

Lt. Burgess' Team is the Best of the Best in multi-national competition

SCHWEINFURT, Germany—The proud tradition and rigorous training of airborne troops sets them apart from other Soldiers in the Army, but how do these top-notch warriors determine which among their own ranks is the most capable?

The 173rd Airborne Brigade hosted a brigade-wide —Sky Soldier competition over two days in early May to find out.

The contest, which pitted 34 four-Soldier teams against each other, was held in Schweinfurt's Pfaendhausen training area, known locally as —Area Mike. The Schweinfurt troopers of the 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment welcomed their brigade-mates from the garrisons in Bamberg, Germany, and Vicenza, Italy. Also throwing their berets into the ring were eight German Soldiers and four airborne members of the Serbian army.



The full-scale production simulated a battle mission, as the competition was complete with a tactical operations center bustling with commanders and coordinating officers. The well-oiled machine started the night of May 3 with a mass arrival in Schweinfurt from both Germany and Italy. Competitors then smoked through a physical fitness test and slept for four hours before beginning the showdown before dawn.

Camp Robertson – located in the heart of Pfaendhausen – is the nerve center of Schweinfurt's Training and Support Command, and there the Sky Soldiers shimmied up ropes, down cargo nets, over elevated beams and across stretches of monkey bars during the timed confidence course section of the competition.

Outside the fence of Camp Robertson, the airborne Soldiers then moved on to Situational Training Exercise lanes, designed to simulate the real-life demands of battle with mock injuries, lugging heavy, loaded sleds and mitigation of potential enemies.

After the relatively close comfort of the confidence course and STX lanes, the long haul portion of the contest took hold. The quartets each strapped on a loaded rucksack and humped it for six miles from Camp Robertson to the Pfaendhausen range for the final test: a tiring —stress shoot. Sweaty and out of breath from the six mile slog, the Sky Soldiers had to drop their rucks and lug heavy five gallon water cans for 300 feet. Then, two of the four Soldier teams simulated an incapacitating injury, requiring the remaining two healthy teammates to drag their wounded comrades 75 feet.

But the battle was not over. Lungs burning and head spinning, all four Soldiers then took up arms at the range and had eight magazines worth of ammunition to score center hits on a far-off target, taking special care to miss strategically placed balloons that take points off the total score when popped. The cumulative scores from the timed confidence course, STX lanes, ruck march and stress shoot

determined the winners and, despite the drive for victory within every Soldier there, not everyone would triumph. In the end the winners were four-Soldier teams from the following units: 1st place –

Attack Company from 1st Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment – **Graham's team ;-)**

2nd place – A Company from 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry Regiment

3rd place – Headquarters Battery from 4th Battalion, 319th Airborne Field Artillery Regiment

Source: [CNN International](#), I Report posted by [US Army Garrison Schweinfurt](#)

Lt. Burgess on the far right.



Lt. Burgess on the left, relaxing after competition.



Lt. Burgess