

# U.S. Army Europe

contact: paoci@eur.army.mil  
phone: 49-6221-57-5815 / DSN 370-5815  
fax: 49-6221-57-6376 / DSN 370-6376



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2009: THE YEAR OF THE NCO

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## Joint Multinational Training Command NCO named Army NCO of the Year says self-improvement, leading by example never stop

By Staff Sgt. Patricia Deal

U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A U.S. Army Europe noncommissioned officer proved himself the “best warrior” in the Army's NCO Corps when he was named the 2009 Department of the Army NCO of the Year at the 2009 Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition here, Oct. 5.

[Sgt. 1st Class Aaron Beckman](#), a senior small group leader with [7th Army NCO Academy](#) at the [Joint Multinational Training Command](#) in Grafenwoehr, Germany, earned the title by edging out 23 other NCOs from 12 commands across the Army during the 2009 [Best Warrior Competition](#) at Fort Lee, Va., Sept. 28-Oct. 3.

Prior to competing at the Army level, Beckman faced tough competition on his home turf, winning the title of [2009 USAREUR NCO of the Year](#) in Grafenwoehr in early August.

At that competition, [USAREUR Command Sgt. Maj. Ralph Beam](#) passed on to competitors the challenge he received from [USAREUR commander Gen. Carter Ham](#): to find the best warriors to represent their command at the Army level.

“Beckman is that warrior. He is truly an outstanding NCO who exemplifies all the attributes our Army expects of its leaders. He is poised, focused and ready to take on the many challenges faced by leaders and Soldiers today,” Beam said.

After months of grueling physical and mental challenges, Beckman said he is happy to now have



PHOTO COURTESY TSC VILSECK

Sgt. 1st Class Aaron Beckman of the 7th Army Noncommissioned Officer Academy competes in the 7th Army Joint Multinational Training Command Best Warrior Competition in Grafenwoehr, Germany, earlier this year. Beckman, representing JMTC and U.S. Army Europe, went on to be selected as the Army's top NCO at the Best Warrior Competition September 28 - Oct 2 at Fort Lee, Va.

a reprieve from competition, but believes the hard part of being named number-one NCO is just beginning.

“I’m just glad I won’t have to face any more boards. But I still have to challenge myself every day to continue to grow as a senior NCO,” he said. “Plus, as the NCO of the Year, junior NCOs and Soldiers will be looking to me as a role model, so I have to work extra hard to make sure I’m maintaining that exemplary example.”

[Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston](#) cited the drive and determination Beckman showed in competing for the NCO of the Year title as the epitome of “leading from the front.”

Preston, speaking to a group of senior NCOs and sergeants major at the AUSA event here, said he was especially proud of the fortitude Beckman and fellow senior NCO competitor Sgt. 1st Class Corey King showed in competing against a typically younger field and clearly setting an example for the junior NCOs.

“All the competitors throughout the competition have been clear-cut professionals, well developed and trained,” Beckman said. “I would look down on their sleeves and see one or no service stripes. Then I would look at my sleeve, which has four -- yet I knew I had to step up my game to compete with these guys. For everything they did, I knew I would have to do one better.”

Despite the competitive environment of the Best Warrior challenge, Beckman said, all the competitors supported and encouraged their fellow contenders. “That is what being an NCO is all about -- leading and mentoring, pushing each other along,” he said.

He attributed his success to the leaders in his unit, the Soldiers who supported him all the way through the levels of competition, and his family.

“I could not have achieved what I did without support -- from my unit and my family. There were a couple of times when I was ready to give it up, but then I would get a boost or push from someone and I would be back on track,” he said. “My family was also very encouraging, and supported me the whole time.”

Although he has proven himself to be the best, Beckman said he doesn't plan to rest on his laurels.

“I’m not going to be stagnant. I’m going to continue my self-growth and hone my warrior tasks and battle drills to continue to be the best I can be,” he said. “And just as my leadership set me up for success, I will help others. I will mentor Soldiers, nudging them take up the challenge, to move ahead of themselves.”

Beckman's win at the Army level is USAREUR's third in five years. V Corps' Sgt. Jeremy Kamphuis was named Army NCO of the Year for 2005, and Spc. John Emmett of the [21st Theater Sustainment Command](#) earned the Army Soldier of the Year title in 2006.

For more information on the Army's Best Warrior Competition, go to [www.army.mil/bestwarrior](http://www.army.mil/bestwarrior).



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