

10TH MOUNTAIN LIFE

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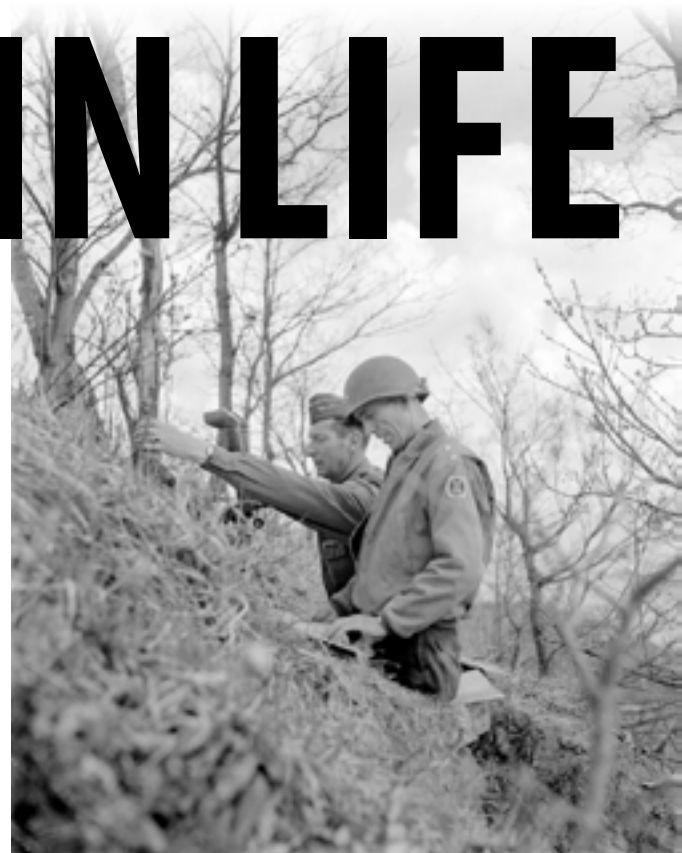
10th Mountain Life features soldier shoutouts, photos of Fort Drum events, memories from post and more.

To recognize your favorite soldier or share photos, email news@wdt.net with subject "10th Mountain Life"

Right: Gen. George Hays, commander of the 10th Mountain Division, looks at a map as Gen. Mark Clark, commander of the 5th Army, points to something in the distance as they confer before the start of a big offensive during the Italian campaign in April 1945. They stand in an observation point complete with periscope, surrounded by trees with budding leaves.

From the Watertown Daily Times Archive

HISTORIC DRUM



Best Squad Competition

Elite Fort Drum soldiers accept the challenge

By SGT. ALYSSA NORTON
10th Mountain Division

FORT DRUM — The XVIII Airborne Corps Best Squad Competition is a rigorous annual event that pushes Soldiers to their limits, testing both physical endurance and mental resilience. Throughout the competition, squads face a demanding series of challenges designed to evaluate their ability to operate effectively in realistic, high-pressure combat scenarios.

Competing units include the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), 3rd Infantry Division, 82nd Airborne Division, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), 16th Military Police BDE, and 20th CBRN Command.

Events include marksmanship, land navigation, E3B-based lanes, and physically taxing endurance courses, all designed to mirror the complexity and intensity of modern warfare. Every lane requires precision, discipline, and the ability to perform under stress.

"This is a competition that brings out the best in everybody," said Sgt. Montoia Jaesus, an infantryman assigned to 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division (LI). "This will prove our physical capabilities and knowledge of Soldier tasks."

Each squad, consisting of five Soldiers, must demonstrate not only individual excellence but also seamless cohesion as a team. Every member plays a critical role, and



U.S. Army soldiers assigned to the 10th Mountain Division compete in the XVIII Airborne Corps Best Squad Competition.

success depends on how effectively the squad communicates, adapts to rapidly changing conditions, and executes missions with confidence and precision.

Trust, accountability, and shared purpose become the difference between success and failure.

"Entering this competition, the plan was just to keep moving and keep pushing each other forward," said Spc. Markeel Bass, an

infantryman assigned to 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 10th Mountain Division (LI). "Our main priority was to stick together as a

squad, separating could have compromised our efficiency."

As squads push through each event, they compete not only for the top spot, but to uphold the standards that define effective teams across the Army. The experience gained reinforces the discipline, teamwork, and mental toughness required to succeed in the most demanding environments.

"The Best Squad Competition is pinpointing what I need to work on in order to reach my goals. Through each event, I'm learning something new," Bass said. "The squad recognizes its weaknesses, and we're going to use this experience to strengthen one another."

With the competition coming to a close, Command Sgt. Maj. Brett Johnson, senior enlisted advisor for the 10th Mountain Division (LI), recognizes the Soldiers who took on this challenge and competed against the elite.

"To raise your hand and expose yourself to external evaluation, miles of pain and discomfort; it says a lot about you as a Soldier and your commitment to excellence, so thank you."

The XVIII Airborne Corps Best Squad Competition concluded with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) taking first place, followed by the 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) and the 3rd Infantry Division rounding out the top three.



The XVIII Airborne Corps Best Squad Competition required competitors to navigate aquatic obstacles while wearing full combat uniform and gear to simulate real-world operational challenges.

Far left: Soldiers assigned to the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) pose for a group photo with Command Sgt. Maj. Brett Johnson and Command Sgt. Maj. Bryan Barker at the Non-Commissioned Officer Academy on Fort Drum on April 24. The 101st Airborne Division squad earned first place in the regional competition, followed by the 10th Mountain Division in second place and the 3rd Infantry Division in third place.

U.S. Army photo by Spc. Mason Nichols



U.S. Army soldiers assigned to the 10th Mountain Division complete a 56-question written examination immediately following a 12-mile ruck march during the XVIII Airborne Corps Best Squad Competition.

Above: U.S. Army soldiers assigned to the 10th Mountain Division push through an expert physical fitness assessment at Fort Drum on April 23. During this phase of the XVIII Airborne Corps Best Squad Competition, soldiers were measured against demanding standards to determine their ability to sustain peak performance during prolonged physical exertion.

Find more photos online at nny360.com/news/fortdrum