U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard Soldiers deployed to Kosovo competed in the MNBG-E Soldier of the Month competition, August 1, 2015, at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo.

The competition led off early that morning with an Army Physical Fitness Test, followed by a day of challenges that measured the Soldiers’ knowledge of land navigation, first aid, detainee operations and military customs.

Command Sgt. Maj. Ralph Johnson, the senior noncommissioned officer for the North Carolina National Guard’s 30th Armored Brigade Combat Team, oversaw the competition, which was broken into two categories: one for junior enlisted Soldiers, and another for sergeants and staff sergeants.

The 30th ABCT and its integrated structure of National Guard, Army Reserve and active-duty Soldiers assumed responsibility in early July for the 20th MNBG-E rotation since the late 1990s.

“This was the first competition since the new rotation of U.S. Soldiers in Kosovo,” Johnson said. “I will be holding one every month and I encouraged every unit here to send Soldiers to compete.”

Sgt. Sterling Quimby, from 1st General Support Aviation Battalion, 169th Aviation Regiment, out Enfield, Connecticut, said he studied and exercised in his spare time to get ready for the competition.

“I think the event went very well,” Quimby said. “I worked hard and did the best I could.”

Sgt. Daniel Lopez, from 2nd General Support Aviation Battalion, 238th Aviation Regiment, out Los Alamitos, California, won the competition’s NCO category. He said he studied and exercised in his spare time to get ready for the competition.

“It really lets us know where we are, both physically and mentally,” Lopez said. “It is good to be tested so that Soldiers know what their strengths and weaknesses in the subjects are.”

Competing in an event such as the Soldier of the Month, helped me realize the importance of staying current on my basic Soldier tasks and leadership skills,” Lopez said.

Spc. Felicia McCormick, from 1st Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 150th Calvary Regiment, out of Bluefield, West Virginia, won the only female to compete in the event.

“Competing in an event such as the Soldier of the Month, helped me realize the importance of staying current on my basic Soldier tasks and leadership skills,” McCormick said.

Spc. Felicia McCormick, from 1st Armored Reconnaissance Squadron, 150th Calvary Regiment, out of Bluefield, West Virginia, won the junior enlisted Soldier category, and was the only female to compete in the event.

McCormick said the competition’s events were well-planned and challenging, but she felt confident in her answers.

“I think the hardest part was the board,” McCormick said. “I am sitting before a panel, not sure what they will ask, and wondering if I will know the answers.”

Top troops compete for title of MNBG-E Soldier of the Month

Winners hail from Southern Command Post, Liaison Monitoring Team

By Sgt. Erick Yates and Sgt. Gina Russell

Multinational Battle Group-East

Clockwise from left: Spc. Devin Lewis, from the 30th ABCT headquarters out of Clinton, N.C., salutes the board of the MNBG-E Soldier of the Month competition, Aug. 1, 2015, at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo; Sgt. Sterling Quimby, from 1st Battalion, 169th Aviation Regiment and the MNBG-E Southern Command Post, walks through the steps of handling a detainee; Sgt. Christopher Graves, with the 666th EOD Company, participates in the map-reading challenge. (Photos by Sgt. Erick Yates)
Italian Maj. Gen. Guglielmo Miglietta holds the NATO colors after assuming command of Kosovo Force during a ceremony Aug. 7 in Pristina, Kosovo.

The Transfer of Authority ceremony between the outgoing KFOR Commander Major General Francesco Paolo Figliuolo and the incoming Major General Guglielmo Luigi Miglietta took place Aug. 7 in Camp "Film City", NATO KFOR Headquarters.

The Ceremony was attended by the Kosovo President Atifete Jahjaga, the NATO JFC Naples Commander, Admiral Mark Ferguson III, the Italian Chief of Defence, General Claudio Graziano and military, civilian and religious authorities.

Admiral Ferguson III thanked General Figliuolo for the important results achieved and the outstanding performance showed by KFOR XIX soldiers during his mandate while pursuing KFOR XIX motto "Example Endeavour Entrust" and then he welcomed General Miglietta “we are blessed with another Commander from Italy”.

NATO JFC Naples Commander also greeted members of KFOR and he emphasized the importance of KFOR in maintaining a safe and secure environment in Kosovo, improving the security of Kosovo and of the Balkan area.

Major General Figliuolo in his speech pointed out that “today KFOR is ten times smaller than it was in 1999 and the security in Kosovo is much more than ten times better”, he concluded, “security situation has vastly improved over the last year due to the preventive posture and actions adopted by my KFOR troops and the strong dialogue and cooperation we have forged among the stakeholders”.

Kosovo Force, as established by the United Nations Security Council resolution 1244, will continue impartially to enhance a safe and secure environment and to maintain freedom of movement all around the Kosovo, ensuring stability and safety in Kosovo for the benefits of all Kosovo people.
Take a bite out of crime: Camp Bondsteel MPs and dogs train together

Pfc. Cecelia Record, an MNBG-E MP, and Spc. Cindy Ortiz, a K-9 handler, clear a room during a July 24 active-shooter exercise. (Photo by Sgt. Erick Yates)

By Sgt. Erick Yates and Sgt. Gina Russell
Multinational Battle Group-East

Military Police Soldiers from the 363rd Military Police Company out of Grafton, West Virginia, currently deployed to Kosovo in support of MNBG-E, arrived on the scene during a July 24 active-shooter exercise to rehearse emergency response efforts with their military working dog partners, at the Camp Bondsteel Post Exchange.

The Soldiers with the 363rd MP Company are deployed for the first time to work in a garrison law enforcement capacity. Team leaders said want to ensure the training at Camp Bondsteel will build the skills needed for the Soldiers to secure a safe environment for the multinational troops and civilians serving in Kosovo.

The active-shooter training pushed the Soldiers to work in a different capacity by allowing them to work with the military working dogs.

Staff Sgt. Lex and Sgt. Hundii, MWDs deployed to Camp Bondsteel, participated in the training to familiarize the MPs with the use of K-9s during an active-shooter scenario.

“I always enjoy working with the K-9s because it definitely adds a different element to our training that we are not used to back home,” said Spc. Christopher Boatwright, an MP with the 363rd.

“The training was geared for getting the Soldiers used to working with the MWD detachment,” said Spc. Cindy Ortiz, a K-9 handler with the 100th MWD Detachment, out of Miesau, Germany, and also deployed with MNBG-E.

“This training is also a good way the unit can become familiar with the layout of the buildings on Bondsteel for if there is a real emergency situation,” she said.

“Having the dogs as another asset brings an extra level of force to our team,” said Pfc. Cecelia Record. Working with them enables the MPs to see things that could possibly be overlooked, she said.

The MWDs offer support to units within MNBG-E by raising the level of force protection with perimeter checks and vehicle inspections.

Correction: The Aug. 1, 2015 edition of Guardian East included the wrong cutline for a photo on its second page. The correct cutline is: U.S. Army Spc. Cindy Ortiz, a military working dog handler, and her partner, Sgt. Hundii, from the 100th Military Working Dog Detachment out of Miesau, Germany, are hoisted into a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter during medevac hoist training, July 23, 2015, at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo. The training was conducted to familiarize the EOD team with hoist operations in case medevac assistance is needed while conducting missions for MNBG-E. (Photo by Sgt. David Marquis)

U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard Soldiers assigned to Multinational Battle Group-East pose for a group photo alongside their German instructors, after shooting the HK P8 9mm Combat Pistol during a German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge event, Aug. 1, 2015, in Prizren, Kosovo. Shooting the pistol to test their marksmanship, along with the physical fitness test and ruck march, is part of the six sporting events that the Soldiers competed in to earn the badge. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Gina Russell, Multinational Battle Group-East)