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By Sgt. Marisa Lindsay

No rest for the weary: Alaska Army National Guard best warrior competition singles out top Soldiers

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Seven Soldiers competed in the 2015 Alaska National Guard Best Warrior Competition held during a rainy and fog-filled weekend at a variety of training locations on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Sept. 25-27.

This year's three-day competition consisted of 15 events that physically and mentally challenged the sleep-deprived Soldiers.

The 72-hour course began Thursday night with in-processing and a brief night of rest. The competitors started early Friday morning with an Army physical fitness evaluation, and the remaining competition included written examinations, evaluations on day and night land navigation, weapons knowledge and tactical shooting; and participation in an obstacle course and a variety of other assessments.

"What the Best Warrior Competition is looking to do is identify the Soldiers that are mentally and physically equipped to perform these Soldier tasks alongside environment-produced and self-induced stress," said Master Sgt. Justin Shaffer, the operations sergeant and deputy commandant for the 207th Multifunctional Training Regiment, who is in his fifth year running the Best Warrior Competition operation.

Constant drizzle, fog and colder temperatures delivered plenty of environmental stressors for the participants as they navigated their way through the mainly-outdoors competition.

"The rain really did present a challenge," stated Private 1st Class Michael Notti, a paralegal specialist with the 761st Military Police Company and competitor in the event. "You're coming through an event feeling exhausted and physically drained and on top of that it's raining, so it was hard to focus — it really tests your skillset and your abilities."

Even though it's a strict competition, Notti explained that everyone covered down to make sure each competitor was supported and had what they needed.

"At the end of the day, we are all the Alaska Army National Guard and we want everyone to do well," concluded Notti.

After the competition had concluded, the wet, muddy and weary Soldiers were given a few well-deserved hours to eat and clean up prior to reporting Sunday afternoon to the drill hall floor where

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friends, family and fellow Guardsmen were in attendance awaiting the announcement of junior enlisted and non-commissioned officer Best Warrior winners.

State Command Sgt. Maj. Marc Petersen, with the Alaska Army National Guard hosted the awards ceremony, where Spc. Dillon Ball, with the 1st Battalion Airborne, 143rd Infantry Regiment, Bravo Company, was named Junior Enlisted Soldier of the Year and Staff Sgt. Edsel Huyhn, also with the 1st Battalion Airborne, 143rd Infantry Regiment, Bravo Company, was named Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year.

“Win or lose, the Soldier walks away knowing more about himself ... they know what it takes mentally to get through situations — because this is so much more than a physical competition,” explained Shaffer. “I’ve never seen anyone walk away from this event having wished they didn’t participate; they always walk away knowing themselves, their skillset, and the Army better.”

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Seven Alaska Army National Guardsmen board a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter during the 2016 Alaska Army National Guard’s Best Warrior Competition on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Sept. 25. The Best Warrior Competition was designed to test Soldiers in a series of mentally and physically challenging events over the course of 72 hours to determine who the best junior enlisted and noncommissioned officers are in the Alaska Army National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Kristopher Fager)



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Alaska Guardsmen treat simulated casualties before evacuating them by dragging a 170-pound dummy in a Skedco (TM) during the 2016 Best Warrior Competition on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Sept. 25. The Best Warrior Competition was designed to test Soldiers in a series of mentally and physically challenging events over the course of 72 hours to determine who the best junior enlisted and noncommissioned officers are in the Alaska Army National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Kristopher Fager)



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Pfc. Michael Notti, 761st Military Police Battalion, leads his troops during the drill and ceremonies portion of the 2016 Alaska Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Sept. 26. The Best Warrior Competition was designed to test Soldiers in a series of mentally and physically challenging events over the course of 72 hours to determine who the best junior enlisted and noncommissioned officers are in the Alaska Army National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Balinda O'Neal Dresel)



PHOTOS

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and small selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.
2. **Flickr link** includes an event album with the complete selection of full-resolution, free downloadable images. (Flickr is not generally accessible from .mil computers.)
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaskanationalguard/21753383751/in/album-72157656810300914/>
3. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is also generally accessible from .mil computers for individual users.)
<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/177438/no-rest-weary-alaska-army-national-guard-best-warrior-competition-singles-out-top-soldiers#.VgnJU3luUk>