed when training on Army North's communication equipment, he said: "Your writing capability."

"We as noncommissioned officers, we have to be careful how we write," Fields said. "We require our noncommissioned officers to know how to write here. In other words, how to express yourself and how do you sell the organization when you're going out here explaining what's going on on your storyboard — because our storyboards have a tendency to go all the way up to a four-star level. So you've





Photo by Sgt. Nazly Confesor

Marine Lance Cpl. Hans Hetrick, assigned to the Chemical Biological Incident Response Force from Indian Head, Md., conducts gamma radiation detection training using Point Detection Radiation 77 equipment on simulated contaminated citizens. The training was conducted during Vibrant Response 11.1, a large-scale multi-agency training exercise held in March in central Indiana.

got to be particular and understand what you're writing and understand the plan and understand the mission and understand the situation or area that you're working in."

### **Tsunami response**

Communicating and coordinating efforts were critical in one of Army North's biggest recent operations, the repatriation of thousands of Department of Defense employees and their families after an earthquake shook Japan in March. An ensuing tsunami battered the island nation, nearly creating a nuclear disaster when it damaged a nuclear power plant.

Several of the regional DCEs played important roles when the families arrived at U.S. airports. Region X, headquartered in Seattle, was the first to be notified, Hernandez said, and that team was able to establish

the equivalent of an in-processing center at the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

"Here in Region IX, we were alerted almost at the same time that Region X was. But it was a toss-up where we were going to go," he said.

At first, Hernandez said, his team expected to go to Los Angeles International Airport. Then that changed to San Francisco International Airport. Finally, it was decided the Region IX DCE would welcome citizens back to the United States at Travis Air Force Base, Calif. — "which for us ended up being awesome," he said, "because it took a lot of the burden off us as a DCE in Region IX, because we already had flights coming when we were told to go to Travis, and we had no time to get anything set up."

Fortunately, Travis already had a plan

in place to evacuate Air Force personnel from overseas, so the DCE and Travis personnel were able to set up an in-processing center almost immediately. And although it's an Air Force base, Travis has many of the same amenities as a commercial airport — security, check-in counters, baggage claim and a waiting area.

"Flights came in, and we worked there with the Travis command to pretty much track everyone coming in; over 3,000 people ended up coming through Travis alone," Hernandez said. "It was a completely different role than the DCE was expected to do. It was more of a command and control role, which is totally the opposite of what we're supposed to do. But it got us to work in a different environment and see what else we're capable of doing — this nine-person team that



we have — what we're actually capable of doing. We can do more than just assist with disasters. We can turn around and do things like this. It was a good experience, in terms of we're so focused on working with the states and working with our federal partners, and here we were able to help our own, our DoD family. And we were able to do it at a moment's notice."

NORTHCOM, which is headquartered in Colorado Springs, Colo., was created in response to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks to help protect the homeland, said NORTHCOM's previous senior enlisted advisor, Air Force Chief Master Sgt. W. Allen Usry. "And its maturation was caused by Katrina," he said. The federal response to the hurricane in New Orleans showed the many things that can go wrong in disaster relief. But Army North's and others' handling of the repatriation effort from Japan illustrates how far federal efforts have progressed when it comes to helping its citizens.

"I'll tell you, a lot of Americans leaned forward; a lot of USO leaned forward," Wood said. "And again, it's bringing all those entities together to make a success. A family gets off an 11- to 12-hour flight, and they land and they've got these screaming kids. All of a sudden there's a playroom set up by family members, the [family readiness groups]. The USO's there and providing child care, and the people are being processed through.

"All those things happened in our major city airports. And the airports themselves bent over backward to facilitate that kind of stuff. Just getting in there, setting up what we have as far as processing and accountability and ensuring onward movement of the family members, yeah, that's a small portion. But a bigger portion of that is what did that family feel like? Were they just a number? Or were they a family?"

"I think we did a very good job as a whole — the United States — of being able to facilitate that type of environment where families actually were relieved that not only were they being onward moved and they were getting help, but they had the child care, the babysitting, the nurturing room, all that little stuff that people often don't think about." 📷

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U.S. Marine Corps photo by Gunnery Sgt. Jim Goodwin

A public affairs NCOIC responds to questions during a U.S. Northern Command's Joint Task Force—Civil Support forum in January at Fort Monroe, Va., facilitated by U.S. Army North to rehearse the Department of Defense mission of support to civil authorities.

## What all NCOs need to know about operating in the homeland

Several Army North NCOs said one of the biggest transitions to their duty defending the homeland was learning about all the rules that govern the use of the armed forces within the United States — and those are lessons that all NCOs should know, said Command Sgt. Maj. David Wood, command sergeant major of Army North.

"I'd ask the NCOs outside of Army North to start understanding the dynamics of our country — political, social, economic, not just the military — understanding those kinds of different dynamics within our own country to better understand their role," he said. "Army North is a great place to get a lot of face time with that type of environment. But I'll tell you I did not know anything about defense support to our homeland at all before I got here, and it was a struggle trying to catch up and understand."

He said he had to learn how to facilitate first responders and state and national authorities within the United States' legal framework. Some of the laws and regulations covering the actions of Army North:

**POSSE COMITATUS ACT:** The act was passed after the Reconstruction period following the Civil War. It limits the powers of the federal government to use Title 10 military forces for law enforcement.

**STAFFORD ACT:** Authorizes various forms of federal assistance to state and local governments, certain nonprofit organizations, and individuals and households in the event of a presidentially declared emergency or disaster. Since its enactment in 1988, the act has been significantly revised by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006. The amendments strengthened FEMA's capacity to support hazard mitigation and emergency response.

**DEFENSE SUPPORT OF CIVIL AUTHORITIES:** The process by which U.S. military assets and personnel can be used to assist in missions normally carried out by civil authorities. These missions include responses to natural and manmade disasters, law enforcement support, special events, and other domestic activities.



# NCO Stories

*A selection of Valor*



## *The foundation of his sacrifice*

By Sgt. Kandi Huggins  
1st HBCT, 1st Infantry Div.

It's never easy to hear news of a fallen comrade.

"All I could do was stand there," said Spc. Rodolfo Moreno, recalling how he heard the news his brother-in-law and close friend, Sgt. Israel Devora-Garcia, was killed in Baghdad while supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Maybe it's different being in the military and being around family and friends when we hear something like that, because we try to be a little stronger. But I know inside I was hurting badly," Moreno said. "I'll never forget that day. I got the call from a friend late at night on April Fool's Day, but of course, nobody jokes around like that."

That was six years ago



Photo by Staff Sgt. Robert DeDeaux

Spc. Rodolfo Moreno, a finance specialist with the 4th Financial Management Company, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, repaints the name of his brother-in-law, Sgt. Israel Devora-Garcia, Aug. 6, on the Warrior Memorial Wall at Contingency Operating Site Warrior, Iraq.



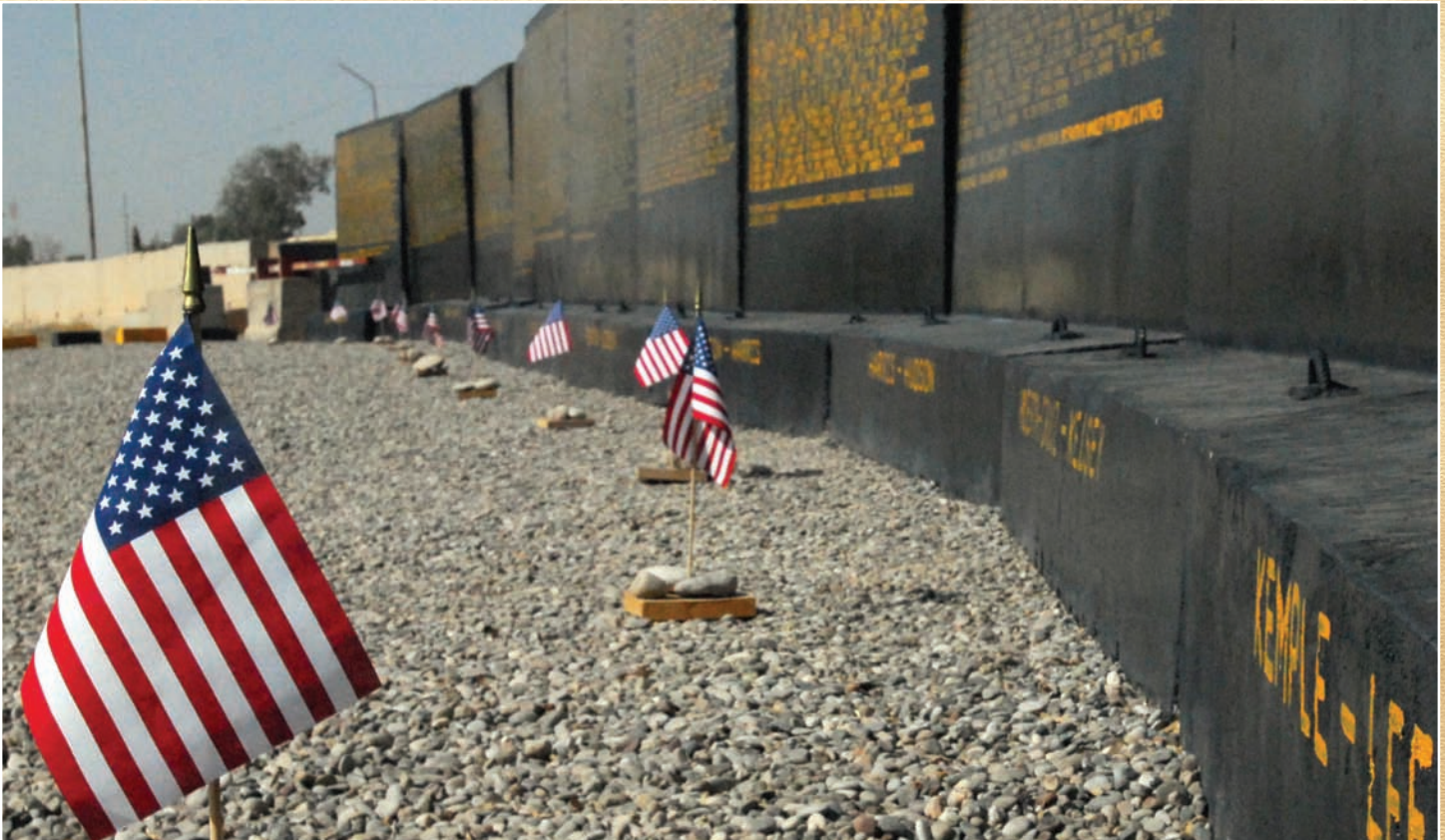


Photo by Spc. Jessica Luhrs-Stabile

On Sept. 11, 2010, a 280-foot wall was dedicated to over 4,000 fallen American warriors who had lost their lives in Iraq.

when Moreno, now a finance clerk with 4th Financial Management Company, 1st Advise and Assist Task Force, 1st Infantry Division, received the news about Devora-Garcia.

Moreno deployed a year later to Iraq and felt it was his duty to serve and find a way to give back to the community in memory of Soldiers who sacrificed their lives while deployed.

“After he passed, I felt more obligated to be here and be with him because this is where he is now,” Moreno said.

Now on his second deployment to Iraq, Moreno had the opportunity to remember Devora-Garcia and other fallen heroes. He volunteered to help Spc. Faith Bedwell, a chaplain assistant with 1st Special Troops Battalion, 1st AATF, and other service members touch up the names of fallen Soldiers painted on the Warrior Memorial Wall at Contingency Operating Site Warrior. The names, which have faded over the years, now include those who have given their lives in support of Operation New Dawn.

“When the decision was made to move the memorial wall to the center of COS Warrior, I felt it was our duty as fellow Soldiers to ensure the wall was complete by adding the names of those fallen during Operation New Dawn,” Bedwell said.

When Bedwell asked for volunteers, Moreno was enthusiastic and passionate about helping to honor his brother-in-law.

“Unless you’ve been in that position where you’ve lost someone on the wall, people don’t really understand the sacrifices,” he continued. “And for [the wall] to be there, it helps them understand. It makes you stop and think ‘that could’ve been me or that could’ve been my battle buddy.’”

A lot of time and effort went into painting the wall, and

Bedwell said it was their duty to not let the work go to waste.

“We are now able to hand over responsibility and bring closure to this war because of them, our fellow brothers and sisters,” Bedwell added. “If you take a look around, you will see the aftermath of the fights here, and around this area, and acknowledge that these guys were in the fight since OIF.”

Moreno also remembers Devora-Garcia, who was a scout with the 1st Armored Division, by giving back to his community through a foundation in honor of Devora-Garcia and other local fallen heroes.

Moreno said the foundation does a lot of charity events in raising money for kids to go to school and sponsoring meals around the holidays.

“People need some help every now and then,” he said.

Moreno said Devora-Garcia’s sacrifice brought a lot of patriotism to their hometown of Clint, Texas.

“We were from a small town, a farming community,” Moreno said. “We have veterans, but when Devora-Garcia [passed], we started getting more attention, military-wise, and people opened their eyes more in supporting troops.”

He said his community became more open-minded to what Soldiers were doing in combat zones, being away from their families, and taking their patriotism and commitment to their country to the next level.

“I’m proud of what I do and of his sacrifice. And not a day goes by where I don’t think about him,” Moreno said. “I just want people to know we’re still here and some of our comrades are going to be here forever because this is where they gave their lives.”



# Rangers receive medals for combat valor

By Rick Wood  
Northwest Guardian

Valor and sacrifice were recognized during a combat awards ceremony June 10 for members of the 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

The rain broke just as the Rangers lined up in formation to honor 21 of their own.

Chaplain Maj. David Curlin started the ceremony by reflecting on courage and service.

“As we commend the courage and valor of these men and acknowledge the spirit of selflessness in each heroic deed, we pray that selflessness and courageous spirit these men have manifested will characterize our own lives on and off the battlefield,” Curlin said.

Col. Mark Odom, the battalion commander, said the actions of the Rangers being recognized defined valor.

“The frequency of our deployments and the length of our nation’s wars has sadly relegated these heroic actions to commonplace — exceptional service to standard,” Odom said. “The actions of our Rangers in combat are neither common nor simply the standard.”

Defining valor means knowing the difference between acts of self-preservation and true heroism, he said.

“The [actions] we recognize today are conscious ones and uniquely counterintuitive,” Odom said.

Odom pointed to the example of Staff Sgt. Austin McCall, who despite being wounded and facing continuous insurgent threat, led his team forward into the face of battle and successfully completed the mission.

“The natural reaction is to seek cover,” Odom said. “His actions allowed the rest of his squad to enter the compound safely.”

During the battle, fragments from a grenade went through McCall’s face, Odom said.

“However, McCall continued to clear the compound,” he said.

Wanting to rejoin his team after being evacuated for medical treatment, McCall returned to duty in Afghanistan, approximately one month after being wounded, Odom said.

“That is amazing,” Odom said.

For his actions, McCall received a Bronze Star Medal with “V” device for valor and a Purple Heart for being wounded.

“It means a lot more to me than I could ever talk about. But what really means the most is that I’m a Ranger, and my fellow Rangers are living with me in that compound and doing the things they do and living the Ranger Creed,” McCall said.

McCall is still recovering from his wounds and faces reconstructive surgery on his shattered jaw.

However, if duty calls, he is ready to serve again, he said.

“It’s an honor to serve my country,” McCall said.

McCall was one of two Rangers awarded the Bronze Star Medal for valor during the ceremony. Twelve more Rangers received Bronze Stars for meritorious service. Four Rangers [including McCall] received Purple Hearts.

Six Soldiers received Army Commendation Medals with “V” device for valor, and three received the Order of Saint Maurice, awarded by the National Infantry Association and the Chief of Infantry for outstanding contribution to the infantry.



Photo by Ingrid Barrentine, Northwest Guardian

Staff Sgt. Austin McCall received the Bronze Star Medal with “V” device for valor and the Purple Heart during a combat awards ceremony June 10. McCall and 23 Rangers from the 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, were recognized for their combat actions. Among the awards presented were the Bronze Star Medals and Army Commendation Medals for valor, Purple Hearts and Bronze Star Medals for service.





# Alaska paratrooper earns award for heroism

By Staff Sgt. Matthew E. Winstead  
4th BCT, 25th Infantry Division

Members of the 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25th Infantry Division, honored one of their own March 10 during a ceremony at their battalion headquarters on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, for actions on the battlefield during one of the unit's deployments to Afghanistan.

Staff Sgt. Jacob Bobo, currently serving as the weapons squad leader for 3rd Platoon, A Company, was awarded the Army Commendation Medal with "V" device for valor by his battalion commander as Bobo stood beside his wife, Kerri.

Lt. Col. Shawn Daniel, 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment commander, pinned Bobo, noting that the award recognized the NCO's selfless actions making sure his team was moved to safety before himself.

"I personally feel that most awards represent the actions of the men under you that make you look good. But an award with valor is all about you and what you have done for those men," Daniel said.

During a tactical check point in August 2010 in Afghanistan, Bobo held a position overwatching his fellow paratroopers when an enemy rocket-propelled-grenade and small-arms attack came from the south of his position.

"The enemy was solely focused on the TCP itself. They hadn't seen me or my men yet since we were up on the ridge," Bobo said. "I got maybe one or two rounds off with the 60mm mortar tube I had with us before they shifted their fire and were targeting us, too."

Exposed on the side of the ridge facing the enemy, Bobo was in an excellent position to attack the enemy but not to defend against attacks. He led his team back to the opposite side of the ridge to use terrain as cover.

"I got my mortar team and moved them back first. My forward observer and



Photo by Staff Sgt. Matthew E. Winstead

Staff Sgt. Jacob Bobo recounts details of the event for which he was awarded the Army Commendation Medal with "V" device for valor to Lt. Col. Shawn Daniel, 3rd Battalion, 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, commander.

I were the last to fall back behind the ridge on the opposing military crest after the other guys had moved," Bobo said.

The movement to cover wasn't without its own hazards, as enemy rocket-propelled grenades were getting closer to hitting their targets.

"Just before we fell back, there was this one RPG that hit so close to me and my [forward observer] that I thought we were dead," Bobo said, recalling the magnitude of the concussive blast. "When I looked up and saw that we were both

still alive, I knew that it was time for us to move."

After the entire team was behind cover and able to safely engage the enemy with well-aimed shots, Bobo's forward observer was able to call in 120mm mortar rounds on the enemy location, effectively ending the attack.

"When the 120s landed, they hit both the enemy location itself as well as the most likely path an enemy retreat would take," Bobo said. "We weren't being shot at anymore after that."





# Rising to the CHALLENGE

MP WARFIGHTER COMPETITION 2011

By Melissa Buckley  
Fort Leonard Wood Guidon

**M**ore than 100 Soldiers signed up for the challenge of the Military Police Warfighter Competition, but after 11 daunting events spread across 65 grueling miles on foot, three Soldiers proved their superiority.

The winning team, from the 93rd Military Police Battalion at Fort Bliss, Texas is: Sgt. Dennis Jones, Spc. James Bagby and Spc. Christopher Tees.

“True hard work really does pay off,” Bagby said. “We have a good team with a strong heart.”

Jones contributes winning to chemistry.

“If you don’t get a team that works well together, it doesn’t matter,” Jones said.

This was the third year in a row Sgt. 1st Class Shon Dodson has served as the noncommissioned officer in charge of the

competition.

“Every year we have different routes,” Dodson said. “We never stay the same.”

Dodson said the events are designed to challenge Soldiers on specific military police knowledge.

“They get tested from everything they learned on day one as a private to the knowledge they have now,” Dodson said, “They have to be the best of the best, not just out of the company, but from their battalion, and represent their unit. They are coming from different military occupational specialties. They have to put all of their experience together.”

Dodson said all of the competitors are elite because, “just to be on a team is a remarkable feat.”

The challenges are designed to push Soldiers past their mental and physical breaking points.

Bagby said staying motivated during the extensive ruck march was the hardest thing for him and his teammates, who

trained for months for the competition.

“You can’t come here and half step it. I know teams that come here that have trained for six months or longer to get here,” Dodson said.

Command Sgt. Maj. Charles Kirkland, regimental command sergeant major, agreed.

“They have to be well-rounded; they are physically fit and smart,” Kirkland said. “Every event is designed to be almost impossible to achieve 100 percent. We don’t want to identify the average Soldiers — we want the best.”

Kirkland and other command leaders were present for each challenge the warfighters were faced with.

“These warfighter teams have put in so much time and energy to prepare for this. Out of respect for them, I need to be here to experience this with them,” Kirkland said. “I am so proud. They are pretty amazing; they put their heart and soul into this.”



The Soldiers who competed in the competition are the future of the Military Police Corps, Kirkland said.

“You prove to us daily that our regiment is in good shape. I am not concerned; there is somebody here who is going to fill my shoes,” he said to the competitors. “You will do great things. You are seasoned. You have more experience than I did at your age.”

Brig. Gen. Mark Inch, the Military Police Regiment chief and U.S. Army Military Police School commandant, felt the same way.

“I am amazed at what I have watched over the last few days. I, at my best, don’t think I could have done it,” Inch said.

Inch told all of the warfighters they have a lot of courage for competing.

“You took on a challenge that most of your peers chose not to do,” Inch said.

Kirkland said the competition is always evolving, and so are the MPs who take on the MP Warfighter challenge.

“We continue to raise the bar, and they continue to rise to meet it,” Kirkland said. “It’s a great event to showcase our best to the rest of the Army.”

Thinking about his fellow Soldiers got Jones through the hardest portions of the competition.

“We are trying to inspire our Soldiers,” Jones said.

The winning team is excited to return to Fort Bliss.

“I can’t wait to get home and work with the other Soldiers again,” Bagby said.



Photo by Melissa Buckley

The winning team, Spc. James Bagby, Sgt. Dennis Jones and Spc. Christopher Tees, takes the lead during the endurance march, the final event.

**Left:** Spc. Ernest Trujillo drags a dummy casualty to safety during the 2011 MP Warfighter Competition Sept. 18–21 at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. Trujillo is a member of the Joint Base Elmendorf, Alaska, team.

**Background:** From the top of a 35-foot tower, Soldiers rappel immediately after firing weapons during the reflexive fire event.

Photos by Michael Tolzmann





# THE 21ST CENTURY SQUAD

*Human and tech dimensions key to providing overmatch capability*

By Rob McIlvaine  
Army News Service

**T**he Army is working to provide the infantry squad an overmatch capability through network improvements and immersive training.

Maj. Gen. Robert B. Brown, commanding general of the U.S. Army Maneuver Center of Excellence and Fort Benning, Ga., said Oct. 11 at the 2011 AUSA Annual Meeting and Exposition in Washington, D.C., that the Army is focusing on bringing the nine-man squad into the 21st century.

The overmatch capability will not be achieved only through improvements in technology, but also through training and leader development, Brown said. The goal is to improve lethality, survivability, power energy and mobility.

“We really started looking at the tactical small unit, based on what’s happened over the last 10 years, and we said, where is the fight too fair? Where do we not have overwhelming ability to overmatch our enemies,” Brown said.

The enemy, he said, is looking at where they have the fairest fight and their best opportunity, and it’s at the squad level, Brown said. It’s the lowest level that causes the biggest challenges, he said.

“Gen. Martin Dempsey (then Army chief of staff) saw the force about six or seven months ago and said, let’s start at the very pointiest end of the spear, let’s look at where the need is the greatest, so let’s turn the system on its end and look bottom up,” he said.

The dismounted squad is the foundation of the decisive force, Brown stressed. Its nine-man team is the centerpiece of the tactical fight despite the fact the squad is the only level where there is no appreciable overmatch capability to the current threat.

“But what is the measure of effectiveness for that formation

of the squad? A lot of folks came in thinking it would be a lot of items given to the squad, but what we found was it’s really not items, it’s the human dimension: leader development, training, simulations for the small unit,” Brown said.

## HUMAN DIMENSION

The human dimension has become even more important today.

In World War II, he said, Soldiers relied on maps and radios, but they still had a lack of situational awareness. Nearly 70 years later, the Soldier still relies on maps and radios and still has a lack of situational awareness.

“The Soldier needs to be networked, mobile, linked digitally and have knowledge of the environments.

“Almost 70 years after World War II, we still don’t have dismounts in the network. And the enemy strategy, of course, is to bleed us by a thousand cuts. And they know that they can have a fair fight against that squad, hiding in among the populace,” he said.

It’s difficult to keep squads fully manned, Brown said. Injuries — combat and noncombat — illness and other effects accumulate over time. Because of the importance of the squad’s effectiveness to overall mission success and the thin margin for loss, careful consideration must be given to the human dimension.

## MISSION COMMAND

“We say that mission command is clearly the way to go, it’s fantastic. Well, how do you get mission command? Through trust,” Brown said.

Trust, he said, is achieved through empowerment.

“But you’re just not going to empower somebody if you don’t know them well. You’re going to give them their left and





Photo by Kristian Ogden

right limit and you've got to see them, over and over again, in an immersive environment where they're facing the same challenges they'll face."

Some of that can be done in live fire, he said, and some of that has to be done in small-unit simulation, where they can be immersed in an environment and have the complexities that exist today in a contemporary operating environment.

"The other aspect is ... the squad can't be dominant everywhere. You have to be realistic. You know you're not going to be dominant in open terrain against armored forces; that doesn't make sense. But dominate at a given time and place, and as we've seen, that's mostly in cities, tough terrain, where the squad is required."

### PROACTIVE, REACTIVE

An important point, Brown said, is establishing favorable conditions while retaining the squad's ability to react. The squad should be more proactive, less reactive.

"Right now, when we go to do a precision mission, we're in pretty good shape," Brown said. "But when we're out there on patrol and we're moving not to a precision-type mission, 75 to 80 percent of the time, we're reacting to the enemy. We can do better than that.

"You'll never get to 100 percent and nobody's trying to attain that, but wouldn't it be better if only 30 percent of the time we were reactive, instead of 80 percent of the time?" he said. "You

can't be as fast as the enemy unless you have empowerment, and you can't get there unless you have mission command and that trust with the lower echelons.

"Another absolutely critical point: We have not had in the dismounted force the immersive trainers," he said. "Originally, there was supposed to be, like with the close-combat, tactical trainer, a dismounted portion of it, but it never materialized. We have that now coming where you can immerse in an environment and push the squad over and over again, ramp it up for someone who's doing very well and bring the scenario complexities down for someone who's struggling a little bit. This is so critical."

### FUTURE SQUAD PRIORITIES

Power and energy will be crucial, Brown said.

"You know, the average platoon on a 72-hour mission carries about 415 pounds of batteries — 11 different types. As Gen. Dempsey has said, you can follow a platoon by the trail of batteries. We've got to do better than that. Soon, we'll have embedded batteries and power into existing uniforms and equipment," Brown said.

Advantages that the squad is striving for include:

- ▶ **Network:** Eventually, the squad will have reachback to support weapons platforms.
- ▶ **Mobility:** Light-weight ammunition, portable mine-clearing, portable robotics.
- ▶ **Lethality:** Connectivity to all supporting platforms, lethal-



to-nonlethal conversion, sensor-to-shooter linkage and pass targets.

- **Force protection:** Lightweight body armor, bio-monitoring and reporting capability, combat ID.
- **Human dimension:** Embedded training capability and avatar linked to simulation performance.

## NEW METHODS OF TRAINING

The human dimension has drawn the most interest wherever the Army has conducted briefings.

“The 21st century Soldier competencies, which are cognitive, physical, social-cultural and moral-ethical, are outlined in the Army Learning Concept 2015. And we’re trying to look at how to determine the human capacity and limits within those competencies,” said Command Sgt. Maj. James Hardy, the command sergeant major of the Maneuver Center of Excellence.

Hardy said the squad has not changed over time, but what is expected of the squad has changed significantly.

“One of the things that has come about is Advanced Situational Awareness Training. Over the next 12 months, we’ll run

mance Resilience Enhancement Program. This is about leveraging the emerging cognitive enhancement to get at the human dimension — look at goal setting, imaging management, coaching, focus,” he said.

## DIGITAL COMFORT

“Soldiers come in the Army today with a digital comfort,” Brown said. “They’re digital natives. And we actually take them out of their comfort zone when we take their cell phones away and we put them out there.”

They get a comfort from being connected digitally, he said. If they can text, if they can communicate, they can spread apart and do more of the digital comfort aspect.

“It’s pretty powerful. [With avatars,] we have taken Soldiers out of the network to a certain degree. And you know we have kids who like to play games. We have Soldiers who play games, so they want their avatar to be a superhero,” he said, smiling.

In real life, he said, Soldiers know they aren’t superheroes.

“But we’ll issue an avatar to a Soldier when they graduate their Initial Military Training, and it’s kind of like their digital leader’s book that goes with them. It’s tied to their physical performance and their psychological and leadership styles,” Hardy said.

It’s also tied to the digital training management system and the Army Career Tracker.

“As you conduct a PT test, as you conduct your weapons qualification, as you complete a specific course that further develops you, all that stuff goes in there. And as you build your personal strength, you’re building the strength of your avatar.

“So, if you can shoot expert in real life, your avatar will be an expert. If you scored a 300 on your PT test, so will your avatar, but if you’re overweight and you can’t pass a PT test, that’s what your avatar will be,” Hardy said.

The Army’s goal is to develop capabilities that provide squads with combat overmatch.

The squad operates in a three-tiered environment that applies to all operations.

Tier 1 squads conduct dismounted operations in restrictive terrain with great risk acceptance. Tier 2 squads operate with armored, mechanized or wheeled forces, and Tier 3 squads are characterized by a well-established presence with contractor support.

An important goal of the squad-as-a-system concept is transitioning from each tier to the next — up and down — with minimal disruption or loss of capability.

“To ensure these capabilities are carried into the future, the Army must develop a holistic approach to small-unit development that considers training, equipping and networking in light of the squad’s contribution to the overall mission, treating it as a system rather than a collection of individuals,” Brown said.



Photo by Megan Locke

Sgt. Weston Williams of the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade trains in the UH-60 Black Hawk gunner’s seat Oct. 3 at the Nonrated Crew Member Manned Module. The simulator recently opened at Fort Campbell, Ky., providing aviation Soldiers there the opportunity for the first time to train as gunners and practice sling load and hoist operations, all without leaving the ground.

a pilot at the Maneuver Center, and we’re going to incorporate the ASAT training into the Noncommissioned Officer Education System courses, the Captain Career Course, the Reconnaissance-Surveillance Leaders Course, the Army Reconnaissance Course, the Sniper Course and a couple of others,” Hardy said.

To ensure Soldiers are physically and mentally resilient, they will follow the tenets of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program.

“Some have heard of the Army Center for Enhanced Performance, which started up at West Point. We pulled that down to Fort Benning to start the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Perfor-



# NCO's 'house calls' fix radars and save lives in remote reaches of Afghanistan

By Spc. John A. Martinez  
Task Force Centaur →

When a radar dish malfunctioned Sept. 15 near Combat Outpost Chamkani, a small outpost located in a remote, mountainous region of Afghanistan's Khost province near the Pakistan border, a repair team was summoned for the risky task of crossing a mountain in a hostile environment to replace it.

Within an hour, the team diagnosed the system, replaced the radar and was ready to move on to the next mission.

Sgt. 1st Class Christopher B. Sutton, a fire finder radar operator with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, Task Force Centaur, led the team.

Sutton, a 14-year Army veteran, works with intricate computer systems known as lightweight counter mortar radar. The main function of the system is to detect incoming mortars and identify their firing locations.

"I love this job and everything that comes with it," he said. "This job saves lives."

Part of that job is making sure the system is in good working order, he said.

"The LCMR is a tool well-suited for the fight coalition forces are currently engaged in with insurgents," said Spc. Magella Correa, one of Sutton's team members. "Because of the LCMR's ability to detect and designate where enemy mortars are fired, we are able to find and counter-fire on the insurgent that attacked us."

Sutton said he started his career primarily to "see the world through a secured job."

As he matured, so did his desire to care for his growing family, which now consists of his wife, Tiffany; son, Christopher; and daughter, Icic.

Working long hours and being constantly on the move isn't easy. For Sutton, however, his family plays a large part in why he does this job.

"It's hard to be away from them. But they understand this is my job," he explained. "This is what I do to take care of them, as well as the nation as a whole."

Since Sutton's team, based out of Forward Operating Base Salerno, is in constant demand, it is never in one spot for long. "I'm based at FOB Salerno, but I don't live there. I visit," Sutton quipped. "Wherever they need us, we go."

Most of Sutton's time is spent making the journey to a number of different combat outposts, he said. The team is constantly on the move and gets warm welcomes at several of the more



Photo by Spc. John A. Martinez

Sgt. 1st Class Christopher B. Sutton adjusts a lightweight counter mortar radar system Sept. 15 at Combat Outpost Chamkani in the Khost province of Afghanistan.

remote outposts, such as Chamkani.

"It's a great honor to know you are recognized for doing good work," he said.

Being a fire finder radar operator isn't easy. It requires its technicians to be highly knowledgeable about the equipment to be able to troubleshoot the dish, Sutton said.

"As with most jobs, skills are perishable," he explained. Sutton said his team stays sharp by staying busy.

"Most Soldiers get their training through classes and reading," he said. "We get ours through actual hands-on experience, and in most cases, while under duress."

Sutton said leading his team and being a Soldier isn't a 9-to-5 job. "It's more than wearing a uniform," he said. "It's about sacrifice, hard work and doing everything you can to wear the uniform with pride. To me, every Soldier's job is an important one."

Sutton credits his family with inspiring him to do what needs to be done regardless of how tired he may be or how dangerous the task.

"My family looks at me as their hero, so I work hard on being that person for them," Sutton said. "My son told me, 'Dad, you're my hero,' and because of his words, I do everything I can to do things better than before, because I don't want to ever let my family down."



# Army Field Band staff sergeant wins Emmy for work as highlight producer

By Lisa R. Rhodes  
Fort Meade Soundoff

The gold and black Emmy statue arrived in July in a black box. Since then, Staff Sgt. Jared Morgan's supervisor and several of his colleagues at the U.S. Army Field Band have been quite impressed. But he remains humble.

"I never really told anybody," said Morgan, 31, the organization's media producer. "Everybody here is very educated and established in their own right. [The Emmy] helps me blend in."

The 32nd Annual Sports Emmy Awards were presented May 2 in New York City. Morgan was among the more than 150 nominees in 33 categories, including outstanding live sports special, live series, sports documentary, studio show, promotional announcements, play-by-play personality and studio analyst.

Morgan, who did not attend the awards presentation, won in the "Outstanding Studio Show Daily" category for his work as a highlight producer for the Major League Baseball Network, a cable television network. Morgan was one of several highlight producers recognized for their contributions to a season of *MLB Tonight*, a daily sports show that features one-minute recaps of baseball events.

"I'm extremely impressed and glad we hired him," said Master Sgt. Scott Vincent, the Army Field Band's production manager and Morgan's supervisor. "It has really enhanced our public image to have someone with such in-depth industry knowledge."

Morgan worked at the MLB Network for about a year before joining the Army Field Band in October 2010. He learned about his win in June, when he visited the Facebook pages of several of his former MLB Network colleagues who were sharing congratulatory notes. A colleague sent Morgan the list of winners, and he saw his name.

"It is cool. I sent the list to my mother," Morgan said. "[The Emmy statue is] a nice thing to have in my office. It's great to have it."

As the Army Field Band's media producer, Morgan is responsible for creating

the organization's visual content for the Internet, as well as music videos, DVDs and short television promos. He also films many of the Army Field Band's live concerts.

Morgan joined the New Jersey Army National Guard in 1997 during his junior year in high school. He was then assigned to the New Jersey Army National Guard's 63rd Army Band, where he played the French horn.

Morgan graduated in 2002 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in broadcasting from Montclair State University in New Jersey and landed a job as a television editor at CBS Sports the following year. He also worked as an audio technician for the U.S. Army Soldier Show before being hired at the MLB Network.

Vincent said with Morgan's expertise in broadcast media, the Army Field Band is "branching out into a whole new realm and reaching a whole new demographic" — particularly young music enthusiasts.

In preparation for the holiday season, Morgan just completed shooting an Army Field Band Christmas music video that will be broadcast on the Pentagon Channel.



Photo by Jonathan Agee

Staff Sgt. Jared Morgan, a media producer for the U.S. Army Field Band, won an Emmy in May for his contributions in 2010 as a highlight producer for the Major League Baseball Network. In his current position, Morgan creates visual content for the Internet, music videos and short television promos.



# Togolese journalist returns to Africa as a U.S. civil affairs Soldier

By Senior Airman Jarad A. Denton  
Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa →

During a recent civil affairs mission through Djibouti, Cpl. Kwami Koto, the information manager for Civil Affairs Team 4902 at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, was able to articulate his connection to the African continent and its people.

“You see those kids playing soccer barefoot?” he asked his team chief as their vehicle passed by children running around on a dirt field. “That used to be me.”

Koto, a resident of Denton, Texas, was born in Togo, a nation in West Africa. In the wake of a military coup d’etat and cultural turmoil nearly 10 years ago, he and his wife fled their homeland as political refugees and sought asylum in the United States.

“Human rights in Togo were being systematically violated,” he said. “As a journalist, I started writing about it, denouncing the military regime’s abuses.”

Koto and his family began to receive death threats. He weighed his options carefully: Stay in Togo and likely be killed while reporting on the unfolding situation, or flee to America.

“I chose the latter,” he said.

After coming to the United States, Koto went to work as a program manager for a marketing company. He attended graduate school in his free time, earning his master’s degree in journalism in the spring of 2005. Four years ago, Koto decided to demonstrate his pride for his adoptive country and enlisted in the Army Reserve.

“It is a pride not only for myself, but for my family — my parents and my entire hometown back in Togo,” he said. “They are all proud to have a son who serves in the most prestigious, and by far the best, Army in the world.”

Army Reserve officials decided Koto was best suited to build relationships with villages and government leaders throughout the Horn of Africa. To him, the journey has been an astonishing one.

“Thirty-five years ago, I was playing here as a kid — kicking an orange because we couldn’t afford a soccer ball,” he said as a proud smile grew on his face. “Now I wear the uniform of a U.S. Army Soldier. I never could have imagined it years ago. It’s indescribable, the feeling I get when I travel to African villages and help bring about change.”

As an Army civil affairs Soldier, Koto said returning to Africa has been a life-changing event for him.

“I had seen Americans before, when I was in Togo,” he said. “I learned English from a Peace Corps teacher. I never forgot those lessons or the interactions I had with the Americans. I



Photo by Senior Airman Jarad A. Denton

Cpl. Kwami Koto, a native of Togo, uses his experiences to engage with the people of Djibouti while serving as a civil affairs team member with Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa.

make sure to treat the people I meet now the way I want them to remember me.”

Civil affairs Soldiers assess and engage local leaders at both the village and government levels. They build relationships with the people through a spirit of cooperation facilitated by African leaders.

Capt. Justin Lev, chief of Team 4902, said having Koto on the team has been invaluable.

“From day one, he’s been working with us on understanding the African people,” Lev said. “The reason we are able to work so well with them is because of Koto.”

Lev added that Koto brings a unique perspective on Africa’s potential to the team’s mission.

“This is a land of opportunity,” Koto said. “Africa presents people with both an opportunity to help and an opportunity to learn. Just like all the opportunities we have in the United States, the ones here should not be taken for granted.”

As an American who earned his citizenship in February 2009, Koto has strong and passionate feelings for both his home and adopted countries.

“I love Africa,” he said. “I love it in the same way I love the United States — with my whole heart.”



# PHOTO JOURNAL



**Sgt. 1st Class Justin Hathaway, the U.S. Forces-Iraq provost marshal office's operations NCO in charge, braves a sandstorm Sept. 27 after leaving the 9th Air and Space Expeditionary Task Force-Iraq and U.S. Forces-Iraq provost marshal office at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq.**

*Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Cecilio Ricardo*







# PHOTO JOURNAL



▲ A Soldier from 2nd Detachment, C Company, 147th Aviation Battalion, oversees the liftoff of a UH-60 Black Hawk flown during medevac training in harsh weather conditions at Muscatatuck Urban Training Center in Butlerville, Ind.

*Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Benoit*



▶ A Soldier with the 1st Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, throws a grappling hook to clear a potential minefield before advancing during a field training exercise July 21 at Fort Bragg, N.C.

*Photo by Sgt. Mike MacLeod*





◀ Cpl. Kristine Tejada and Pfc. Thomas Adgate, both of Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 82nd Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Task Force Steel Dragon, climb the steps of the Ziggurat of Ur on Sept. 24 to provide security for a tour of the ancient city in Dhi Qar province, Iraq. Soldiers of Steel Dragon have provided security for more than 20 tours of Ur since December 2010.

*Photo by Pvt. Andrew Slovensky*

▶ Members of 3rd Platoon, A Battery, 1st Battalion, 77th Field Artillery Regiment, 172nd Infantry Brigade, work at dislodging their M-777 155 mm howitzer from a 3-foot-deep hole Sept. 3 in Paktika, Afghanistan. The huge weapon weighs 9,000 pounds and can launch projectiles more than 30 kilometers.

*Photo by Spc. Ken Scar*



◀ Sgt. Emmanuel Johnson, a team leader assigned to 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, fires blank rounds against the opposing U.S. Marines from 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit in a simulated exercise during Talisman Sabre 2011. Talisman Sabre promotes the alliance with Australia, which is one of the United States' most important defense relationships.

*Photo by Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Benjamin Kittleson*





# Roll Call

## OF THE FALLEN

### Operation New Dawn

*Staff Sgt. Estevan Altamirano, 30,  
Edcouch, Texas, Sept. 18, 2011*

*Sgt. Andy C. Morales, 32,  
Longwood, Fla., Sept. 22, 2011*

*Staff Sgt. James R. Leep Jr., 44,  
Richmond, Va., Oct. 17, 2011*

*Chief Warrant Officer 3 James B. Wilke, 38,  
Ione, Calif., Oct. 10, 2011*

### Operation Enduring Freedom

*Sgt. 1st Class Daniel R. Adams, 35,  
Portland, Ore., Sept. 13, 2011*

*Spc. Michael D. Elm, 25,  
Phoenix, Ariz., Oct. 14, 2011*

*Sgt. Rodolfo Rodriguez Jr., 26,  
Pharr, Texas, Sept. 14, 2011*

*Pfc. Carlos A. Aparicio, 19,  
San Bernadino, Calif., Sept. 23, 2011*

*Sgt. Garrick L. Eppinger Jr., 25,  
Appleton, Wis., Sept. 17, 2011*

*Spc. Jakob J. Roelli, 24,  
Darlington, Wis., Sept. 21, 2011*

*Sgt. Rafael E. Bigai Baez, 28,  
San Juan, Puerto Rico, Sept. 23, 2011*

*Spc. Garrett A. Fant, 21,  
American Canyon, Calif., Sept. 26, 2011*

*Staff Sgt. Keith F. Rudd, 36,  
Winder, Ga., Sept. 10, 2011*

*Spc. Francisco J. Briseno-Alvarez Jr., 27,  
Oklahoma City, Okla., Sept. 25, 2011*

*Spc. Steven E. Gutowski, 24,  
Plymouth, Mass., Sept. 28, 2011*

*Capt. Drew E. Russell, 25,  
Scotts, Mich., Oct. 8, 2011*

*Spc. James A. Butz, 21,  
Porter, Ind., Sept. 28, 2011*

*Sgt. Tyler N. Holtz, 22,  
Dana Point, Calif., Sept. 24, 2011*

*Spc. Jeremiah T. Sancho, 23,  
Palm Bay, Fla., Oct. 13, 2011*

*Spc. Ricardo Cerros Jr., 24,  
Salinas, Calif., Oct. 8, 2011*

*Staff Sgt. Michael W. Hosey, 27,  
Birmingham, Ala., Sept. 17, 2011*

*Sgt. Timothy D. Sayne, 31,  
Reno, Nev., Sept. 18, 2011*

*Pvt. Danny Chen, 19,  
New York, N.Y., Oct. 3, 2011*

*Capt. Joshua S. Lawrence, 29,  
Nashville, Tenn., Oct. 8, 2011*

*1st Sgt. Billy J. Siercks, 32,  
Velda Village, Mo., Sept. 28, 2011*

*Spc. Chazray C. Clark, 24,  
Ecorse, Mich., Sept. 18, 2011*

*1st Lt. Ivan D. Lechowich, 27,  
Valrico, Fla., Sept. 28, 2011*

*Sgt. Chester G. Stoda, 32,  
Black River Falls, Wis., Sept. 2, 2011*

*Spc. Ryan J. Cook, 29,  
Fort Walton Beach, Fla., Sept. 18, 2011*

*Staff Sgt. Jorge M. Oliveira, 33,  
Newark, N.J., Oct. 19, 2011*

*Staff Sgt. Houston M. Taylor, 25,  
Hurst, Texas, Oct. 13, 2011*

*Staff Sgt. Robert B. Cowdrey, 39,  
Atwater, Ohio, Oct. 13, 2011*

*Sgt. Mycal L. Prince, 28,  
Minco, Okla., Sept. 15, 2011*

*Pfc. Brett E. Wood, 19,  
Spencer, Ind., Sept. 9, 2011*

*Pfc. David A. Drake, 21,  
Lumberton, Texas, Sept. 28, 2011*

*Staff Sgt. Daniel A. Quintana, 30,  
Huntington Park, Calif., Sept. 10, 2011*

*Sgt. Nathan L. Wyrick, 34,  
Enumclaw, Wash., Oct. 10, 2011*

*Spc. Robert E. Dyas, 21,  
Nampa, Idaho, Sept. 21, 2011*

*1st Lt. Andres Zermeno, 26,  
San Antonio, Texas, Sept. 25, 2011*

*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 Sept. 13, 2011 and Oct. 21, 2011.*





# Take 5

*Safety Begins at Home*

- Leave three feet of space around space heaters
- Check electrical outlets for frayed wires or loose-fitting plugs
- Inspect fireplace flues and chimneys for leaks and blockages
- Keep a multi-purpose fire extinguisher handy
- Lock up medicines and household chemicals
- Keep hallways clutter-free and clear of obstacles



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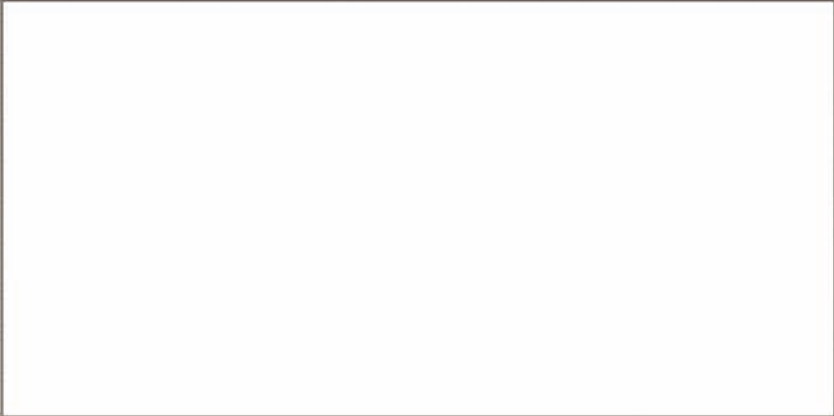
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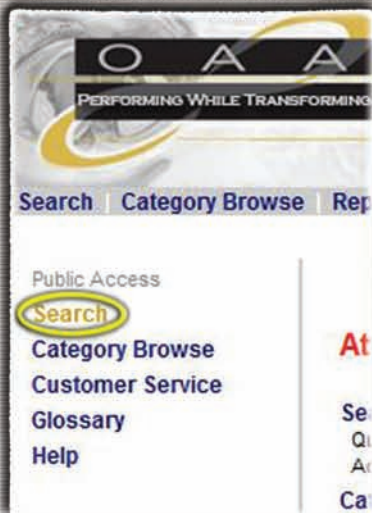
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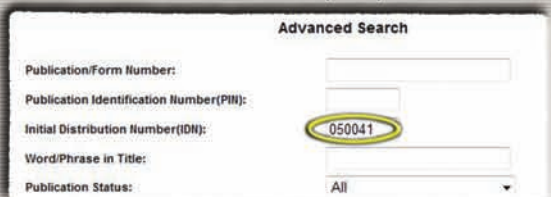
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