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Air Force master sgt. competes in NATO chess tournament

Master Sgt. Robert Keough is one of the top Chess players in the United States Air Force. Keough put his skills to use this month when he competed in a multi-national NATO Chess tournament. The tournament is a permissive TDY in which Airmen are permitted to travel to the country in which the tournament will be held, this year it's Brest, France. Keough placed 19th out of 80 competitors. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Lauren Main)

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## **Hickam master sgt. competes in NATO chess tournament**

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- By Senior Airman Lauren Main
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**JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii** -- One might say that Master Sgt. Robert Keough 'moves.' Chess moves, that is. As one of the top three Airmen in the Air Force at his game, Keough is soon to be on his way to Brest, France where he will compete in the 23rd annual NATO Chess Championship.

As a member of the 613th Air Operations Squadron at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, Keough has a long way to travel for this year's tournament. The five time Air Force champion is confident in his ability and experience as he heads off to face the competition.

"I usually prepare for a tournament by going over tactics, studying and playing chess online," he said.

His competitors, which include top military players from 19 other countries, will undoubtedly be preparing for a grueling competition as well.

"Each game lasts, on average, four hours and we play two rounds a day," he said. "This year it's just the Air Force and Navy representing the U.S. Unfortunately, the Marines and Army had to pull out."

The tournaments are held in different participating NATO countries each year. In his 7th year of competition as an Airman, Keough will be returning to the very location where he first competed in 2002. That very same year, the U.S. placed the highest in its history, thanks to Keough's final game against a one-star general from the Netherlands.

"I learned how to play in fifth grade," he said. "I had some friends teach me and my mom taught me some too. But I really started playing more seriously when I was 14 and joined a chess club in high school. While I was on my high school chess team, I was routinely beating adults. So, I started competing in tournaments and winning them."

As a strong advocate for Airmen to get involved with playing and competing, Keough offers himself up as a point of contact and subject matter expert to anyone who might have questions.

"I enjoy representing the armed forces at the NATO tournament. It's a huge honor," said Keough. "I'm so thankful to my commander, Col. Paul Issler, for being supportive and allowing me to go to the tournament."