

The high wires...



...and the low tyres.

KIWIS 2019 FORCE SKILLS CHAMPS

The Army-dominated Kiwi team won the hotly contested overall Force Skills Competition in the Sinai recently.

The Multi National Force and Observers (MFO) Force Skills Competition which began in 1986 is one of the most competitive events of the year. This year saw eleven teams, from seven different countries (Australia, NZ, Canada, Fiji, USA, Columbia and Uruguay) compete for the coveted title of MFO Force Skills Champion. Many of the teams had been training for months leading up to the event and the MFO was rife with rumors that some teams would get to select their next posting if they managed to secure first place. However, the level of preparation the New Zealand team could afford contrasted significantly. Nearly all members of the New Zealand team were drivers who were busy on the road supporting the MFO right up until the day of the event. Training

had to be held late at night after long days conducting driving tasks had been completed. The stakes had been set and they were high.

Day One began with a weigh in, where all teams had to achieve at least 15 kg per person (body armor, helmet and weapon). Having weighed their equipment the night before the Kiwis confidently stepped up to the plate only to realize that the scales they had used the night before must have been calibrated in a different hemisphere as each of the Kiwis weighed in their equipment at an average of 20 kgs per person.

The first stand for the New Zealanders was a written test on the Culture and History of Egypt, Israel and the MFO. The late nights studying under the tutelage of CPL Robert Brocklehurst had paid off and the New Zealanders started the competition on the front foot. After a leisurely two km run in under 15 min (which would become less leisurely after each stand) the Kiwis arrived at the Rules of Engagement (ROE) stand. The Kiwis mounted up in two armored jeeps and after a brief set of orders trundled down the road into the scenario area. The first scenario involved a confrontation with neutral role



players who were denying the MFO passage down the main road. The second involved an encounter with a militant checkpoint. The Kiwis executed the ROE perfectly and scored 100 percent which pushed them out in front of the competition and into an early lead.

Another perfect performance followed on the reaction to an IED and casualty stand, after LCPL Robert Bruce and PTE Dean Atkins executed what an American directing staff member claimed to be "the best medical handover they had seen in the competition". However, it was not over for PTE Atkins as he and LCPL Peter Young now had to step up and crush the "skilled driving" stand. After a few cone grazes, a couple of close calls and some of the heaviest spectator commentary I've ever heard, the two nominated drivers secured another podium finish for the team. The legs now growing heavy as the sun faded, the Kiwis dug deep for the final stand, the section shoot. LCPL Bruce once again did his part for the team by scoring very highly.

As the day grew to a close the team proudly gathered around CPL Brocklehurst for a few inspirational words before turning in with the knowledge that day two could

well decide the competition. Day two commenced with the CON COURSE. Starts were staggered and luck was on the Kiwis' side again with another late start drawn. Rumored times for the Fijian group that had started earlier in the morning could be heard everywhere. They were fast, very fast. The New Zealanders refocused on the job at hand and hit the course at speed. However, too many penalties were incurred, and the Kiwis found themselves with a big task ahead of them. They needed a strong finish.

Next was the forced march and shoot. PTE Phillips grabbed a NZ flag and charged out the gates alongside a doggedly determined LCPL Takurua Pou. As the team rounded the final corner to the range, legs heavy and tired, PTE Sean Clague charged out in front inspiring the team to a strong finish. The Kiwis performed well in the final shoot with an honorable mention going to LCPL Bruce who shot well again (only missing out on the overall top shot by 0.4) and with that the day was done.

Speculation circled as to whether the Kiwis, who had held a clear lead at the end of Day One, had done enough to secure the win.

The results were read out, New Zealand were winners of the driving, minor and overall force skills competitions. A thunderous haka from the rest of the New Zealand contingent fittingly sealed the occasion into the memories of everyone in attendance. This was a great achievement and one that everyone was proud to be a part of. The New Zealand team had the strength of character not to sacrifice the quality of the work they are here to do and still against large odds beat back the best every other country had to offer.

Clockwise from top: The Kiwi team gathers with its flags.

The start of one section of the competition.

The obstacle course.

The final stand – the section shoot.