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RELEASE #2008-10-01-01

October 1, 2008

Medical Soldiers train, test for coveted Expert Field Medical Badge

USAREUR competition runs Sept. 22- Oct. 2 at Grafenwoehr Training Area

By Sgt. David Chapman, 30th Medical Brigade Public Affairs

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany – After a large dose of anticipation and months of preparation, U.S. Army medical Soldiers from across Europe converged at the Grafenwoehr Training Area Sept. 22 with one goal in mind: earn the highly coveted Expert Field Medical Badge.



Sgt. David Chapman

Capt. Grace Chung works her way under a barbed wire obstacle and into smoke cover Sept. 28 during U.S. Army Europe's Expert Field Medical Badge testing at Grafenwoehr, Germany Training Area.

The Expert Field Medical Badge, or EFMB, is the “utmost challenge to the professional competence and physical endurance of the Soldier-medic,” according to the EFMB Branch Web site. Last year’s worldwide EFMB success rate was 15.3 percent.

For two weeks at Grafenwoehr, U.S. Army Europe candidates from private to major are striving to earn the award that many of their peers have failed to receive.

During the first week, 84 candidates are divided into four platoons and sent to one of four combat training lanes where they learn tasks needed to earn their badge. Training encompasses medical and general Soldier skills, including night and day land navigation. Medical skills include casualty assessment and triage; litter carry; controlling bleeding; treating head, eye and abdominal wounds; casualty recovery from vehicles and combat communication.

Lane instructors, who have all already earned their EFMB, teach candidates what they need to know to be successful during testing in the second week.

“The cadre is taking its time to make sure that the candidates understand what they are up against,” said Sgt. Leonardo Brightstar, 212th Combat Support Hospital preventative medicine specialist. “They make sure we have everything we need to know to get this badge.”

In the second week, the Soldiers begin the test portion. No help is provided during that stage, and students must rely on what they have learned before their arrival at Grafenwoehr and what they have practiced during the introductory train-up stage.

During testing, each candidate will complete tasks at three combat training lanes where they must accomplish 14 to 16 different tasks. The Soldiers will tackle day and night land navigation courses and a 60-question written test. A candidate who fails any of the tasks will not be awarded the EFMB and will be sent home the following day.

Many of the Soldiers striving to wear this badge of honor feel that they have a lot to prove to themselves and those who support them.

“I know this is one of the hardest badges in the Army to earn, so I want to prove to myself and everyone else I can do it,” said Sgt. J.B. Donaldson, Hohenfels health clinic force health protection noncommissioned officer in charge.

Candidates who make it to the final day of testing will be greeted by a required 12- mile foot march and, if successful, be presented the Expert Field Medic Badge during an Oct. 2 ceremony.



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