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'DOING THE RIGHT THING EVERY DAY' EARNS ACCOLADES FOR V CORPS MAINTENANCE TEAM

By Pfc. Michael Syner

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HEIDELBERG, Germany – “We try to do the right thing all day, every day,” says Warrant Officer Phillip A. Ranck, officer-in-charge of the maintenance team for V Corps’ Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion.



PFC MICHAEL SYNER

Spc. Ronnie Trujillo of V Corps’ Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troop Battalion welds a part for a Humvee in the unit’s motor pool on Tompkins Barracks in Schwetzingen, Germany Sept. 26. Trujillo is part of the HHC maintenance team recently named as a winner in the corps level of the Army Award for Maintenance Excellence competition.

Ranck’s philosophy must be infectious, as his HHC maintenance team was just named as the winner of the V Corps-level Army Award for Maintenance Excellence for large Modified Table of Organization and Equipment units.

It is not an easy task to win the AAME, regardless of the unit’s size. Doing the right thing day in and day out without fail is pretty much what it takes to earn the award. The AAME review team judges each unit competing in a broad range of skills that go beyond just how well the unit’s equipment is maintained. Judges also look at whether equipment is properly accounted for and tracked and inspect every maintenance facility using checklists designed specifically to outline strict standards for each type of operation. For example, judges evaluate the unit’s Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical gear and the security of its arms room, and even check Soldiers’ military driver’s licenses to ensure they are all within standard.

With such intense scrutiny of a maintenance team’s ongoing operations, the AAME cannot be won in a day.

“It took about three months of preparation to get ready,” said Ranck.

And winning at the V Corps level is just a start down the “long AAME road” for the HHC maintenance team. Next comes competition for U.S. Army, Europe-level awards, then all-Army competition. It takes more than a year to work up to a chance to win the Department of the Army level award, according to officials at the Army’s office of the deputy chief of staff for logistics. And even then the competition continues, to the Department of Defense level.

Ranck doesn’t hesitate to say who gets the praise for doing the hard work it takes to keep his tight maintenance ship running every day at the level of performance that earned his team their AAME.

“The credit goes to all of my outstanding Soldiers,” he said.

Soldiers like Spc. David R. Hare, who helped to keep the HHC’s hazardous materials operations running smoothly while a new NCO-in-charge, Sgt. Christopher S. Sadowsky, came into his position.

“I just took what I knew and went with it,” said Hare. “It is a lot of information to know, but it had to be done.”

“He was always making sure that the different HAZMAT programs were up and running,” said Sadowsky.

This isn’t the HHC team’s first award; not by a long shot. For instance, the unit won a USAREUR-level AAME and Unit Hazardous Materials Award in 2005. So well regarded is his operation, Ranck said, the U.S. Army Garrison Heidelberg Directorate of Public Works holds his team up as an example for others to follow.

And all these accolades were earned while the maintenance team was understaffed. Ranck said his Soldiers frequently stay beyond the normal business hours to get the job done.

“We have about 30 troops,” Ranck said. “We are supposed to have around 50. Even though we are under-manned, we are still rocking.”

The team has had to overcome another major challenge as well, when they changed to the Army Records Information Management System in July. The ARIMS is a system that tracks equipment via the internet.

Ranck said the ARIMS is a major improvement over the team’s old system, which relied on hand-typed memorandums and tracking orders.

Getting ready to “go live” with the system in July took months of research and planning, said Staff Sgt. Kofi B. Hanson, HHC system and logistics specialist.

“We do what we need to be doing,” Hanson said.

The award presentation for the V Corps-level AAME awards is scheduled for Oct. 11 at 2:30 p.m. in the Casablanca Room on Campbell Barracks in Heidelberg.



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