



STORY RELEASE



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Multi-National Medical Personnel step up to USAREUR EFMB challenge

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ROSE BARRACKS, Germany – This year’s U.S. Army Europe’s Expert Field Medical Badge competition was hosted by the 2nd Cavalry Regiment Sept. 10 through 21 at Grafenwoehr training area. U.S. Forces candidates, as well as soldiers from five European countries including Slovenia, United Kingdom, Germany, Estonia and Italy trained and demonstrated their expert medical skills under strict observation in order to obtain the right to be called the best.

The Expert Field Medical Badge is an award given to military personnel who complete various physical and written tests that determine their ability to go above and beyond and effectively perform medical tasks while in a hostile environment.

Among candidates who competed for the badge in this year’s event is Spc. Cindy Lee, a healthcare specialist with 557th Medical Company, 421st Medical Battalion (Multifunctional), 30th Medical Command, Lee took a positive experience from the training she received during the competition.

“It was worth it,” Lee said. “Anything worth fighting for is worth doing. It makes us stronger and EFMB training made me a better medic.”

Personnel who graded the candidates on their performance are EMFB holders and took the competition very seriously. Staff Sgt. Joshua Mordenti, a non-commissioned officer with 64th Medical Detachment, 421st Medical Battalion (Multifunctional), 30th Medical Command and native of Tallahassee, Fla., was a lane evaluator for combat testing lane one. Mordenti describes how detrimental it is for the candidates to know every detail of the task they are performing in order to ensure successful completion of each testing lane. He describes how the failure rate of this competition is higher than that of other military competitions.

“The EFMB is about attention to detail, the things that people are missing are minute tasks and that’s the problem that we are having,” Mordenti said. “It has one of the highest attrition rates in the military.”

Lt. Gen. Mark P. Hertling, Commanding General, United States Army Europe, observed some of the lane testing and described the difficulty of changes that have been made to the competition and the diversity among the Soldiers participating.

“Over the last couple years, we have steadily improved the requirements for EFMB and the medical community has changed some of the testing, it’s a whole lot harder than it’s ever been before,” Hertling said. “You’re not only seeing Germans, Slovenians, Poles and Estonians, but you’re also seeing some corpsmen from the Navy, as well as a couple of Air Force guys.”

The majority of the participants in this year’s competition were young soldiers who have not deployed, which shows dedication and determination within the ranks. Every EFMB competition usually yields a much less percentage of awardees in the end, making it an extremely difficult title to achieve.

“Most of the candidates this year are not combat veterans, so these are young people who are trying to learn the skill before they might be asked to deploy and that’s always a good thing as opposed to rushing into deployment and learning it for the first time when you get into

a combat situation,” Hertling said. “If you’re one of the very small percentage of people who win the badge, and its usually under 20 percent, you will see people at the awards ceremony who have tried to get this badge four, five or six times, and they keep coming back because it is that tough and challenging.”

A lane observer, Sgt. Cynthia Samudio with Medical Troop, Regimental Support Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, described some of the different scenarios an EFMB candidate had to successfully complete in order to receive the badge.

“The EFMB is comprised of a written-test, day and night land navigation, three combat training lanes and a twelve-mile ruck march at the end,” Samudio said.

Combat testing lane one starts off with weapons disassembly and reassembly, then tactical movement down a trail. The Soldiers then approach casualties and provide care under fire before moving them to a casualty collection point where they will treat a new set of casualties. Moving down the lane the candidates will come under contact and approach the last two casualties. There are artillery-simulation rounds that let the candidates know they are under fire. Everything going on in the lane is intended to raise the stress level, said Samudio.

Sgt. Michael Sandford with 557th Medical Company, is also a lane observer for combat testing lane one. Sandford described how he felt when he received his EFMB when he competed for it.

“It’s the best thing I have done in my career, said Sandford. “During my first experience I rushed through one of my lanes and I forgot a couple of small steps, so I went back about a month and a half later and I got it. It was surreal and now I’m proud to be wearing it on my chest.”

The 12-mile foot march signified the end of the EFMB competition. Each candidate carried a rucksack weighing no less than 35 pounds, a modular lightweight load-carrying equipment vest, an Army combat helmet and a weapon. Among the 312 candidates who

started the competition Sept. 10, 75 finished the march and earned the badge which signifies the overall difficulty surrounding the competition itself.

Hertling attended the awards ceremony after the march, gave a speech to the candidates who finished and handed out the badges. He spoke about the diversity of careers represented at the competition and what earning the EFMB says about an individual.

“There were doctors, nurses, dentists, combat medics, people from labor and delivery and from every single medical organization throughout Europe who started the road march,” Hertling said. “When you get the EFMB, that tells me you’re volunteering for another thing, to show that you are the very best.”



Soldiers from the United States, Estonia and the British Army pose for a photo Sept. 12, 2012 at Grafenwoehr training area. The soldiers trained during the standardization phase of the United States Army Europe's Expert Field Medical Badge competition hosted by 2nd Cavalry Regiment. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Joshua Edwards/Released)



Pfc. Tasha Vasquez, a United States Army Europe's Expert Field Medical Badge candidate with Regimental Support Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, pulls security with her team in a testing lane Sept. 12, 2012 at Grafenwoehr training area. Vasquez trained during the standardization phase of the EFMB competition hosted by 2nd Cavalry Regiment. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Joshua Edwards/Released)



Spc. Ryan Dietrich, a United States Army Europe's Expert Field Medical Badge candidate with 2nd Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Regiment, throws a grappling hook to clear an obstacle in a testing lane Sept. 12, 2012 at Grafenwoehr training area. Dietrich trained during the standardization phase of the EFMB competition hosted by 2nd Cavalry Regiment. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Joshua Edwards/Released)