



# Tip of the Sphere

## Soldiers display Warrior spirit at SMDC/ARSTRAT Competition

By Sharon L. Hartman

FORT LEE, Va. -- Twenty six of the U.S. Army's best Noncommissioned Officers and Soldiers competed against each other to earn the titles of Department of the Army Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year, Oct. 1-5. Among this elite twenty six stood two members of U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/U.S. Army Forces Strategic Command, both proudly representing the command and proving that the warrior spirit does not only live within Soldiers who serve on the front lines.

"We had the opportunity to represent all the outstanding Soldiers from within our MACOM," said SGT Patrick Mann, SMDC/ARSTRAT's 2007 NCO of the Year and the SMDC/ARSTRAT 2006 Soldier of the Year. "It was a great honor to be able to show to the rest of the Army the quality of Soldiers that proudly serve within SMDC/ARSTRAT."

SGT Martin Jensen represented SMDC/ARSTRAT as the 2007 Soldier of the Year. He began the competition through company and regional levels as a specialist, but was promoted to sergeant shortly before the MACOM board. Both Mann and Jensen are satellite network controllers stationed with Charlie Company, 53rd Signal Battalion in Landstuhl, Germany.

The DA competition put the Soldiers through a wide range of events to include a board chaired by the Sergeant Major of the Army, Kenneth O. Preston, a traditional Army physical fitness test, a written exam, day and night urban orienteering, M4 rifle qualifications, battle drills and the infamous mystery events.

Having competed in 2006 for the Soldier title, Mann commented that "the competition was very similar to last years, so there were no real surprises for me. However, the mystery events are always a challenge and they did a great job picking a wide variety of tasks."

In the end, SSG Jason R. Seifert from the National Capital Region was named the Army's top NCO and SPC Heyz T. Seeker with U.S. Army Special Operations Command was selected the Army's top Soldier.



Photos by Sharon L. Hartman



# From Their Point of View

By SGT Patrick J. Mann  
& SGT Martin A. Jensen

**L**ANDSTUHL, Germany — The saying, “work hard, play hard” has been around for many years. The expression conveys the idea that although we as individuals are strenuously focused on our work mission, we also have other personal activities that we participate in with the same zeal and passion as our work.

This statement could not have been truer than it was for us as the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/U.S. Army Forces Strategic Command’s Soldier and Noncommissioned Officer of the Year. The hard work was not even close to over after we were selected to represent SMDC/ARSTRAT in the Sergeant Major of the Army’s Best Warrior Competition in October at Fort Lee, Va. As we prepared for that competition, there was plenty of hard work. It started months earlier with countless hours of PT [physical training], land navigation, Army Warrior Tasks, weapons, and of course studying regulations and manuals.

The sergeants major of SMDC/ARSTRAT had some top-rate, challenging training arranged for us at the operational headquarters in Colorado Springs, Colo. We spent two weeks in September at Fort Carson, Peterson Air Force Base, and the Air Force Academy training on anything and everything that might be thrown at us during the competition in Fort Lee. We spent three days at the range qualifying with the M4 from the foxhole, prone, kneeling and standing positions. We covered dozens of miles in full battle rattle practicing day and night land navigation, both with and without the PLGR [Precise Lightweight GPS Receiver]. We practiced our Modern Army Combatives in addition to regular morning PT.

On the weekends, we’d take all our gear and a 35-pound rucksack and head off for a ruckmarch through the Garden of the Gods. There was also extensive training on chemical, biological,



Photo by Sharon L. Hartman

radiation and nuclear attacks, improvised explosive devices, urban warfare, and the EST 2000 was used to help us practice our escalation of force and rules of engagement. We also had the M249, M240B, M2, and M9 readily available to practice disassembly, assembly and functions check. As to be expected from a world class organization such as SMDC/ARSTRAT, the teams in Colorado Springs did an incredible job.

So we’ve talked about working hard, but what about playing hard. This really began the moment we were announced as the winners of the SMDC/ARSTRAT competition. We were given hundreds of dollars in gift certificates and traveler’s checks, numerous coins and plaques, an ACU [Army camouflage uniform] assault pack, complete set of dress blues, and even an official Army Noncommissioned Officer sword.

Our first duty as the 2007 Soldier and Noncommissioned Officer of Year was to attend the uncasing of the colors at Redstone Arsenal, Ala. This was our first opportunity to see the outstanding team at Redstone and get a VIP tour of the Von Braun Complex. Just a short month later and we were back in Huntsville for the 2007 Space and Missile Defense Conference. The week began with a four-person best ball tournament where the SMDC/ARSTRAT Commanding General LTG Kevin T. Campbell, CSM Ralph C. Borja, 1st Space Brigade CSM Kevin McGovern, and SGT Mann shot a very respectful nine under par, just missing a top three finish.

# 2007 SMDC/ARSTRAT NCO of the Year SGT Patrick J. Mann



*Photo courtesy Department of the Army*

After competing in the Best Warrior Competition in October, we again had the opportunity to relax and have some fun in Washington, D.C., during the Association of the U.S. Army Conference. The first thing on After Cour agenda was a Potomac River Cruise sponsored by Gerber Knife. The fully catered, three-hour cruise was a salute to some of Americas Wounded Warriors with about 15 Soldiers from Walter Reed Hospital able to attend. We were lucky enough to have our family with us, and they were able to enjoy the cruise along with CSM Borja and his wife.

Tuesday evening was spent moving amongst the various hospitality suites sponsored by the numerous AUSA vendors. Throughout the night, CSM Borja introduced us to many of his friends and contemporaries. The culmination of the week was Wednesday night during the George C. Marshall dinner. Just before the dinner, we pinned on our VIP passes and walked the conference floor with CSM Borja, walking away with some of the best loot the AUSA conference had to offer.

Only 10 days after our time in D.C., we were off again, this time to the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., to view the Space Shuttle Discovery launch. Once again we were able to link up with our families and CSM Borja for the activities. We were again given VIP passes, this time to tour the visitor center and museums, attend mission briefings from NASA officials, and view the launch. The night before the launch, we were invited by Army Astronaut COL Douglas Wheelock



# 2007 SMDC/ARSTRAT Soldier of the Year SGT Martin A. Jensen

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*Photo courtesy Department of the Army*

to a reception in his name. It was a fun and festive evening as hundreds of people celebrated the achievements of this distinguished SMDC/ARSTRAT officer.

The next day was the much anticipated launch. We loaded the bus around 8:30 a.m. and headed out to our prime viewing location at Banana Creek. As the clock hit 10 seconds the crowd joined in and began counting down. At T-0, you could see the flames bursting out of the solid rocket boosters and the shuttle began to lift off the pad as hundreds of spectators cheered and yelled. Shortly after lift off, the sound waves finally made it across the water and shook everyone to their core as they watched in awe.

The shuttle was actually in view for about a minute and half, but at the same time it seemed to go by in a split second and take an eternity. This latest trip seemed to epitomize the entire experience that came with winning the titles of SMDC/ARSTRAT Soldier and Noncommissioned Officer of the Year. There were monumental challenges that were met and overcome, as well as amazing once in a lifetime opportunities given and taken.

All in all, it was an incredible journey that will not soon be forgotten. And, much like the shuttle launch, it seemed to take forever while simultaneously passing in the blink of an eye.

It was an experience that helped to define the lives and futures of these two very fortunate Soldiers who would not trade it for the world.



NCO

# SSG David A. Engelhardt

2007 SMDC/ARSTRAT Western Region NCO of the Year  
Runner up, 2007 SMDC/ARSTRAT NCO of the Year

Photos by Sharon L. Hartman

Delta Company,  
53rd Signal Battalion (SATCON)  
Camp Roberts, Calif.



Soldier

# SPC James E. Cox

2007 SMDC/ARSTRAT Western Region Soldier of the Year



Headquarter and Headquarters Company,  
53rd Signal Battalion (SATCON)  
Schriever Air Force Base, Colo.

CANDIDATES



Soldier

## SPC Joseph B. Knece

2007 SMDC/ARSTRAT Pacific Region Soldier of the Year  
Runner up, 2007 SMDC/ARSTRAT Soldier of the Year

Charlie Detachment, 1st Space Company,  
(Joint Tactical Ground Station - Pacific), 1st Space Battalion  
Osan Air Base, Republic of Korea



Soldier

## SPC Ericka A.W. Melius

2007 SMDC/ARSTRAT Eastern Region Soldier of the Year



Alpha Company,  
53rd Signal Battalion (SATCON)  
Fort Detrick, MD