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U.S. Army Europe, partner nation Soldiers train, test together in quest for Expert Field Medical Badge

By Spc. Fabian Ortega

U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany -- More than 230 U.S. Army Europe and 16 partner nation medical personnel began competing for the Army's Expert Field Medical Badge March 25 at Camp Aachen in the Grafenwoehr Training Area.



STAFF SGT AIMEE MILLHAM

Staff Sgt. Martin Teresica, a medic with the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, evacuates a simulated "patient" on a litter to a Stryker armored vehicle with the help of U.S. Army Europe Soldiers serving as support staff for the 2009 U.S. Army Europe Expert Field Medical Badge Competition at the Grafenwoehr (Germany) Training Area, March 26. Teresica and 15 other partner nation participants from five European countries have been training and competing alongside more than 230 USAREUR medical personnel during the competition that concludes March 30.

Similar to the Expert Infantry Badge, the EFMB requires candidates to compete in a variety of hands-on events that test Soldiers physically and mentally before they earn the badge. This year USAREUR medical personnel have been here training and testing for the event, which culminates with an

awards ceremony March 30, alongside the 16 partner nation participants from Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

Capt. Justin M. Trisler, officer-in-charge of the EFMB competition, said to qualify for the badge, candidates must successfully complete one week of qualification testing that includes three combat testing lanes with a combination of communication, warrior and medical tasks.

EFMB candidates must also successfully complete day and night land navigation courses, a written test, and a 12-mile foot march, he added.

According to information from the Europe Regional Medical Command, the medical EFMB tasks tested focus on tactical combat casualty care and medical and casualty evacuation, and candidates must also complete an Army Physical Fitness Test, individual weapon qualification and a cardiopulmonary resuscitation certification as prerequisites to the testing.

Historically, the biggest challenges candidates face are the written exam and land navigation, Trisler said.

In the past EFMB candidates were not allowed to retest on any portion of the competition, leading to high attrition rates, testing officials said. This year, candidates will have an opportunity to retake the written exam.

“It used to be one opportunity to take the written test, and if (candidates) weren’t successful the first time they were released from EFMB,” said Trisler. “Now they have a second opportunity to retake the written test if they complete all of the CTLs (Combat Testing Lanes) and day and night land nav successfully.”

Another change is the implementation of real-world scenarios during testing. Now the competition is more battlefield-driven, Trisler said.

“Candidates are given an operation order and they go out and execute. It’s more realistic and (more like) what they might experience on the battlefield,” said the captain.

One Soldier who received his EFMB several years ago noted that it is more difficult to earn the badge now than in years past.

“EFMB testing was more task-oriented back then,” said Sgt. 1st Class Richard Ortiz, a medic at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center serving as an assistant training lane NCO-



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Staff Sgt. Johnathan C. Long, a medic with Medical Troop, Regimental Support Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment, records a simulated casualty's injuries as he maneuvers through a combat testing lane during the 2009 U.S. Army Europe Expert Field Medical Badge Competition at Camp Aachen in the Grafenwoehr Training Area, Germany, March 27.

in-charge for the EFMB. “Now it’s completely scenario-based ... (candidates) are doing 13 tasks in one lane. It keeps them focused and keeps them motivated to complete those tasks.

“In every lane you’re going to be exhausted,” he said

Before embarking on their week of testing, the medical Soldiers were given a few words of encouragement and advice by Brig. Gen. Keith W. Gallagher, commander of the Europe Regional Medical Command.



“Train hard, study, work with one another and take care of one another,” Gallagher said.

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1st Lt. William Kilgore of the 421st Multi-functional Medical Battalion simulates decontaminating his eyes during the nuclear, biological and chemical testing portion of the 2009 U.S. Army Europe Expert Field Medical Badge Competition at the Grafenwoehr (Germany) Training Area, March 27.

The general also said the EFMB is especially valuable today because training and testing for the badge helps keep participants’ medical skills current in a wartime environment.

“We’re an Army at war and your skills are perishable, so you need to stay up to date,” he said.

The EFMB was established in June 1965 as a Department of the Army special skill award recognizing exceptional competence and outstanding performance by field medical personnel.



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