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1st Sig Soldiers compete for annual board

Competitors struggle for bragging rights in NCO, Soldier, KATUSA 'of the year' awards

By Sgt. Alexis R. Ramos

1st Signal Brigade Public Affairs

YONGSAN GARRISON — Non-commissioned officers, Soldiers and Korean Augmentations to the U.S. Army assigned within the 1st Signal Brigade put their wits to the test against each other during the brigade's NCO, Soldier and KATUSA of the year board held here from May 9-12.

The annual board consisted of 11 Soldiers within the brigade competing in six scored events ranging from the physical fitness test, a written exam, day and night land navigation, M16-A2 assault rifle qualification, a mystery event and a board appearance in front of five panel members.

All the events equaled 230 points and the board appearance was worth 240 points, with the total amount of possible points being 470. In the end the board winners were chosen by the top score for each respective category.

"It feels great," said Sgt. James D. Williams, company maintenance NCO and NCO of the year winner assigned to the 293rd Sig. Co., 36th Signal Battalion. "I spent a lot of time on nights and weekends throughout the day studying and preparing for this, so it's really nice to see that in the end it all actually paid off."

The KATUSA of the year winner echoed Williams' sentiments.

"It was a good experience," said Pfc. Jinha Lee, supply clerk, 169th Signal Company, 36th Signal Battalion. "I will never get another chance like this in my whole life, because I'm not staying in the Army after my service is done."

The Soldier of the year winner had a different sentiment though.

"To win, to me, I don't really have a feeling towards it, because it wasn't just me who did this," said Spc. Andrew D. Reel, tech control team chief, 169th Sig. Co. 36th Signal Battalion. "I had a lot of people take control within the company, sponsors, people like that who helped me get here. So I'm just thankful that I had everyone helping me out." With the competition over and the best of the best chosen, the Soldiers who won now bear a huge responsibility explained Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur T. Swingler, from 1st Signal Brigade.

"They not only represent themselves, but they represent the commands from which they have won," said Swingler. "So these Soldiers who won the 1st Signal Brigade Soldier of the year board will go out and be role models for other Soldiers to aspire to be like them at the brigade level and as they move up to 9th Signal command level, and also, when they win at the 8th Army best warrior competition."

The 8th Army best warrior competition ends today. ▴



Sgt. James D. Williams, company maintenance NCO, 293rd Signal Company, works on disassembling the M16 A-2 assault rifle as part of the mystery event in 1st Signal Brigade's NCO, Soldier and Katusa of the year board held from May 9-12 at Yongsan Garrison. — U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Wonyong Park