

MILITARY POLICE WARFIGHTERS

Story and photos by Cindy Ramirez



Sgt. Ryan L. Rutherford, Team 33, HHC 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, at the confidence course.

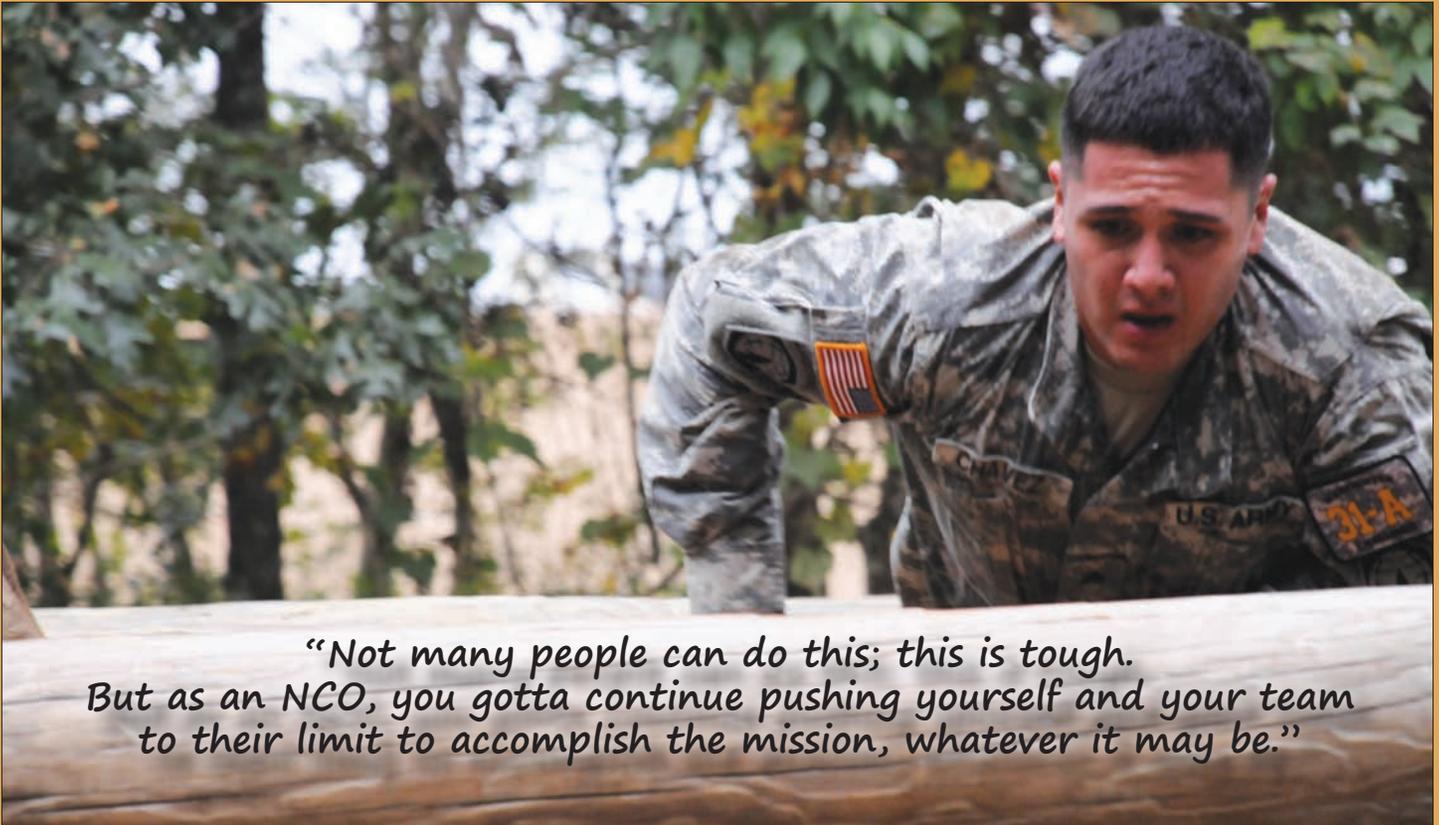


Eight of 36 teams finished the competition with only two men, and five teams were unable to complete it, mostly due to injuries.



Staff Sgt. Adam R. Norton led Team 2 from the 385th MP Battalion, Fort Stewart, Ga., to victory as the 2010 first place winners.

Above, an unidentified Soldier tackles the pull-up challenge during the MP Warfighter Competition at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., in September.



“Not many people can do this; this is tough. But as an NCO, you gotta continue pushing yourself and your team to their limit to accomplish the mission, whatever it may be.”

Above: Sgt. Alonzo Chavez, Team 31, of the 503rd MP Battalion, Fort Bragg, N.C., tackles the confidence course. **Below:** Team 6 members from left, Pfc. Wayne J. Hodge, Sgt. William R. Veith and Pfc. Brandon J. Cummings of the 525th MP Battalion, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, near the finish line of the 15-mile march.

14TH ANNUAL TEAM CHALLENGE GETS TOUGHER

Blistered feet, twisted ankles and aching backs are among the battle scars more than 100 Soldiers were left with following the 2010 Military Police Warfighter Team Challenge.

More telling of the grueling mental and physical challenge were the MPs' grunting, sweat-dripped

faces during the competition. Expressions of sheer exhaustion eventually turned into smiles, faces beaming with pride at the end of the event Sept. 13-16 at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., home of the Military Police Corps.



Presented with Warrior Tasks, Battle Drills and endurance challenges, 36 three-man teams from installations across the globe were tested in their technical and tactical abilities. Each team was led by a noncommissioned officer, with two other members of lower enlisted rank.

The winners:

- **First Place:** Team 2, 385th MP Battalion, Fort Stewart, Ga. — Staff Sgt. Adam R. Norton, Spc. Gene F. Thompson, Spc. Joseph D. Kajer

- **Second Place:** Team 1, 504th MP Battalion, Fort Lewis, Wash. — Sgt. Justin A. Jordan, Spc. Aaron E. Garlock, Spc. Joseph K. Maza

- **Third Place:** Team 16, 508th MP Battalion, Fort Lewis, Wash. — Sgt. Vincent P. Jarman, Spc. Spencer L. Grantham, Spc. Brandon Walker

“Not many people can do this; this is tough,” said Sgt. Alonzo Chavez from Team 31, 503rd Military Police Battalion, Fort Bragg, N.C. “But as an NCO, you gotta continue pushing yourself and your team to their limit to accomplish the mission, whatever it may be.”

The mission included a non-standard physical training test that comprised of flat-box push-ups, pull-ups, 25-pound weighted sit-ups and a six-mile run, during part of which competitors had to carry a 70-pound ammunition can and then a 50-pound water can.



Team 13, led by Sgt. Jonathan Miller, above, received the Spirit Award. Miller finished the competition smiling, on crutches and in probable need of knee surgery.

Rainfall added to the challenge during the 16-obstacle confidence course and a march to the tactical site exploitation exercise. There, teams were to search a building, locate and search detainees, and process and escort the detainees — Fort Leonard Wood basic training Soldiers role-playing as Iraqi insurgents — in a simulated Iraqi village.

Combatives matches, daylight and limited-visibility marksmanship tests, and Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills were among the challenges, the latter sending teams down miles of gravel road to several stations where they were tested on non-lethal weapons identification, blind-folded weapons assembly, responding to a casualty and more.

The final day comprised a 30-minute, 50-question written exam and a full-gear, 15-mile endurance march.

“We hit them hard and heavy,” said Sgt. 1st Class Shon Dodson, NCO in charge of the competition. “It gives them an experience they’ll never forget.”

Dodson said this year’s competitors were younger and lighter than in years past — most were between 19 to 21 years old and weighed 160 to 175 pounds. Competitors have been three to five years older, and about 10 pounds heavier.

“They’re fast. They’re fit. They’re dedicated,” Dodson said. “They’re not these big-muscle guys who are out to



Team 30 members Sgt. Samuel L. Dagiau, forefront, Spc. Steven E. Stam, right, and Spc. Justin R. Garcia, back, of the 95th MP Battalion, Baumholder, Germany, won the Warrior Task and Battle Drills challenge. Here, they are tested on a mounted combat simulator.



Team 1, from left, Spc. Joseph K. Maza, Sgt. Justin A. Jordan and Spc. Aaron E. Garlock of the 504th MP Battalion, Fort Lewis, Wash., won second place overall and also won the physical fitness assessment and team weapons night qualification challenges.

prove their brawn — though they are out to prove what they got. They are seriously hungry to take on the challenge.”

And they did, even as eight of the teams finished the warfighter challenge with only two men. Five teams were unable to complete the challenge, mostly due to injuries.

“It’s a test of endurance, physically and mentally, so it’s a huge accomplishment just to finish,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Charles Kirkland, regimental command sergeant major of the U.S. Army Military Police School, Fort Leonard Wood.

“Sleep deprivation, plus long, tough marches equals pain,” said Cpl. Christopher Vazquez of Team 20, 289th MP Company, Fort Myers, Fla.

“It was tough; so right now I just feel relieved we finished, and finished strong,” said Vazquez, whose team was first to finish the 15-mile march with a record time of 3 hours and 6 minutes. “But, it was more relieving to know I can push my Soldiers to succeed, to know anything can be thrown in our path and we’ll overcome it as a team ... not only the physical weight, but the mental weight of it. It’s a great accomplishment.”

Chavez, whose team finished with only two men, said the victory lies in doing your best — and more.

“You give all you got, and then you push out a little more, especially if you’re a leader,” said Chavez.

“You lead by example, and they give back.”

Cpl. Jerad B. McCaslin, who led Team 17, 720th MP Battalion, Fort Hood, Texas, agreed, adding that inspiration is a two-way street.

“I have to give it up to those guys behind me, it was those guys who motivated me,” McCaslin said. “When you’re training your Soldiers and they respond positively, you know you’ve instilled something in them and they’re giving back to you. It makes you proud to know you’ve done something right, and that they’ll be strong leaders themselves.”

After winning his combatives match, Sgt. Logan Gabrielson of

Team 23, 303rd MP Company, Jackson, Mich., said “every day is a building day here. I’m honored to be part of this.”

Promoted to sergeant and selected to compete and lead his team just two months prior to the warfighter challenge, Gabrielson said he’s been inspired to be a leader by his father, and now his comrades.

“When I was a little kid, he would be in his uniform and I would notice how people looked at him — with thanks and gratitude. He led by example, and as an NCO, I hope to do the same,” he said about his father, retired 1st Sgt. Gentle James Beard.



Above: Team 18 members Sgt. Benjamin Lacaire, left, and Spc. Anthony D. Hauck, try to catch their breath after completing the final endurance march. **Right:** Team 19 Staff Sgt. Donny L. Timas prepares his weapon during the M4 zero challenge.



“Here today, I see a lot of that strong leadership from my fellow NCOs that I will learn from.”

The competitive nature of the event didn’t take away from that fellowship. In fact, the event coincided with the 69th anniversary of the corps and the annual regimental conference at Fort Leonard Wood, celebrated with the theme of “The Army’s Triple Strand of Strength: Military Police Corps Regiment.”

The competition encouraged unity among its participants, no matter their military occupational specialty within the corps. The three MOSs are military police, criminal investigation special agents and correction specialists.

“The camaraderie was awesome,” said Sgt. Thomas L. Rincon of Team 4 from the 40th MP Battalion, Fort Leavenworth, Kan. “All the teams came together to help and motivate each other, and that was awesome to see.”

Staff Sgt. Scott Snyder, a reservist from Team 5, 317th MP Battalion, Tampa, Fla., said he felt better prepared to go back and train his reservists for future warfighter challenges.

“We finished strong, so I want part of my message to be that we can compete at a level equal to our active duty brothers,” said Snyder, a two-time competitor. He added jokingly as he took a deep breath, “But I’ve also learned not to come back a third time.”

When asked if he’d be back next year, first-time competitor Rincon said as tough as the challenge was, “Absolutely, I’m coming back — with a vengeance.”

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Top left: Sgt. James Obra, Team 3, 92nd MP Battalion, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., grunts during the 25-pound weighted sit-up challenge. **Center left:** An unidentified Soldier looks out a window during a tactical site exploitation exercise. **Bottom left:** Team 26 members, from left, Spc. Terrence Williams, Spc. Nicolas Tomaro and Cpl. Brabdon Smith of the 519th MP Battalion, Fort Polk, La., work their way through a mock Iraqi village. The team won the confidence course challenge. **Above, right:** Sgt. Vincent P. Jarman (red belt) of the 508th MP Battalion, Fort Lewis, Wash., led Team 16 to finish in third place overall. Competing against him in the combatives match is Sgt. Jonathan Miller, Team 13, 716th MP Battalion, Fort Campbell, Ky.



Above, left: Led by Cpl. Christopher Vazquez, Team 20, 289th MP Company, Fort Myers, Fla., finished first in the 15-mile endurance march. **Above, right:** Boots off, Sgt. Jeremy S. Gross of the 759th MP Battalion, Fort Carson, Colo., naps following his medical evaluation after completing the warfighter challenge. **Below:** Team 4, from left, Spc. Vincent R. Pimentel, Spc. Anthony R. Perry and Sgt. Thomas L. Rincon of the 40th MP Battalion, Fort Leavenworth, Kan., crosses the endurance march finish line.

