

The best of the best

Carson hosts NWR IMA NCO and Soldier of the Year

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The U.S. Army Garrison of Fort Carson hosted the second annual Northwest Region Installation Management Agency Noncommissioned Officer and Soldier of the Year competition May 16 through 19.

Fort Carson's own Sgt. Larry Johnson of the Soldiers' Memorial Chapel Unit Ministry Team won NCO of the Year. Spc. Amanda Stierwalt, an air traffic controller at Fort Lewis, Wash., won Soldier of the Year.

The contestants came from all over the IMA Northwest region. Competing along side Johnson and Stierwalt were Sgt. Edwin Vargas, Fort Lewis; Sgt. Nicole Brown, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.; Sgt. Kellisea Thompson, Fort Leonard Wood; Spc. Alexander Boyce, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Detroit; and Spc. Deontra Turner, Fort Carson.

The sergeants major present for the competition were Command Sgt. Maj. Jose Ranglerosado, Fort Lewis; Command Sgt. Maj. James Noble, Fort Riley, Kan.; Command Sgt. Maj. Kevin Edwards, Fort McCoy, Wis.; Command Sgt. Maj. Joseph VanDyke, Fort Carson; and Sgt. Maj. David Austin, USAG Michigan.

Representing the Northwest Region IMA command group were director J. Randall Robinson and Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Braddock.

The week began with an informal ice breaker at the Elkhorn Conference Center May 16 where contestants and reviewing sergeants major were allowed the chance to meet and greet each other.

The four-day competition tested the contestants in all the Soldier tasks.

On May 17 at range 51, the Soldiers started their first task where they were required to zero their rifles without assistance and then perform M-16 qualification using paper targets.

In the afternoon, Soldiers performed common-task training consisting of six tasks. All Soldiers were required to maintain an M-16 series rifle, decontaminate themselves and their equipment, communicate via tactical radio in a secure net, evaluate casualty, and perform first aid to prevent or control shock. Those competing in the Soldier category were required to control entry and exit from a registered area and NCOs were required to request a medical evacuation.

The day after the range and CTT brought an early morning physical fitness test. The Soldiers were tested on their push-up, sit-up and running abilities.

Later that morning, the Soldiers took a written test and

Sgt. Larry Johnson, left, Fort Carson, knocks out push-ups as Sgt. 1st Class Glen Wilson grades his abilities.

Spc. Amanda Stierwalt, Fort Lewis, Wash., and Sgt. Larry Johnson, Fort Carson, discuss memories of the competition before the awards dinner at Elkhorn Conference Center May 19.

Spc. Amanda Stierwalt, Fort Lewis, Wash., uses a tactical radio during the common-task training portion of the competition.



Sgt. Kellisea Thompson, front, and Sgt. Nichole Brown, both from Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., plot points on a map before tackling the land navigation course at Range 8 on May 18.



From left, Command Sgt. Maj. Jose Ranglerosado, Fort Lewis, Wash.; Sgt. Maj. David Austin, USAG Michigan; Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Braddock, Northwest Region Installation Management Agency; Command Sgt. Maj. Kevin Edwards, Fort McCoy, Wis.; and Command Sgt. Maj. James Noble, Fort Riley, Kan.; carefully judge Sgt. Nichole Brown, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., during her board. The board tested the Soldiers' military bearing, appearance and general military knowledge.

wrote essays. The theme of the essay was "If I were Sergeant Major of the Army, what three things would I focus on?"

That afternoon, the Soldiers hit the land navigation course where they plotted points on a map and navigated from point to point.

On May 19, Soldiers presented themselves before a board of sergeants major and were judged on military bearing, appearance and general Army knowledge.

The awards ceremony and dinner was that night at the Elkhorn Conference Center. The guest speaker was Sgt. Maj. Julia Woodhouse, senior enlisted adviser for the Staff Judge Advocate. Woodhouse spoke to the Soldiers about the roles of NCOs.

"You are charged with great responsibility," said Woodhouse. "You must now set the example for others to emulate. The key to success is not that you arrive at the top, but that along the way you stop to help others you've met along the way."

After the guest speaker addressed the attendees, plaques, gift cards, gifts bags, and Army Commendation Medals were awarded to Stierwalt and Johnson, who will go on to represent the Northwest Region in the national competition.

"This competition was very tough," said Johnson. "The opportunity that I have to represent the Northwest Region IMA NCO of the Year at the next level is humbling. I hope that I will be able to stand up to the expectations set for me. I'm sure that Specialist Stierwalt would agree with me, that the best is yet to come."



Northwest Region Installation Management Agency director J. Randall Robinson presents a coin to Sgt. Kellisea Thompson, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., during the awards dinner at the Elkhorn Conference Center. All the contestants received coins from Robinson and Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Braddock, NWR IMA, for their hard work.



Spc. Deontra Turner, Fort Carson, fires for grouping while zeroing his M-16A2 rifle at Range 51 May 17.