

Soul Survivor Challenge met by SATCON Soldiers

By CW2 Garth Hahn

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Sunrise found the soldiers hiking a trail, a slight breeze cooling the sweat on their brows. Moving up the hill in teams of four and five, their NCOs pushing them to haul their 40-pound packs just a little faster, the soldiers gave it their all. The goal they strove for was more than just making the top of the hill — the real prize was the honor of being known as “Best Crew.”

In the second quarter of 2003, the 1st Satellite Control Battalion received a tasking from higher headquarters requiring a Best Crew competition.

Members of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st SATCON Bn. took this to heart and executed a comprehensive competition called the “Soul Survivor Challenge” involving leadership skills, and operational and common task training.

The Best Crew competition for HHC consisted of five events: an operational crew certification, ruck march, global positioning system road rally, obstacle course, Jeopardy! game, Class A inspection, and scores from the most recent Army physical fitness test and M16/M9 Ranges. This evaluation allowed a variety of events, thoroughly testing the soldierly abilities of the three crews vying for top honors.

The operational crew certification is a weeklong evaluation of a crew’s ability to accomplish a variety of crew tasks. The tasks required a range of skills from operation of one of the operational subsystems to deployment to off-site locations. This particular

week constitutes the operational meat of the best crew competition, and is similar to what the crews will experience during the annual Battalion Command Inspection and Evaluation Program (CIEP).

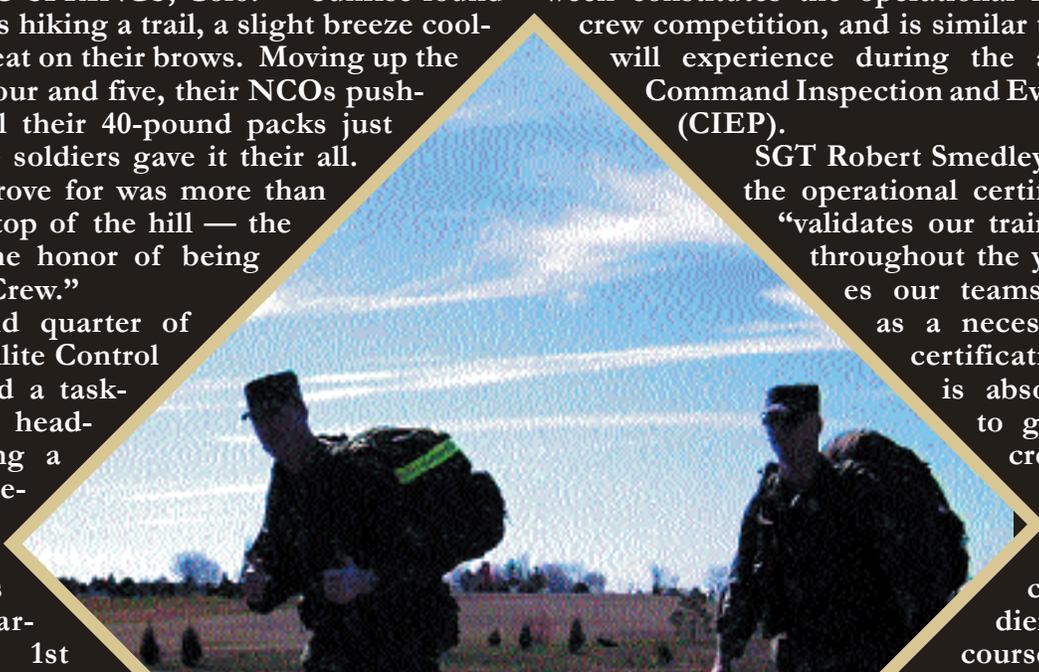
SGT Robert Smedley, contestant, said the operational certification of crews “validates our training efforts from throughout the year, and enhances our teams communication as a necessary element of certification. Teamwork is absolutely necessary to get certified as a crew.”

The ruck march, held on Fort Carson, challenged the soldiers to an eight-mile course with 40-pound packs. The personal best of every soldier was all that could be demanded, and the troops of HHC responded with a hearty effort and a close finish.

Wearing a pack nearly half her own weight, SPC Jennifer Swift said, “The teamwork was the most important part of the event. The march was physically challenging, and we had to motivate each other to finish.”

The GPS road rally was a test in navigation and Precision Lightweight GPS Receiver (PLGR) use skills. Each crew was given a PLGR and a list of 10-digit grid coordinates for points around Colorado Springs. The teams had three hours to go out and find the points — with the team locating the

(See *Soul Survivor*, page 55)



During HHC, 1st SATCON's Best Crew competition, SSG Nathan Daniell and SSG Steven Cato (above left) take part in the rucksack march and contestants SPC Chaun Frink and SGT Keith Barnhart (above l-r) attempt to cross a rope obstacle. Photo by CW2 Garth Hahn

Westerners must “publish or perish.” They have a “right to know” and a free and inquisitive press. Non-Western counterparts do not.

Next, the collection threat to this critical information must be studied. Soldiers must consider who wants what they have. Here, the intelligence community can provide assistance. The collection capability could be a highly sophisticated process or a hacker who can read the Army’s e-mail. In weighing the threat to the critical information, the answer to the next question, “Is the Army vulnerable?” may be surprising. Even units with 100 percent traditional security

of their classified information have been compromised by a hemorrhage of unclassified data. Unit leaders did not tell their soldiers what was critical to protect, and soldiers did not control bar talk, telephone talk, or what went out over the wire, much less what went into the trash. After the risks are weighed, such as collection capabilities and reaction times, countermeasures must be decided on.

The Army must communicate to accomplish any mission, but it has to remain aware of the unseen listener. Soldiers must know what an adversary can do. To survive, other countries will read everything the Army writes

and listen to any conversation they can. The Army has to see itself as others see it.

Once they learned that the Viet Cong had made tiny mines from discarded C-ration cans, soldiers stopped leaving cans uncontrolled. Now, the Army should do no less with its open source information.

John W. Davis, a retired U.S. Army MAJ, teaches the threat portions of the Department of the Army’s Operations Security course at the Space and Missile Defense Command, Huntsville, AL. (Article updated: From ARMY Magazine, July 1997. Copyright 1997 by the Association of the U.S. Army and reproduced by permission.)

Soul Survivor ... from Page 32

most points winning.

SPC Chaun Frink, a member of Crew 3, said this event was “adventurous and made us use teamwork to drive, navigate and find the points.”

This task was best accomplished using waypoints on the PLGR. In the end, Crew 3 turned out to be the team finding the most points.

The day after the road rally, HHC held the obstacle course and Jeopardy contest. The obstacle course was conducted at the Air Force Academy’s Jack’s Valley Training Complex, and required the teams to surmount 17 obstacles over the one-mile course.

Each team took on obstacles such as rope swings, water traverses and belly busters in a timed circuit. Teamwork was encouraged, and in some cases absolutely necessary. All the soldiers learned something about themselves as they pushed through the difficult course.

The Jeopardy! Competition was a mental challenge that

followed the tough physical workout of the obstacle course. Done in the Jeopardy model, answers were given under 12 categories in two rounds, and the team with the highest score in the end won. This game was complete with “Daily Doubles” and a Final Jeopardy question.

The categories covered military history, leadership, and a slew of operational inquiries that challenged the teams with both Army and mission related questions. Crew 2 answered the most questions correctly.

The next day, a Class A uniform inspection was held to determine the best prepared team. This event evaluated the preparation of the uniform and personal appearance, and Crew 1 came out best in this “dress right, dress” event. As the final event in the Soul Survivor Challenge, the Class A inspection wrapped up three weeks of good-natured, competition.

Each of the teams did very well, excelling in one or more

of the events, but the team that ended up with the highest overall score, winning the competition and becoming HHC’s Best Crew was Crew 3, led by SSG Steven Cato.

Cato said, “We all enjoyed the competition, it was a fun change of pace, and the variety of areas tested really challenged the team.”

Cato’s crew will compete for the 2003 Best Crew title with the Best Crews from the other five companies in the 1st Satellite Control Battalion.

The Soul Survivor challenge resulted in one Best Crew being chosen at HHC, but all crews shared the benefits of stronger, more cohesive teams as a result of the intense efforts required by the competition.

CW2 Garth Hahn serves as the Operations Officer for HHC, 1st Satellite Control Battalion. He served two tours in Kosovo performing voice and data switching and wide-area network management. During his 12-year tenure as an enlisted satellite systems operator-maintainer, he held various staff and operations positions in tactical and strategic satellite stations. He also serves as unit reporter.