

# Fort Bragg Military Working Dog Teams Take Home Trophies From 10th Annual Iron Dog Challenge

*By Sergeant First Class Melvin Avis*

The battle lines were drawn in the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains as competitors entered the field for the 10th Annual Iron Dog Challenge held at Waid Park, Franklin County, Virginia, on 10 May 2008.

The competition was designed to test the handlers and their dogs by challenging them with natural and man-made obstacles; weapon engagements; multiple water crossings; detection and apprehension scenarios; and a “dog carry” over a mountainous, three-mile course. Actual course running time and penalties (time deducted for infractions such as failed obstacles and missed targets) were used to score the event and determine team placement.

Thirty-one teams representing twenty-five agencies from across the eastern United States participated in the competition. The competitors included three military working dog (MWD) teams from Fort Bragg, North Carolina—Sergeant Heather Keefer and MWD Falco, Sergeant Henry Rabs and MWD Capka, and Specialist Cory Blair and MWD Britt.

The Soldiers from Fort Bragg have less than one year of experience as dog handlers. Each of them found the event very interesting and educational. They all appreciated the chance to visit and share handling techniques and procedures with civilian personnel from other agencies. Sergeant Keefer said, “[The Iron Dog Challenge] was challenging and a lot of fun. I would definitely compete again.”

At the end of the day, after the final competitor crossed the finish line and the scores were tallied, the Fort Bragg teams placed as follows:

- 1st place, Women’s Open: Sergeant Keefer and Falco.
- 3d place, Men’s Open: Specialist Blair and Britt.
- 5th place, Men’s Open: Sergeant Rabs and Capka.
- 2d place, Team: Sergeant Rabs, Capka, Specialist Blair, and Britt.

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