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HARD WORK, FLEXIBILITY EARN UNITS IN EUROPE ARMY-LEVEL LOGISTICS AWARDS

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U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

HEIDELBERG, Germany -- Every commander in the Army knows the value of logistics. "For want of a nail..." right?

Today's Army inspires its logistics specialists with an array of awards programs that recognize the best people and programs in its maintenance and supply arsenal. The Department of the Army recently announced the winners of those awards -- the 2008

Combined Logistics Excellence Awards -- and the names of several organizations in Europe were on the winners list.



SGT MICHAEL TAYLOR

Soldiers of 5th Signal Command's 44th Expeditionary Signal Battalion join German workers in loading equipment onto barges in Mannheim, Germany, Aug. 24 for their deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 44th's skill in deploying its equipment recently earned the unit a 2008 Army Deployment Excellence Award.

The CLEA is a program that recognizes units that excel in their supply and maintenance missions, said Mario Ambriz, the Army Award for Maintenance Excellence program manager for U.S. Army, Europe. It also pays tribute to those units that have proven they have a skill vital to today's Army -- the ability to deploy effectively and efficiently. Thus the CLEA is a trio -- the AAME for "maintainers," the Supply Excellence Award for

“suppliers,” and the Deployment Excellence Award for “deployers,” though these last can be any type of unit in the Army.

“The SEA is the sister program to the AAME,” said Dominador V. Jalique, the USAREUR SEA program manager. “While the AAME is usually for motor pools and other maintenance areas, the SEA targets the supply offices of units.”

The DEA focuses on deployment readiness.

“The DEA rewards the units that are able to successfully deploy their assets in a timely manner,” said Aaron Burr, USAREUR DEA program manager. “We look at how well the mission followed Army deployment regulations, how efficiently everything is moved, and the complexity of the mission.”

The 44th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, part of USAREUR’s 5th Signal Command, earned first place this year in the large active-Army category of the 2008 Army-level DEA. In earning the award, the 44th deployed its equipment to more than 40 sites spread across Iraq.

“The battalion was able to do this because leadership pushed responsibilities down and the junior NCOs did an outstanding job of making sure it was done right. It went very smooth, because the whole battalion was involved,” explained Maj. Benjamin Anderson, deputy director of plans, training, mobilization and security for U.S. Army Garrison Mannheim, in a 5th Signal news release on the award.

“While loading and receiving more than 299 pieces of signal equipment during the transition, there was not one piece of ‘frustrated cargo’ -- that is, we maintained 100 percent of our equipment,” added Maj. John Harris, the 44th’s executive officer.

Competing in the SEA or AAME takes just as much effort. Ambriz said they are rigorous exercises in discipline and attention to detail.

“The programs have fairly similar requirements. They all require the units to go through a series of examinations that focus on how well their gear is maintained and tracked,” he said.

Sometimes that feat requires a fair amount of flexibility, as in the case of 1st Armored Division’s B Company, 123rd Main Support Battalion, a runner-up in the Army-level AAME competition.

“Most of our stuff was gone,” said Capt. John V. Salling, the B Company commander. “Our fleet was deployed at the time of the inspection. We only had a few things to show the examiner.”

Not only that, he said, but a lot of vehicles in the unit’s fleet have been used almost continuously since Operation Iraqi Freedom began in 2003.

“Our vehicles have deployed several times, and they usually come back all right,” the captain said. “The trick is very regular preventive maintenance checks and services.”



PFC MICHAELSYNER

Daniela Milhem, a mechanic for Maintenance Activity Kaiserslautern (Germany), works on a Humvee. MAK recently won an Army Award for Maintenance Excellence in the Department of the Army level of the annual competition -- the facility's fourth in six years.

These preventive checks have been performed on all the 123rd MSB's vehicles at least once a week for several years now, said Salling.

“We just did our job, day in and day out,” he said.

Salling said the company has had a series of leaders who understood the necessity of well-cared-for gear.

“I fell in on a program that was already well established,” he said. “The trick to maintaining equipment well is to ... well ... maintain your equipment. It would be hard to start from nothing and then somehow show that you've been taking care of your stuff for the past year for a competition.”

It's that maintenance rhythm that keeps equipment in good condition, Jalique said, noting that most of the winners in the CLEA competition had good practices in place long before this year's competition. Many of the units that won this year are no strangers to CLEA trophies, he added.

“We stay prepared (all) year long,” said William D. Haddix, deputy director of Maintenance Activity Kaiserslautern. MAK earned an AAME this year -- the fourth time it has earned the award in its category at the DA level in the past six years.

Haddix said the MAK crew doesn't even break a sweat earning an AAME. “We just go at our normal pace,” he said.

Looking at MAK's records, that pace seems pretty fast-paced.

Haddix says the facility's crew can repair any military vehicle, adding with pride that “last year we had only 41 valid complaints out of 9,881 items that we repaired, giving us a 99.6 percent success rate.”

“It feels good knowing that people recognize our hard work,” said Salling. “The Soldiers are really excited to have competed in such a large event, and to do so well in it.”

The Army's CLEA awards will be presented in Alexandria, Virginia, June 3.

The following Europe-based units earned Army-level AAME awards:

B Company, 123rd Main Support Battalion, Dexheim, Germany (runner-up)
Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops Battalion, V Corps,
Schwetzingen, Germany (runner-up)

Maintenance Activity Kaiserslautern, Kaiserslautern, Germany (winner)

6981st Civilian Support Group, Mannheim, Germany (winner)

The following Europe-based units earned Army-level SEA awards:

Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 208th Finance Battalion, Mannheim,
Germany (honorable mention)

Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 28th Transportation Battalion, Mannheim,
Germany (winner of two awards)

7th Army NCO Academy, Grafenwoehr, Germany (runner-up)

204th Quartermaster Supply Company, Bamberg, Germany (runner-up)

The following Europe-based unit earned an Army-level DEA award:

44th Expeditionary Signal Battalion, Mannheim, Germany (winner)

(Spc. Evan Marcy of the 5th Signal Command Public Affairs Office contributed to this article.)



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