



21st Theater Sustainment Command
16th Sustainment Brigade
18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion
Public Affairs Office
USAG Grafenwoehr, Germany
DSN 475-4197
Commercial from U.S.: 011-49-964-183-4197

702nd EOD Soldier breaks world record 1-mile run in 80-pd. bomb suit

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GRAFENWOEHR, Germany – A team leader with the 702nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 16th Sustainment Brigade has set a new world record for his one-mile bomb suit run, which was completed in 8 minutes, 42 seconds here Oct. 30.

This all started when Staff Sgt. Eric Johnson heard about the last record being set in March of this year. The previous World Records Academy entry for the one-mile bomb suit run was set by Air Force Staff Sgt. Owen Duff with a time of 9 minutes, 22 seconds. Johnson shaved 40 seconds off of Duff's time.

“You can say there was some good natured, professional competition at the heart of this,” said Johnson, a native of Charles City, Iowa. “The first record was set by the Navy, followed by the Air Force. I thought it was time for the Army to take a shot at it.”

After researching the application and competition process, Johnson took the idea to his company for their support. The 702nd EOD Co. came out in full force with interactive EOD robots and displays for the spectators.

The run route was designed with the start and finish line in front of the Grafenwoehr Post Exchange, creating a loop around the exchange. This gave spectators the ability to watch Johnson for most of the run.

“Initially I thought I took off too fast, and it would have a negative effect on my run time,” said Johnson, who’s bomb suit weighs approximately 80 pounds. “Halfway through the run, all I could really do was concentrate on my breathing.”

“The pace truck was calling out my times as I ran but I just could not hear them because I was so focused on running and pushing myself,” Johnson said. “It was not until I turned the corner into the final stretch when the crowd was cheering me on that I was able to hear the time and run it in.”

“This record setting is a reflection of his personality,” said Capt. Steward McGurk, the 702nd EOD Co. commander. “He sees challenges, sets goals and achieves them.”

“In those final hours before the run I just felt anxious, nervous and ready to do it. But to paraphrase Vince Lombardi, we can accomplish many more things if we don’t think of them as impossible,” said Johnson.

The record breaking run will not be considered official for approximately two months while the World Records Academy verifies the paperwork and run witness information.

The 702nd EOD Co. leadership used the one-mile bomb suit run event to support Johnson and also to raise awareness for the EOD Warrior Fund and EOD Memorial Foundation, two organizations which support both EOD Soldiers and Families of EOD Soldiers who were wounded or killed in action.

“It was a great day to see Staff Sgt. Johnson break the world record, and I want to thank everyone who came out to support him,” said McGurk.

The World Records Academy is the leading international organization, which certifies world records, based on world-wide coverage for certification services available through local public notaries, lawyers or authority representatives such as mayors, sheriffs or post office chief executives. The World Records Academy lists more than 1,000 world records on its website and contains the largest off-line world records database, with more than 250,000 listings.



The 18th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion commander, Lt. Col. Reed Hudgins (left), starts the official run timer as Staff Sgt. Eric Johnson, a team leader with the 702nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company, starts his run to break the world record for a one-mile bomb suit run Oct. 30. (Photo by Capt. Jennifer Dyrz, 18th CSSB Public Affairs)



Staff Sgt. Eric Johnson, a 702nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company team leader, pushes himself for the last few feet before crossing the finish line outside the Grafenwoehr Post Exchange Oct. 30 during his attempt to beat the world record for a one-mile bomb suit run. Johnson beat the previous record with a time of 8 minutes, 42 seconds. (Photo by Capt. Jennifer Dyrz, 18th CSSB Public Affairs)



Staff Sgt. Eric Johnson, a 702nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Company team leader, crosses the finish line and beats the world record for a one-mile bomb suit run Oct. 30. Capt. Steward McGurk, the 702nd EOD Co. commander, holds the timer as he keeps Johnson's official time. (Photo by Capt. Jennifer Dyrz, 18th CSSB Public Affairs)