



**3rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command  
16<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade  
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## **‘Dark Knights’ make firing range a safe place**

By 16<sup>th</sup> Sust. Bde. Public Affairs

CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE Q-WEST, Iraq – Soldiers from the 16<sup>th</sup> Special Troops Battalion, 16<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade, attempted to qualify on their M16 rifles at Sykes range here June 22-24.

The three-day training event was the last M16 qualification range held by the unit in Iraq before they redeployment back to Bamberg, Germany.

The “Dark Knights” of Headquarters and Headquarters Co., 16<sup>th</sup> STB, ran the range. Capt. Russell Matusiak, range officer in charge, and Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Nancy Fisher, range non-commissioned officer in charge, led 27 NCO’s and Soldiers from HHC to ensure the Soldiers of the 16<sup>th</sup> STB qualified on their personal weapons.

Over the three-day period, 78 soldiers from the battalion, as well as several Soldiers from attached units, qualified. The Soldiers used recently implemented standards of prone supported, prone unsupported, and the kneeling unsupported positions.

“The elements posed a challenge for many Soldiers” said Staff Sgt. Natasha Dumig, tower NCO. “But even with all the gear, new shooting positions, and heat, the Soldiers persevered and qualified.”

The range began each day at 4:30 in the morning to avoid the Iraq heat. All three days the temperature reached over one-hundred degrees. Range safeties supported and maintained the Soldiers participating at the range providing shade as well as ice water, sports drinks and snacks.

“There was great feedback during the after action review that were conducted daily,” said Fischer. “Soldiers said that they felt more confident in their firing capabilities after having a coach with each firer during the zeroing phase of the range. Several firers mentioned that the range was well organized and proficient.”

There were one safety personnel for every three firers to ensure that everyone remained in the complete uniform and practiced muzzle awareness at all times.

“Overall the qualification range was a success since there were no injuries or heat casualties and soldiers improved their skills with their individually assigned weapons,” said Fischer. “But mostly, the Dark Knights would never quit until the mission and task was complete.”

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The Soldiers from 16<sup>th</sup> Special Troops Battalion, 16<sup>th</sup> Sustainment Brigade, take aim at their targets during a qualification range at Contingency Operating Base Q-West June 22. (Courtesy photo)