



1ST MSC GAZETTE



VOL. NO. 11/ ISSUE 2

WINTER 2021

**MOTHER,
SOLDIER,
MILITARY TECHNICIAN,
AND
DOCTORAL STUDENT**

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**CREATING NEW ARMY
LEADERS**

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Brig. Gen. Jeffrey W. Jurasek
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COMMAND SGT. MAJ. ROBERT BRECK
1ST MSC COMMAND SGT. MAJ.



The involvement of our Soldiers family members in our military organizations, only helps to build a stronger foundation of trust in the leadership that controls their Soldiers lives. We must not forget that what we are asking of our Soldiers, we are also asking of their families.





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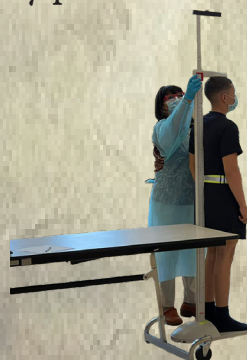
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New Commander at the 597th Quartermaster Company

By: U.S. Army 363rd Public Affairs Detachment

PUERTO NUEVO, P.R. — Capt. Elizabeth de Gracia relinquished command of the 597th Quartermaster Company to Capt. Jose Tristani on a change of command ceremony held at the Capt. Euripides Rubio United States Army Reserve Center, Dec. 3, 2020.

The ceremony was presided over by Lt. Col. Damian Sickinger, commander of the 346th Transportation Battalion.

"I congratulate Capt. De Gracia on this successful command and good luck to her on her future endeavors. I have full faith and confidence in Capt. Tristani to command the 597th Quartermaster Company", said Sickinger.

De Gracia was the commander of the 597th QM CO since May 2018. Some of the most relevant missions De Gracia accomplished during her tenure was the Earthquakes relief mobilization, and the support to the COVID-19 Pandemic related missions.

"After Hurricane Maria I was notified that I was selected as the commander of the 597th QM CO. I knew it was going to be a great experience. I consider the 597th as my school for this past three years, and the unit that made me the officer that I am today," said De Gracia on a very emotive speech.

CAPT. JOSE TRISTANI (LEFT) PASSES THE 597TH QM CO GUIDON TO 1ST SGT. HENDRICK ROMAN, 597TH QM CO FIRST SERGEANT, (RIGHT) DURING THE CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONY HELD AT THE CAPT. EURIPIDES RUBIO UNITED STATES ARMY RESERVE CENTER, DEC 3, 2020.

U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico Commanders make everyday decisions that involve millions of dollars in resources. Their judgment and skills can mean the difference between a mission failure and mission accomplished.

"I want to thank my family for their conditional love and support and also to Lt. Col. Sickinger, Capt. De Gracia and her family for giving me this opportunity to command such a great unit. I am honored to be joining your team and I expect great things to happen in the future," said Tristani.

A change of command is a military tradition that represents a transfer of authority and responsibility for a unit or command. The history, tradition, and accomplishments of the command are embodied in the colors. The passing of colors from an outgoing commander to an incoming commander ensures that the unit and its Soldiers are never without official leadership, represents a continuation of trust, and signifies an allegiance of Soldiers to their unit's commander.



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Eduardo Rivera, 363rd PAD/released

US Army Reserve Multifunctional Geographic Command for the Caribbean putting people first



“WE MUST ENSURE EVERY HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE IS PROPERLY TRAINED, SO SOLDIERS HAVE ACCURATE INFORMATION IN THE SYSTEM. IN THAT WAY WE TAKE CARE, NOT ONLY OF THE TROOPS, BUT THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS AS WELL.”

Master Sgt. Juan Guerra, Senior Human Resources Noncommissioned Officer

Soldiers and civilian employees from the U.S. Army Reserve Multifunctional Geographic Command for the Caribbean participated in a data correctness campaign training, led by the Command's Human Resources G1 section, Dec. 15, 2020 (U.S. Army photo by UPAR/ released)

By: U.S. Army 1st MSC Public Affairs Office

FORT BUCHANAN, P.R. — Soldiers and civilian employees from the U.S. Army Reserve Multifunctional Geographic Command for the Caribbean, participated in a data correctness campaign training, led by the command's Human Resources G1 section, Dec. 15, 2020, at the command headquarters.

The Data Correctness Campaign is designed to identify and correct data inconsistencies within every Soldiers' records, in preparation for the Integrated Personnel and Pay System-Army (IPPS-A) implementation.

IPPS-A is an online Human Resources system that will provide

integrated personnel, pay and talent management capabilities in a single system to all Army Components, for the first time ever.

“In order to have a smooth transition to the IPPS-A in the near future, it is critical to conduct a data correctness now to fix any discrepancies,” said Maj. Orlando Garcia, Assistant Human Resources Officer.

The largest federal U.S. Army in the Caribbean is scheduled to implement the IPSS-A next fiscal year.

For Master Sgt. Juan Guerra, Senior Human Resources Noncommissioned officer, it is very important to train and build understanding

around this new system across every formation.

“We must ensure every human resources office is properly trained, so Soldiers have accurate information in the system. In that way we take care, not only of the troops, but their family members as well,” said Guerra.

“This new system is very important, especially for Army Reserve Soldiers, because it will increase personnel readiness by consolidating and synchronizing every piece of information, as total force within all three U.S Army components,” said Jose Ruiz, the command's Human Resources Officer.

Army Reserve facilities in Puerto Rico enable mission success

By: U.S. Army 363rd Public Affairs Detachment

I ENJOY THE FACT THAT OUR SENIOR LEADERS, COMMANDING GENERAL AND COMMAND SGT. MAJ. ARE COMMITTED ON THESE EFFORTS. THAT DEMONSTRATES THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ARMY RESERVE FACILITIES FOR THE COMMAND AND OUR SOLDIERS

Sgt. 1st Class Herbert Correa, 390th Transportation Company Training NCO and U.S. Army Reserve Center Facility Manager in Ceiba



Brig. Gen. Jeffrey W. Jurasek, 1st MSC Commanding General (left) and Command. Sgt. Major Robert B. Breck, 1st MSC Command Sgt. Maj (right) showing the Army Reserve facility in Ceiba to Maj. Gen. Jami C. Shawley, 81st RD commanding general (center) , Jan. 13, 2021 (U.S. Army photos by Sgt. Eduardo Rivera Escobales, 363rd PAD/released)

FORT BUCHANAN, P.R. — As part of the expansion of the U.S. Army Reserve in Puerto Rico, Brig. Gen. Jeffrey W. Jurasek, senior federal Army Officer in the Caribbean, and Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Breck, senior Non-commissioned officer in the region, welcomed Maj. Gen. Jami C. Shawley, 81st Readiness Division Commanding General, Jan. 11-14, 2021, at the headquarters, and provided a brief about the 1st Mission Support Command's mission, relevance and readiness.

The 81st Readiness Division has the responsibility for base operations at Army Reserve units throughout the South Eastern United States and Puerto Rico, ensuring units and Soldiers are prepared to deploy and fight in multi-domain operations, and meet current and future Combatant Commander Force requirements. Shawley had the opportunity to visit

several Army Reserve centers around the island, observing firsthand the facilities.

"The visit of Maj. Gen. Jami C. Shawley is highly important since we are getting the support of a Senior Officer responsible for the facilities that provide support to our units" said Sgt. 1st Class Herbert Correa, 390th Transportation Company (Seaport) Training NCO and U.S. Army Reserve Center Facility Manager in Ceiba.

"I enjoy the fact that our senior leaders, Commanding General and Command Sgt. Maj are committed on these efforts and demonstrating the importance of the Army Reserve facilities for the command and our Soldiers" added Correa.

The U.S. Army Reserve facilities enable the readiness by facilitating multiple trainings to Army Reserve-Puerto Rico

troops to fulfill the needs of the nation.

The Multifunctional Geographic Command for the Caribbean, 1st Mission Support Command, has played critical role as part of Defense Support Civil Authorities missions during local emergencies, such as Hurricane Irma, Maria in 2017, and the earthquakes in the southern region of island in 2020.

The proactive coordination between both commands, clearly showcases how the Army Reserve synchronizes efforts to support the troops, by maintaining a high level of readiness of its facilities.

Creating New Army Leaders

By Staff Sgt. Carlos Rodriguez Ortiz, 1st MSC Public Affairs Office

FORT BUCHANAN, P.R. — Approximately twenty Soldiers from the U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico striving for career progression, participated in a junior enlisted promotion board, Dec. 11, 2020, at the Mission Command Support Group headquarters, presided by Command Sgt. Luis Martinez, senior noncommissioned officer at the 49th Multifunctional Medical Battalion Command Sergeant Major.

The junior enlisted promotion board takes place every month at the 1st Mission Support Command, the largest federal U.S. Army in the Caribbean, providing Soldiers with the opportunity to advance to the next rank.

According to Martinez, every Army Reserve Soldier must be evaluated with the same standards and does not matter if the Soldier is on active duty or a member of the Troop Program Unit.

"If we want to build this organization with great leaders, the standards must be the same for everybody; it does not matter if the Soldier is part of Troop Unit Program or the active-duty force," said Martinez, a native from Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico.

The promotion board consists of at least three voting members and the recorder as a non-voting member. The president of the board is the senior member. If the board consists of noncommissioned officers, then the president of the board usually is a command sergeant major.

The board is an extremely demanding event that emphasizes on the Soldier's personal appearance, oral

expression, conversation skills, knowledge of world affairs, awareness of military programs, and knowledge of basic soldiering, among other areas.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, hit the globe, the command has been taking the necessary precautions to mitigate any outbreak, while proactively maintaining the readiness of the force. The promotion boards are not the exception.

Multiple Soldiers appearing before the board, demonstrated self-confidence, but at the same time recognized that it is very challenging to control the nerves.

"Every step is hard, from long hours of study, getting dressed and executing, but dealing with your mind and nerves when it comes to performing is the most challenging part of this event," said Sgt. Jose Farrao, a Property Book noncommissioned officer at the 49th MMB.

While waiting for their turn, other Soldiers reflected about the importance of good leadership in the organization.

"I couldn't be here if it wasn't for my family, and those great leaders that paved the way for me, especially two great females leaders:

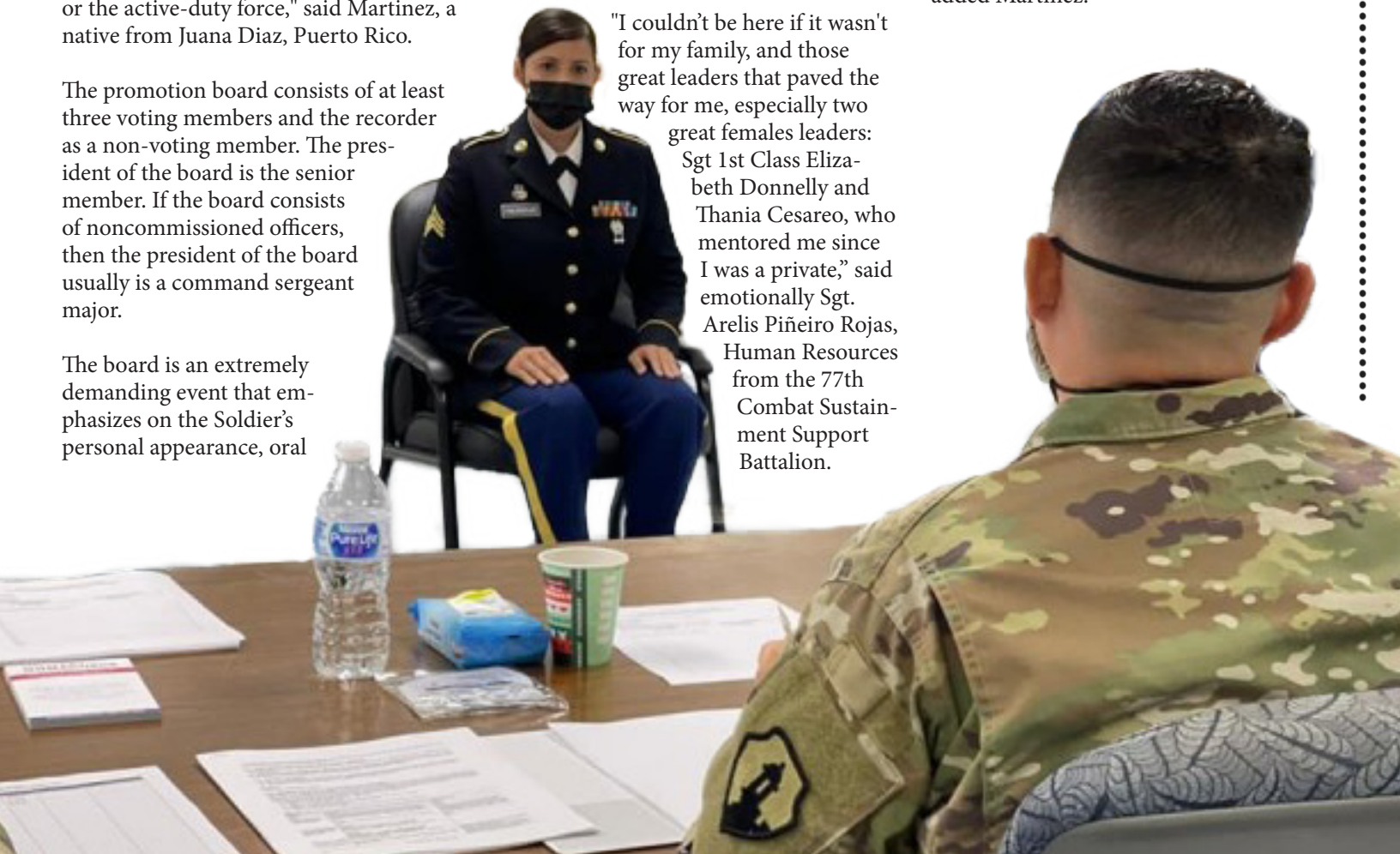
Sgt 1st Class Elizabeth Donnelly and Thania Cesareo, who mentored me since I was a private," said emotionally Sgt. Arelis Piñeiro Rojas, Human Resources from the 77th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion.

Other Soldiers expressed their goal of becoming role models to other troops across the command.

"I want to become an example for those young Soldiers who just joined the Army, by demonstrating what right looks like, and teaching them that we must go after career progression, and always setting an example to follow, as my two previous mentors did with me," added Piñeiro Rojas, a native from the Coto neighborhood, in Isabela Puerto Rico.

Events such as this promotion board, clearly demonstrate how the largest federal U.S. Army Command in the Caribbean offers multiple opportunities for career progression, with an inclusive environment, where everyone has an equal opportunity to excel.

"We must continue promoting, educating, and cultivating an environment of inclusiveness. These events are a great opportunity to provide an equal opportunity for everybody to get the chance to advance in their career, based on their potential," added Martinez.



1st Lt. Virgen Rivera: Mother, Soldier, Military technician and a doctoral student

By: Sgt. Eduardo Rivera Escobales, 363rd Public Affairs Detachment

CEIBA, P.R. — 1st Lt. Virgen Rivera Gomez, a single mother of a 13 years old autistic daughter, serves as the commander of the U.S. Army Reserve-PR, 390th Transportation Company, and as the Staff Administrative Specialist for the U.S. Army Reserve-PR, 346th Transportation Battalion, both in Ceiba, while at the same time pursues a doctorate degree in psychology.

Rivera Gomez was born and raised in a humble family at the Limones neighborhood in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico, and enlisted the U.S. Army Reserve in Puerto Rico at the age of 19, as a water treatment specialist in 2005. Meanwhile, at the time, she was pursuing a bachelors of science in chemical engineer at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayaguez.

“When I joined the Army, my family could not believe it. I was a tiny, fragile little girl. People thought I could not make it due to my physical appearance. They were not against it, but they could not believe it,” said Rivera.

After enlisting Rivera decided to switch her academic goals and transferred to the University of Ana G. Mendez, formerly known as Turabo Univeristy in Gurabo, where she completed a bachelors of science in biology.

VIRGEN RIVERA: THE UNITED STATES ARMY COMMISSION OFFICER

Rivera began her journey as a private and advanced in the enlisted ranks, all the way up to Staff Sgt.

“The commission process was challenging since I was a noncommissioned officer for 12 years. I felt too old compared to my peers because I was almost 30, and most of them were in their mid-20. It was challenging seeing them so energetic,” remembered Rivera. Rivera got commission and joined the United States Army Officer Corps in April 2017



U.S. Army Reserve-PR 1Lt. Virgen Rivera commander of the 390th Transportation Company posing in front of a wrecker at the unit's motorpool, Feb. 9, 2021. (U.S. Army photos by Sgt. Eduardo Rivera Escobales 363rd PAD/released)

in the quartermaster field.

Officers in the quartermaster field are developed to command and control operations within combined armed forces during land combat—coordinate employment of quartermaster Soldiers at all command levels in U.S. and multinational operations.

“I decided to commission to amplify my skills set, serve, lead and have a positive impact with compassion and empathy on more Soldiers, civilians and family members,” added Rivera.

Rivera Gomez previously commanded the 432nd Transportation Company and now is the commander of the 390th Transportation Company.

“The key to being a successful transportation company commander is to know your Soldiers, equipment, and capabilities,” stated Rivera.

VIRGEN RIVERA: THE MILITARY TECHNICIAN

Rivera works as Staff Administrative Specialist for the U.S. Army Reserve 346th Transportation Battalion in her civilian occupation. She provides support by managing individual trainings, medical readiness, logistics, and financial management programs in support of subordinate units.

“As a civilian, I help to provide continuity to the operations. Being a Staff Administrative Specialist helps me as a commander and vice versa, since I can amplify my common operating picture and understanding military

1st Lt. Virgen Rivera
390th TC Commander

(from previous page)

VIRGEN RIVERA: THE DOCTORAL STUDENT

Rivera manages her time by complying with her civilian job during the day, then, she changes her outfit to a doctoral student of psychology to do her clinics in a night shift at the Carlos Albizu Clinic, Puerto Rico Medical Center in San Juan.

Rivera is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology specialized in autism and trauma.

“Right now, I’m giving therapies in the Puerto Rico Administration of Mental Health and Anti-Addiction Service (AS-SMCA) helping people with addictions, and providing support in trauma cases after accidents, as part of the clinical practice,” expressed Rivera Gomez.

Rivera also uses her psychology skills to help her daughter and other children with similar conditions.

“The main reason I took psychology is to not only help my daughter but also to help other children and parents that could not afford therapies to provide a brighter and independent future for them,” expressed a proud Rivera.

“My goal is to join the U.S. Army Medical Corp as a Physiologist once I finish my doctor’s degree in May 2022,” said a confident Rivera.

VIRGEN RIVERA: THE MOTHER

Rivera’s daughter, Ariana Nicole Rivas Rivera, a 13 years old was diagnosed with autism at two years old. Virgen Rivera has managed to raise her daughter as a single mother.

“I learned from my daughter that the world is a good place. She is always happy, even though life is challenging for her. I remembered asking myself, “What am I going to do?” after Ariana got diagnosed with autism. But I realized that those were my fears, not hers. She never sees her shortcomings or mines and thinks I am perfect, and that gives me the strength to continue grinding every day,” said Rivera emotionally.

ADMIRING OTHER FEMALES IN THE MILITARY

Rivera has several female role models that inspired and paved her way in the military.

“I have met several outstanding females in the military, for example, Brig. Gen.

Maria A. Juarez Benero, when she was the 166th Regional Support Group commander. The way she briefed and her delivery was impressive. I also admire Brig. Gen. Irene Zoppi; impressive leader and an all-around a Soldier. She impacted my life with her empathy,” said Rivera.

I learned from them to maintain a balance between personal life and the military career. They developed their individual careers, succeeded in the military, and raised a family” said an inspired Rivera.

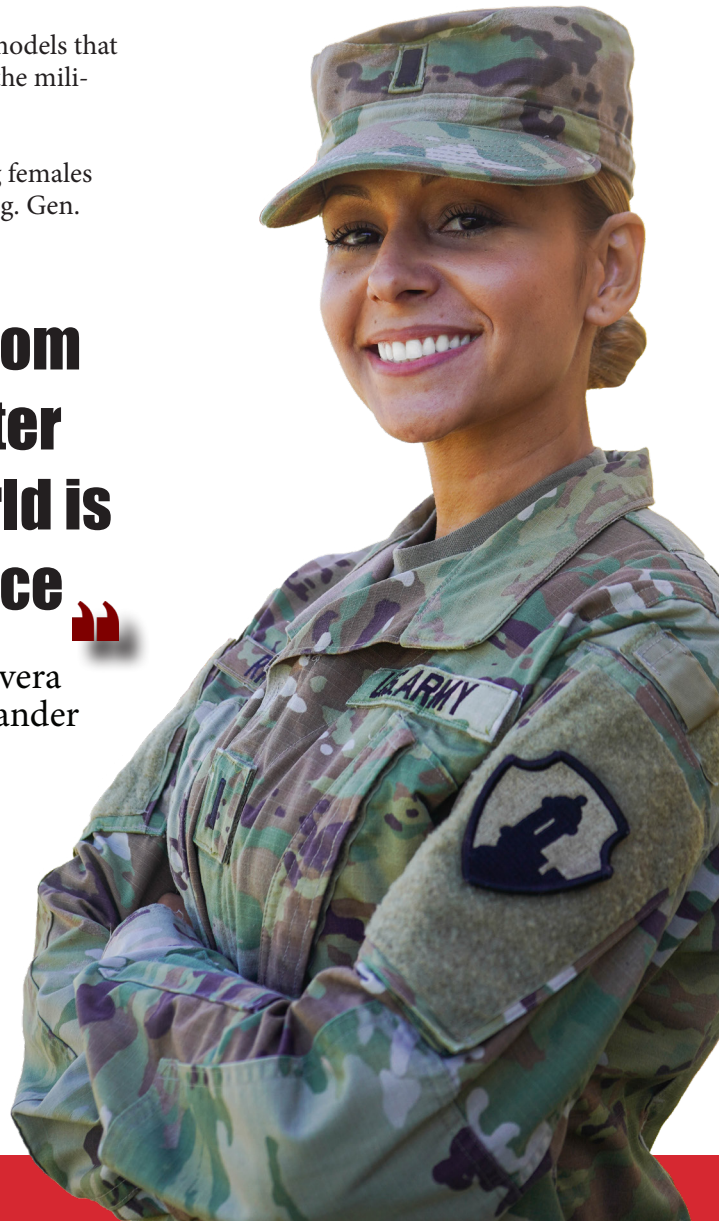
Rivera shows how the willingness, leadership, discipline, and possibilities available in the Army Reserve empower our current and future female Soldiers to reach their maximum potential as Soldiers. For almost 100 years, women assigned to the U.S. Army Reserve Multifunctional Geographic Command for the Caribbean have been serving, fighting, contributing to the security and prosperity of our nation, and continue to do so today.



1Lt. Virgen Rivera with her daughter Ariana Nicole Rivas Rivera on her commission ceremony. (Courtesy photo)

“**I learned from
my daughter
that the World is
a good place**”

**1st Lt. Virgen Rivera
390th TC Commander**



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MARCH 5th
Three Cheese Meat Lasagna \$39
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MARCH 12th
Salmon and Chicken Dinner \$59
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MARCH 19th
"Ropa Vieja" Shepherd's Pie \$39
 Cassava root mash stuffed with Cuban style shredded meat. Accompanied with dinner rolls and Chef garden salad with guava vinaigrette dressing.

MARCH 26th
Mozzarella Stuffed Meatloaf \$45
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Cut-off date to order is the THURSDAY prior to pick-up day by 2 p.m.

Pick-up FRIDAY at the Borinquen Bar & Patio from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

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 or text **787-600-3198**

Social distancing practices and use of face mask is required at all times in this facility.

BOATING SKILLS AND SEAMANSHIP

VIRTUAL COURSE (English)

10 DAYS VIRTUAL COURSE DATES:
March 22nd to April 6th, 2021

HOURS: Monday to Thursday from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.
 Ending Tuesday, April 6.

REQUIREMENTS: All students need to attend all class days and comply with the instructor requirements to get certified.

INCLUDES: Textbook and Exam

COST: \$79 pp / Note: There is an additional cost of \$15 collected by the DRNA for preparing the certificate.

- This is the only course authorized by the USCG, NASBLA and the State Department of Natural Resources to qualify for a recreational boating operator permit. This permit issued by the State Department of Natural Resources after passing the course is the official way to command a recreational craft up to 65' feet in length on the Island.

More information by calling: 787-707-3734 / 3138

• Open for Authorized ID cardholders, VHIC and Federal employees.

Saint Patrick's Golf Tournament

**Saturday,
 March 13, 2021**

Time: 8 a.m.

Format:
Luck of the Irish Stableford
(individual event)

Fee:

\$45 Golf Members

\$65 Non-Members

Non-members must call to register and secure space.

Register at:

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• Mask does not need to be worn on the golf course. During play social distancing of 6 ft. is in effect at all times.

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CLOSEST TO THE PIN
Contest on
holes #3 and #8



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• Open for Authorized ID cardholders, VHIC and Federal employees.

READINESS IN THE U.S. ARMY RESERVE-PUERTO RICO, NOT AFFECTED BY PANDEMIC

By Staff Sgt. Carlos Rodriguez Ortiz, 1st MSC Public Affairs Office

PUERTO NUEVO, P.R. - Approximately 1,000 Soldiers assigned to the U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico, 1st Mission Support Command and subordinate units, have been participating in mass medical events, during the recent weeks, at different facilities around the island, as part of the continuous efforts to maintain the medical readiness of the force, while becoming the first command across the Army Reserve, to conduct this type of event in the middle of the pandemic.

The MMEs provide immunizations, dental, audiology, laboratory, and visual exams services to our troops. In addition, due to the COVID-19,

this year, the command has integrated strict mitigation measures.

"The reality is that it will be harder to coordinate a medical event to prevent any outbreaks, but it's not impossible, and we must have the capability to adapt and overcome challenges to maintain the readiness standards," said Lt. Col. Eric Jackson, the command's Deputy Surgeon.

The successful completion of these MME's serve as an example to follow for other Army Reserve commands across the globe.


"These Mass Medical Events have set a precedent and standards for the other commands by demonstrating that it can be done with the necessary precautions," said Jackson.

It is important to note that the command based in Fort Buchanan, is the

largest Mission Support Command in the Army Reserve, heavily relies on civilian medical providers, as it does not have an active duty Military Treatment Facility available.

"We came out with a solid plan, despite the challenges to conducting an MME under COVID-19 conditions, because we understand how critical and important the medical readiness for the continuation of operations is to support the needs of the nation," added Jackson.

Despite the pandemic, the U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico has continued sustaining the readiness of its Soldiers through a variety of trainings, in what represents the agility of the troops assigned to the largest federal U.S. Army command in the Caribbean, and their ability to adapt easily and quickly, without compromising the mission.



“These Mass Medical Events have set a precedent and standards for other commands by demonstrating that it can be done with the necessary precautions”

Lt. Col. Eric Jackson, 1st MSC Deputy Surgeon

U.S. Army Reserve-PR Soldier receiving medical care by a Logistics Health Incorporated (LHI) provider during a Mass Medical Event conducted, at the Army Reserve facilities in Puerto Nuevo, PR, Dec. 9, 2020, in preparation for future mobilizations. (U.S. Army photo/released

INTRODUCING SOLDIERS TO THE NEWEST BATTLEFIELD EQUIPMENT

By: U.S. Army 363rd Public Affairs Detachment



U.S. Army Reserve-PR Sgt. Melisa Crespo Quiles, 393rd CSSB CBRN NCO, explaining Soldiers how to properly use the M50 Gas Mask at a gas chamber exercise for chemical and biological exercise drills, at Camp Santiago, Dec 9., 2020. (U.S. Army photo by 1LT David E. Reyes, 363rd PAD/released)

SALINAS, P.R. — The 393rd Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC) introduced Soldiers to the newest battlefield equipment, the M50 Gas Mask at a gas chamber exercise drills for chemical and biological operations, at Camp Santiago Joint Maneuver on Dec. 9, 2020.

Before this event took place, COVID-19 measurements were enacted to ensure Soldiers safety.

“Its really hard to evade coughing once inside the gas chamber, as a preventive measure, Soldiers went in with napkins and in smaller groups than normal. In the chamber only eight to ten Soldiers were permitted to enter, plus a controlled exit to comply with social distancing,” expressed Sgt. Melisa Crespo Quiles.

The type of mask used for this training is M50 Joint Service General Purpose

Mask (JSGPM). The gear is above-the-neck and has Chemical and Biological (CB) respirators that protects the Soldiers eyes, face and lungs against battlefield concentrations of CB agents, toxins, toxic industrial materials and radioactive particulate matter.

“This exercise is necessary to help Soldiers get familiarized with the process of putting on your mask quickly in case of chemical attack,” said Capt. Francheska Cebollero. “It not only prepares them on how to handle the equipment, but on strengthening their ability to keep calm and react effectively for a successful mission,” added Cebollero.

This new generation of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CBRN) full face mask is specifically designed to meet the latest military, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) require-

ments. It comes with features such as: wide visors that offer superior field of vision, replaceable outer protective visor lens, twin filter systems that sits close against the face (which provides high protection and very low breathing resistance), self-seal valves which enables users to change filters without the need to hold their breath, 24-hour above-the-neck protection from CB agents, radioactive particles, and an improved drinking system.

“The training that we are conducting seeks to improve the Soldiers' confidence in their protective equipment, and to make sure there is no leaks on the mask. We had to go into the gas chamber ourselves and test out the masks before assigning one to a Soldier,” stated Crespo.

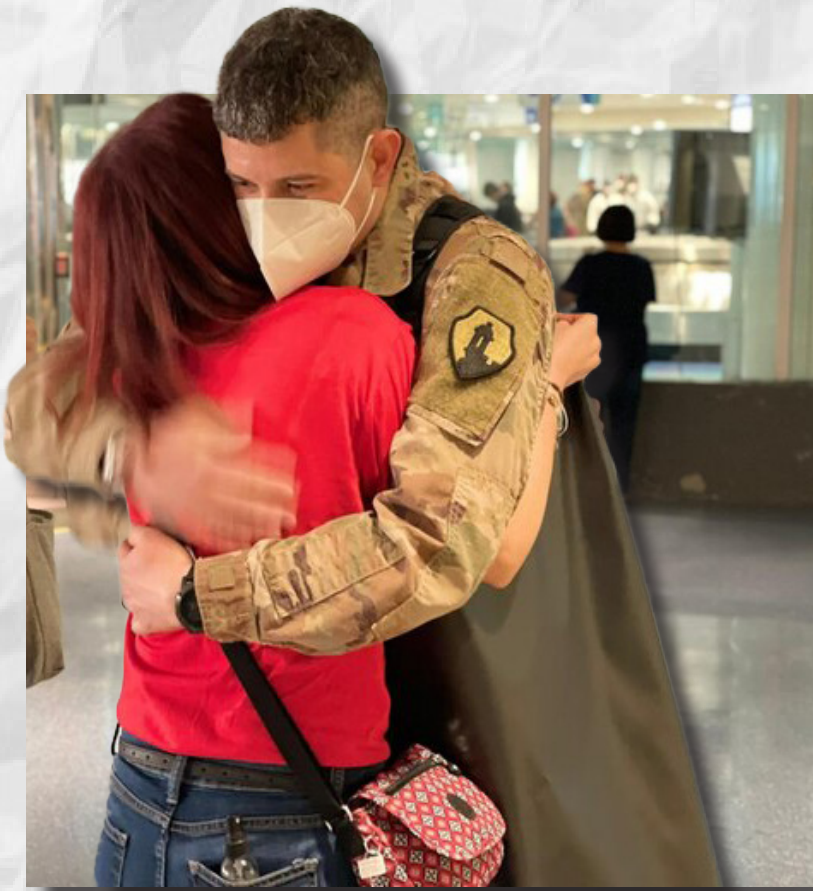
In addition to CBRN threats, several improvements were made to the M50 over its previous models the MCU2, M40, M42 and M45. The new masks have reduced weight and bulk, improved mask carrier system, flame resistant hood for combat vehicle version, improved reliability and comfort and more than 50 percent improvement of breathing resistance compared to the previous model.



U.S. Army Reserve-PR Soldiers from the 393rd CSSB HHC testing the new M50 Gas Mask, as part of the gas chamber exercise event, at Camp Santiago Joint Maneuver Training Center, Dec 9, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by 1LT David E. Reyes, 363rd PAD/released)

SOLDIERS FROM THE U.S. ARMY RESERVE-PUERTO RICO RETURN AFTER NINE MONTHS IN AFGHANISTAN

BY: U.S. ARMY 363RD PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT



**THIS IS THE BEST
CHRISTMAS
PRESENT I CAN
RECEIVE**

Ambar M. Baez, Sgt. Alejandro
Hernández Burgos' wife

U.S. Army Reserve-PR Sgt. Hernandez Burgos hugging his wife, Ambar M. Baez after he came out of the terminal at the Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport in Carolina, Dec. 23, 2020 (U.S. Army Reserve photo/ released)

CAROLINA, P.R. — Approximately 25 Soldiers from the 271st Human Resources Company of the U.S. Army Reserve Multi-functional Geographic Command for the Caribbean, returned on Dec. 23, 2020 to Puerto Rico, after being deployed in Afghanistan for a period of nine months.

Ámbar M. Báez, from Ponce, was early at Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport in Carolina with a banner to welcome her husband, Sgt. Alejandro Hernández Burgos.

"I have not seen him since February, 2020. The minutes get long, it is like an eternity," said Baez, as she waited for her husband to come out of the terminal.

For her, separation was not easy,

as she had to face the COVID-19 pandemic with her husband being deployed.

"It was too many months, in the midst of a pandemic that no one expected. However, it is all over now and I got over it. Today I get it and the excitement is great. This is the best Christmas present I can receive," added Baez, who works at the Pontifical Catholic University of Ponce.

Once Hernandez left the terminal, he hugged his wife.

"I am very happy to be back on the island with my family. Thank God, we carried out a mission without major setbacks. Mission accomplished. Now to eat *guanamos con bacalao*," Hernandez said referring

to a Puerto Rican typical dish.

Meanwhile, General Jeffrey W. Jurasek, the senior federal Army officer in the Caribbean, officially welcomed the troops.

"I am very proud of the mission they carried out in Afghanistan. No doubt with your return you demonstrate the caliber of people you are and how you fulfill your mission despite the difficulties," Jurasek said.

The group of Soldiers specializing in military postal operations was in charge of overseeing U.S. mail contracts in Afghanistan. Soldiers were quarantined in the United States before traveling to the Island.

Honoring those who inspire us

By: U.S. Army 363rd Public Affairs Detachment



U.S. ARMY RESERVE-PR SGT. MARCOS ROMERO AND SGT. MANUEL MORALES FOLDING THE U.S. FLAG TO BE PRESENTED TO VICTOR TORRES' WIDOW, MARGARITA CRUZ, AT THE PEÑUELAS MUNICIPAL CEMETERY, JAN. 8, 2021 (U.S. ARMY PHOTO BY SGT. EDUARDO RIVERA, 363RD PAD/ RELEASED)

PENUELAS, P.R. — Members of the 65th Infantry Regiment (Borinqueneers), veterans, Soldiers, and local citizens, honored the memory of Sgt. 1st Class Victor Luis Torres at a funeral held at the Peñuelas Municipal Cemetery, Jan 8, 2021.

Torres passed away at the age of 89, providing more than 20 years of service to the Army. He was a member of the 65th Infantry Regiment, the Borinqueneers, the first and only all Hispanic segregated unit of the United States, known for the critical role they played in some of the most hostile 21st century conflicts.

Torres was the epitome of a model Soldier. He was one of the few Soldiers to serve in both the Vietnam

and Korean War and was decorated with a combat infantry badge, bronze star medal, and Vietnam service medal, among many others.

Torres's most amazing achievement is the family he raised along with his wife, Margarita Cruz. Their children Victor Luis Torres Jr, Jose Torres, Maria Margarita Torres (Deceased), Jose Luis Torres, and Danny Torres, grew up to become leaders eager to follow their fathers' footsteps. Altogether, the Torres' children have more than ten years in combat.

"My father was an exemplary role model just by the way he lived his life. My dad came from poverty, and still, he wished to learn and go to school even if barefooted; his sense of self-accomplishment was just

outstanding. Even during his time in the military he would study nonstop to become the subject matter expert at any topic. As his children, seeing him become the man he was, we had no choice but to want to be like him. I always wanted to be like him," emotionally expressed Command Sgt. Maj. Jose Torres.

"For me, Victor was the hero we had at the American Disabled Veterans because he was one of the very few Soldiers known who participated in both Korea and Vietnam War," said Carlos Perez, Commander of Disabled Veterans chapter Ponce, department of Puerto Rico.

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Today's U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico Soldiers honor the legacy of courage, sacrifice, selflessness, and patriotism passed on by the Borinqueneers. The troops assigned to the U.S. Army Reserve Puerto Rico have the privilege of wearing the Sentry Box uniform patch, also known as Garita, also used by the Borinqueneers.

By the time the Korean War ended, Soldiers of the 65th Infantry Regiment had gained many Distinguished Service Crosses, more than 200 Sil-

ver Stars, over 500 Bronze Stars, and thousands of Purple Hearts medals.

In 2016, the Borinqueneers received the Congressional Gold Medal for heroically serving during World War I, World War II and the Korean War.

Since 1922, Soldiers from the U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico, the largest federal U.S. Army command in the Caribbean, have played a critical role in the defense of the Nation, serving in different countries around the world.

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Carlos Perez, Commander of American Disabled Veterans, Ponce Chapter, Department of Puerto Rico



U.S. ARMY RESERVE-PR SGT. MARCOS ROMERO PRESENTING THE UNITED STATES FLAG TO VICTOR TORRES' WIDOW, MARGARITA CRUZ

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Eduardo Rivera, 363rd PAD/released



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