

## USAMU first team to win International Sniper Competition two years in a row

By Cheryl Rodewig, The Bayonet

FORT BENNING, Ga. - A team of two Soldiers from the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit won the eighth annual International Sniper Competition for the second consecutive year. Sgt. 1st Class Jason M. St. John, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the USAMU Service Pistol Team, and Sgt. 1st Class Robby D. Johnson, a USAMU action/combat pistol shooter, defended their title of Sniper Champions.



The competition was hosted by the Sniper School under Company C, 2nd Battalion, 29th Infantry Regiment, Oct. 16 to 21. The USAMU Team was one of more than 30 sniper teams from France, Canada, Spain, Denmark, Ireland and different branches of the U.S. military.

Sgt. 1st Class Robby Johnson, left, and Sgt. 1st Class Jason St. John search a body for information. The team earned seven extra points for finding a cell phone, radio, map and other pieces of intelligence. They scored 57 points in the counter sniper event, bringing them to second place for the event but first place overall.

Snipers tested their skills in several events, including aerial shooting, convoy live fire and night shooting. "They're meant to simulate real world scenarios they could encounter in a combat environment," said Capt. Jason Lojka, commander of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 29th Infantry Regiment.

Participating in this premier event not only helps snipers identify their own weaknesses but also provides a forum for different branches of the military and snipers from around the world to learn from each other and perfect their techniques, Lojka said.

The competition is also good preparation for deployment, said Spc. Taylor Smith, a spotter with the 10th Mountain Division, which will deploy later this year.

"The scenarios you get here are probably the best training you can get in the Army before you deploy," Smith said. "It's good because the situations here are more elaborate than what a lot of posts can provide. It's a lot more detailed as opposed to going out to your usual range and placing your basic target just so far away. It's a challenge."

The exercises weren't exactly stressful, said Smith, who has been a sniper for a year, "but it does get a little high-paced."

Many of the events, such as counter sniper, were timed. Three points behind first place, USAMU ranked second in that event, finishing with two seconds to spare.

"That's what puts the stress on you - the clock," said St. John, the spotter for the team.

St. John and Johnson identified and engaged four targets, but one was non-hostile, costing the team 10 points. After hitting the bonus target, they were allowed to go downrange to search for intelligence and earn extra points.

In all the exercises, their success depended on clear communication, Johnson said. Even after the events, they discuss how they can improve.

"The scenarios and targets that are put out there are so phenomenally difficult," St. John said. "There isn't an event that we haven't stopped and looked at and said we should have done this a little bit different. This is an extremely difficult match, top to bottom."

The 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, of Fort Lewis, Wash., placed second overall. Company D, 2nd Battalion, 1st Special Warfare Training Group, came in third.

*(The mission of the USAMU is to raise the standard of marksmanship proficiency and combat readiness throughout the Army by sharing knowledge gained from competing and winning in national/ international competitions, research and development and advanced training programs while enhancing the Army's recruiting effort through an active public information and public relations program. For more information on the U.S. Army Marksmanship Unit, contact the Public Affairs Office at (706) 545-5436, Paula.Randall@usaac.army.mil or [www.USAMU.com](http://www.USAMU.com).)*