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U.S. ARMY MANEUVER SUPPORT CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FT. LEONARD WOOD, MISSOURI



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release No. 15-197

November 12, 2015

Service members compete for German proficiency badge

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Marines were invited to qualify for the German Armed Forces Military Proficiency Badge during a six-day event held Nov. 2 through Saturday.

The GAFMPB is an annual requirement for Bundeswehr (German Army) Soldiers, but other services are afforded the opportunity to voluntarily earn the badge.

“This program is for U.S. Soldiers, run by U.S. Soldiers and supervised by a German noncommissioned officer or officer. It’s a kind of sharing,” said Bundeswehr Sgt. Maj. Marco Somma, Maneuver Support Center of Excellence International Army Programs Division.

For some participants, it’s not their first time attempting the achievement.

“I had a chance back in 2008 to compete. There were so many more events in that competition, and I missed the 3-kilometer run by about 10 seconds,” said Staff Sgt. Taylor Peters, Higher Headquarters Company, 779th Engineer Battalion, Florida National Guard out of Tallahassee, Florida.

Peters is attending the surveying engineer advanced leader course here.

“For me this is like bringing things back around full circle, and I finally get to have the badge,” he said.

The GAFMPB has three badges for which Soldiers may compete.

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“They begin with the (physical training) test. Based on their scores it’s broken down into the categories of bronze, silver and gold,” said Sgt. 1st Class Rodney Styer, interior electricians course noncommissioned officer in charge, 169th Engineer Battalion, 1st Engineer Brigade, who organized the event.

“The next day, everyone participates in the 100-meter swim. If they don’t complete the swim in 4 minutes, they are eliminated. We started with 54 and have 46 on day three,” Styer added.

Somma said he personally sees more than 1,000 GAFMPB participants a year on Fort Leonard Wood, and about 800 of them earn the badge.

“The goal is to fulfill standards for all of the different requirements based on what we use as Soldiers,” Somma said. “Swimming, for example, is for crossing a river, marching is for basic fitness, and shooting is to fulfill the standards for firing.”

Somma said he enjoys being part of the competitions.

“For me, it’s a pleasure when the U.S. Soldiers request the German proficiency badge. At the end of the day, they wear a German badge on their uniform, and that makes me proud.”

Spc. Fernando Escobedo, supply specialist, Company B, 169th Eng. Bn., 1st Eng. Bde, said it felt like a brotherhood being among the other services during the pistol qualification.

“We all do different things but, in this competition, we came together to do one thing,” Escobedo said. “It feels like we’re a Family.”

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Enclosed: Photo

Photo Cutline: Spc. Fernando Escobedo, 169th Engineer Battalion, marks his target during competition for the German Army proficiency badge. U.S. Army Photo by Staff Sgt. Kelly Carlton, Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs

For more information, contact the Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains about 80,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command’s U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, and the Army’s largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting a colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.