

# Wilderness Challenge: Accepted

By Lt. j.g. Simone Harbas,  
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**N**avy and Marine Corps judge advocates departed Norfolk, Va., to represent the Navy JAG Corps in the All-Military Wilderness Challenge in Fayetteville, W. Va.

A feat of true mental and physical toughness, the Wilderness Challenge is an outdoor adventure race in the heart of the Appalachian Mountains organized by the Navy Region Mid-Atlantic, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation. This year the race consisted of an 8K mountain run, a 12-mile mountain bike race, a 14-mile forced hike through the mountains, a 13-mile whitewater raft race on the Gauley River, a seven-mile kayak race on the New River and an obstacle mud course challenge.

Judge advocates from Defense Service Office Southeast, Region Legal Service Office Mid-Atlantic, and the USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71) split up into two teams. Team “Reckless Endangerment” was comprised of four officers: Lt. j.g. Simone Harbas, Lt. Greg Dixon, Lt. j.g. Victor Marquez, and Lt. j.g. Emily Jones. Team “Lethal Litigators” was comprised of four officers: Lt. Jacob Meusch, Lt. Keven Schreiber, U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Keaton Harrell, and Lt. Chris Caetano.

This was a truly amazing experience and a fantastic opportunity to meet and compete with service members from all branches of the Armed Forces.

Forty-one teams composed of active-duty service members, retirees, reservists and wounded warriors from around the country gathered, to compete in the race, which is approved



Lt. j.g. Simone Harbas, Lt. Greg Dixon, Lt. Chris Caetano, U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Keaton Harrell, Lt. Keven Schreiber, Lt. Jacob Meusch, Lt. j.g. Emily Jones, and Lt. j.g. Victor Marquez from the Defense Service Office Southeast, Region Legal Service Office Mid-Atlantic, and the USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71), represented the JAG Corps in the 12th Annual Wilderness Challenge. The Wilderness Challenge is an outdoor adventure race organized yearly by the Mid-Atlantic Region, Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Department and is located in the Appalachian Mountains in West Virginia. Teams are made up of four members which complete in numerous endurance challenges over a period of three days.

by the United States Adventure Racing Association as a National Championship qualifying event.

Each team came together to prove that they had what it took to challenge themselves and the wilderness itself. As event coordinator Michael Bond remarked, “this is one of the most grueling, hard-fought competitions in the Armed Forces.”

Teamwork is vitally important to be successful in the Wilderness Challenge, as all team members must complete the entire race and all must remain in line-of-sight of each other at all times. Truly, no man could be left behind. Nowhere was this more apparent than the four-man raft race.

Team “Lethal Litigators,” captained by Meusch, acted together to heroically rescue their river guide who was thrown from the raft in the Class IV-V rapids of the Lower Gauley River. The team responded rapidly, working together to both paddle and steer the raft without assistance of the guide who was swept downstream. Using teamwork and quick thinking, they were able to catch up to their guide, haul him back in the raft, and complete the raft race.

Despite one broken wrist, one bruised and bloody eye, various cuts and scrapes, and numerous sore muscles, both JAG teams completed the race and all members were able to cross the finish line to compare battle scars and stories with the other teams.

The winning team this year came from the Navy, Team “Trample the Weak, Hurdle the Dead,” who completed the 52-mile course with a winning overall time of 7 hours, 11 minutes, 13 seconds. Team “Reckless Endangerment” came in 15th with a time of 9 hours and 22 minutes and Team “Lethal Litigators” came in 31st with a time of 10 hours and 53 minutes.

Although we may meet across the courtroom against one another, this really brought us together as friends and judge advocates. It taught us all about the power of working together as a team, remaining positive, and the sheer power of our wills. 🌟



Lt. Christina Caetano from Team “Lethal Litigators” broke her wrist and Lt. j.g. Emily Jones from Team “Reckless Endangerment” received a gash under her eye during the 2012 All-Military Wilderness Challenge.