

## U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

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RELEASE #2008-10-08-01

October 8, 2008

### Europe Medical Soldiers earn Expert Field Medical Badge

Sgt. Daniel J. Nichols, USAREUR Public Affairs Office

**GRAFENWÖHR, Germany (Oct. 2, 2008)** -- The U.S. Army Europe Expert Field Medical Badge testing began in Grafenwöhr Training Area Germany, Sept. 27. Six days later, Oct. 2, 30 of 87 candidates were able to stand proud at the graduation ceremony to receive their EFMB and call themselves experts.



**Sgt. Daniel J. Nichols**

Capt. Lori Metcalf, Baumholder Health Clinic, (right) performs emergency first-aid on simulated casualty Spc. Dealagdon Roberts, 8th Medical Logistics Company, EFMB support staff, while being tested for the EFMB on Combat Testing Lane 1, Sept. 29.

The EFMB qualification is well known for its low success rate, usually averaging around 13 percent. This EFMB qualification saw a 34 percent graduation rate.

“I would venture to say that it’s one of the highest success rates that the Army Medical Department has seen,” said Maj. Rodrigo Chavez, EFMB officer in charge, 30th Medical Brigade.

Chavez attributes the high success rate of this EFMB qualification to two deciding factors.

“First off,” said Chavez, “we planned for 150 candidates but we had 87. So now we have a much better candidate to evaluation instructor ratio during the standardization week. That means my instructors have fewer candidates to teach and therefore those candidates are able to get almost one-to-one attention.”

During standardization week, candidates watch demonstrations and practice EFMB tasks, overseen by the instructors who will validate them during the following week’s testing.

Chavez said the second factor of success was the caliber of candidates who came to earn the badge.

“There’s a tendency in a large-scale event where you’ll send just a mass group out because it’s a great training experience, and that’s great and we encourage that,” Chavez said. “What plays in our favor is the dedication of these candidates coming in, because all of them actually want to be here.”

Constant talk before the event spread rumors of how difficult it is to achieve what some candidates refer to as the ‘Expert Field Memory Badge,’ referring to the mass of information participants must memorize.

“I can see why someone would call it that,” said Maj. Jose Nunez, test board chairperson, 30th Medical Brigade. “There is a lot to take in, and you have to want it, and stay up at night and sacrifice the hours of sleep to study. And it’s worth it. It’s a great badge to have.”

Although the average success rate may be daunting, it does spur some candidates on to be in that select group of medical experts.

“I think all the rumors before motivated me enough to spend the extra hours studying and go over that field manual one more time,” said Sgt. Joshua Welch, 129th Field Artillery Regiment, Task Force Thunder, Missouri National Guard, currently deployed to Kosovo.

Test week, day one, began with a written exam starting at exactly 10:02 a.m., to meet the 120-hour standard for the EFMB set by the Army Medical Department. Once the written exam was over the Combat Testing Lanes, used to test candidates on everything from advanced medical tasks to basic Soldier skills, began at 1 p.m.

At the end of Day One, 14 candidates went home. Those who remained continued to study for the tests they would face the following day, and focus on the reasons they came to earn the badge.

“It’s one of the badges coming out of officer basic course that I had my sights on,” said Cpt. David Sensiba, 254th Medical Detachment, Miesau, Germany. “It’s the experience, it’s the knowledge ... and just being able to wear the badge on my shoulder and do something the Army has a high standard on.”

Combat testing lanes included five communication tasks, 13 warrior skills tasks, 14 tactical combat casualty care tasks, and 10 medical and casualty evacuation tasks. Days one through five, candidates rotated through these lanes in addition to completing day and night land navigation.

When the candidates weren’t testing, they were spending time in study hall with instructors, preparing them for the following days’ events.

“The candidates did not have any free time. From the day they hit the ground at standardization week to the end of test week, they had no free time whatsoever,” said Chavez. “That was because if they weren’t out there on the lanes they were in the motor pool or in a hard structure going over the individual tasks, or they were ... studying for the written exam. There was no down time for these candidates.”

Day two, 31 candidates went home.

“We could see, particularly the first two days, the difference between the people that prepared before they came here and the people who didn’t,” said combat testing lanes instructor Staff Sgt. Michael Vidro, Company F, 158th Aviation Battalion, Katterbach.

Day three, eight candidates went home.

Although the remaining candidates said they were proud to still be in the fight, they expressed mixed emotions at the end of each day.

“It’s bittersweet,” said Welch, “You’re glad to be one of the last people to be here, but you make some good friends, and there were some cool people you met along the way, and you think they should have gotten it, or maybe they just forgot one small detail they had to do.”

Days four and five were quiet, as all 34 remaining candidates completed the tasks leading up to the final event: a three-hour, 12-mile ruck march. During these two days, cadre began to speak of what could become a record-breaking EFMB qualification.

“I don’t know where this batch came from, but they’re a very, very good batch of Soldiers and candidates,” said Nunez.

On the day before the ruck march, spirits and motivation were high as candidates prepared for the last event.

“I’m going to make the ruck march,” said Spc. Deon Cofield, Co. A, Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, said with a smile. “I’m not going to have come this far just to fail out on a ruck march.”

Thursday, hopes among candidates and cadre alike were high as 34 of the original 87 set forward on their final test at 7 a.m. One test remained before candidates could claim the badge they had set out to earn: six miles out and back on the tank trails of Grafenwoehr.

The first Soldier crossed the finish line after two hours and 16 minutes; the last did it with less than a minute to spare. Two Soldiers didn’t finish because of injuries, and two did not meet the time limit, but the 30 participants who completed the march in three hours or less were no longer candidates: they were experts.

Candidates spent the hour between the ruck march and the graduation ceremony recovering and congratulating each other on a job well done, a mission accomplished.

“It was a lot of fun, and it was good training, but it was hard too,” said Spc. Kyle Busche, 557th Medical Company Wiesbaden, “I’m glad I did it, and I’m glad it’s over.”

At the graduation ceremony that followed, the new experts received their badges from Lt. Gen. Gary D. Speer, USAREUR deputy commanding general, and Brig. Gen. Keith W. Gallagher, Europe Regional Medical Command commanding general.

“In a typical EFMB it’s considered a good test in terms of success rate if 10 percent successfully complete the task and earn the EFMB,” Speer said.

“We had 87 folks at the beginning of this as EFMB candidates and standing before you are the survivors who met the task, met the standard, demonstrated their proficiency and earned this very special Army award,” said Speer. “I’m proud to tell you that of the 87 who started, 30 have completed and earned the EFMB.”

“For the rest of your time in the Army,” said Speer, “you will proudly display that you are an expert in your field.”



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