



The Official Magazine Of The U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command

PEACEMAKER

Best Warrior special edition, Summer 2012

6 commands
15 Soldiers
only two make the cut

Survival of the fittest

**352nd CACOM ironmen (and women)
compete for 28 straight hours**

PEACEMAKER

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Spc. Shad Barrows checks the zero card in San Antonio / U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Felix R. Fimbres



Maj. Gen. Jeffrey A. Jacobs
—USACAPOC(A) Commanding General

Congratulations to our warriors

Congratulations to Staff Sgt. Derek Hahn of the 7th POG and Spec. Adam Engel of the 352nd CACOM - USACAPOC(A)'s NCO and Soldier of the Year. These two great Soldiers will represent CAPOC well at the Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition later this year.

Staff Sgt. Hahn and Spc. Engel trained hard, dug deep down for motivation, and put their warrior ethos and Army Values to work in order to win their unit competitions and finally come out on top at the USACAPOC(A) Best Warrior Competition at Fort Bragg. They represent all of the great NCOs and Soldiers of USACAPOC, and all of us are proud of them!

We all must recognize the importance of basic Soldier skills - the foundation of what we as Soldiers must know how to do. That's what the Best Warrior Competition is all about and, as Command Sgt. Maj. Blosser says below, we must refocus our training to achieve proficiency in these skills as our deployments become more predictable.

To Staff Sgt. Hahn and Spc. Engel - continue to train hard and let's show the rest of the Army Reserve what we already know - you are winners!

AIRBORNE!



Command Sgt. Maj. Dale R. Blosser
—USACAPOC(A) Command Sgt. Maj.

On warriors & training

The 2012 USACAPOC Best Warrior Competition has come to an end and this year's winning Soldiers are: Staff Sgt. Derek Hahn of the 7th Psychological operations Group, and Spc. Adam Engel of the 352nd Civil Affairs Command. Out of 15 competitors, they displayed the physical stamina and mental toughness to come out on top. All of the competitors performed admirably and maintained great enthusiasm as they faced each task and battled the weather conditions Fort Bragg is notoriously known for. All are to be commended for their great display of competitive spirit and camaraderie. Congratulations to all of you.

On this note, I would like to take a moment to emphasize the reasons we do these competitions. It stresses the very core of "Be, Know, Do"; what we as Soldiers are required to know and do on the battlefield. I could not help but notice that even at this level of competition there were definite struggles for not just one, but several Soldiers with basic rifle marksmanship (qualification) and land navigation skills. Two of the basic and perishable skills needed to "shoot, move, and communicate." Since our operational tempo has begun to wind down and become more predictable, we need to focus on getting back to the basics and fundamentals of soldiering.

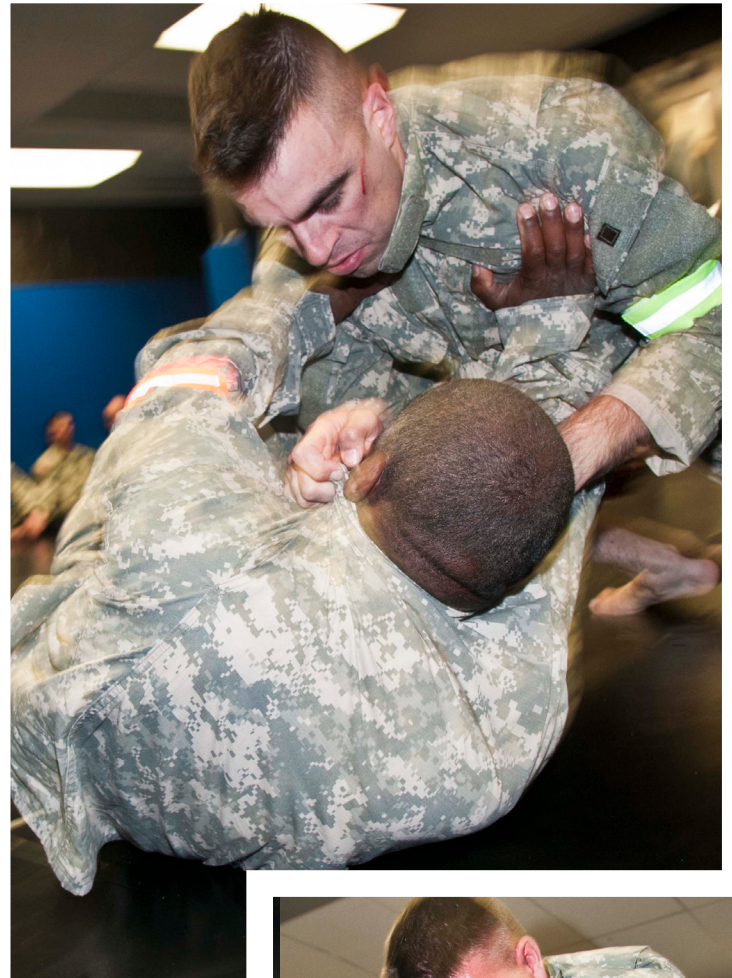
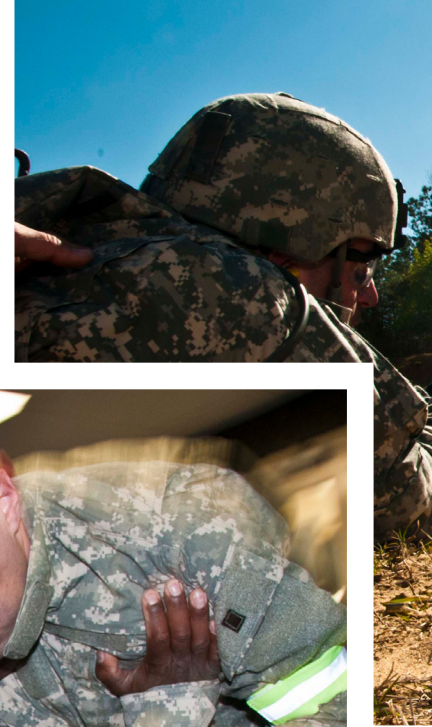
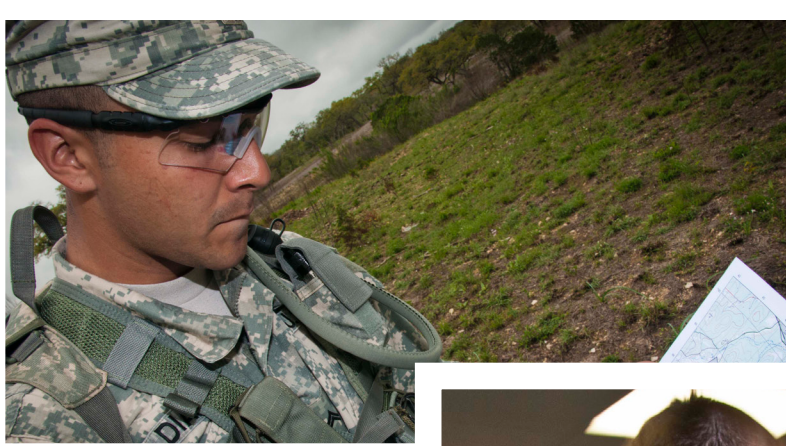
As Maj. Gen. Jacobs and I visit our units throughout the command, one of the many topics covered and stressed to commanders and NCO's is planning and conducting

training, and that means training to standard. Where do you begin to look? The Soldier's Manual of Common Tasks is a good start. How do I plan and conduct this training? Look to ATN, "Army Training Network." It offers the solutions to your training needs. Remember, it is the NCO who should be leading and conducting this training. NCOs take broad guidance from their leaders; identify the necessary tasks, standards, and resources; and then execute training. In ATN, there is a complete section dedicated to the NCO titled NCO Corner that is focused on the Noncommissioned Officer's role in the training management process.

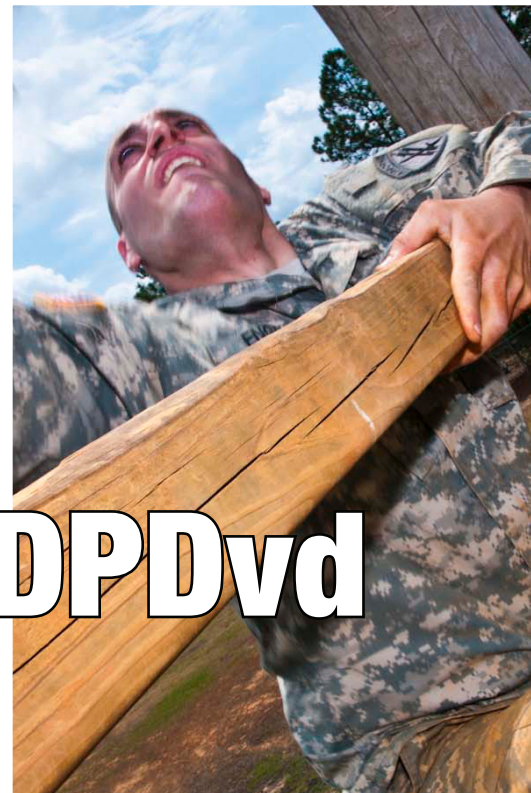
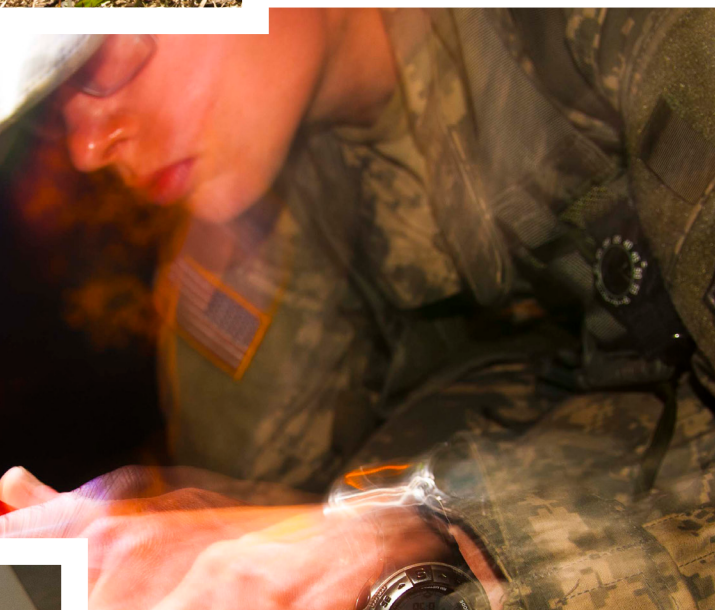
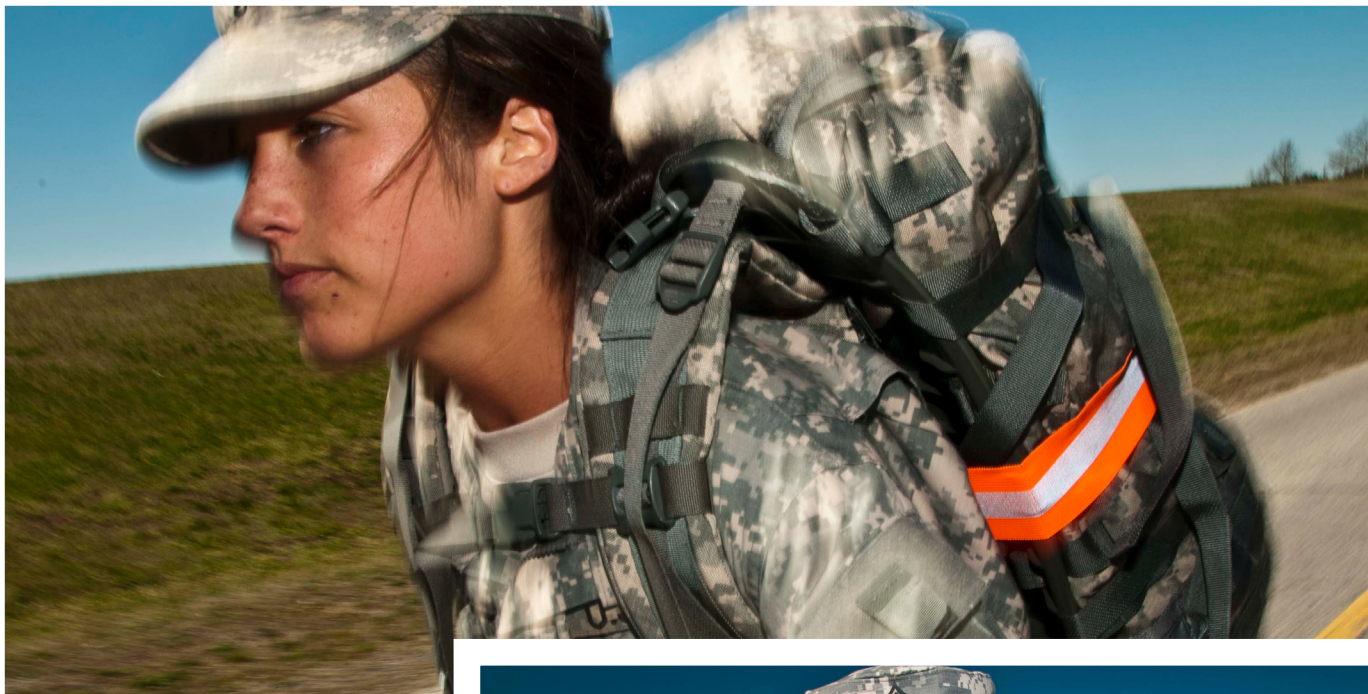
One of our biggest obstacles to overcome is time. Outside of all the requirements we are faced with, time to train is one resource we cannot afford to squander. We have to utilize the time we have available to rehearse and conduct the relevant training our soldiers need so they are prepared when they do mobilize and deploy to conduct their missions.

My challenge to the NCO Corps and enlisted Soldiers is to maximize the increased dwell time which we will gain as we draw down in Afghanistan, and use that time to focus on basic Soldier skills. Own the training you conduct and let's prepare our Soldiers for the next conflict.

AIRBORNE!



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Survival of the fittest

352nd CACOM ironmen (and woman) compete for 28 straight hours to earn the title of best warrior

By Staff Sgt. Felix R. Fimbres, USACAPOC(A) Public Affairs



Spc. Christopher Coder, 412th Civil Affairs Bn. / U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Felix R. Fimbres

The best warrior season was in full effect on April 1st and the 352nd lead the way with one of the most grueling best warrior competitions yet.

"We like to make it a challenge," said Command Sgt. Maj. Harry Bennett, "We are very proud of Staff Sgt. Klatt and Spc. Arrington who won last year's (USACAPOC Best Warrior), both from our command, and we think having a hard competition makes our soldiers ready to go to USACAPOC(A) and represent the command at the Army Reserve level."

Klatt and Arrington both found themselves at this year's best warrior as well, however in a different role than competitor. This year Klatt was one of the cadre team, the soldiers behind the scenes who make the event tick. "We're doing something a little special this year, if a competitor is able to beat Klatt, they'll get bonus points,"

said Sgt. 1st Class Frederick B. Riccio, "but if they don't beat me, they'll lose points."

Arrington meanwhile, found himself in the role of sponsor, helping his fellow soldier, Pfc. Amber Nolan, get through the demanding competition. "I'm happy to be here as a sponsor, helping her out," said Arrington. And help he did, rucking alongside Nolan, providing Nolan with both motivation and a study partner.

After the second event, a 10k road march, some Soldiers were already feeling the pain. Sgt. Steven D. Rhyne found himself nursing some rather large blisters, "I'm kind of stubborn and continued with the desert, jungle style boots, and probably should have gone with the newer style of boots," said Rhyne, "I'll still continue, but I won't be much of a competitor now."

And there was a lot left to continue with. The road march conveniently ended at the range, allowing the competitors to go directly into the range portion of the competition. Which was immediately followed up with a range related mystery event: disassemble and reassemble

the M9 pistol followed immediately by test fire and malfunctions test.

As the sun began to set, the soldiers walked across the street and were greeted with an obstacle course, which allowed for three soldiers to run through simultaneously. A quick dinner was followed by a full night's worth of Warrior Tasks, putting the physically exhausted and tired soldiers through a mental ringer.

"These soldiers have endured an intense schedule of events, but they also started to mold as a team. They've developed respect for their fellow competitors and made new friendships," said Bennett

Around midnight the land navigation portion started off in the dark and ended well past sunrise. But there was no time to rest, a quick breakfast and a written exam awaited the tired competitors.

The final event would prove to be the most grueling. A Modern Army Combative's tournament capped the two day ordeal, pitting these warriors against each other in physical combat.

In the end, Sgt. Paul Rothfeld of the 450th Civil Affairs Battalion, in Riverdale, Md. and Spc. Adam Engle of the 401st Civil Affairs Battalion in Webster, N.Y., were chosen. These two Best warriors went on to represent the 352nd at the USACAPOC(A) Best Warrior competition at Fort Bragg, N.C. on May 4.

"Rothfeld and Engle are a reflection of the great Soldiers we have in the command and continue a tradition of winning. They follow Klatt and Arrington, who won at Fort Bragg last year and went on to the U.S. Army Reserve best warrior competition. The 352nd is well represented by this year's Best Warrior winners," said Bennett.

See the rest of the photos on Flickr at — bit.ly/KDPDvd

Soldier of the Year

USACAPOC(A)
Junior Enlisted
Best Warrior



Spc. Adam Engle

352nd Best Warrior, USACAPOC(A) Soldier of the Year

I came out here with the plan to not embarrass my unit, they took very good care of me, and they made sure I had everything I needed.

I trained on warrior tasks for a few days before coming out here; we took out that WWT level 1 book and just trained like crazy.

I like to think that the more you put into something, the more you'll get out of it. I put in a lot, and I feel like I really got a lot out of it. I think that the training we receive at our Battle Assemblies is good, but there is nothing like the opportunity to be a part of this, cramming all the activities in and getting stressed tested.

Throughout this whole competition, I felt that win or lose; as long as I give it my all- when it was over I wouldn't regret anything. I think that is huge. Every single event, I gave it 100%, if someone is going to beat you, they are going to have to earn it.

Showdown by the Alamo

350th Civil Affairs Command finds its best warrior

**By Staff Sgt. Felix R. Fimbres,
USACAPOC(A) Public Affairs**

Spc. Cecil Shaw, of the 451st Civil Affairs Battalion in Pasadena, Texas, found himself limping towards the finish line with sweat covering him from head to toe.

While this was a race, his competitors rallied behind him and cheered him to the finish. Even though the U.S. Army Best Warrior Competition season may be ripe with a series of highly competitive affairs, the underlying camaraderie that every soldier carries with him isn't trumped by who finishes first.

This was especially true for Sgt. Joseph Schrock of Headquarters, Headquarters

Command of the 350th, a veteran of multiple best warrior competitions.

This was his second time competing against the best the 350th CACOM has to offer. After narrowly taking 2nd last year, Schrock is back and ready to give whomever wins not only a fair fight but also a helping hand.

"If they can beat me — great, and if they want me to sponsor them and help them get thru it because I've already been here, then I'm all about that too. The end state is getting the right guy from the 350th to keep advancing and being the best in the Army," explained Schrock

Staff Sgt. Andrew J. Paulson, of Grapevine, Texas, is a civil affairs team sergeant with the 413th in Lubbock, Texas and last year's 350th CACOM best warrior, came back to not only give whomever was chosen a good challenge, but to experience a unique Army tradition.



Cpl. Gregory G. Eaton, 490th Civil Affairs Bn. / U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Felix R. Fimbres

“What we do during the Best Warrior Competition is why most people join the military, so if you want to get a real good taste — get back to the basics. Do a best warrior competition. It’s all about soldiering,” said Paulson. Over the course of three days, the best warriors put their soldiering skills to the test by completing basic events like the Army physical fitness test and the ruck march, but also combat skills like marksmanship and combatives, and were also mentally challenged with written exams and oral boards.



Oral boards provided the sergeants major of the 350th CACOM a chance to put their soldiers under stress by asking a barrage of questions that must be met with confidence and knowledge. A soldier never wants to be to be grilled by a sergeant major, let alone four at the same time.

“You have to know your Army regulations and field manuals, but most of all you have to be confident, no matter what,” said Cpl. John Diaz, from El Paso, Texas, and is a civil affairs team sergeant with the 410th. Certainly knowing the material helps, and no other soldier has had a more intense study regiment then Staff Sgt. Bartholomew Rhode from Columbus, Neb., the senior intelligence sergeant for the 486th Civil Affairs Battalion in Tulsa, Okla., took his preparation to a whole new level. “I studied online, but I also downloaded the audio files from the Army study guide website and listened to them whenever I could — during runs, at work, and even in my sleep,” said Rhode, just minutes after exiting the sergeants major lion’s den, unscathed and supremely confident in his performance.

In fact, one thing all of these soldiers can take away from these events is a new-found understanding of their capabilities.

“It’s a challenge in every way. It teaches you what you can be capable of doing. You will find out how strong you are,” said Sgt. Arnaldo Rivera, is a civil affairs team leader

with the 402nd in Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico who lives in San Juan.

As the sun began to set over Texas, it was time to announce the two winners. After much deliberation and a careful examination of each soldiers performance, two winners emerged from the pack; Staff Sgt. Bartholomew Rhode of the 486th Civil Affairs Battalion in Tulsa, Okla., and Spc. Shad A. Barrows of the 413th CA Battalion in Lubbock, Texas.

And while victory was sweet for Rhode and Barrows, another battle waited just over the horizon. They were the first two of 16 selected to meet at Fort Bragg, N.C., to find out who will become the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne)’s next best warrior.

“It’s a challenge in every way. It teaches you what you can be capable of doing.”

- Sgt. Arnaldo Rivera, 402nd Civil Affairs Bn.

See the rest of the photos on Flickr at — bit.ly/KDPDvd



Jose A. Torres, CSM, 478th Civil Affairs Bn. / U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Felix R. Fimbres

West Coast Challenge

The 351st CACOM tests their Soldier's mettle along the rocky Oregon coast.

By Staff Sgt. Amanda Smolinski, USACAPOC(A) Public Affairs



With competitive enthusiasm, the 351st Civil Affairs Command soldiers drove to the northern coast of Oregon to Camp Rilea, where more than 18 junior enlisted and non-commissioned officer competitors met to earn the title of best warrior and a chance to progress to the next level of competition.

After reading about competitions at the highest Army level, 351st CACOM Command Sgt. Maj Mark Martello told the competitors, "It is about time we win." Martello told each of the competitors to maintain a mind-set that they are the best in the Army while demonstrating their warrior abilities.

The BWC is an opportunity for soldiers to demonstrate the training and physical conditioning exercised throughout the year, in front of their peers, leadership and the entire command.

The coastal valley camp, nestled in a temperate rainforest, provided all but an easy challenge for the competitors. Despite the herd of elk parading through the training site, copious rainfalls that flooded the area on occasion, or the mystic-like marine air that greeted soldiers each morning, the climate and training sites forced the competitors to transcend their basic soldiers skills and unleash the warriors within themselves.

Despite the range of experiences and types of badges worn on competitors' uniforms, Staff Sgt. Jose Soto, of the 426th Civil Affairs Battalion in Upland, Calif., looked forward to the competition and admitted that his weakness might be the written tests, but that his greatest strength was that he wanted to be there.



"Whether I win or lose, my major motivation is to go back to my S-1 office and raise the standard by setting the example," said Soto. "I want to show them that you don't have to win, just try; because in the effort of trying is how you develop all of the skills, trades and Army values."

Martello says that the competition is his best way as a CACOM CSM to evaluate how the command's units are performing, their skill levels, and esprit de corps as a whole, competitors, NCO sponsors and teams alike.

He believes that through this evaluation, it is one of the major advantages to having his command sergeants major from each of the CACOM's brigade and battalions attend the competition.

"They can see for themselves, and the lessons learned are circulated much faster; it is clear whether we are hitting the standard or not," said Martello.

Over the course of four days and with the help of their NCO sponsors, competitors raced for time and accuracy during an APFT, written test, a mystery event in which competitors were given the task to find four points and perform a skill along an unknown distance, day and night land navigation, an obstacle course, and a 10k ruck march. Soldiers were also tested on their marksmanship skills and Army knowledge at an oral board where they stood in front of senior enlisted leaders and went to a range to fire the M-16 rifle and M-9 pistol.

Not all soldiers had the same amount of time to prepare for the competition, but Spc. Shawn Brooks out of the 448th CA BN in Ft. Lewis, Wash., had four weeks to prepare after winning the best warrior competition

held at his battalion.

"Because the battalion held a best warrior competition, it made me better prepared and put me in a good mind-set to be here," said Brooks.

After winning the junior enlisted best warrior competition title, Brooks said he used the time to refine his map reading skills before moving onto the 351st CACOM BWC. "I am carrying the weight of the battalion here with me, I have to represent."



At the end of the grueling week, a junior enlisted and NCO soldier, both from the same command, the 425th Civil Affairs Battalion out of Encino, Calif., earned the title "Best Warrior," Pfc. Lester Ambergey and Staff Sgt. John Astorga. They will represent the 351st as they advance to the next level of competition at the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne)'s best warrior competition in May.

"There is no doubt in my mind that these two soldiers live and practice soldiering, not just in anticipation of a competition, but they practice and live the Army values 24/7," said Martello.

See the rest of the photos on Flickr at — bit.ly/KDPDvd

"I want to show that you don't have to win, just try; because in the effort of trying is how you develop all the skills, trades, and Army values."

- Staff Sgt. Jose Soto, 426th Civil Affairs Bn.



Neither Sleet nor Hail

353rd Soldiers battled through barrages of sleet

By Pfc. Lalita Guenther, USACAPOC(A) Public Affairs

Soldiers did not let rain, sleet, nor snow stop them from completing their mission. From chilling breezes, to spells of pouring sleet, they kept on going without complaint. Through the woods and over gravity-defying obstacles, not one of them ever gave up.

Only five Soldiers from the 353rd Civil Affairs Command, in Staten Island, N.Y., accepted the challenge, but all of them endured until the end. The best warriros from the 353rd descended upon Fort Indiantown Gap, Penn., from April 10 through 12.

Three Noncommissioned Officers (NCO), and two Soldiers went into this competition together, each hoping to advance to the next level of the competition.

As usual, this Best Warrior Competition started off with an Army Physical Fitness Test early the first morning. After pushing themselves to their physical limits these Soldiers moved on to the land navigation portion of the competition.

Land navigation has its risks. The terrain features, while helpful when it comes to navigating, can also pose threats. Thick patches of brush and leaves hide deep holes in the ground, and unsteady rocks and thorny bushes put Soldiers at a high risk for injury. This is only mild

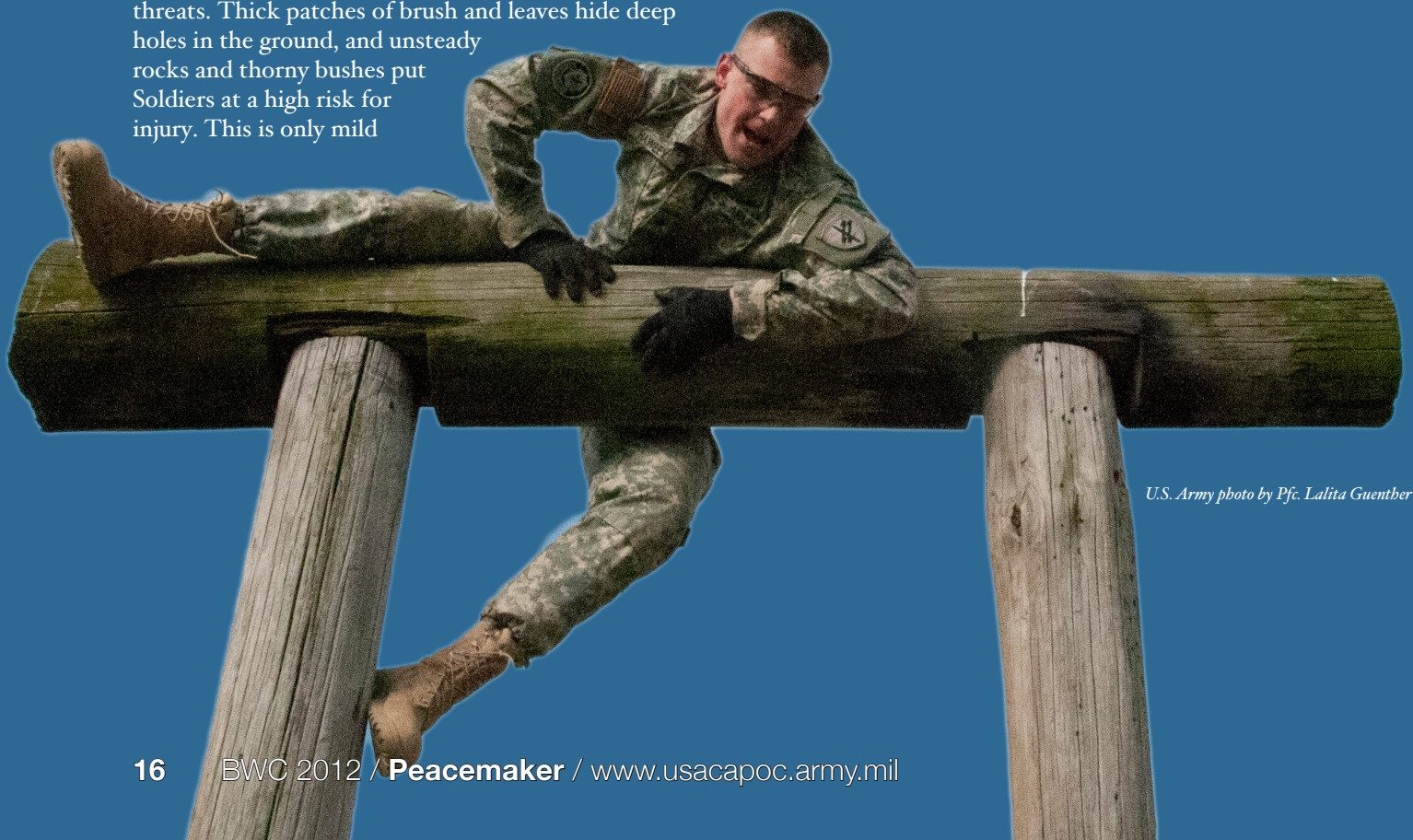
compared to some of the sudden drop-offs, which can sneak up on Soldiers if they are not careful.

Without injuries or complications, each Soldier made it back to the starting point, ready to depart for the electronic simulation training range, where they all had to qualify with an M16 rifle, and last for the day – some drill and ceremony tests.

The following day consisted of an obstacle course, a 10 kilometer ruck march, and preparation for an appearance board. The final day of competition was a written exam, and the board.

Finally, the awards ceremony and banquet took place, where they announced the winners, Staff Sgt. Donald E. Ellis and Spc. Nicholas Hawley of the 353rd CACOM. The winners were selected to compete in the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) Best Warrior Competition at Fort Bragg, N.C. in May.

See the rest of the photos on Flickr at — bit.ly/KDPDvd



U.S. Army photo by Pfc. Lalita Guenther

Two from twinsburg

2nd Psychological Operations Group Awards Top NCO and Soldier for best warrior competition

By Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Siemion, USACAPOC(A) Public Affairs

Sweat, sore muscles and self motivation drove Soldiers from the 2nd Psychological Operations Group in competing in the 2nd POG Best Warrior Competition in Twinsburg, Ohio in early April. They competed for the opportunity to represent the 2nd POG at the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) Best Warrior Competition.

These Soldiers have competed in many levels leading up to the 2nd POG competition. Noncommissioned officers and junior enlisted Soldiers are not only competing but are receiving excellent training at the same time.

"This Best Warrior Competition can be a resource and labor intensive event," said Command Sgt. Maj. Donald E. Langworthy, 2nd POG Command Sgt. Maj. "The return on that investment may be that I am helping to groom my future platoon and first sergeants."

"It's a great event, you get to participate with the best of each company," said Staff Sgt. Ryan Steadman, from the 312th PSYOP Co., Upper Marlboro, Md. "Also you get to represent the group which is really interesting and a really neat honor."

Day one began with registration, uniform appearance during an oral board, "I'd never been to a board before so I was really nervous about my uniform," said Pfc. Michael Bullis, from the 312th PSYOP Co., who then completed written exam and an essay with his fellow competitors.

On the other hand, Bullis was not nervous about physical training and land navigation. "I feel pretty confident in land navigation," he said. "I

feel really good because land navigation is one of my favorite and strongest events after the Army Physical Fitness Test."



The APFT, weapons qualification, Warrior Tasks and a 10k ruck-march tested the Soldiers on Day 2 of the competition.

While confident in some events, Bullis admits there were a few times during the competition he was worried. "One of the hardest parts for me (during the APFT) was a straight-away towards the end of the first mile," said Bullis. "I just looked down that track and I knew I had to run back as fast as I could."

Friendly competition proved to be a helpful motivator for Bullis.

"Sgt. Steadman and I were the first two to finish, and we actually finished within a few seconds of each other so we kind of motivated each other during the run," said Bullis.

The competition ended on day three with land navigation and an awards ceremony where Steadman and Bullis were recognized as the group's winners.

"Keeping an active training cycle at my unit has helped me prepare for the BWC"

- Sgt. Ryan Steadman, 312th PSYOP Co.

"Keeping an active training cycle at my unit has helped me prepare for the BWC," said

Steadman. "There were some easy points I left out on the table. I am definitely going to work on the appearance part for the board at the next competition."

See the rest of the photos on Flickr at — bit.ly/KDPDvd

One winner, many awards

7th Psychological Operation Group Best Warriors aim for victory and a foreign badge.

By Pfc. Lalita Guenther, USACAPOC(A) Public Affairs

Earning a German Armed Forces Badge for proficiency is a hard task. Competing in a Best Warrior Competition can be even tougher. Soldiers from the 7th Psychological Operations Group did both, as they held a combined BWC and GAFB, March 25 to 29, in humid San Antonio weather at Camp Bullis, Texas.

Competing for the GAFB is not an everyday occurrence in the Army Reserve, but the two competitions coincided, and some of the events in the GAFB counted for points or were given a “go or no go” toward the BWC. The events included a 7.5-mile ruck march, M9 pistol qualification, day and night land navigation, and track and field events making it a very rigorous week during the combined four-day competition.

“Combining the GAFB with the Best Warrior Competition is very exhausting,” said Spc.

Justin Taylor, a PSYOP specialist in the 341st PSYOP Company, out of San Antonio. Whether or not soldiers completed proficiently in each portion, they will leave with the experience and knowledge received during both events.

“I’m excited to just be able to learn what I can about everything here so I can take it all back to my unit and teach them,” said Spc. Sally Roberts, a PSYOP specialist in the 324th PSYOP Company, out of Aurora, Colo.

The skills, whether it be the 200-meter swim for the GAFB or how to evaluate a casualty during the BWC, will be valuable at any time during a soldier’s life. Knowing these skills before hand is preferred. However, some competitors are simply learning as they go.

“I wasn’t sure what to expect, so I was willing to take what was thrown at me and it has turned out that it has been really tough with a lot of tough competitors,” said Roberts. “It has been a lot of fun to get back in there and have the heart and mind set and just roll with it.” Mixed in the planned schedule for the week have been mystery events for the BWC – where with little or no warning or preparation, soldiers are presented a task and are expected to complete it to standard. One of these mystery events included the assembly of an M9 pistol, an M4 carbine rifle, and an M240B machine gun while blindfolded.

“We all want to be the best warrior, but we are going to help each other get there.”

- Spc. Justin Taylor, 341st CACOM

After one minute they were allowed to take their blindfolds off. After assembling the weapons (in under six minutes), soldiers had to correctly perform a functions check on each weapon. Sometimes the soldiers got lucky and had a mystery event they happened to be very

good at. It could be anything from weapons assembly to combat life saving skills.

Sgt. Derek Hahn, a PSYOP specialist with the 341st, was one of the lucky soldiers who just happened to have recent experience assembling weapons on a time restriction. Spc. Justin Taylor, with the 341st, used to be an armorer, and together he and Hahn would practice assembling and disassembling weapons, said Hahn.

This eventually led them to having races to see who was faster, and with this practice they were oddly prepared for the mystery event. Many of these soldiers know each other closely and are friends. Feeling the challenge of having to compete with each other only pushed the competitive level higher for each event. This aspect gives the word “competition” a whole new angle.

“Looking to your battle buddies for motivation has helped in the competition,” stated Cpl. Matthew Fish, a PSYOP specialist from the 318th PSYOP Company, out of St. Louis. “Helping them get motivated just makes it more of a competition for myself against the other soldiers.”

During both competitions, camaraderie and teamwork came together as one as shouting voices of motivation helped push the competitors to finish strong. “The sportsmanship has been excellent,” stated Taylor. “We all want to be the best warrior, but we are going to help each other get there. We are going to motivate each other and help the soldier who might be ten yards behind us during the ruck march.”

In the end, Hahn (top non-commissioned officer) and Spc. Levi Coulter (top lower enlisted soldier) from the 324th Psychological Operations Company out of Aurora, Colo., were named 7th POG NCO & Soldier of the year.

See the rest of the photos on Flickr at — bit.ly/KDPDvd



USACAP
Best Warrior 12.
NCO of the Year



Staff Sgt. Derek Hahn
7th POG Best Warrior, NCO

“While preparing for the competition, my sponsor and I got the WTT from of the book and we went line by line until I was proficient at it. Spc. Taylor (the representative at the POG level) was there as well as SGT Pena to push me to continue to train in different ways. “This time we’re gonna do it backwards, or blindfolded, until you get it down,” they told me.

I enjoy challenge competitions and believe that if you are not pushing yourself every day; I think you are wasting the time that you are given. There is no reason to do something if you are going to do it halfway, you’ve gotta do it full-on.

The best part of the competition was the combatives tournament. Since it was the last event, no one was holding back or trying to negotiate, it was just try until you were done.”



Pfc. Michael T. Bulis, 312th PSTOP Co. / U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Felix R. Fimbres



NEXT LEVEL

After a long series of competitions, two winners advance to U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior

By Staff Sgt. April Evaro, USACAPOC(A) Public Affairs

Top competitors gathered from all corners of the country to participate in the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Command (Airborne) Best Warrior Competition here, May 4-8. The competition was a grueling 5-day event that not only tested the tactical and

technical skill of the 15 competitors but also tested their mental fortitude and physical strength.

The competition began as a race against the clock during an Army physical fitness test and continued with a written test, day and night

orienteering, an obstacle course, a 10k ruck-march as well as weapons familiarization. Soldiers were also tested on their Army knowledge and warrior tasks at an appearance board where they stood in front of the command's most senior enlisted leaders.

"I enjoy doing all the Army stuff; going to the field, the land navigation, physical training," said Pfc. Michael T. Bullis, of the 312th Psychological Operations Company in Upper Marlboro, Md.

"I have enjoyed applying all the skills I have learned."

Each Soldier at this competition was a seasoned competitor having won competitions leading up to the USACAPOC(A) BWC and each brought specific strengths, skills, and experience ranging from the newly enlisted Soldier to the seasoned Non-Commissioned Officer.

"I told a lot of my friends back home that I was in this competition, and they said that it is really cool that I just got out of basic (training) and I was chosen to represent my unit," said Bullis. "I am really proud to be here."

This is the sixth year that the Army Reserve has held BWC events, and the third year that USACAPOC(A) has participated.

The competition was designed to not only test the skills and knowledge of the competitors, but also to challenge their strength and willpower, said Master Sgt. Brooks, the USACAPOC(A) competition coordinator.

"This year, we built the schedule of events to be extremely challenging compared to the previous years," said Brooks. "The land navigation portion of the event topped off a day that started at 3:30a.m. and the schedule of events was not going to end until 2:30a.m. the following morning."

According to Bullis the most challenging part of this experience were the early mornings.

"Waking up at 2a.m. for the ruck-march and knowing that I still had the rest of the day ahead of me and I probably wasn't going to be able to hit the sack for another 14 hours was rough," said Bullis. "It's been hard, but I've had a really good time with it."

While some events in the competition are standard Soldier tasks at a basic level, the USACAPOC(A) competition committee was able to incorporate skills-training that Soldiers do not receive on a regular basis.

"We have been able to incorporate training into this competition, for example the M249 and M240, simply for familiarization," said Brooks. "Some soldiers have never operated a crew-served weapons-system before, so for us to take some of the competition stress away with the addition of training, the soldiers could concentrate on learning the fundamentals and enjoy the training aspect."

Soldiers are renowned for their preparation and training. Staff Sgt. Derek Hahn and his sponsor Sgt. Roland Pena of the 341st Psychological Operations Co. trained in their off-time.

"We trained at Camp Bullis for ruck-marching, combatives, the obstacle course and we ran through a lot of mock-boards to get Hahn ready," said Pena. "I enjoy challenge and competition," said Hahn. "If you are not pushing yourself every day; I think you are wasting the time that you are given. There is no reason to do something if you are going to do it halfway; you've got

to do it full-on."

First term Soldier and police officer cadet Spc. Adam Engel of the 352nd Civil Affairs Command not only embraced the hectic schedule and atmosphere of the BWC, but excelled.

"I like to think that the more you put into something, the more you'll get out of it. I put in a lot, and I feel like I really got a lot out of it," said Engel. "I think that the training we receive at our Battle Assemblies is good, but there is nothing like the opportunity to be a part of this."

Engel went on to say that his philosophy is to always do your best. "Throughout this whole competition, my mantra was 'win or lose'; as long as you give it your all- you don't regret

"I am really honored to be a part of this."

- Staff Sgt. Derek Hahn, 7th POG

anything," he stated. "Every single event, I gave it 100 percent. If someone is going to beat you, they are going to have to earn it."

Along with friendly competition, the Soldiers of the BWC gained a new respect for fellow comrades.

"I've learned a lot about the way that USACAPOC(A) functions as a whole," said Hahn.

"I learned how the components such as civil affairs, military intelligence and supply work together for USACAPOC(A); we are all Soldiers and we all share the same mission."

At the end of the competition, Soldiers chattered away while they cleaned their gear and equipment. Despite the fact that they were working on a lack of sleep and physical exhaustion, the competitors talked about what they had learned from this experience.

"I want to take back what USACAPOC(A) does for esprit de corps- take it back for next year's BWC so that any one of my Soldiers can come back and accomplish this," said Hahn.

Both Engel and Hahn took home top BWC honors and were named USACAPOC(A) Soldier of the Year and Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year. Both will immediately begin preparing for the Army Reserve Command Best Warrior Competition this summer at Fort McCoy, Wisc. where they will represent all of



***Do you have any tips for
someone who has never
competed in a Best Warrior
Competition before?***

Staff Sgt. Fimbres is the combat documentation specialist for the USACAPOC(A) Public Affairs Office. He is kind of a whiner but he usually knows what he's talking about, or at least that's what we in the office like to tell him. This issue he offers his unique perspective in the hopes of helping future Best Warrior Competitors.

Do you have a question you'd like feedback on? Send us an email to publicaffairs@usar.army.mil

I've covered a number of best warrior competitions over the years here at USACAPOC(A) and if one thing has shown itself time and time again is that no one wins an event like this without preparing for it.

However, I've also found that no two Soldiers prepare the same way. So let's dissect some of the events you know will always be in a BWC.

Andrew Paulson, has won his share of competitions; he is also a Team Sergeant with the 413th Civil Affairs Bn., located in Lubbock, Texas. Paulson finds time in his busy schedule to ruck by simply incorporating it into one of his routines,

"I take my ruck every once in awhile when I'm walking the dog," said Paulson, but he also feels the secret is in how he carries his weight, "Carry your load high and your ruck tight; it's always worked for me and that's the biggest tip I have."

When it comes to the obstacle course, not everyone has one sitting in their backyard, but you can still prepare your body.

Cpl. Diaz, said when it comes to the obstacle course you want to be fit.

"I do the Olympic training lifts, you want to do a lot of functional lifts and Crossfit is definitely a good option," he said.

Beyond your physical conditioning, you'll also want to be mentally fit as well. No one did that better at this year's competition than Staff Sgt. Bartholomew Rhode. When I asked him how he trained he told me, "Well, I studied and I downloaded the mp3 files from the Army study guide website and listened to it when I was working out and even listened to it when I was sleeping."

Of course, there are dozens of other ways to train and prepare, but these should get you started.

Also, let's not forget the importance of having a great sponsor.

When talking with last year's winner, Justin Arington of the 352nd Civil Affairs Command, it was pretty obvious that his sponsor was going above and beyond in taking care of his soldier, providing him with everything he needed, including wrapping up his feet prior to the ruck. Of course Arington had to prove himself, but not having to worry about little things helped him focus on the win.

The road to



Begins Today.

Will you be ready?

Or just left in the dust