

**1ST MISSION SUPPORT COMMAND- U.S. ARMY RESERVE PUERTO RICO**



# **1ST MSC GAZETTE**



**U.S. ARMY RESERVE PUERTO RICO  
HIGHLIGHTS FEMALES CONTRIBUTIONS**



## 1ST MSC GAZETTE

Brig. Gen. Jeffrey W. Jurasek  
Commander

CSM Robert B. Breck  
Command Sgt. Maj.

Col. Manuel Ocasio  
Deputy Commander

Lt. Col. Carlos M. Cuebas  
Public Affairs Officer

1st. Lt. David Reyes  
363rd Public Affairs Det.  
Commander

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E-mail submissions to the 1st MSC public affairs officer at [carlos.m.cuebas.mil@mail.mil](mailto:carlos.m.cuebas.mil@mail.mil)

### 1st MSC Phone Numbers

|                    |              |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Commander:         | 787-707-4928 |
| Deputy Commander:  | 787-707-4944 |
| Safety Specialist: | 787-707-4182 |
| Personnel:         | 787-707-4164 |
| Plans:             | 787-707-4171 |
| Public Affairs     | 787-707-4988 |



**COMMAND SGT. MAJ. ROBERT BRECK**



The preparing of our Soldiers and Leaders is also preparing our civilian counterparts and our Families for the inevitable challenges we will all face during wartime and peacetime deployments. Our Families need to know that their loved ones are trained, ready and prepared to fight the nation's battles on foreign land or on the home front.





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# U.S. ARMY RESERVE PUERTO RICO HIGHLIGHTS FEMALES CONTRIBUTIONS

*Story and photos by: 363rd Public Affairs Detachment*





## FORT BUCHANAN P.R.—

Capt. Maria del Carmen Rivera, Sgt. Belmarie Laguna Sierra and Sgt. Amanda Rivera from the 1st Mission Support Command U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico, occupied the public eye as part of the command's commemoration to the International Women's Week, March 9.

Capt. Rivera serves as a Logistics Operations Officer for the 393rd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion. Officers in this field are developed to be multifunctional and experts in their basic core function as they support unified land operations and the operational environment. "It is an honor because I am proud of the organization and what we do to accomplish the mission," said Rivera who possesses 20 years of military service.

Since the Revolutionary War, women played a critical role in the defense of the nation. "Sometimes we are worried about how we are perceived by others, however, we should expand our panorama and stop limiting

ourselves, because we are more-than capable," said Capt. Rivera.

Laguna serves as a Cargo Specialist for the 268th Transportation Company. Laguna is responsible for securing and transferring cargo equipment on vehicles, planes, and vessels. "If you have the necessary enthusiasm to learn, anyone regardless of gender, can operate this type of equipment," said Laguna, making reference to the size of the Material Handling Equipment she operates.

As Non-Commissioned-Officer, Laguna, sees herself as a facilitator that enables professional growth of Soldiers. "As a facilitator, I am always trying to motivate my Soldiers to thrive and achieve their full potential," said Laguna, who in 2017 provided support to the 5th Special Forces Group in the Middle East.

Sgt. Rivera, a Glen Cove New York native, serves with the 448th Engineer Battalion, as a Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic, primarily responsible for performing maintenance and recovery operations on wheeled vehicles. "My job requires a lot of teamwork, we all

need to be synchronized and on the same page, otherwise one would not be able to succeed," said Sgt. Rivera.

Sgt. Rivera currently participates of the Active Guard Reserve program. "On a daily basis, I order equipment through the system, conduct preventive maintenance checks and services and mechanical repairs on vehicles, ensuring that every equipment in our motor pool is up-to-standards," said Sgt. Rivera.

The story of these three female Soldiers clearly shows how the education, training, and hands-on experience available in the Army Reserve empowers our current and future female Soldiers to reach their maximum potential as Soldiers, professionals, Family members and citizens.

For the past 98 years, the women assigned to the U.S. Army Reserve Multifunctional Geographic Command for the Caribbean have been serving, fighting, and contributing to the security and prosperity of our nation, and continue to do so today.



# HONORING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Story and photo by: 363rd Public Affair Detachment



**Capt. Jamillah N. Douglas, 166th Regional Support Group, Command Operation Officer served as a guest speaker for the National African American History Month, held at Fort Buchanan Community Club, Feb. 21.**

**F**ORT BUCHANAN, PR- Soldiers, civilians, and Family members from the U.S. Army Reserve Multifunctional Command for the Caribbean attended the National

African American History Month event hosted by the Equal Opportunity Office held at the Fort Buchanan Community Club, Feb. 21.

Capt. Jamillah N. Douglas,

166th Regional Support Group Command Operations Officer served as guest speaker during this event. Douglas shared her past experiences and explained the positive impacts of equal opportunities among the force.

“Equal opportunity builds readiness at all levels”, said Douglas.

Douglas is the Founder and CEO of Empower U, entity focused on life-coaching strategies and techniques for those in need.

The Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements of African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history.

The celebration began in 1915, half a century after the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in the U.S.

Black History Month creates awareness of the

long path many have endured for freedom. The 1st Mission Support Command is honored to commemorate events that enhance equal opportunities within the force.





**Left: Soldiers from the 407th Ground Ambulance Group staged at the Weapons Qualification Mandatory Training, Feb. 8 at Camp Santiago, Salinas P.R.**

**Below: Range Safety Officer rodding the weapon of a Soldier exiting the fire line.**



# SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT DURING EVERY TRAINING EVENT

*Story and photos by: 363rd Public Affairs Detachment*

**S**ALINAS,PR- The 1st Mission Support Command, U. S. Army Reserve-PR, maximized training time during the battle assembly conducted Feb. 8, at Camp Santiago Joint Training Center.

Aside from meeting the weapons qualification Army standards, safety, was the major priority during the mandatory event.

Spc. William Silva, 407th Ground Ambulance Group, explained the unit's role. "Our mission was to provide medical support, during the weapons qualification here in Salinas, in case of any injuries or heat casualties," said Silva.

As a Combat Medic, 68W, Sil-

va is trained to assist during emergency situations that require technical skills. "In case of a stroke, we are able to provide immediate assistance and evacuate the Soldier," said Silva.

Meanwhile, Sgt. 1st Class Francisco Rivera, Safety Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) In Charge, explained the safety measures implemented. "The first consideration is weather, we did not want any heat casualties, and we are glad we did not have any," said Rivera.

Prior to the live-fire event, every Soldier received a safety brief that included rules of firearms, loading and unloading, firearm handling, and hygiene guidelines. "A very important safety consideration is that we are

qualifying with live ammo and the last thing we want is a misfired weapon," said Rivera.

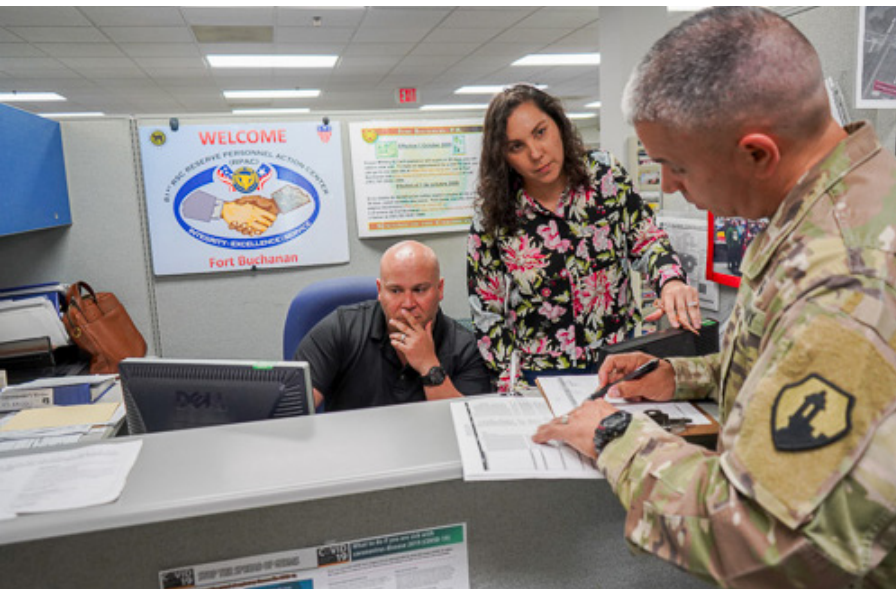
During live-fire event, Range Safety Officers were engaged throughout the shooting lanes providing assistance while implementing the established safety protocol.

"The weapons qualification ran pretty smooth, all the Army Reserve-Puerto Rico units cooperated to keep safety at all times," said Rivera.

With approximately 3,500 rounds of M-9 Pistol and M-4 Assault Rifles ammo used, the largest federal U.S. Army command in the Caribbean was able to sustain its readiness and ability to serve the needs of the Nation around the world.

## RPAC TACKLES UNSATISFACTORY PARTICIPANTS

Story and photo by: 363rd Public Affairs Detachment



**F**ORT BUCHANAN, P.R. – The Reserve Personnel Action Centers (RPAC) in Puerto Rico are actively monitoring the percentages of unsatisfactory participation across the largest federal Army command in the Caribbean.

Between March 2020 and the same period of time last year, the numbers of non-participants Soldiers dropped by 10 percent.

“Soldiers who are not actively participating during battle assemblies and annual training are considered unsatisfactory participants, with nine or more unexcused absence during a 12-month period,” said Rivera.

Troop Program Units (TPU) Soldiers are required to participate in at least 48 scheduled inactive duty training periods and no less than

14 days of annual training. “The unit commander has the authority to excuse absences,” said Rivera.

Soldiers’ finances are impacted by the unsatisfactory status. “For example, if the Soldier enlisted with a bonus, and did not perform satisfactorily, he or she, receives a codification in the system that may incur into a collection,” said Rivera.

Unsatisfactory performance can result in separation of service, yet retention through counseling, retraining and rehabilitation is first be considered prior any action.

The participation of all Soldiers allows the U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico, to continue playing a critical role in the defense of the Nation.

## NEW CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE COMMAND

Story and photo by: 363rd Public Affairs Detachment

**F**ORT BUCHANAN, P.R. – After a transparent and open process that considered dozens of highly qualified candidates across the Nation, Manuel Vergne (left) became the new Supervisory Staff Administrator (SSA) at the U.S. Army Reserve 210th Regional Support Group, March 2nd, in a ceremony at the 1st Mission Support Command headquarters.

Julio Aponte, Command Executive Officer, led the solemn ceremony.

The position was announced through internal and external channels as an open vacancy, and allowed candidates across the Nation to compete. “Selection process included two boards, one that evaluated candidates’ qualifications, the other interviewed the pre-selected top 25. Finally, only three were elected for interview with the Command Group, for final decision,” said Aponte.

“Vergne served as the Brigade S6 Signal Officer at Fort Benning Georgia for the 3rd Brigade, 98th Training Division. His past professional experience made him extremely qualified for this position,” added Aponte.

As a Supervisory Staff Administrator, Vergne, will represent the 210th RSG Brigade Commander, on the daily operations. Vergne’s obligation includes supervision of administrative personnel, both military and civilians, training operations, facilities coordination and budgeting.

Vergne civilian education is supported with a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration and Master Degree in Organizational Leadership from U.S. Army Sergeant Major Academy (USASMA).

“The 1st Mission Support Command had this competing process, in order to obtain the best of all talents, and support the vision of the Commanding General, Jeffrey W. Jurasek, for us to move forward,” added Aponte.



Julio Aponte (right), Command Executive Officer, administers the civilian oath to Manuel Vergne (left), as the newly appointed 210th Regional Support Group, Supervisory Staff Administrator at the command's headquarters, March 2.



## ARMY RESERVE-PUERTO RICO CONTINUES HIRING

Story by: Public Affairs Office

U.S. Army photo by Jose Santos Santos

**F**ort Buchanan, PR –In a small ceremony led by Julio Aponte, 1st Mission Support Command, U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico Command Executive Officer, Luis Calvo became the newest civilian employee at the largest federal U.S. Army command in the Caribbean, May 11, at the command's headquarters.

Calvo a native of Toa Baja, Puerto Rico is the Retention Non-Commissioned Officer, for the 166th Regional Support Group (RSG), a brigade size element under the U.S. Army Reserve Multi Functional Geographic Command for the Caribbean.

Calvo accepted a position to serve as the Army Reserve Administrator (ARA) and became the first civilian hired for the 699th Engineer Detachment, the newest military element under the 448th Engineer Battalion that will be activated at the end of the current fiscal year.

As ARA, Calvo will be managing the detachment's operations and will make decisions on behalf of the Commander during his/her absence. "I am the first civilian on this position and there is no shoes to fit, hopefully I will be that person to set the high standards," he added.

This hiring action represents how the command continues recruiting

talent, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, while implementing strict preventive measures to safeguard the force's safety and well-being. "Even though we are going through rough times during this pandemic, we have the commitment to continue our mission by providing a ready force in support of our Nation needs" stated Aponte.

"As part of our Organization Transformation and Modernization, we continue hiring personnel non-stop filling multiple available positions in order to enable our forces to achieve the highest standards of readiness to answer the Nations call at any given time, whether is abroad or in the Home front", added Aponte, who is the senior U.S. Army civilian in the region.

Calvo joins more than 100 civilian Army Reserve-Puerto Rico employees, a workforce of talented and qualified people that fill critical non-combat positions. The Army Reserve civilian payroll represents over \$7 million annually to the local economy.

Army civilians are an integral part of the Army team, committed to selfless service in support of the protection and preservation of the United States.







# UNITED STATES ARMY

THE 1ST MISSION SUPPORT COMMAND COMMEMORATES 112 YEARS OF





# RESERVE BIRTHDAY

HISTORY IN SERVICE TO THE NATION OF THE AMERICA'S ARMY RESERVE





# ENGINEERING: AN EXCELLENT CAREER WITHIN THE U.S. ARMY RESERVE IN PUERTO RICO

Story by: 363rd Public Affairs Detachment



**Soldiers from the 602nd Engineering Detachment of the U.S. Army Reserve 1st Mission Support Command posing in front of the unit's commemorative mural in Camp Buehring, Kuwait. (U.S. Army photo by 602nd UPAR/released)**

**F**ORT BUCHANAN, P.R.—Soldiers from the 602nd Engineering Detachment of the U.S. Army Reserve 1st Mission Support Command, culminated their mission in Kuwait and arrived safely to the island, April 1.

In 2019, the unit deployed and provided support to the Directorate of Public Works (DPW) in Camp Buehring, Kuwait. Maj. Jorge Miguel Perez Serrano served as the Commanding Officer during the mobilization.

“Our mission was to lead the DPW in Kuwait, by promoting projects that enhance the quality

life of every Department of Defense (DOD) employee and Soldiers living in Camp Buehring,” said Perez.

One of the most needed requirements that Perez addressed, was the living facilities available to the military community.

“This was my second deployment to the base, back in 2014, the unit was previously assigned to a similar mission in Kuwait and since then, the quality of life has not changed significantly. As of today, Soldiers were still living in tents so, our main objective was to promote a project that accommodates the population in concrete buildings,” said Perez who possess 16 years of service.

DOD supplies every military installation with the equipment needed for each construction project. However, most of the labor falls under local contracts. “We did not have to deploy the unit’s equipment from Puerto Rico. Part of our job was to supervise the local contractors working on post,” said Perez.

As a commander, Perez, had to ensure that all Soldiers were credentialed and successfully trained for this mission. “Every Soldier within this unit needs a credential within the engineering field. Most of the trainings are designed under the principle of building structures, developing civil work programs and providing combat support,” said Perez.

A total of 15 Soldiers were selected to be part of this construction management mission. “We had engineer officers and warrant officers, along with enlisted personnel with the military occupation specialty associated to the field, like Horizontal Construction Engineer (12N) and others,” said Perez.

Staff Sgt. Gelmarie Andreu Morales served as a project manager for the 602nd Engineer Detachment. “My main responsibilities included construction management of the range site located at the frontier of Kuwait with Irak,” said Andreu who possess a Civil Engineering Bachelor Degree from the Caribbean University in Puerto Rico.

For Andreu, working along foreign civil contractors represented a unique experience.



“The dynamic was different because most of them were from India and Sri Lanka. Despite the language challenges, we were able to communicate effectively,” said Andreu.

One of the most gratifying memories that Andreu cherish from her first deployment was the opportunity to see camels wondering in Kuwait. “Since most of my projects were outside of camp, every now and then, I was able to see camels on my way to work,” said Andreu.

After successfully accomplishing their mission, the troops redeployed back to the Continental United States and were quarantined immediately, as a preventive measure against the spread of COVID-19.

“We were quarantined for 15 days on a military installation in the states. Meanwhile, we complied with online medical and administrative actions that are part of the redeployment process,” said Perez.

When asked about reuniting with his family, Perez, expressed mixed emotions, because of the current COVID-19 safety precautions. “As soon I saw my family, I could not hug them right away. Instead, I had to take a bath, disinfect myself, and wear a mask prior making an approach. I wanted to kiss my kids, so badly, but I could not,” said Perez.

The unparalleled skills and hands-on-training that Soldiers gain in the U.S. Army Reserve engineering career can’t be matched anywhere. “The U.S. Army Reserve will give you the necessary tools for a successful career by providing both, professional and leadership experience,” said Perez.

Andreu shared a similar outlook. “This experience is something that I can definitely add to my resume,” said Andreu who is also a project manager for a private company in the civilian sector.

The successful redeployment of the U.S. Army Reserve 602nd Engineer Detachment, clearly shows how the US Army Reserve forces in Puerto Rico have become an essential part of the total force, with streamlined, deployable forces and citizen Soldiers who embody the warrior mindset and spirit.

**Below: Staff Sgt. Gelmarie Andreu Morales, project manager for the 602nd Engineer Detachment, supervises foreign civil contractors during her mission in Kuwait. (U.S. Army photo /released)**



# ORDER OF MILITARY MEDICAL MERIT INDUCTION IN PUERTO RICO

Story by: 363rd Public Affairs Detachment  
Photo by: Mui Chao

**F**ORT BUCHANAN, P.R.- In a small ceremony led by Brig. Gen Jeffrey W. Jurasek, Senior Federal Army Officer in the Caribbean, Lt. Col. Ritha Chao, Battalion Commander for the 49th Multifunctional Medical Battalion (MMB), was inducted into the Order of Military Medical Merit (O2M3), May 4, for his contributions to the Army Medical Department.

The O2M3 is a prestigious organization founded by the Commanding General of U.S. Army Health Services Command. The honor was presented by Lt. Col. Rachel Wienke, Rodriguez Army Health Clinic Commander and, signed by Richard L. Ursone, Brigadier General, U.S. Army Retired, President of Military Medical Merit.

Natural from Cambodia, Southeast Asia, Chao, moved to the United States in 1976, with his family as refugees of the Vietnam War. “When my family came over, we could not speak English. My parents stressed a lot for education, learning how to write and read English was paramount,” said Chao.

Chao possess a bachelor degree in Property Management and a minor in Leadership, from Virginia Polytechnic University, and a master degree on International Business from University of Maryland. “I am the first person in my family to ever graduate high school and to get a four year degree,” said Chao.

One of the most significant contributions includes the Medical Mission Command in Defense Support to Civil Authorities during Hurricane Maria Recovery Operations. “We used the same concept that we would have done in war and applied it into the civilian emergency. By using a checklist we were able to assess and prioritize our capabilities,” said Chao.

“Transportation, evacuating patients from a point of injury to a point of definitive care was an issue, and the 49th MMB, was able

to fill that gap,” added Chao.

By applying the same principle of assessing necessities, Chao was able to contribute with the transformation of the United States Army Reserve in Puerto Rico, into a Multifunctional Geographic Command for the Caribbean.

“We created opportunities and venues to protect the medical force of the 1st Mission Support Command. We realigned all the systems, organized our efforts and created incentives to recruit medical personnel,” said Chao.



**Lt. Col. Ritha Chao, Battalion Commander for the 49th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, during his induction to the Order of Military Medical Merit, May 4, at the U.S. Army Reserve Puerto Rico Headquarters.**



# MEDICAL MERIT INDUCTION CONTINUATION

“The U.S. Army Reserve offers a wide range of opportunities, from the basics to a more specialized level, keeping in mind that Soldiers need to be credentialed in the civilian side, for any military medical position,” added.

As the Chief of Current Operations for the 807 Medical Command, Chao, expertly supported five medical brigades with 10 combat

support hospitals, and 81 medical units across 26 states. “As the Chief of Current Operations, we took what the basic requirements is for the Medical Command, looked at the population that we were supporting and figured how we shape the organization,” said Chao.

During the ceremony, Wienke, presented a coin of excellence to Mui Chao, spouse, for her dedicated

support through to the Army.

Lt. Col. Chao currently resides in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico with his wife, two daughters, Kiera and Meghan, and son, Lex. “My family are the ones that motivate me. Everything I do is to ensure that my kids have better chances in life,” added Chao while expressing gratitude towards his family.

## SOLDIER. MOTHER. SURVIVOR.

*Story by: 363rd Public Affairs Detachment*

**A**fghanistan—Sgt. Liza Nazario, from the 271st Human Resources Detachment, sendt message about family readiness and resilience while deployed in the Middle East, May 8.

For Nazario this is the first time celebrating mother's day from the Middle East. “I want to jump through my phone and hug my family so hardly, but I know that in a few months, I will be able to be next to them,” said Nazario.

Her son, Robert Mayol Nazario expressed admiration and gratitude towards his mother. “I know she is giving it all and I am really proud of her,” said Mayol.

While overseas, Nazario manages the inbound and outbound of almost 80,000 pounds of correspondence weekly. “It boost their morale every time Soldiers receive correspondence from their family,” said Nazario.

Nazario shared experience as a survivor of domestic violence in 2012, and encouraged the re-

porting of all instances of abuse.

“I was able to move forward thanks to my Family and the resources available. My grandchildren and my son are my biggest motivation and I know they need me in their life,” said Nazario.

“Although it is hard to move from omething negative like this, we are a strong human beings and if we are surrounded by those who we love, we are able to overcome anything,” added Nazario .

The Family Advocacy Program is a Commander's program designed to prevent domestic and child abuse.

The 1st Mission Support Command pledges to continue empowering our female troops, as we sustain the future strenght of the finest fighting force in the Caribbean.



**Sgt. Liza Nazario, U.S. Army Reserve Puerto Rico, deployed in the Middle East during Mother's Day. (U.S. Army photo/released)**



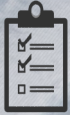
# PREPARE FOR HURRICANE SEASON



Know your Hurricane Risk



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Make an Emergency Plan



Strengthen and Secure Your Home



Gather Emergency Supplies



Get Tech Ready, Keep your Cellphone and Electronics Charged



Those with Disabilities identify if you may need additional help during an emergency.



Help your Neighborhood



Know your Evacuation Zone



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