



## PEO SOLDIER DEVELOPS LIGHTER, MORE LETHAL WEAPONS SYSTEMS

J.D. LEIPOLD

Two weapons in development are expected to be more precision-oriented, lighter and lethal: the laser-sighted XM-25 Counter Defilade Target Engagement System and the Lightweight .50-Caliber Machine Gun.

The XM-25 will undergo field-testing this summer while the LW50MG is already being tested by Soldiers.

### XM25: First shoulder-fired 'smart' weapon

The semi-automatic, shoulder-fired XM-25 with a five-round magazine of 25mm dual-warhead ammunition weighs in at about 14 pounds (about the same as an M-16 with a 203 grenade launcher) yet it's

only a few inches longer than an M-4 Carbine with the shoulder stock extended. Decked out in Army Combat Uniform camouflage, its toy weapon appearance belies its expected lethality.

Richard Audette, deputy Project Manager Soldier Weapons, said the technology behind the XM-25 is a leap ahead because it's the first smart weapon system with a smart round in small weapons.

"The way a Soldier operates this is you basically find your target, then laze to it, which gives the range, then you get an adjusted aim point, adjust fire and pull the trigger," he said. "Say you've lazed out to 543 meters ... when you pull the trigger it arms the round and fires it 543 meters plus or minus a one-, two- or three-meter increment, then it explodes over the target." That, he added, makes it a full-solution fire control weapon.



U.S. Army photo

*The XM-25 Counter Defilade Target Engagement System is the Army's first "smart" shoulder-fired weapon.*

Audette said the evaluations this summer will test accuracy and effectiveness, and because it's a completely different type of weapon system its use will call for different tactics.

"For example, in Iraq we had many instances where there was a sniper firing from a rooftop and you have a squad trying to engage that target, but the Soldiers couldn't get to him with the weapons they had, so they'd call in the Air Force to drop a JDAM (joint direct attack munition)," he said. "We can take out the target at \$25 per XM round as opposed to a \$20,000 to \$50,000 JDAM."

According to Audette, ranges in Afghanistan are longer than in Iraq. He said the XM-25 has an effective range of 750 meters, which is longer than an M-16 and M-4 and outperforms the 40mm M-203 grenade-launcher range by more than double.

### LW50MG: Less weight, better accuracy

The MK-25 doesn't offer a Soldier any weight-savings, but the LW50MG definitely will come in with tripod at 64 pounds — half what the M-2 .50-caliber heavy machine gun weighs.

With the addition of a modified M-145 machine-gun optic, the LW50MG will be more accurate and quicker to reach its target because it will also have 60-percent less recoil than the M-2, which has been an Army staple in some form or another since 1921.

COL Doug Tamilio, program manager for Soldier Weapons for Soldier lethality and weight reduction, said

the Army has more than 34,000 of the M-2s, each weighing in at 128 pounds with 256 moving parts, but the prototype LW50MG has not only half the weight, it also has only half the moving parts.

"The M-2 is a great weapons system, but before you fire it, you have to set the head space and timing and if you want to change a barrel out, you have to unscrew it, pull it out, then insert and screw in a new barrel; then you have to open the feed tray cover... if you fail to check it or do something improperly, you could have an issue with a round going off because it doesn't have a safety on it," he said.

To fix that problem, PEO Soldier developed a quick-change barrel kit which allows Soldiers to simply pull out the barrel without having to screw in a new one.

*(J.D. Leipold writes for the Army News Service.)*

# BEST RANGER 2009

## 4th RTB NCOs Clinch Title

LORIEGAN

Two Soldiers made history this year during the 26th annual LTG David E. Grange Jr. Best Ranger Competition May 8-10.

SFCs Blake Simms and Chad Stackpole, 4th Ranger Training Battalion Ranger instructors, won the overall competition, and also came in first on the road march that began Friday night and first in Saturday night's orienteering, earning both the Rippetoe and Leandri awards, respectively.

This is the first time one team won the three major awards.

The Best Ranger Competition challenges the technical, physical, and mental abilities of two-man Ranger teams. Out of a starting field of 49 teams, only 24 finished the three-day event.

One team fell out during the first event, the buddy run at Camp Darby, which took the Rangers, wearing Army combat uniforms and individual body armor weighing more than 32 pounds, on a 4.8-mile run through rugged, unimproved terrain with a swamp and a chest-high creek, said SFC Troy Reed, a Ranger instructor with 5th Ranger Training Battalion in Dahlonega, Ga., who walked the course earlier in the week. Team 8, SSGs Luke McDowell and Brandon Farmer, with the 75th Ranger Regiment, crossed the finish line first in the buddy run, followed by Team 22, MSGs Daniel Jenkins and Walter Zajkowski, with the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, and Team 46, CPT Samuel Linn and 1SG Robert Carter, 5th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Fort Lewis, Wash. Simms and Stackpole came in fourth. The second event was the Darby Queen, which is more than a mile long with 26 obstacles.

With names like easy balancer and island hopper, the obstacles are anything but, said CSM Matt Walker, U.S. Army Infantry School command sergeant major. Three teams did not complete the Darby Queen, two teams were injured on the Island Hopper and one team didn't complete the Tough One.

"I always thought the Darby Queen was the toughest obstacle course in the Army," said SFC Jeffrey Vazzana, with the 95th Civil Affairs Brigade (Airborne), Fort Bragg, N.C., who competed for the first time this year after supporting the competition for years when he was assigned to the Ranger Training Brigade. "It's even worse than Nasty Nick," he said, referring to the obstacle course for Special Forces Assessment and Selection at Fort Bragg.

After the Darby Queen, the remaining 45 teams had a series of marksmanship challenges to complete on the Malone Ranges before making their way through the woods to the field expedient litter carry at Coombs Range, where competitors administered first aid to a "casualty."

Friday's last event was the road march, which was 18 miles long, and the Rangers carried rucksacks weighing about 65 pounds.

"Having the Darby Queen right after the buddy run was tough," Vazzana said. "(After) three hours into the road march, I was tapped out. I had three bags (of fluids) put into me."



Lori Egan

*SFCs Blake Simms and Chad Stackpole of the 4th Ranger Training Battalion hold the Colt .45 pistols they received for winning the 26th annual LTG David E. Grange Jr. Best Ranger Competition.*

Only 26 teams completed the road march. Simms and Stackpole finished it in four hours, 23 minutes.

Stackpole said he and Simms wanted to be one of the top two teams during day one and win the road march.

"Historically, it's impossible to win every event. Our goal was to be in the top three to five percent for every single event," Stackpole said.

Simms, who competed in the last three competitions, was the strategic mastermind, and he broke every event down, Stackpole said.

During day two, most teams aren't competing anymore but just trying to finish, he said.

"Going into the night, we knew to win (orienteering) we had to stay out there all night," Stackpole said. "Five hours from finish time, we were at the farthest point you could be away from the finish point, and we ran for five hours just to make it back and made it back with eight minutes to spare."

Team 22 won Day Stakes on Todd Field, followed by Team 21. Team 7, SGTs Jesse Collins and Michael Malchow, 75th Ranger Regiment, came in third.

At the start of day three, two more teams were eliminated from the competition during the orienteering event. When the helocast began at Hurley Hill, Simms and Stackpole were in first place with 1914 points, Jenkins and Zajkowski were in second with 1857 points, and Collins and Malchow were in third with 1637 points.

After the helocast was the water confidence test, and then the teams were flown to Rotary Park on the Chattahoochee River for the legacy event — canoeing for nearly nine miles to the pet cemetery on Main Post where the final event, another buddy run started and ended nearly four miles away at Lawson Army Airfield's Freedom Hall, a change from previous competitions.

"It's good to change it up," said SFC Corey Hawkins, 5th Ranger Training Battalion. "A lot of these guys have competed before, and the changes keep it interesting."

*(Lori Egan is the editor of Fort Benning's post newspaper, The Bayonet.)*



Jennifer Gunn

Second-place finishers MSGs Daniel Jenkins and Walter Zajkowski complete the canoeing event during the third day of the competition.



Kristin Molinaro

SFC Chad Stackpole tackles the tri-tower challenge during the second day of the 2009 David E. Grange Jr. Best Ranger Competition.

### 2009 BRC Top 20 Team Standings

- 1st** - (2483 points) SFCs Blake Simms and Chad Stackpole, 4th RTB
- 2nd** - (2396) MSGs Walter Zajkowski and Daniel Jenkins, USASOC
- 3rd** - (2165) SGTs Michael Malchow and Jesse Collins, 75th Ranger Regiment
- 4th** - (2151) SSGs Brandon Farmer and Luke McDowell, 75th Ranger Regiment
- 5th** - (2138) SSGs Michael Mutchie and Miguel Antia, 4th RTB
- 6th** - (2094) CPT Samuel Linn and 1SG Robert Carter, 5th SBCT, 2nd ID
- 7th** - (2050) SGM Jesse Boettcher and MSG Eric J. Turk, USASOC
- 8th** - (1976) SGT Jeremy Billing and CPL Troy Jenkins, 75th Ranger Regiment
- 9th** - (1970) 1LTs Thomas Halverson and Michael Luth, 4th BDE, 4th ID
- 10th** - (1920) SSGs Benjamin Hunter and Ian Hunter, 75th Ranger Regiment
- 11th** - (1904) SSGs Raylan Heck and Adam Angisano, 6th RTB
- 12th** - (1864) 1LT Chris Migliaro and SFC Jordan Martell, 4th BDE, 4th ID
- 13th** - (1863) MAJs Jose Salinas and Edward Sedlock, 199th INF BDE
- 14th** - (1852) SGT Edward Killmeier and SPC Michael Pierce, 75th Ranger Regiment
- 15th** - (1779) MAJ Pete Kranenburg and SFC John Przytulski, 1st SWTG
- 16th** - (1735) CPTs Ronald Garberson and Anthony Aguilar, USASOC
- 17th** - (1638) SFCs Mark Breyak and Steve Fields, SWC NCOA
- 18th** - (1592) SFC Derek Wise and SGT David Paul, 25th ID
- 19th** - (1554) CPTs Stephen Magennis and Todd Tompkins, 199th INF BDE
- 20th** - (1534) CPT Lloyd Wohlschlegel and 1LT Raymond Kuderka, 25th ID