

U.S. Army Europe selects Career Counselor of the Year

Nov. 6, 2013

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Staff Sgt. Efrain D. Garcia Jr. receives the Army Commendation Medal from Command Sgt. Maj. David S. Davenport Sr., the U.S. Army Europe senior enlisted advisor, for earning the title of 2013 USAREUR Career Counselor of Year, in Wiesbaden Nov 5. Garcia, originally from New York City, is a battalion career counselor with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 18th Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, 21st Theater Sustainment Command, based in Grafenwoehr, Germany. The sergeant earned the title in a two-day competition that included an Army Physical Fitness Test, a 50-question written examination and an appearance before a selection board. (U.S. Army Europe photo by Spc. Glenn M. Anderson)

WIESBADEN, Germany -- A 21st Theater Sustainment Command noncommissioned officer has earned the title of 2013 U.S. Army Europe Career Counselor of the Year.

Staff Sgt. Efrain D. Garcia Jr, originally from New York City, is a battalion career counselor with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 18th Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade, 21st TSC, based in Grafenwoehr, Germany,

Career counselors conduct retention and re-enlistment interviews, determine Soldiers' eligibility to re-enlist or extend their current enlistments; review re-enlistment and extension documents; coordinate retention ceremonies and advise commanders on all areas of the retention program.

Each year career counselors from across USAREUR compete at their unit level for the award. Each must have achieved 100 percent in all traditional retention categories, to include managing their unit retention programs within the guidelines established by USAREUR.

"I am very humbled and excited to have won this prestigious award," said Garcia. "I have been studying and preparing for the past two months, and thanks to my noncommissioned officers at my unit, and my family...I was able to get to this level of competition."

The two-day competition included an Army Physical Fitness Test, a 50-question written examination, and an appearance in front of a panel of NCO's who asked numerous and rigorous questions about the Army and the Army retention program.

The board consisted of four voting members and the board president, Command Sgt. Maj. David S. Davenport Sr., the USAREUR senior enlisted advisor.

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Davenport said he was impressed by the competitors' general knowledge of not just things they deal with every day, such as their job requirements, but also their expertise in a broad range of Soldier skills.

"Like any competition, there is always a winner," said Davenport. "What was unique about this competition was we had different Soldiers do better at different events, and we had one overall winner."

Even planning and executing such an event is a task in itself, said Master Sgt. Michael J. Sadler, HQ USAREUR Retention Operations NCO, organizer of the competition. Sadler is a Career Counselor of the Year Award winner himself, earning the title while assigned to III Corps at Fort Hood, Texas, in 2009.

"It was not too difficult to plan for this event because we use a lot of things from previous years to help us improve every year," said Sadler, "It is time-consuming because there are a lot of pieces involved, but it is relatively simple to prepare for."

At the end of the event, Garcia was awarded an Army Commendation Medal, a plaque and several small gifts from Army supporters.

"My advice to any career counselors wanting to participate in this event is: definitely get engaged in more competitions before going to 'the big one,'" said Garcia. "That will give you the confidence and the experience you will need to go against the stiff competition."

Garcia will represent USAREUR at the Secretary of the Army Career Counselor of the Year Competition in Washington, D.C. in January.

About us: U.S. Army Europe is uniquely positioned to advance American strategic interests across Eurasia and has unparalleled capability to prevent conflict, shape the environment and, if necessary, win decisively. The relationships we build during more than 1000 theater security cooperation events in more than 40 countries each year lead directly to support for multinational contingency operations around the world, strengthen regional partnerships, and enhance global security.