



News Release

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Office of the Chief of Public Affairs
Unit 29351 APO AE 09014
Postfach 10 43 21 69033 Heidelberg
DSN 370-8934/6647 Tel.: 06221-57-8934/6647

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Medical specialists put to the test

Expert Field Medical Badge competition stresses real-world combat skills

By Arthur McQueen, USAREUR Public Affairs

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany – Nearly 300 medical specialty Soldiers, Airmen – and one Sailor – challenged themselves here May 6-11 in an attempt to earn the Expert Field Medical Badge, the U.S. military's most difficult series of qualification tests.

How difficult? According to Department of Defense statistics, the Expert Infantry Badge has a success rate of 50 percent. The Navy's Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL training course sees from 24 to 30 percent of its students graduate.

Of the 262 EFMB candidates in Grafenwoehr, 26 finished the course successfully – slightly higher than the Armywide pass rate of 8 percent.

Even knowing their chances, the candidates at the Grafenwoehr event in May were eager to test themselves against an unforgiving standard.

What it takes

"It is a difficult and rigorous written and hands-on test that requires medics to understand in detail how to be field medics," said Brig. Gen. David Rubenstein, commanding general of Europe Regional Medical Command. Rubenstein reviewed the testing site and attended the awards ceremony on May 11.

"The tasks for the EFMB have changed as the skills (required) of our medics have changed – smarts alone will not get you through this course," he said. "A combat medic has to have the skills to treat a Soldier, and if need be, have the physical stamina to pick that Soldier up and take him or her off the battlefield."

Staff Sgt. Diana Darrell, assigned to the Heidelberg Medical Department Activity, was an evaluator for the competition, one of 20 responsible to measure EFMB competitors against the event's exacting standards. Darrell, like all EFMB evaluators, sports the badge on her own uniform.

"If you earn the EFMB, you should be the cream of the crop," she said. "In a combat environment there is no room for error."

Week one of the event consisted of on-site training. This was the competitors' final chance to polish the skills they had been practicing, often for months, at home station. Then candidates faced the first graded EFMB events: a two-hour written test of 100 questions, followed by three lanes of realistic hands-on tests.

The written test is developed locally from STP 91W15-SM-TG (Soldier's Manual and Trainer's Guide, MOS 91W, Health Care Specialist) (Skill Level 1 Tasks Only), FM 4-25.12 (Unit Field Sanitation Team), ST 4-02.46 (Medical Support to Detainee Operations, and STP 21-1-SMCT (Soldier's Manual of Common Tasks, Skill Level 1). A grade of 75 is required to pass, a score achieved by 29 percent of candidates.

The two days of evaluation lanes tested the remaining hopefuls on land navigation, tactical combat casualty care and evacuation, communication tasks and warrior skills.

Assaulted by artillery simulators, opposing forces and multicolored smoke; the candidates triaged, calmed, infused, wrapped, intubated, dragged, carried, prioritized, reported, loaded and evacuated “injured” Soldiers, while reacting to enemy fire, natural and man-made obstacles, and the cadre holding their checklists.

During the tasks, the candidates faced a “GO” or “NO GO” evaluation on each particular detail of being a medic in combat.

On certain tasks, such as the precisely worded and timed calling in of a medical evacuation mission (after first assembling, loading communications security data and conducting a radio check), a “NO GO” means an immediate dismissal.

The final test, with a three hour time limit, was completed the next morning: a 12-mile ruck march. Candidates carried their individual field equipment, with their weapon “at the ready,” meaning it cannot be slung anywhere or stowed in the backpack. The packs average 35 pounds and hold the required boots, chemical resistant gloves, trousers and jacket, parka, poncho, spare clothing and other items.

“Even if I don’t make it, I am getting some great training out here,” said Pfc. Amanda Hopkins, Medical Troop, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment.

“This is so important, because as a field medic, these are the skills I will be using downrange,” she said.

Why it matters

Rubenstein said Soldiers injured on today’s battlefields have high injury-survival rates, partly because of their protective gear, but largely due to the medical support Soldiers receive.

“The medics, physicians and nurses, the equipment, and the organization to provide health care are (all) of the highest order,” he said. “We have better survival rates today than at any time in the history of the United States; 97 percent of Soldiers who are wounded come off the battlefield and go back to their families.”

Soldiers who know they will receive expert care can focus on their tasks, said Rubenstein.

“When we have a Soldier in combat, we don’t want them to worry about what is behind them, they need to be focused on the mission at hand,” he said. “Knowing that they have combat medics at their side who have trained for and earned the badge makes them more confident.”

The following Soldiers and Sailor earned the Expert Field Medical Badge.

From the 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, Vilseck, Germany:

2nd Lt. Ryan Labio
Sgt. Carlos A. Rivera-Rod
Pfc. Danielle Desimone
Pfc. Matthew R. Reilly
Pfc. Natalie Vogt

Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Landstuhl, Germany:

Capt. Alisha Hutson
Lt. Cdr. Charles Pasque
Sgt. 1st Class Olga Terekhina
Spc. Ryan Dawson

123rd Main Support Battalion, Dexheim, Germany:

2nd Lt. William C. Cave
Spc. Jeremiah R. Potts
Pfc. Daniel P. Jaggie
Pfc. Matthew D. Radcliff

212th Combat Support Hospital, Miesau, Germany:

1st Lt. Lindsey Colburn
2nd Lt. April Baccinelli

Staff Sgt. Dustin Miller

U.S. Army Medical Department Activity, Bavaria
Capt. David Vollbrecht
Staff Sgt. Gabriel Camacho

30th Medical Brigade, Heidelberg, Germany:
1st Lt. Joshua Thompson

67th Forward Surgical Team, Landstuhl, Germany:
1st Lt. Andrew Chung

Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine – Europe, Landstuhl, Germany:
2nd Lt. James Lakey

U.S. Army Medical Department Activity C, Heidelberg, Germany:
Sgt. Nathaniel Turner

1st Battalion, 94th Field Artillery, Baumholder, Germany:
Spc. Jeffrey Hurt

412th Aviation Support Battalion, Ansbach, Germany:
2nd Lt. Alexander J. Bertone

7th Joint Multinational Training Command, Noncommissioned Officers Academy, Grafenwoehr, Germany:
Sgt. Timothy White

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment, Baumholder, Germany
2nd Lt. Daniel McQuary

Images/Cutlines:



Hutson.jpg - Capt. Alicia Hutson of Landstuhl Regional Medical Center displays her joy on completing a 12-mile ruck march, the final test for the Expert Field Medical Badge competition, held in Grafenwoehr May 6-11. Hutson, on her third attempt, was one of 26 candidates from a field of 262 to earn the badge. "It's a lot of hard work, but very rewarding. You are taking care of Soldiers, that's what it's all about." The 9.92 percent success rate for the group is slightly higher than the 8 percent Army-wide average.



Jaggie.jpg -- Pfc. Daniel P. Jaggie, 123rd Main Support Battalion, Dexheim, Germany, leads a team carrying a patient-laden stretcher underneath barbed wire amid the noise of artillery simulators and hostile fire. Jaggie was one of only 26 candidates, out of a field of 262, to complete the requirements for the Expert Field Medical Badge. "This competition is important, because if you are ever responsible for someone's life in combat, you have to know what you are doing and not second guess yourself."