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Charleston Top Dollar team best in AMC

By Staff Sgt. Pamela Smith
437 AW Public Affairs

The Charleston AFB Top Dollar team took top honors at the Air Mobility Command Top Dollar Competition held June 24-29 in Alpena, Mich. The team, made up of seven members from the

437th Comptroller and Contracting Squadrons, was tested on its ability to function in an austere environment. The team brought home three awards - Best Overall Team, Esprit de Corp and Best Finance Team.

"This is such an awesome feeling," said Maj. Patrice Solorzano, 437 CPTS commander. "The

awards, especially best overall team, prove that in the military you can put a team together that's never worked together before and they can accomplish anything."

The five finance and two contracting members had to prove their ability to set up a base at a deployed location with minimal finances and supplies from their home station.

Scenarios were set up to test each member individually and as a team. Some of the scenarios included cashing checks and converting U.S. dollars into foreign currency while under chemical attack in MOPP Level 4 (full chemical gear worn).

Each morning, the base commander would issue a list of items to be purchased by the contracting team. In turn, they would coordinate with their finance counterparts to determine which items were authorized to be bought using appropriated funds. They would then contact vendors and make the requested purchases.

This particular ongoing scenario displayed the awesome teamwork Team Charleston displayed throughout the competition, said 2nd Lt. Andy Grab, team leader.

"We set the standard day one for teamwork. Whether it was marching to meals or supporting one another throughout the competition, no other team came close," Grab said. "It was an exhilarating experience because each team member had their moment to shine on their own and we came together to shine as a team."

Grab said his team was faced with challenges and overcame each one.

"We nailed most of our scenarios and had the best score for the last three days," he said.

Lt. Col. Paul Braunbeck, 437 CONS commander, said the competition proves that performing financial and contracting services is critical to mission accomplishment.

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Staff Sgt. Pamela Smith

Co-workers and family members of the Top Dollar team welcome them home at the Charleston International Airport June 30. The team won Best Overall Team, Esprit de Corp and Best Finance Team awards at the competition in Alpena, Mich.

DoD considers offering laser eye surgery to beneficiaries

Department of Defense officials are looking into the possibility of offering laser eye surgery to military beneficiaries.

Several studies are under way to determine if laser vision correction stands up to the rigors of military life, said Dr. John Mazzuchi, deputy assistant secretary of defense (health affairs) for clinical and program policy.

"Our first concern is for the active duty force," Mazzuchi said. "If this method works for them, the eye is stable over time, and the military environment doesn't harm them, then I think this is something we'll do for them as a readiness issue."

He said officials will probably relook the issue in two to three years, when preliminary data are available from ongoing studies. New DoD policy allows individuals who have had laser vision surgery to obtain a medical waiver before joining the military; previously they were barred altogether.

Providing the service to family members is a different ball game. While laser eye surgery might become a readiness issue for the active duty force, Mazzuchi said, it would be elective cosmetic surgery for others.

Laser eye surgery might be beneficial, but doing purely cosmetic procedures means having to take care of all medical necessities first, he said. "For the near future, at least, I think this is not going to become a covered benefit."

According to Capt. (Dr.) Tina Luichinger, chief of optometry services for the 437th Medical Group, the people who would benefit from the surgery would be those with extremely poor vision who can't wear contact lenses.

"If you have a minor prescription, you won't gain a whole lot from this surgery," she said.

The military healthcare system already has to struggle to operate within its budget, he explained.

However, he added, that doesn't necessarily mean these laser procedures would be out of reach of military beneficiaries.

"Our facilities are going to have to do a number of these procedures because we have ophthalmology training programs," Mazzuchi said. "The way we've normally done cosmetic surgery is to make it available at our teaching centers, but the beneficiary has to pay for it."

Under current regulations, outpatient surgical procedures would cost about \$270 per day in military medical treatment facilities, he said. So, that would be the cost of a 15-minute laser operation — considerably cheaper than the \$4,000 to \$6,000 charged by civilian providers.

"We don't want to deny a new medical breakthrough to our beneficiaries, but when it's purely cosmetic and not medically necessary, we can't

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