

Soldiers take home prizes, valuable training from All-Army Small Arms Championships

By Paula J. Randall

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FORT BENNING, Ga. - Besides the more than 400 trophies, plaques and medals that were awarded to the Army's top combat shooters in the All-Army Small Arms Championships, each Soldier left with something even more valuable - advanced marksmanship training. All the competitors in the All-Army Championships received advanced marksmanship instruction and training materials to conduct Train-the-Trainer clinics on return to their home station.

"It's not just about the competition; it's about the training," USAMU Commander Lt. Col. Frank Muggeo told the competitors at the March 15 awards ceremony at Phillips Range. "And the training from competitive shooting transitions into training for combat."

Soldiers from the active Army, Reserve, National Guard as well as Army ROTC cadets from across the country, spent 11 grueling days of rifle and pistol competition on the ranges of Fort Benning during the matches. Competitors ranged in rank from private first class to lieutenant colonel.

The U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit hosted the 2008 Army Rifle and Pistol Championships in conjunction with the U.S. Army Infantry Center March 8 to 15 and the All-Army Long Range Competition March 16 to 18.

After the smoke from 144 rifles and pistols cleared, an Army National Guardsman walked away with the top trophies in the U.S. Army Small Arms Championships.

At the awards ceremony March 15, guest speaker Lt. Gen. Benjamin C. Freakley, commander of U.S. Army Accessions Command, presented the top awards to recognize the Army's finest marksmen.

"Today more than ever Soldiers need to be lethal and that's what this competition is all about," Freakley said. "Marksmanship is a fundamental skill and a core competency that every Soldier needs to be lethal. I encourage all of you to go back to your units and encourage and teach marksmanship."

Overall Small Arms Championship

Staff Sgt. John A. Robertson III of the Army National Guard won the overall U.S. Army Small Arms Championship for the second year in a row. Sgt. 1st Class Eric Leid, a North Georgia College and State University ROTC instructor, took second place and National Guardsman Sgt. 1st Class William Cary was third.

Army Reservist Sgt. 1st Class Charles Crouchman was the top drill sergeant and Cadet Michael Smolucha of North Georgia College was the novice winner.

Army Reserve First Army Black Team won the U.S. Army Small Arms Team Championship. Shooters were Sgt. 1st Class Leslie Lewis, Staff Sgt. David Lahmann, Sgt. Jason Godel and Spc. Martin Ennor. The Army Reserve Small Arms Readiness Group Black Team was second and the Army Reserve First Army Blue Team was third.

Service Pistol Championship

Staff Sgt. John Buol Jr. of the Army Reserve won the Army Service Pistol Championship followed by Robertson in second place and National Guardsman Sgt. 1st Class Gregory Neiderhiser in third. Staff Sgt. Kirk Broyles of the National Guard won the Novice Division and Crouchman took the top drill sergeant spot.

Army Reserve First Army Blue Team won the Service Pistol Team Championship. Team members were Buol, Staff Sgt. Shannon Estep and Sgts. Joshua Adams and Jean-Noel Howell. The Army Reserve Team from the Small Arms Readiness Group took second place and Army Reserve First Army Black was third.

Service Rifle Championship

Smolucha was the overall and novice winner of the U.S. Army Service Rifle Individual Championship. Leid took second place and Capt. Jason Koehler of the Maneuver Captains Career Course was third overall. Crouchman was the drill sergeant winner.

First Army Team Black won the Service Rifle Team Championship. Shooters were Lewis, Lahmann, Godel, Ennor and Sgt. 1st Class Warren Clark. The North Georgia College Team took second place and the Nebraska Army National Guard Team finished third.

Long-Range Rifle Championship

Staff Sgt. Douglas Button of Fort Richardson, Alaska, won the U.S. Army Long Range Rifle Individual Championship, which was an aggregate of the 600-, 800- and 1,000-yard matches. Reservist Sgt. Maj. Scott Anzivino of Natick, Mass., took second place and Staff Sgt. Christopher Carter of Fort Richardson was third.

Col. Gregory Kane, commander of Fort Benning's 197th Infantry Brigade presented the long-range awards.

"Long-range marksmanship is very important. The more we can do, the better off we are," Kane told the long-range competitors at the awards ceremony March 18. "Over the past three days of long-range competition, everyone learned a valuable skill and you're all better marksmen. Take this back to your units and raise your units' marksmanship skills."

(Formed in 1956 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to raise the standards of marksmanship throughout the U.S. Army, the Army Marksmanship Unit is assigned to the Accessions Support Brigade of the U.S. Army Accessions Command. The Marksmanship Unit trains its Soldiers to win competitions and enhances combat readiness through train-the-trainer clinics, research and development. For more information on the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit, contact the Public Affairs Office at (706) 545-5436, Paula.Randall@usaac.army.mil or www.USAMU.com.)