



# 1st MSC GAZETTE

## CARIBBEAN BEST WARRIORS

Test their capabilities  
and combat readiness

Vol. No. 11 / ISSUE 3 SPRING 2021

### **Inside:**

Resilient Force  
Mobilization  
Readiness  
Transformation





# 1st MSC GAZETTE

## Brig. Gen. Jeffrey W. Jurasek's Note

“We must build understanding to enable readiness. That means nothing more than teaching. If you are an officer or a noncommissioned officer, teaching is part of your job. As a leader, the effectiveness of your leadership is defined by the leaders you leave behind. Teaching applies not just to subordinates. I have learned as much or more from platoon sergeants, first sergeants, and command sergeants major than I have from superior officers. Teaching people how to do things right requires the moral courage to point out things that are being done wrong.”



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## Hurricane Season Unit Ministry Team trains to stabilize units during domestic emergencies

Story and Photos by: Sgt. Katherine Ramos,  
363rd PAD

FORT BUCHANAN, P.R.—In the past, soldiers from the U.S. Army Reserve in Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico has been mobilized to provide relief support to areas in the island impacted by natural disasters.

Lt. Col. Wanda Acevedo, deputy command chaplain of the 1st Mission Support Command, said that hundreds of soldiers has served during local emergencies regardless of their own challenges, she said.

As a result, the 1st MSC requested the mobile training team, from San Antonio Texas, to conduct for the first time a Traumatic Event Management course at the command's headquarters, from May 10-14.

“Now we have the resources to intervene with the individuals that are directly impacted by a possibly traumatic event,” said Acevedo. “Our goal is to stabilize the units so they can continue with their mission.”

This training aims to enhance the 1st MSC readiness to overcome challenging situations that may occur during emergency response.

The unit ministry team from the largest federal U.S. Army command in the Caribbean collaborated with counterparts from the P.R. National Guard, U.S. Coast Guard and Department of Defense civilians.

Right: Kanoe Val, a training specialist from the U.S. Medical Center of Excellence, delivered the Traumatic Event Management course at Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico, May 12, 2021.





Acevedo said that the command chaplain office works in partnerships as an effort to expand capabilities.

During the course, participants learned a set of interventions aimed at supporting troops who experience potentially traumatizing incidents during Defense Support of Civil Authorities missions—to give an example.

“Often times when people experience a traumatic event they can sometimes get stuck,” said Kanoe Val, a training specialist from the U.S. Army Medical Center of Excellence. “Many soldiers try to hide their feelings because they don’t want to look weak, they hold everything in and try to fix it themselves.”

One of the interventions discussed in the course was the psychological group debriefing where participants learned how to conduct unit-needs assessment, he said.

Through this assessment, the participants can identify specific stressor in a unit and prioritize the behavior health interventions required to help unit personnel cope.

The Nation has come to rely more and more on the Army Reserve. The soldiers from the U.S. Army Reserve Puerto Rico are highly trained, motivated and possess the personal courage and skills needed to perform difficult missions at home and around the globe.



Left: Lt. Col. Wanda Acevedo, deputy command chaplain of the 1st Mission Support Command, coordinated the Traumatic Event Management course at Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico, May 12, 2021. “Our goal is to stabilize the units so they can continue with their mission,” said Acevedo.

# SDDC, Total Force team load first DEFENDER-Europe 21 equipment

Story by : Kimberly Spinner,  
Military Surface Deployment and  
Distribution Command

JACKSONVILLE, Fla.—The Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command is once again moving cargo to Europe in support of DEFENDER-Europe 21.

A Total-Force team of active-duty, National Guard and Reserve Soldiers, civilians and commercial partners began loading the Military Sealift Command's U.S. Naval Ship Bob Hope March 24, 2021, in support of Immediate Response, a linked exercise to DEFENDER-Europe 21, at the port of Jacksonville.

This is the first of four outbound port missions in support of the exercise for the 841st Transportation Battalion, 597th Transportation Brigade and SDDC headquarters.

DEFENDER-Europe is an annual large-scale U.S. Army-led, multinational, joint exercise designed to build readiness and interoperability between U.S., NATO

and partner militaries. This year's exercise utilizes key ground and maritime routes bridging Europe, Asia and Africa.

This overarching exercise is defensive in nature, integrating approximately 30,000 multinational forces from 27 nations conducting nearly simultaneous operations across more than 30 training areas in 12 countries. During the exercise, U.S. forces will demonstrate their ability to serve as strategic security partners in the western Balkans and Black Sea regions while sustaining operations in northern Europe, the Caucasus, Ukraine and Africa.

**Below: Spc. Jeanette Caceres, U.S. Army Reserve 390th Transportation Company from Puerto Rico, tracks cargo as stevedores stow vehicles and containers on the U.S. Navy's Military Sealift Command's USNS Bob Hope, bound for DEFENDER-Europe 21 linked exercise, Immediate Response.**





"For the last few months, our battalion has been preparing for operations in support of DEFENDER-Europe 21," said Maj. Andrew Deel, 841st Transportation Battalion operations officer.

Joint Logistics Over the Shore operations is part of U.S. Transportation Command's strategic sealift mission. The JLOTS process allows combined Army and Navy forces to move equipment to and from a ship on air-cushioned watercraft to overcome anti-access and area-denial challenges and improves the ability to move forces closer to tactical assembly areas.

"Following operations here in Jacksonville, the USNS Bob Hope will go up to Portsmouth, Virginia, where we will upload the 7th Transportation Brigade, as well as a Navy cargo-handling battalion," said Deel.

"It's a mission-critical task for the 7th Sustainment Brigade to be able to load and discharge the vessel and then conduct their own onward movement," said Lt. Col. Altwon Whitfield, 841st Transportation Battalion commander.

SDDC and their Total Force team, made up of Army Reserve, Army National Guard and commercial partners, loaded around 750 pieces of cargo, including containers and rolling stock onto the ship.

The U.S. military depends on sealift like this to project and sustain forces around the world, providing the means to deter regional aggression, to protect U.S. national interests, and to achieve U.S. strategic goals. SDDC gets equipment to the fight – rapidly and efficiently – from fort to port and port to the tactical edge.

"Supporting DEFENDER-Europe 21 is a great opportunity," said Maj. Mark Huey, 841st Transportation Battalion terminal management team officer in charge. "The mission integrates units from the Reserve, National Guard and active duty, then also units on the naval side. We really get to exercise our full functionality."

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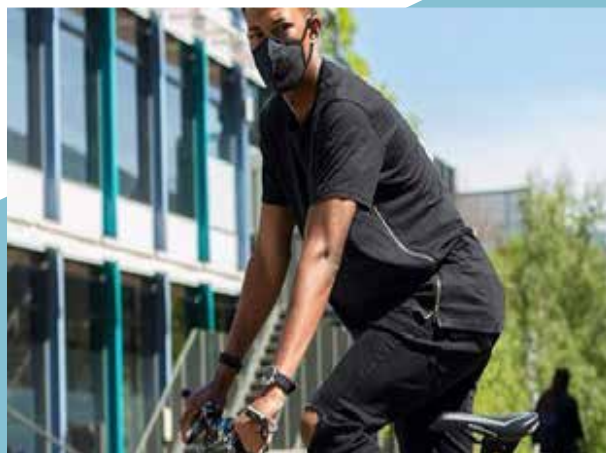
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# Caribbean Best Warriors

## Test their capabilities and combat readiness

Story by: Staff Sgt. Carlos D. Rodriguez, 1st MSC PAO

FORT BUCHANAN, P.R.—Sgt. Gustavo Rodríguez and Spc. Nicole Ruiz Rivera, from the U.S. Army Reserve–Puerto Rico, will compete for the top noncommissioned officer and soldier title at the U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior Competition in Fort McCoy, Wis., May 18.

Soldiers will spend a week competing in a variety of challenges including firing weapons, land navigation, the Army Combat Fitness Test, among others to test

their capabilities and combat readiness.

“I can’t describe the emotion I felt when I won this award,” said Ruiz. “The most satisfying thing was coming home and hearing my sister say ‘when I grow up I want to be like you.’”

Previously, soldiers won “The Best Warrior of the Caribbean” title at the U.S. Army Reserve in Puerto Rico, now they will face approximately 120 soldiers from 26 commands around the world.





During the command level competition, Ruiz-Rivera made history by being the first female to represent the island.

From approximately 5,000 soldiers in the Multifunctional Geographic Command for the Caribbean 17% are female soldiers.

Rodriguez, 27, competes for the non-commissioned officer title. "It is definitely an accomplishment that I am proud of, as are my family and neighbors," said Rodriguez. "But right now I want to win and be able to bring the title of 'Best Army Reserve Warrior in the United States' to the Caribbean especially to my island."

Sgt. Miguel Cardona, Spc. Rafael Franco and Spc. Joshua Torruella, from the U.S. Army Reserve Puerto Rico, participates as squad members for certain events of the competition.

This type of competition enables experiences and trainings that solidify the readiness of the soldiers.

The U.S. Army Reserve in Puerto Rico have become an essential part of the total strength of the U.S. Army, with streamlined, deployable forces and citizen soldiers embodying the warrior mindset and spirit.

U.S. Army photos by Sgt. 1st Class Jason Herrman  
2-348th TSBN, UPAR/released.







# 1ST MISSION SUPPORT COMMAND







Soldiers from the U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico completed the 12 mile ruck march during the 2021 U.S. Army Reserve Best Warrior / Best Squad competition at Fort McCoy, May 24, 2021.

(U.S. ARMY RESERVE PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. JOSHUA WOOTEN)



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## Mission Accomplished: 266th Ordnance Detachment returns from Middle East

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

CAROLINA, P.R.—Over 30 soldiers from the U.S. Army Reserve-P.R. assigned to the 266th Ordnance Detachment returned to the island, after completing their deployment in the Middle East.

“I feel an immense joy to return to my island,” said Sgt. Alejandro Rosario, a native from Ponce. “We all fulfilled our mission and arrived home safely.”

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, soldiers were able to fulfill their mission and return to the island with their loved ones.

The 266th OD provided logistics support to the troops stationed in the Middle East.

“Our mission was specifically the handling and distribution of ammunition in Kuwait,” said Rosario.

Maj. Juan Sanfeliz, 77th CSSB support operations officer, heard great things about the performance of the soldiers from the 1st Mission Support Command, he said.

“The mission of our soldiers is extremely important not only for the United States but for the island,” said Sanfeliz. “I am proud to represent the chain of command in welcoming our soldiers and to honor their sacrifices and efforts.”

Soldiers will now go through a reintegration phase to ensure a healthy transition into the community.

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# 393rd CSSB Battalion Deploys

CAROLINA, P.R.— Over 70 Soldiers from the U.S. Army Reserve Multifunctional Geographic Command for the Caribbean, assigned to the 393rd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion departed, Mar. 14, to a mobilization station in Texas, before heading to the Middle East.

Once they arrive in the area of operations, the soldiers will supervise and provide logistics support to Operation Inherent Resolve.

“We will be supervising and in charge of multiple units with more than 1,000 soldiers,” said Maj. Nel Morales, 393rd CSSB executive officer. “We will provide logistics support to different locations in the Middle East such as transportation, food supply and equipment storage, among others.”

Soldiers trained for about a year in preparation for this mobilization which will last approximately twelve months.

“During the year of preparation the training had to be adjusted because of the pandemic,” said Morales. “However this did not pose an obstacle for our soldiers to be properly trained to meet the standards and requirements of this mobilization.”

Pvt. Javier Gonzalez, 20, said to be ready for this new experience in the Middle East.

“We have trained a lot for this moment, but I am very proud and excited as it is my first mobilization and I fully count on the support of my family at this new stage of my life,” said Gonzalez, who has been in the Army Reserve for three years.

Story by: Staff Sgt.  
Carlos D. Rodriguez,  
1st MSC PAO

CAROLINA, P.R.—  
Col. Manuel Ocasio, 1st  
MSC deputy commander,  
Command Sgt. Maj.  
Robert Breck, former  
1st MSC command  
sergeant major, and  
Lt. Col. Edgardo Ortiz,  
1st MSC command  
chaplain handshaked  
the departing soldiers  
at Carolina, Puerto  
Rico, March 14, 2021.

(U.S. Army photo by  
Sgt. Eduardo Rivera,  
363rd Public Affairs  
Detachment)

Inside 393rd CSSB Mobilization

## Female Officers deploys, serves as inspiration

Story by: Sgt. Katherine Ramos, 363rd PAD



KUWAIT—Nearly three months have passed since the mobilization of the 393rd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion to the Middle East.

For Capt. Elizabeth De Gracia-Fret, a 393rd CSSB operation officer, has been an opportunity for professional growth. “My first month was challenging,” said De Gracia-Fret. “I feared the unknown; I even questioned my capability because of the complexity of my job.”

Because of her drive, she has gained confidence in flight operations and is now overcoming challenges, she said.

De Gracia-Fret is one of the female officers from the U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico that shared her mobilization experience to serve as inspiration, June 1.

Like many other soldiers, being away from their loved ones is the hardest thing to do. However, receiving family support through the mobilization process means the world, said De Gracia-Fret.



“My husband motivates me to do stuff that I thought I was incapable of doing,” said De Gracia-Fret. “As a mother, I want my two daughters to be proud of me and follow my steps.”

In 2020, De Gracia-Fret commanded the 597th quartermaster company in support of the earthquake relief efforts in the southern region of Puerto Rico. Now both, De Gracia and Capt. Maria Rivera-Baez are leading the operations of the 393rd CSSB in the Middle East.

Rivera-Baez was the first female commander to lead the 276th maintenance unit of the U.S. Army Reserve Puerto Rico, and she has 21 years of military experience.

In 2006, she joined the 393rd CSSB as an enlisted specialist, and little did she know that she would be commanding the same battalion.

“With my service, I want to honor my family and military mothers,” said Rivera-Baez, who has two daughters, 16, 7, and one son, 14.

She has served in Korea, Germany, Hawaii, Japan and is currently in Kuwait. “I am passionate about impacting positively in people’s life and emerging myself into different cultures,” added.

Capt. Francheska Cebollero, a native of Toa Baja, Puerto Rico, is also supporting over 1,000 soldiers in the Middle East by directing the human resources operations of the 393rd CSSB.

“Serving in the military and wearing the U.S. Army uniform is very honorable,” said Cebollero. “Although it requires one to make sacrifices, I think I am demonstrating to my son that one has to keep fighting in life to be successful.”

Female soldiers have been serving in the military since the revolutionary war. In Puerto Rico, 17% of the command’s force is composed of females.



**From left to right: Capt. Elizabeth De Gracia-Fret, Capt. Maria Rivera-Baez and Capt. Francheska Cebollero posing for a photo in the Middle East. The 393rd CSSB officers shared their journey to serve as inspiration for young soldiers. Hundreds of Army Reserve soldiers from Puerto Rico are proudly serving the Nation in different countries around the globe. (U.S. Army photos provided/released)**

Civilian force keeps growing

## 1st MSC adds two new federal employees

Story by: Sgt. Katherine Ramos, 363rd PAD

FORT BUCHANAN, P.R.—Yesenia Pagan took the U.S. Army civilian oath of office as she became the newest drug test coordinator for the U.S. Army Reserve Puerto Rico in a ceremony led by Julio Aponte, command executive officer of the 1st Mission Support Command, at the command's headquarters, May 10.

Pagan has a civilian education in criminal justice, 14 years of law enforcement experience and ten years of experience supporting unit commanders with the Army Substance Abuse Program.

Now as a drug test coordinator, Pagan will administer and handle the command military and civilian testing and training programs.

"I am happy because this is something that I have been striving for," said Yesenia Pagan. "Becoming a federal civilian employee has been one of my biggest professional goals."

Pagan is one of the many citizens that went through the federal application process prior selection.

On April 26, Ashley Hines-Gonzalez, became the newest 1st MSC suicide and prevention program manager.

Hines updated her résumé and applied through usajobs.gov for the position. After a time waiting, the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center gave her the news.

"The CPAC was organized when it came to sending the administrative tasks needed for the on-boarding process," said Hines.

Hines has a civilian education in clinical social work, 10 years of military experience and has completed 500 training hours within the mental health field.

Her mission is to reduce factors that increase suicide risk and promote resiliency within the command, she said. "I am passionate about helping the military community," said Hines.

The Army Reserve in Puerto Rico has hundreds of federal civilian positions, with a payroll impact of approximately \$21 million into the local economy.



FORT BUCHANAN, P.R.—Yesenia Pagan poses for a picture after the oath of office ceremony at Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico, May 10, 2021.



FORT BUCHANAN, P.R.—Ashley Hines-Gonzalez during oath of office ceremony led by Julio Aponte, command executive officer of the 1st Mission Support Command, at Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico, April 26, 2021. (U.S. Army photo provided/released)



# U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico, Change of Responsibility

Story and photo by: Sgt. Katherine Ramos, 363rd PAD

FORT BUCHANAN, P.R.—A change of responsibility ceremony is a long traditional event rich in symbolism and heritage within the military. This ceremony reinforces noncommissioned officer authority in the Army and highlights their support to the chain of command.

The U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico change of responsibility ceremony between Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Breck, outgoing senior federal Army noncommissioned officer in the Caribbean, and Command Sgt. Maj. Michael P. Meunier took place, June 26.

"Command Sgt. Maj. Robert B. Breck not only lived the Army values but daily showed us what awesome is all about," said Brig. Gen. Jeffrey W. Jurasek, 1st Mission Support Command commanding general and senior federal Army officer in the Caribbean. "He ensured the mission was always accomplished and never gave up."

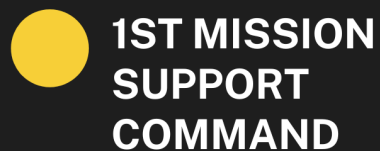
The main highlight of the ceremony is the passing of colors, which represents the lineage, and honors of the 1st Mission Support Command. For 27 months, Breck was the custodian of the colors for the senior federal Army officer in the Caribbean.

Once the commanding general received the colors, Jurasek passed the colors to Meunier, naming him the new senior federal Army enlisted advisor in the Caribbean and command sergeant major of the 1st Mission Support Command.

Meunier gratefully received the new assignment, directed himself towards the units, and expressed his commitment to the organization.

The U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico is the largest federal U.S. Army Command in the Caribbean, and has units in Aguadilla, Mayaguez, Yauco, Ponce, Juana Diaz, Ceiba, Salinas, Puerto Nuevo, Virgin Islands, and headquarters at Fort Buchanan.





1ST MISSION  
SUPPORT  
COMMAND

# URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM

U.S. Army Reserve- Puerto Rico



The Urban Search and Rescue team of the U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico conducts a confine space training at Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico, June 11, 2021. The USAR team solidified their skills as they prepare for the hurricane season.

As the largest federal Army force in the Caribbean, Title 10 USC Section 1234a authorizes the Army Reserve to provide disaster assistance to a major natural disaster or emergency in the United States at the request for the governor of a state or territory.





**DEFENSE  
SUPPORT OF  
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# DSCA

**By request, the Department of the Army the U.S. Army Reserve command in Puerto Rico and Virgin Islands responds to emergencies in order to save lives, prevent human suffering and mitigate great property damage through DSCA mobilization authorization.**

**(U.S. Army Infographic by Sgt. Katherine Ramos, 363rd Public Affairs Detachment)**



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