

# 141 Sig Bn fires German weapons

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Early in the morning on July 29, twenty 141st Signal Battalion soldiers set out to earn a rare award, the Schuetzenschnur, the German weapons qualification award.

To earn the award, the American soldiers have to qualify to German Army standards on the German weapons: the MG-3 machinegun and on either the PK-8 pistol or the G-2 rifle.

"I thought it was exciting training with the Germans, we learned a lot about their army. They taught us a lot about their weapons," said Staff Sgt. Tara Bryan from Company C.

The shooting competition was part of the ongoing German-American partnership program between the 141 Signal Battalion and German Army's 920th Signal Regiment, based in Kastellaun.

Through the partnership, the German and American soldiers take turns hosting military-oriented events. For the Schuetzenschnur, the 141 Signal Battalion. Soldiers traveled by bus to Kastellaun, a 45-minute drive from their post in Bad Kreuznach.



A soldier from 141st Signal Battalion fires the PK-8 pistol under the watchful eye of a German range NCO.

The German weapons are quite different from the weapons the American soldiers train on. The PK-8 pistol is similar to the American M-9 pistol, but heavier with a more rugged design. The G-2 rifle is a lot heavier than the American M16A2 rifle. And where the M16A2 fires a 5.56mm round, the German rifle fires a larger, 7.62mm round.

"It was a good learning experience...learning about the differences between German and American weapons," said Spc. Gordon Smith from Company A.



Sgt. Sharon Vermillion, of Company A, receives instructions from a German range NCO prior to firing the G-2 rifle.

Each of the American soldiers familiarized and attempted to qualify with the German weapons. And each had a favorite.

"I liked the 9mm PK-8 pistol...also the power of the [other] weapons. [The weapons] were more difficult to control but easier to aim accurately," said Staff Sgt. Donnell Hassell from Company A.

"...[I] liked the German rifle best, even though it gave me a black eye!" said Sgt. Sharon Vermillion from Company A.

By the end of the day, all 20 soldiers qualified for the Schuetzenschnur. The Schuetzenschnur has three different levels: gold for expert, silver for sharpshooter and bronze for marksman. Three of the 141st Signal soldiers qualified for the gold badge, the other 17 soldiers qualified for the silver badge.

The Schuetzenschnur is a permanent award for American enlisted soldiers. The gold, silver or bronze medal is set in a gray braided rope that is worn on the shoulder of the Class A uniform, similar to a fortege. Once they have qualified and receive the orders for the award, they are eligible to wear it.

"I thought it was great [getting the Schuetzenschnur]. I had seen other soldiers with it and I wanted it since I was first stationed in Germany," said Bryan.

"We have been having activities together for almost a year," said Staff Sgt. James Fenney, the battalion's partnership noncommissioned officer in charge. The 141st Signal Battalion and the German 920th Signal Regiment have planned other partnership activities, including the German Physical Training Award qualification, joint field exercises, and participation in 141st Signal Battalion's Iron Time Training and Organization Day. "We're going to invite [the German soldiers] for our PT test, our marksmanship qualification, and our NCO Professional Development Program," said Fenney.