75th Ranger Regiment Team Takes Top Spot at 2017 Best Ranger

KEITH BOYDSTON

After enduring and dominating three days of intense and grueling competition, the 75th Ranger Regiment team of CPT Michael Rose and MSG Josh Horsager captured the 2017 Best Ranger title on 9 April, beating out 52 other elite Ranger teams.

The team maintained the number one ranking going into the third day and during the final day of events, which included the Darby Queen obstacle course, water confidence course, and the final buddy run. The 75th Ranger Regiment team was able to slip past SSG Carlos Mercado and 2009 winner MSG Chad Stackpole of the 82nd Airborne Division who finished in second place.

"This competition was just as tough as the last one; my body is toast right now," said Rose, a member of the 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, Fort Lewis, WA, and who was also part of the winning team in 2014. "I'm more proud of this win because we brought the title back to the 75th Ranger Regiment and this one is for them."

Horsager, also of 2-75th Ranger Regiment, echoed that sentiment.

"This is something I've looked forward to since I joined the Army," he said. "It's been one of my career goals, and I'm proud to represent the 75th Ranger Regiment."

Rounding out the top three teams was last year's winning team of CPT Robert Killian and SSG Erich Friedlein of the National Guard.

Of the original 53 teams to begin the competition, only 21 finished. During the awards ceremony 10 April, Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army GEN Daniel B. Allyn commended all the Ranger teams who competed.

"Each one of these great Rangers embraces the Warrior Ethos, and at the end of those few days, they will carry those values and experiences back to the units to train and develop the next generation of leaders," said Allyn.

The event challenges two-man Ranger teams in events that test their physical conditioning, Ranger skills, and team strategies. The events are purposely scheduled back-to-back and around the clock for 58 hours, allowing little time for rest and meals. The competition has been compared to the Ironman and Eco-Challenge competitions.

"This willingness to fight through pain, to persevere in the face of adversity and to work together to ultimately triumph, are the hallmarks every one of us holds dear and that ultimately assures success in life," Allyn said.

Read the complete article at: https://www.army.mil/article/185770/75th_ranger_regiment_team_captures_2017_best_ranger_competition.

(*Keith Boydston works for the Maneuver Center of Excellence Public Affairs Office.*)

Photos by Patrick A. Albright

CPT Michael Rose and MSG Josh Horsager, winners of the 2017 Best Ranger Competition, cross the finish line of the competition's final event on 9 April.

Photo by SPC Sharell Madden

Above, a competitor fast ropes from a UH-60 Black Hawk during the first day of the 2017 Best Ranger Competition. Top right, a team jumps over the final obstacle while competing in the Spartan Race event on 8 April. At right, a team completes the helocast event on the last day of the competition. Below, MSG Josh Horsager reaches for the Ranger tab before dropping into the water during the water confidence course on 9 April, the third and final day of the competition. View more photos at: http://www.fortbenningphotos.com/Infantry-Brigades/Airborne-Ranger-Training-Briga/Ranger-School/Best-Ranger-Competition/2017-Best-Rager-Cmpetition.

SFABs to Free BCTs from Advise, Assist Mission

C. TODD LOPEZ

In May 2017, the Army established the first of what will eventually be six security force assistance brigades (SFABs). That unit, now assigned to Fort Benning, GA, has already identified about 70 percent of the personnel who will ultimately serve under its flag and wear its patch — though right now, both the patch and the flag are still being designed.

The new SFAB and the five others planned — a total of five in the active component and one in the National Guard — will each have 529 Soldiers assigned and will be tasked to conduct advise and assist missions for the Army, said LTC Johnathan Thomas, who serves with the Army's G-3/5/7 force management directorate at the Pentagon.

Photo by CPT Jarrod Morris

A Soldier assigned to Train Advise Assist Command-East pulls security with an Afghan National Army troop during a partnered force protection patrol in Laghman Province, Afghanistan, on 23 September 2015.

"The SFAB is designed to rapidly deploy into a theater of operations in support of a combatant commander," said Thomas. "Once it arrives in that particular theater, it will begin to work with, train, advise, and assist those partner nation security forces on anything they need help with, be it logistics, be it communications, be it maneuver. Anything they need help with to improve their capacity and capability, that's what the SFAB is designed to do."

Thomas said SFABs could deploy to places such as Africa, South America, Europe, or anywhere Army senior leaders decide. The units will have the capability to deploy anywhere.

The advise and assist mission is one the Army has done for years, Thomas said, but it's something the Army has until now done in an "ad hoc" fashion. Brigade combat teams (BCTs), for instance, have in the past been re-tasked to send some of their own overseas as part of security transition teams or security force assistance teams to conduct training missions with foreign militaries. Sometimes, however, the manner in which these teams were created may not have consistently facilitated the highest quality of preparation.

The SFAB units, on the other hand, will be exclusively designated to conduct advise and assist missions overseas. And they will be extensively trained to conduct those missions before they go. Additionally, he said, the new SFABs mean regular BCTs will no longer need to conduct advise and assist missions.

"The SFAB, because it is going to go forward and advise, will somewhat relieve the pressure on our BCTs to go forward and do that mission," Thomas said. Instead, he said, BCTs can now concentrate on training and preparing for their next deployment.

He said that because the advise and assist mission is considered an enduring mission, "the Army decided... we should have a dedicated, permanent structure to get after this mission on behalf of our partnered forces and partner nations."

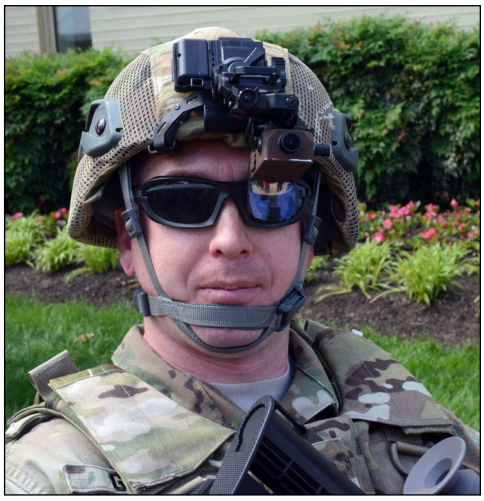
COL Scott Jackson, an infantry officer who has served in the Army for 27 years now, has been named the first commander of the Army's first SFAB. His unit, the 1st Security Force Assistance Brigade, which is headquartered at Fort Benning, was established in May but will officially activate this October.

"The really unique aspect of the SFAB, as a concept, is the training we are going to give the organization," Jackson said. "We are starting with a very talented pool of officers and leaders all around. But then we are going to give them an unbelievable training plan."

Read more about the new SFABs at: https://www.army.mil/article/188004/security_force_assistance_brigades_to_free_brigade_combat_teams_from_advise_assist_mission.

(*C. Todd Lopez writes for the Army News Service.*)

Heads-Up Display to Improve Situational Awareness



DAVID VERGUN

A novel technology called "Tactical Augmented Reality" (TAR) is now helping Soldiers precisely locate their positions, as well as the locations of friends and foes, said Richard Nabors, an associate for strategic planning at U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command's Communications-Electronics Research, Development and Engineering Center (CERDEC).

TAR even enables Soldiers to see in the dark, all with a heads-up display device that looks like night-vision goggles (NVGs), he added. So in essence, TAR replaces NVGs and Global Positioning Systems (GPS), plus it does much more.

Currently, most Soldiers use a handheld GPS system that approximates their position, he said, but only if their device is geo-registered to their location. Geo-registration is the alignment of an observed image with a geodetically-calibrated reference image. TAR does the geo-registration automatically, Nabors said.

SSG Ronald Geer, a counterterrorism NCO with CERDEC's Night Vision and Electronics Sensors Directorate, said that with TAR, Soldiers don't have to look down at their GPS device. In fact, they no longer need a separate GPS device because with TAR the image is in the eyepiece, which is mounted to the Soldier's helmet in the same way NVGs are mounted.

So what they would see, he said, is the terrain in front of them, overlaid with a map. TAR is also designed to be used both day and night. Furthermore, Geer pointed out that the eyepiece is connected wirelessly to a tablet the Soldiers wear on their waist and it's wirelessly connected to a thermal site mounted on their rifle or carbine.

If a Soldier is pointing his or her weapon, the image of the target, plus other details like the distance to target, can be seen through the eyepiece. The eyepiece even has a split screen, so for example, if the rifle is pointed rearward and the Soldier is looking forward, the image shows both views, he said. Also, a Soldier behind a wall or other obstacle could lift the rifle over the wall and see through the sites via the heads-up display without exposing his or her head.

Finally, Geer said that TAR's wireless system allows Soldiers to share images with other members of the squad. The tablet allows Soldiers to input information they need or to share their own information with others in their squad.

David Fellowes, an electronics engineer at CERDEC, said that the key technological breakthrough was miniaturizing the image to fit into the tiny one-inch-by-one-inch eyepiece.

Current commercial technology compresses images into sizes small enough to fit into tablet and cell phone-sized windows, but getting a high-definition image into the very tiny eyepiece was a challenge that could not be met with commercial, off-the-shelf hardware.

Currently, CERDEC is working on producing more advanced versions that are in full color and have a brightness display that can even be seen in daylight. The current monochrome versions are also bright enough to be seen in daylight.

Read more about TAR at: https://www.army.mil/article/188088/heads_up_display_to_give_soldiers_improved_situational_awareness.

(*David Vergun writes for the Army News Service.*)