

Eight Illinois National Guard Soldiers earn Expert Infantryman Badge

Written by Illinois National Guard PAO
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Three awarded additional Army Achievement Medal for perfect performance

CAMP ATTERBURY, IND (07/18/2014)(readMedia)-- After five continuous days of testing, eight Illinois National Guard Soldiers earned the Expert Infantryman Badge (EIB) at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, July 17. Three of the Soldiers performed each of the 39 tasks to standard on the first attempt and was awarded an Army Achievement Medal.

"It really brings out the best of us as infantrymen," said Spc. Michael Schaefer of Mundelein, Illinois, an infantryman with Troop C, 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment in Aurora, Illinois. "It is a lot of helping each other out and getting each other squared away for each day's tasks. Everyone has really worked together to try and get each other as far as they can."

Seventy-seven Infantrymen from the Illinois National Guard put forth their greatest effort to wear the prestigious badge. The Soldiers hailed from the 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment; 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment; and 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment, all units within the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

The EIB test measured Soldiers' physical fitness and ability to perform to standards of excellence in a broad spectrum of critical infantry skills. The Army Physical Fitness Test and land navigation was held the first day, followed by lanes the next three days.

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During EIB lanes, Soldiers were tested on the M9 Pistol, M4 Carbine Rifle, M240B Machine Gun, M249 Machine Gun, MK19 40mm Grenade Machine Gun, M136 (AT4) Rocket Launcher, .50-Caliber M2 Machine Gun, and M320 Grenade Launcher.

"There is a lot of memorization and getting the sequences right and doing the steps in the right order that takes a lot of mental ability along with physical," said Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Wells of Glen Carbon, Illinois, a platoon sergeant with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment in Litchfield, Illinois. "Staying focused and on task was the key to success."

In addition to skills testing on multiple weapons, Soldiers were evaluated on a range of tasks such as move under direct fire, identify and react to possible improvised explosive device, provide tactical combat casualty care, employ an M18A1 Claymore Mine and hand grenade, perform voice communications and use visual signaling techniques.

"These are tasks these guys do in their job all the time, so they should have good fundamental knowledge and then we work on refining it to standard," said Sgt. 1st Class Aric Schwab of Plainfield, Illinois, a EIB grader with Company D, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment in Woodstock, Illinois. "The task is on them. They just have to perform the task to time and standard and we are here to give them feedback on how they performed."

After performing the skills testing, Soldiers ended with a 12-mile foot march in less than three hours to secure their goal of wearing an EIB.

"It's such a coveted thing for an infantryman to get," said Schaefer. "There is such a huge history and it's by no means easy to achieve. You really have to be focused and determined and that's what boils down to an infantryman; working hard everyday and staying focused, working together to achieve a common goal. The EIB is what an 11 Bravo is."

This is the first time in many years Illinois National Guard Soldiers had the opportunity to earn an EIB. Infantrymen from both Active Duty and National Guard units participated in this year's 205th Infantry Brigade, Camp Atterbury, Indiana, Regional EIB competition.

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"The goal is to continue sending Illinois Soldiers to EIB next year," said Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy Beck of Eagle, Wisconsin, the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team sergeant major. "It was a great opportunity for our Soldiers to experience camaraderie with Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division who is partnered with the 33rd IBCT for the Total Force Partnership."

No matter if the Soldier received a badge or not, there were valuable skills gained.

"When they come here and go through the training, they know about everything they need to know to take back and teach their unit," said Schwab. "They don't have to come back with their badge to be a better Soldier. They are better off either way."

Infantrymen who earned the EIB and Army Achievement Medal include:

- Staff Sgt. Anthony Henner of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a sniper section leader with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment in Chicago
- Spc. Michael Schaefer of Mundelein, Illinois, an infantryman with Troop C, 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment in Aurora, Illinois
- Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey Wells of Glen Carbon, Illinois, a platoon sergeant with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment in Litchfield, Illinois

Infantrymen who earned the EIB include:

- 1st Lt. Michael Kuvales of Palos Hills, Illinois with Troop B, 2nd Squadron, 106th Cavalry Regiment in Dixon, Illinois

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- 1st Lt. Lavern Meissner of Niles, Illinois, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment in Chicago

- Spc. Anthony Miller of Springfield, Illinois, with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment in Litchfield, Illinois

- Sgt. Uriah Porter of Du Quoin, Illinois, with Company A, 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment in West Frankfort, Illinois

- Pfc. Steven Smith of Washington, Illinois, with Company A, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment in Bartonville, Illinois