

U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

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USAREUR announces its Soldier and NCO of the year – 2008

U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany (Aug. 28, 2008) – U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army's top 12 Soldiers battled it out for three days in August to determine the command's top warriors ... both Soldier and NCO. Today the winners were announced during a ceremony at Kaiserslautern's Armstrong's Club.



Sgt. Stanley E. Black (left), Soldier of the year for USAREUR separate units, and Staff Sgt. Jonathan R. Higgs (right), NCO of the year for the Southern European Task Force, earned the job of representing USAREUR at the Department of the Army-level Soldier and NCO of the year competition.

USAREUR deputy commanding general, Lt. Gen. Gary D. Speer, spoke to the gathered competitors about the occasion's significance.

"The one single thing that sets the U.S. Army apart from all others is the quality of our noncommissioned officer corps," he said. "And the one thing that sets our Soldiers apart from all others is the fact that they've got quality NCOs looking after them and holding them accountable to train to standard."

Command Sgt. Maj. Ralph R. Beam, USAREUR interim command sergeant major, congratulated all the competitors on their achievements. "In this kind of competition, (you) find out a lot about yourself – how much you can take, and how much you can give back," said "And at the end of it, you can sit back and say, 'Yes, that was it – I've done it.'"

Coordinators aim to make the USAREUR competition harder than the DA competition, said Sgt. 1st Class Steven Stanfill, USAREUR human resources manager and event coordinator.

"If the competitors can excel at what we throw at them, it makes them that much more ready when they move on to the DA level," he said.

Black said his main goal in competing was to develop as an NCO.

"It looks good for Sergeant Black to do these great looking things; but outside of competing, I have two Soldiers that I have to train, to guide, lead and mentor. So that was the main thing that I came here for, to be a more equipped leader," he said.

Higgs said a motivating factor for him was to honor other Soldiers.

"I would encourage every Soldier who is thinking about competing in this kind of competition to do their best and to put their best foot forward. I do it because my brothers and sisters-in-arms make their sacrifices for everyone else and this is symbolic of my way of making a sacrifice by putting the time and effort into doing this. If I can't be down range, then I will be doing something else that is meaningful and honorable," he said.

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USAREUR's three-day competition included two land navigation courses, a 15-kilometer ruck march, day and night weapons qualifications, an appearance before a board, written examinations, an Army Physical Fitness Test and a series of other combat tasks.

Soldier of the Year competitors –

Sgt. Stanley Black,	U.S. Army Europe and Seventh Army, Separate Units
Sgt. Nicole E. Crottie,	Alpha Co. U.S. Army NATO Joint Forces Command
Spc. William L. Foulks,	Southern European Task Force
Pfc. Jason A. Hancock,	21 st Theater Sustainment Command
Pfc. Robert W. Harshbarger,	Headquarters, Special Troops Battalion, Seventh Army
Spc. Daniel R. Ponton,	172 nd Infantry Brigade

NCO of the Year competitors –

Staff Sgt. Jonathan R. Higgs,	Southern European Task Force
Sgt. Keithrick Howard,	HQS & HQS Co., SHAPE Battalion, U.S. Army, NATO
Staff Sgt. Mark C. Lewis,	18 th Military Police Brigade
Staff Sgt. Cory W. MacNeil,	Seventh Army NCO Academy
Staff Sgt. Dejan Pajic,	Headquarters, Special Troops Battalion, Seventh Army
Staff Sgt. Christopher G. Smith,	172 nd Infantry Brigade

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