



NEWS RELEASE

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Staff sergeant with V Corps surgical team earns title of U.S. Army Europe NCO of the Year

By Jason L. Austin

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HEIDELBERG, Germany – A V Corps Soldier has beaten out two other competitors to be named this year's U.S. Army Europe Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

Staff Sgt. James Rehl, stationed at Giebelstadt (Germany) Army Airfield, is an operating room technician with the 67th Forward Surgical Team. He represented V Corps during a three-day competition held at the Grafenwoehr (Germany) Training Area July 12 - 15.



JASON L. AUSTIN
Staff Sgt. James D. Rehl of V Corps' 67th Forward Surgical Team plots points on a map prior to beginning the land navigation course during the U.S. Army Europe Noncommissioned Officer of the Year competition July 13 in Grafenwoehr, Germany.

In a rigorous test of skills that focused on a "total Soldier" concept, competitors were required to best their fellow Soldiers in a fitness test; a written examination; day and night land navigation; an tactical scenario in which they had to help a squad of

German soldiers cross a river; a road march; weapons qualification; situational training exercises and a night live-fire exercise.

USAREUR's top enlisted Soldier, Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Gravens, said he was impressed with all that the nominees accomplished during the competition.

"We are an Army at war, so we conducted the competition like we are at war," Gravens said. "This competition down at Grafenwoehr was not about being in the classroom. It's about three-and-a-half hard days, going event to event to event, showing us they are physically, mentally competent."

The Soldiers also answered questions on a wide range of Soldier-related topics for a panel of USAREUR's senior enlisted Soldiers. Rehl and the others were judged based on wear of their Class A dress uniform, their knowledge, and their overall presentation.

To get to the USAREUR level of competition, the NCOs had to earn the title of NCO of the Year in their respective units. They started at their company-level NCO of the Month boards and then progressed upward, competing against other NCOs at all levels of their commands.



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Staff Sgt. James D. Rehl of V Corps' 67th Forward Surgical Team nears the finish line of the 2-mile run event of the Army Physical Fitness Test during the U.S. Army Europe Noncommissioned Officer of the Year competition July 13.

Each time a Soldier gets top honors at a board he receives promotion points, experience and at some levels, cash and prizes. The rewards for being a NCO of the Year are numerous, but Rehl said, "The best part is the recognition of my team members. The nine others who have served with me have prepared me to get here. They get recognized also for the achievements. I stand up in front of everybody, but it's my team members and my supervisor that put me here."

Each NCO is accompanied by a sponsor, who helps him prepare and stands with him when he appears before the board. Each sponsor spends a considerable amount of time working with and mentoring the Soldier he sponsors.

Rehl's sponsor, Sgt. 1st Class Alexander Abiang, spoke highly of Rehl and said the USAREUR NCO of the Year was a deserved honor. "If you give him a mission, he will go through a wall to accomplish every mission. That's what makes him the best NCO."

It's a Soldier's mission and performance of duty that is the cornerstone of being a Soldier, Rehl said.

"Being a Soldier means someone who does their duty every single day. It doesn't matter what ... your military speciality. You're always a Soldier first. Any time you put on this uniform, you stand a chance to get on the plane ... any time you stand a chance of getting on a plane, you stand a chance of being engaged by the enemy.

Each and every person who put on this uniform is a Soldier and what that means to them is going to differ, but it is all going to be based on the values of the Army."

Rehl, who has been in the Army six years, will go on to compete at the Department of the Army level in October. Meanwhile, "I will continue to go to work like I go to work everyday," Rehl said. "So many people take these things

so seriously. It took me a year to get here. What I did to prepare was I went to work every day, because you learn things at work all the time that help you with these things."

Rehl isn't just happy for the recognition his achievement brings; he says he's just plain happy to be in the Army.

"I was a career car salesman before I came in the Army. One day one customer changed all that for me, and I'm in the Army now. I had one sergeant major tell me he'd been getting out for 20 years now. The Army finds some way of making you happy. I love the Army."