



## News Release

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# HMEDDAC officer receives General McArthur Leadership Award

By Ed Drohan  
Europe Regional Medical Command Public Affairs

**HEIDELBERG, Germany** – Gen. Douglas McArthur lived his life according to three words that are also the motto of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point – Duty, Honor, Country. In May, a Heidelberg Medical Department Activity officer will receive McArthur’s namesake award for epitomizing those ideals.

Capt. Victor Johnson, Headquarters Company commander for the U.S. Army Medical Activity Heidelberg (HMEDDAC), was recently selected to receive the 2011 General McArthur Leadership Award. He will receive the award at a Pentagon ceremony in May.

Johnson is one of 14 active duty and 14 Army Reserve and Army National Guard junior officers and warrant officers selected for the award, which is sponsored by the General Douglas McArthur Foundation. According to Army officials, the award promotes and sustains effective junior officer leadership in the Army.

In her nomination letter, Heidelberg Medical Department Activity Commander Col. Telita Crosland called Johnson, “...an exceptional young officer who excels at taking care of Soldiers while ensuring mission accomplishment.” In fact, it was his concern for his Soldiers that led Johnson to develop a training program that provided some of the most realistic training any had participated in to that point.

Since the medical unit doesn’t participate in national training exercises like many line units, Johnson developed his own based on his personal experiences in combat as a reconnaissance platoon commander in Afghanistan.

“We set up a patrol to conduct counterinsurgency operations in a village” at the Coleman Barracks training area, said Johnson, whose awards include the Combat Action Badge and the Army Commendation Medal with Valor device. “We divided the different departments into squads where they were ambushed and took casualties, and still had to move into the village and retrieve a high-value target.”

Soldiers had to interact with the village elders and try to convince them to hand over the high-value target. Johnson said he wanted to make sure the Soldiers received realistic training so they would be prepared, especially since some could go on to be medics with line units.

He compared it to a high profile case where a group of Soldiers were killed and Jessica Lynch was captured in Iraq.

“That was a group of Soldiers who could have used more training to help mitigate the situation,” Johnson said. “I don’t want any of my Soldiers to get into something like that.”

Most of his Soldiers had never been ambushed before the training scenario, Johnson said. “I’d rather have them ambushed here for the first time than in Afghanistan.”

In addition to training his own Soldiers, Johnson was responsible for assisting members of the Rwandan Defense Force in preparing an emergency preparedness plan for the Kanombe Military Hospital, the African nation’s largest military hospital. The hospital’s disaster plan was almost non-existent, Johnson said, so he and Master Sgt. Maria Sanchez, who has since been assigned to Korea, helped them write one using best practices learned through experiences here.

“They had never thought of having something like our Code Blue (cardiac arrest) teams and had no idea how to create a disaster plan,” Johnson said. “When we left, they had something that would work. They said they were going to replicate it and put it in at other hospitals as well.”

Lt. Col. Hugh McLean, the HMEDDAC deputy commander for administration, first suggested nominating Johnson for the award.

“Vic is imbued with the values: Duty, Honor, Country. These were instilled in him at a young age by his father who was in the Navy and solidified when he attended West Point,”

McLean said. “It was General MacArthur, a graduate of West Point, who gave an awe inspiring speech to the cadets about these three principles in 1962. Captain Johnson is a Soldier's Soldier. The principles are at the heart of every action he takes. I knew as soon as I saw the email message there was not a finer candidate for this award.”

He added that the award selection committee knew what they were doing when they picked Johnson to receive the leadership award.

“I believe that the breadth of his accomplishments stood out,” McLean said. “Vic accomplished more in one year than many officers accomplish in their careers. His initiative, tenacity, and staunch belief in caring for the Soldier and mission accomplishment definitely stood out to the selection committee.”

Despite his accomplishments, Johnson said he never thought he would be selected for the leadership award since it was “...so high up there.” He also said the award was not just his award, but an HMEDDAC award.

“I didn’t win this alone,” Johnson said. “All the Soldiers in this unit helped win it, from the docs who are treating patients, to the NCOs doing the inspections, to the Soldiers doing the basic things to keep this unit running. I like to say I just happened to be holding the ball when the music stopped.”

Johnson, who like McArthur graduated from West Point, started his career as an armor officer but reclassified into the medical service corps in 2010. He’ll be starting a graduate program at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, in June with hopes of becoming a Social Worker.

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**Cutline:**

Capt. Victor Johnson discusses the day’s appointments with 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Sean Hendricks and Sgt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Tina Davis.