



**A Soldier performs weighted sit-ups in the competition.**

*By Ms. Emily Athens*

“True grit” became a crucial and lasting theme of the 14th Annual Military Police Warfighter competition—a four-day event held at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, 13–17 September 2010. Three-man teams representing installations around the world moved from one event site to another, covering 60 miles on foot and facing 11 grueling challenges designed to test their physical and mental abilities as they competed in numerous warrior tasks, battle drills, and endurance tests.

“[The Warfighter competition] is a test of endurance, physically and mentally, so it’s a huge accomplishment just to finish,” said Regimental Command Sergeant Major Charles Kirkland, U.S. Army Military Police School. Of the thirty-six teams that entered the competition, twenty-two finished as a team, eight finished one man short, and five dropped out.

According to Brigadier General David Phillips, commandant of the U.S. Army Military Police School, “This competition has given a lot of young Soldiers the chance to come really show their stuff. They are the best of their organizations. There are no losers here, but there will only be one Warfighter winning team.”

### **Competition**

The competition began with a nonstandard physical training test, during which participants performed push-ups, pull-ups, and weighted sit-ups and then completed a 6-mile run while intermittently carrying 70-pound ammunition cans and 50-pound water cans.

The second day of competition began with a confidence course, where Soldiers maneuvered through strength-testing and teamwork-focused obstacles. Next, they marched to the location of a sensitive-site exploitation drill, where the teams meandered through the streets of a simulated Middle Eastern village, identifying the elements of an area that had forensic and intelligence value and demonstrating their law enforcement and site exploitation skills. This exercise evaluated their abilities to quickly collect the evidence necessary to ensure that a detainee remains in custody and that he can be effectively processed through the host nation’s legal system. The day’s events concluded with Soldiers marching from station to station, embarking on numerous missions that were designed to test their abilities regarding warrior tasks and battle drills. Missions covered at the stations included weapons identification, first aid, and medical evacuation.

On Day 3 of the competition, the weary competitors demonstrated their fighting skills via combative matches. Next, their marksmanship abilities were tested at various ranges throughout the installation. Team members used a wide variety of weapons while in stationary positions and on the move, as well as in daylight and during conditions of limited visibility.

The final day of competition began with a written examination and ended with a 15-mile endurance ruck march. “We didn’t know how long we were marching when we started. It’s a scary situation,” said Corporal Christopher Vazquez, Team 20, Fort Myers, Florida.



**Soldiers crawl under the first obstacle of the confidence course during Day 2 of the competition.**

“But it was so relieving to finally get all the weight off when we finished—not only physically, but mentally, a huge weight lifted,” he said.

As teams crossed the finish line, it was evident that digging deep was the key to success and that true grit was not an option—it was essential.

### **Winners**

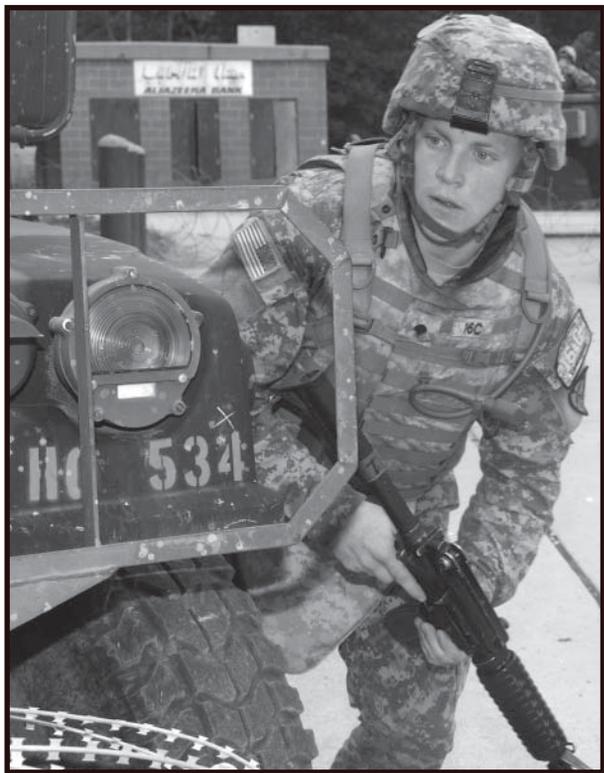
Team 2 (Staff Sergeant Adam Norton, Specialist Gene Thompson, and Specialist Joseph Kajer) from the 385th Military Police Battalion, Fort Stewart, Georgia, won the Warfighter competition.

Second place went to Team 1 (Sergeant Justin Jordan, Specialist Aaron Garlock, and Specialist Joseph Maza) from the 504th Military Police Battalion, Fort Lewis, Washington.

Third place was awarded to Team 16 (Sergeant Vincent Jarman, Specialist Spencer Grantham, and Specialist Brandon Walker) from the 508th Military Police Battalion, Fort Lewis.

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*Ms. Athens is a photojournalist with the Fort Leonard Wood Guidon.*



**A Soldier peeks around an armored vehicle during the sensitive-site exploitation challenge.**