

Top NCO, Top Soldier Selected to Represent at DA Best Warrior Competition

By Sharon L. Hartman
USASMDC/ARSTRAT

PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo. — Overcast skies and muddy terrain could not stop four enthusiastic Noncommissioned Officers and four Soldiers from gutting it out during the 2009 U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year Competition. The weeklong event, conducted May 30 - June 4, was comprised of a variety of events to test the physical and mental strength of eight competitors. The eight competing for the title were from various USASMDC/ARSTRAT units around the globe, representing the Western, Eastern, European and Pacific Regions.

The grueling competition began on Monday with an Army Physical Fitness Test conducted by the 1st Space Brigade. The pushups and sit-ups were fairly typical, but running two miles at an altitude of more than 6,000 feet above sea level was something new for a several candidates coming from much lower elevations.



Candidates perform various tasks throughout the competition.



Above Photos by Michael Kahl
USASMDC/ARSTRAT



Photo by Sharon L. Hartman
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Next on the agenda was a written exam followed by an afternoon at the weapons range, again hosted by the 1st Space Brigade. Although the drenching rain from the previous week had let up for the afternoon, wind gusts up to 30 miles per hour made zeroing and qualifying quite a challenge for the competitors.

The Urban Orienteering courses followed on Tuesday managed by members of the 100th Missile Defense Brigade (GMD). In this event, candidates were trained on and given Defense Advanced GPS Receivers as they navigated their way to various points in both day and night courses.

The following day began in the dark early morning hours. An extended convoy of tactical vehicles slogged through rain soaked roads, mud caking thicker and thicker around wheel wells, as they made their way to the Military Operations on Urban Terrain site. This is where the grueling Situational Training Exercise event would soon take place.

The first candidate was briefed and then given 30 minutes to rehearse with their unit before heading into the unknown to be watched and graded by an Observer/Controller. As each candidate left, the next one was brought in to begin the 30 minute brief and rehearsal period before they too would depart to face a stream of events and encounters with the enemy, the ultimate goal - the rescue of a sheik held captive at the overrun Embassy.

As the candidates began maneuvering their unit through the course, a nearby "mosque" reverberated with music. Gunfire and mortar rounds could be heard in the distance. The first encounter with the enemy came just beyond the mosque. Shots rang out and the candidate along with team took cover returning fire and quickly taking out the opposition. The group then cautiously made their way down the lane only to find a car ablaze from a

Western Region NCO and Soldier Competitors



SGT Sarah Haskins
4th Space Company,
1st Space Brigade,
Peterson Air Force Base, Colo.

SPC Kyle Behrens
Headquarters & Headquarters Company,
53rd Signal Battalion,
Schriever Air Force Base, Colo.

Eastern Region NCO and Soldier Competitors



SSG Matthew S. Davidson
Bravo Company,
53rd Signal Battalion,
Fort Meade, Md.

SPC Roy E. Dilworth III
Bravo Company,
53rd Signal Battalion,
Fort Meade, Md.

“roadside bomb.” A “victim” lay nearby in agony from “burns” to nearly half her body. After tending to the victim and calling in for a medevac, the candidate again cautiously proceeded on with their unit.

Near the “hospital” more enemy gunfire rang out and once again the candidate returned fire neutralizing the enemy. Adding to the action this time, two figures ran out of the hospital screaming in fear and convulsing to the ground. In less than ten seconds, the convulsions stopped as the victims lay still. By that time, the team knew there had been a chemical attack and were already masked to protect themselves.

The candidate directed the team to hastily move out of the contaminated area and continue down the lane. Just ahead a “burning” U.S. helicopter was seen strewn across the middle of the road. As the candidate quickly drew closer screams could be heard from inside, as two “injured” crewmembers lay helpless within the burning wreckage. The candidate, with assistance from their unit, quickly extricated the wounded Soldiers and provided medical assistance, once again calling for a medevac.

Finally, the Embassy was in sight. Candidates guardedly led their team into the building, clearing room after room and sporadically meeting close fire. Eventually the sheik was recovered safely in the basement as enemy combatants lay “dead” throughout the building. It was a successful end to a long and taxing day.

The following day held the culminating event for the competition. Although less physically demanding than the preceding event, the board appearance was just as stressful. Rapid fire questions from a panel of Command Sergeants Major tested the knowledge and mental toughness of each competitor.

The events over, the selection of winners was announced during a standing room only ceremony at Peterson Air Force Base Building Three’s training rooms. SGT Sarah Haskins was selected as the 2009 USASMDC/ARSTRAT Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, and SGT Travis Parsons was named the 2009 USASMDC/ARSTRAT Soldier of the Year. (Parsons was promoted to the rank of sergeant after he began competing for the Soldier title.)

Haskins, a Signals Analyst with 4th Space Company, 1st Space Battalion out of Peterson Air Force Base, Colo., represented the Western Region and Parsons, a Satellite Network Controller from Echo Company, 53rd Signal Battalion in Okinawa, Japan, represented the Pacific Region. The selectees, two will head out to Fort Lee, Va., in September to represent USASMDC/ARSTRAT at the 2009 Department of Army Best Warrior Competition.

The other competitors for the title were European Region NCO of the Year – Staff Sgt. Jonas Moody, 1st Space Company, 1st Space Battalion (first runner up); Pacific Region NCO of the Year – Staff Sgt. David Padilla, 1st Space Company, 1st Space Battalion (second runner up); Eastern Region NCO of the Year – Staff Sgt. Matthew S. Davidson, Bravo Company, 53rd Signal Battalion (third runner up); Western Region Soldier of the Year – Spc. Kyle Behrens, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 53rd Signal Battalion (first runner up); Eastern Region Soldier of the Year Spc. Roy E. Dilworth III, Bravo Company, 53rd Signal Battalion (second runner up); and European Region Soldier of the Year – Spc. Matthew Heard, Charlie Company, 53rd Signal Battalion (third runner up).

European Region NCO and Soldier Competitors



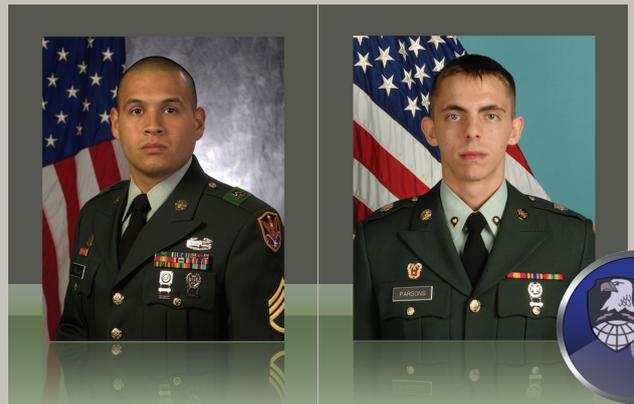
SSG Jonas Moody

Bravo Detachment,
1st Space Company,
U.S. Central Command at time
of Regional competition.

SPC Matthew A. Heard

Charlie Company,
53rd Signal Battalion,
Landstuhl, Germany

Pacific Region NCO and Soldier Competitors



SSG David Padilla

Delta Detachment,
1st Space Company,
1st Space Battalion,
Misawa Air Base, Japan

SGT Travis D. Parsons

Echo Company,
53rd Signal Battalion,
Okinawa, Japan