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JUNIOR LEADERSHIP TRAINERS HELP PREPARE PEERS FOR ARMY SOLDIER, NCO OF THE YEAR COMPETITION

By Susan Husemann

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DEXHEIM, Germany -- The cadre of the Junior Leadership Development Course are the "go-to guys" when it comes to training U.S. Army, Europe's Soldiers and NCOs of the Year for Army-level competition.



KARL WEISEL

As part of their preparation for the upcoming Army-level Soldier and NCO of the Year competition, U.S. Army, Europe Soldier of the Year Cpl. Mihai Mocanu of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry (left) and USAREUR NCO of the Year Staff Sgt. Travis Snook, an instructor at the 7th Army NCO Academy, look over training manuals at the Junior Leadership Development Course facility in Dexheim, Germany. The cadre of the JLDC, operated by 1st Armored Division's 123rd Main Support Battalion, has already helped several USAREUR Soldiers to earn Army-level honors in its less than two years of operation.

Last year the course's staff, from 1st Armored Division's 123rd Main Support Battalion, helped Spc. John Emmett of the 21st Theater Support Command to win the 2006 Army Soldier of the Year title, and the 123's own Sgt. Delroy Barnett came in second in the Army NCO of the Year contest.

USAREUR Command Sgt. Maj. Iuniasolua T. Savusa was so impressed by the JLDC training they received he wanted this year's candidates to also train at the facility here, said Staff Sgt. Albert Patton, NCO-in-charge of the junior leadership course.

This year's USAREUR-level winners -- Staff Sgt. Travis Snook, an instructor at the 7th Army NCO Academy representing USAREUR separate

units and Cpl. Mihai Mocanu of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry representing V Corps -- trained under the tutelage of the JLDC instructors Sept. 3-18.

“We supply the instructors; set up the training schedule and lanes -- everything,” said Patton. “These Soldiers will be well prepared.” The Army-level competition, he said, is scheduled for Sept. 29 through Oct. 6 at Fort Lee, Va.

“The last two years USAREUR has won at (Department of the Army level). It’s a challenge for us to uphold the standard,” said Snook. “At the Soldier of the Year and NCO of the Year competition we’re competing with the best of the best. That’s an honor.”

Snook said training with Mocanu has been helpful. “I’m strong at boards; he’s tough physically. We push each other.”

“He’s really helped me in the boards. English is my second language,” said the Romanian-born Mocanu.

The Soldiers were coached by Patton, Sgt. Tim Johnson, Staff Sgt. Enola Semple, Sgt. Eluid Cadero, Sgt. Sarah De Luna, Sgt. Joseph Jedenasty and Sgt. Joe Bradley. The team provided the two candidates with instruction and mentoring on 40 warrior tasks and 11 battle drills over 11 days.

The training also included preparing Mocanu and Snook for the U.S. European Command Soldier and NCO of the Year competition by conducting mock selection boards.

A JLDC board is different than any other board a Soldier will face, said Patton. “We have nine people sitting on the board,” he said, “and the Soldiers have to answer at least 180 questions delivered rapid-fire from all directions. Your mind has got to be on it. This really prepares you. When you get to the (Department of the Army level) board, you know everything.

“We train our own Soldiers in order to compete in the (Soldier of the Year) competitions at division and USAREUR levels, and in doing so, we’ve become very competent at it.”

As evidence of the team's success, Patton pointed to Barnett and another 123rd Soldier, Sgt. Scott Hanshew, last year's 1st Armored Division Soldier of the Year.

“Hanshew went through the Junior Leadership (Development) Course,” said Patton. “On short notice he stepped in to take the place of an injured Soldier for the 1st AD-level competition.”

The main mission of the course and its instructors is to prepare Soldiers to become leaders, said Patton, before they attend the Warrior Leadership Course.

“We’re continually pounding the message in about how important Soldier skills are to them. When they become leaders these are the same skills they will need to teach their Soldiers.”

Mocanu said the training has been educational. “I’ve learned a lot. For example, I’ve never done an NBC report -- because I’m not a squad leader I’m not in a position to do so,” he said.

Since the school’s opening in January 2006 about 170 Soldiers have undergone training in basic Soldier skills. “We cover 31 areas of instruction,” said Patton, including map reading, land navigation, drill and ceremony, physical fitness and radio communications.

The course is not limited to 123rd Soldiers. “The Soldiers have also come from Kitzingen, Baumholder, Wiesbaden and 141st Signal,” said Patton.

The Junior Leadership Course was a vision of 123rd MSB Command Sgt. Maj. Charles Penn, said Patton, who was selected by Penn to build and run the school. “We’re the only Junior Leadership Course in USAREUR, and I am extremely proud of it,” he said.



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