

1st Mission Support Command - U. S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico



1st MSC Gazette



“Ready, Resilient, Relevant”

Vol. No. 7 Issue 6
FALL 2015



TWICE THE CITIZEN...

SOLDIER HIGHLIGHT 6-7

FOUR GENERATIONS

SERVING THE 1st MSC 10-11

ON THE COVER:

**SOLDIERS FROM THE 1ST MSC
AT THE 9/11 COMMEMORATION**

EVENT

FORT BUCHANAN, PR

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*“Ready, Resilient,
Relevant!”*

Brig. Gen. José R. Burgos
Commander

Col. Irene M. Zoppi
Deputy Commander

Maj. Ruth Castro
Public Affairs Officer

Sgt. 1st Class Lymari Sanchez
Public Affairs NCOIC

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E-mail submission to the
1st MSC Public Affairs Officer
at
ruth.castro.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



FIND US AT:



PUERTO RICO

COMMUNITY CARE UNIT (CCU) DIVING SOLDIERS



in different activities within their different capabilities and injuries.

Sgt. Melvin Vega from the 613th MP Co. from the 1st Mission Support Command (1st MSC) thank the Army Reserve, the CCU and all the components that made this course possible and for helping Soldiers like him work on their recovery. Vega expressed that after he got injured during his mobilization in Guantanamo earlier this year he got introduced to the CCU and all the reconditioning and adaptation programs and that the CCU has helped him a lot.

“Programs like this one help you push thru your physical limits. This is a new experience for me and I grew up near the water in Salinas, Puerto Rico and I had never experienced something like this, diving with the right equipment and the right way.” said Vega.



Soldiers and personnel from the US Army Reserve-Puerto Rico and the National Guard conduct pre-checks of their scuba equipment at “El Escambron Beach” at San Juan, Puerto Rico on July 21, as part of a 4 day scuba diver certification course for soldiers that are part of the Community Care Unit (CCU) located at Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico. (U.S. Army photo provided by Sgt. Carlene Vera/ Release)

Soldiers and personnel from the US Army Reserve-Puerto Rico and the National Guard conduct pre-checks of the scuba equipment at “El Escambron Beach” at San Juan, Puerto Rico on July 21, as part of a 4 day scuba diver certification course for soldiers that are part of the Community Care Unit (CCU) located at Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico. (U.S. Army photo provided by Sgt. Carlene Vera/ Release)

ESCAMBRON, Puerto Rico- On July 21, Soldiers from the US Army Reserve-Puerto Rico and the National Guard gather at the beach “El Escambron” at San Juan, Puerto Rico to continue with a 4 day scuba diver certification course for soldiers that are part of the Community Care Unit (CCU) located at Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico.

The group of Soldiers had John Thomson, President of the Soldiers Undertaking Disable Scuba

(SUDS) and William Velazquez, Scuba Instructor of the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) as their volunteer instructors for the whole certification course.

This initiative is part of a variety of CCU events. When Soldiers get injured while in mobilization, they become part of the Warrior Transition Battalion (WTB), and there for they become part of the CCU. Events like this one help Soldiers find a way to engaged themselves



John Thomson ,President of Soldiers Undertaking Disable Scuba, (SUDS) conversing with some of the Soldiers that were part of the course, at “El Escambron Beach” at San Juan, Puerto Rico on July 21 (U.S. Army photo provided by Sgt. Carlene Vera/ Release)



Helping the homeless...

Spc. Joy Morris, 271st HR Company, has dedicated her time to helping the homeless. Spc. Morris started her military career as an Active Duty Soldier. After her initial six years in Germany, she transitioned into the U.S. Army Reserve Puerto Rico. She holds a Master's Degree in Social Work and loves volunteering with "Ronda Operación Compasión" founded by Dr. Jose Vargas Vidot. Her unique capabilities to reach out to those in need help her be successful when volunteering. The first Friday of each month is their biggest event where they provide food, clothes, medical assistance and counseling from about 7PM - 8 AM reaching the homeless around the island. (Photos provided by Spc. Joy Morris/Released)



TWICE THE CITIZEN

FORT BUCHANAN, Puerto Rico - Physical fitness is a staple in the military. We are required to pass an Army Physical Fitness Test twice a year and have unit PT sessions to build camaraderie among Soldiers and leaders.

Sure, sometimes it is a pain to get up early and participate in unit PT but you usually get a sense of accomplishment when it is over.

Sgt. Waldemar Perez, 430th Quartermaster Company Army Weight Control Program NCOIC, has used physical fitness to overcome difficult times in his life and to help others. Perez started his military carrier at the age of 16 and after encountering difficult situations, he decided to turn to physical fitness and the gym to overcome them.

"After finding myself in depression, instead of turning to pills, I tried the gym and I saw that day after day I started to feel better." said Perez.

"Many of my friends and fellow Soldiers asked me for guidance with their fitness routines and nutritional goals, so I decided to take it to the next level and get my certification as a personal trainer," added Perez.

After obtaining his Personal Trainer License in 2010, Perez kept working towards finding different ways to help others while finding new physical adventures to challenge himself. Partnering up with other trainers, he decided to start competing as a body-

Using physical fitness to overcome challenge...

builder, receiving many awards during various competitions throughout the years.

Despite many challenges that he has encountered during his career, Perez has found a way to get better and overcome his injuries by continuing his fitness routine.

"I believe that because I was physically fit before I got injured, I was able to recover from my injuries a lot faster than even I thought I could." "I've seen first-hand how being physically fit helped me deal with depression and injuries, so I am even more motivated to get others

them to get a sense of what Soldiers go through while at Basic Training and other physically-demanding activities.

His commitment to the physical and health well-being of Soldiers, motivated him to complete the Master Fitness Trainer Course in April 2015 at Fort Knox, Kentucky.



Sgt. Waldemar Perez, 430th Quartermaster Company Army Weight Control Program NCOIC, motivates the participants of his "boot camp" training. (U.S. Army photo provided by Sgt. Waldemar Perez/ Release)

Giving back to the Island...

Master Sgt. Justin D. Broadwater from the 210th RSG U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico demonstrates a variety of sea creatures to the children of a local day care.

"I go dive and get the creatures, show them to the kids and rush the creatures back to the water", said Broadwater who got his diving certification while stationed at Puerto Rico.

Broadwater plans to expand his visits to other day cares thru the Island. "It is peaceful in the water, it's awesome." (Photos provided by Master Sgt. Justin D. Broadwater/Released)



REMEMBERING 9/11 "READY, RESILIENT, RELEVANT"

To commemorate those who lost their lives during the September 11 attacks, the 1st Mission Support Command, U.S. Army Garrison Fort Buchanan, the Puerto Rico National Guard and other federal and local agencies participated in a ceremony at Fort Buchanan on Sept. 11.

Major Hector Martinez, former commander for the 311th Quartermaster Company (QM Co) Mortuary Affairs (MA), was the guest speaker for the commemoration. "Today for the first time, I share with you a brief account of a group of Soldiers from Puerto Rico who were called upon to a mission of National importance," Martinez said. "Fourteen years ago these Soldiers were "Ready, Resilient and Relevant" as our Soldiers are today," he added.

Martinez gave examples of how these Soldiers from the 311th QM Co. demonstrated the 1st MSC's motto of being "Ready, Resilient

and Relevant".

Soldiers were "Ready" as more than 100 members of the 311th QM Co. (MA) reported to their unit and volunteered to deploy. 85 Soldiers were selected to deploy and departed that same day, September 14, 2001 and another 105 Soldiers joined them on September 26.

"Many Soldiers were new to the unit, some had arrived from Basic Training just a month before," said Martinez. "We had a perfect combination of veteran Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs) and new Soldiers which were key to the rapid integration and mission success on all tasks."

As described by Martinez, Soldiers were "Resilient". They said good bye to their families and worked long hours at the Pentagon crash site. Martinez stated, "Our Soldiers are weather proof, they were the

only ones that could endure working for prolonged hours in biohazard suits in the hot weather days of September and were also able to endure the winter cold as they continued their mission for the next three months."

The performance of these Soldiers was always "Relevant". These Soldiers sifted through ten thousand tons of rubble in search of remains and personal effects. After establishing the Joint Personal Effect Depot, they were able to recover, clean, catalog and return more than 10,000 personal effects to their owners or surviving family members.

Martinez and the Soldiers from the 311th QM CO (MA) served our Country without hesitation and clearly defined themselves as a true "First Class Outfit". "We are proud to be a part of the 9/11 Generation that has answered our Country's call," said Martinez.

In addition to honoring those who are no longer with us as a result of the events of September 11, the ceremony paid respects to members of the military and all first responders who work every day for the protection of freedom, and provided an opportunity for military and civilian community members to reflect on the tragedies that occurred on that day.

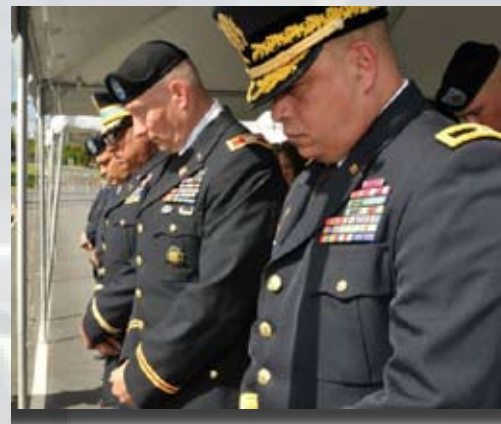
As part of the ceremony, four wreaths were placed in front of the

1st MSC Headquarters in remembrance of those who perished during the attack and for those in uniform who have paid the ultimate sacrifice fighting the war on terror. The first wreath was on behalf of the United States Military, the second on behalf of the first responders, the third corresponding to the local community and the fourth representing the Department of Defense.

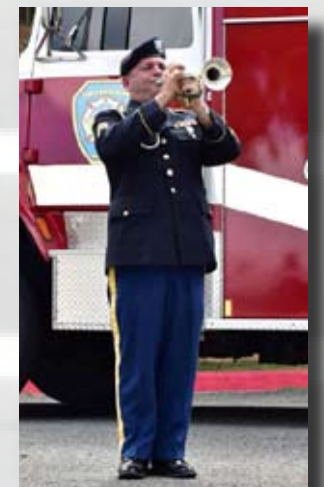
The ceremony concluded with the tolling of the bell, a 21-Gun Salute, and a bugler from the 248th Army Band from the PRNG playing taps.



To commemorate those who lost their lives during the September 11 attacks, Soldiers and first responders participated on the 9/11 Commemoration event 14 years after the attacks. From the tolling of the bell, a 21-Gun Salute, and a bugler from the 248th Army Band from the PRNG playing taps, the 1st Mission Support Command, U.S. Army Garrison Fort Buchanan, the Puerto Rico National Guard and other federal and local agencies paid respect to the falling victims of the attack. (U.S. Army photo provided by U.S. Army Garrison Fort Buchanan PAO, the Puerto Rico National Guard PAO)



Brig. Gen. Jose R. Burgos, commanding general of the 1st Mission Support Command (1st MSC), addresses the audience at the 9/11 Commemoration event held at Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico. (U.S. Army photo provided by U.S. Army Garrison Fort Buchanan PAO, the Puerto Rico National Guard PAO)



FOUR GENERATIONS SERVING THE 1st MSC

Day after day individuals walk into a recruiting station and make a life decision that will affect those around them. Some do it for the many benefits that the military has to offer and others do it because they have always dreamed of being a Soldier, Marine, Sailor, Coast Guardsman or Airman. For Jorge A. Riera, following a family tradition of serving in the Army is what motivated him to raise his right hand.

On July 30, 2015, Riera's father had the privilege of swearing his son in to be a part of the U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico at the Military Entrance Processing Center (MEPS) in San Juan, Puerto Rico as a new Private First Class (PFC).

During this emotional event, PFC Riera officially became the 4th generation of Reira men to serve in the 1st Mission Support Command (1st MSC), the largest command in the Caribbean.

The family tradition started in 1919 when Jose Ramon Reira was drafted during World War I. "Everything started with my grandfather, when he got drafted in 1919. Then my father joined and I decided to join too, and now my son," said Lt. Col. Jorge Riera, 1st MSC G-3/5/7 Operations Officer.

Lt. Col. Riera's father, Jorge Riera-Cruz enlisted during the Korean War.

As a proud father and Army officer, Lt. Col. Riera reflected on his 32 years of service and is confident that his son will continue to serve proudly and follow this great tradition. "I am so proud of him, of all my children he is the only boy and I am so happy he will carry on the family name," said Lt. Col. Riera.

"I have big shoes to fill, since I was a little boy I wanted to be like my dad and wear the Army uniform," said PFC Riera. "It's a little overwhelming but at the same time I am excited. After I finish basic training I am going to finish school, get commissioned and become an officer like my dad," he added.



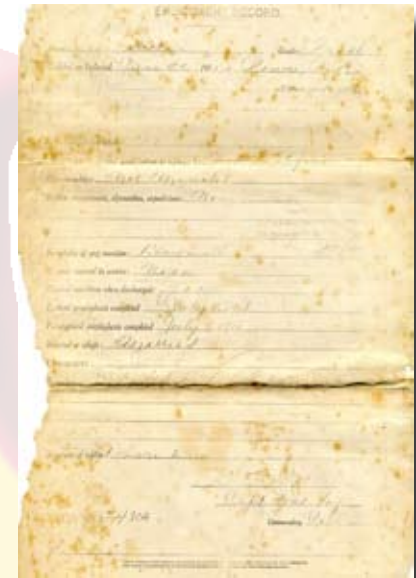
Lt Col. Jorge Riera swears in his son and 4th generation of Riera's, PFC Jorge A. Riera, at the Military Entrance Processing Center (MEPS) in San Juan, Puerto Rico (photo provided by Lt. Col. Jorge Riera)



Jorge Riera Cruz, (2nd Generation) posing for an official photo wearing the 1st MSC patch. (photo provided by Lt. Col. Jorge Riera)



ON TOP- 3rd and 4th generation of Riera men after the swearing in of PFC Jorge A. Riera at the Military Entrance Processing Center (MEPS) in San Juan, Puerto Rico (photo provided by Lt. Col. Jorge Riera)



ON THE RIGHT- Enlistment Record of Jose Ramon Riera, WWI Veteran. (photo provided by Lt. Col. Jorge Riera)



LEFT- Certificate of appreciation for Jorge Riera Cruz, in honor of his memory and in gratitude for his devotion and selfless consecration to the services, given by President Barack Obama. (photo provided by Lt. Col. Jorge Riera)



Jose Ramon Riera, 1st Generation of Riera's, serving the 1st MSC (photo provided by Lt. Col. Jorge Riera)

1ST MSC AWARDS

423ND TC Co. TRANSPORTATION UNIT OF THE YEAR (2014)



LEFT- The National Defense Transportation Association awarded the 432nd TC Co. with the "U.S. Army (Reserve) Transportation Unit Of The Year (2014)", for setting the excellence standards for Transporters and Logisticians.

CONGRATULATION TO THE 512TH MOVEMENT CONTROL TEAM



LEFT- Brig. Gen. Jose R. Burgos, commanding general 1st Mission Support Command, U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico presenting the 512th Movement Control Team with an award from the National Defense Transportation Association.

BEST BATTALION AND SUPPLY EXCELENCE AWARD (2014)

THE NEWEST CHAPLAIN IN THE U.S. ARMY RESERVE PUERTO RICO



RIGHT- Congratulations to the 471st EN CO for their FY 14 Best Company Award.



Brig. Gen. Jose R. Burgos, commanding general 1st Mission Support Command, U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico, congratulating the Soldiers from the 448th EN BN on receiving the Best Battalion and the Supply Excellence Award (2014).



ENGINEERS HELP LOCAL TOWN RESTORE THEIR COMMUNITY CENTER



CANOVANAS, Puerto Rico – Fostering a relationship with local community members can be compared to restoring a house. You have to make sure you have a solid foundation, see what areas need to be improved and make the changes, and finally, look at the progress that has been made.



U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers with the 471st Engineer Company, 448th Engineer Battalion headquartered in Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico are

doing just that. Since August 24, 28 Soldiers have been working hard to help the local town of Canovanas restore their community center that has been closed for approximately one year.

These Soldiers are not only helping a community but they are also enhancing their technical job skills. From plumbing to electrical work, pressure washing, painting and carpentry work, these Soldiers have been hard at work as part of their Annual Training. Working together as a team enables them to not only practice their Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), they get to learn other skills from their fellow Soldiers.

Spc. Daniel Araujo, 471st EN CO, has been diligently working away with the rest of his unit to complete the project at hand. “I have been working here for 2 weeks, my MOS is carpentry, I am a 12W but in this

kind of project everybody works together and you learn about everything, from painting to electrical work,” said Araujo, “I just want the community to enjoy the center once we are done fixing it, a lot of people from around the community have come by and asked us about the progress of the center and it is great seeing the progress that we have accomplished” added Araujo.

Staff Sgt. Josean Orengo, NCOIC of this project, described this as another great opportunity to give back to the community. “It has been an intense 28 days,” said Orengo. “We have worked towards fixing and renovating the electrical system, the bathrooms, the ceiling, the doors and the surroundings of the center. We started the renovations on August 24 with 14 Soldiers working per day, now we are just taking care of small details.” added Orengo after mentioning that he has been part of seven other community outreach projects with this unit.



The local community is very proud of the work these Soldiers have put towards renovating the center. Ms. Lorna Soto, Mayor of Canovanas, expressed gratitude to the Army Reserve for helping bring it back to functional conditions. “The Community Center had been closed for one year, first we fixed the ceiling and now thanks to the Reserve we can open it and give it back to the community. The community needs this center to be able to do their social activities in a safe and secured place,” said Soto.

“Having the Puerto Rico Army Reserve Soldiers help us and work with the renovations allows us to have the center available for the community a lot faster and it is an honor to have our Soldiers working for the community. We are proud of them and thankful that they have been able to

help us.” There is some other work that needs to be done around the community center by contractors. Once it is all complete, the City of Canovanas will host a ribbon cutting ceremony.

Every Soldier loves the opportunity to help their surrounding community, they work hard and the results are true reflection of their abilities. “I am proud to be part of an Army that allows me to serve my community, I think the community will appreciate our hard work.” commented 1st Lt. Juan Rivera, 471st EN Co, Officer in Charge.

“For the people that are thinking about joining the Army Reserve, I would encourage them to join a unit like ours, an Engineering Company, that will allow them to work close with the community like we are doing right now.” added Rivera. There is a process to follow in order for the U.S. Army Reserve Puerto Rico to get involved in community projects like this one. “To request our help, the community has to submit a request letter that goes directly to Brig. Gen. Jose R. Burgos, 1st MSC Commanding General and after his review we start the whole process of conducting visits and assessments.” said Mr. Isaias Diaz, Unit Administrator Technician for the 448th Engineer Battalion. “After every detail is discussed, it goes thru a legal review for approval,” added Diaz.

Soldiers from the 471st Engineer Company, 448th Engineer Battalion headquartered in Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico working on the restoration of a Community Center in Canovanas, Puerto Rico. (U.S. Army photo provided by Sgt. Carlene Vera/ Release)



SCARVES FOR OUR SOLDIERS



you could accompany us today and receive these scarves.” said Angel Zorrilla, President of District 51 of “Club de Leones de Puerto Rico”.

Zorrilla thanked his Arañitas for their time and dedication in making these scarves. He asked them to remember that every time they wove a part of the scarf, they were doing something loving and important for a loved one even though they don’t know them.

Ms. Eli, leader of the “Arañitas” had been waiting for the opportunity to do an activity like this. “We have done this with a lot of love, and we put love in every stitch that we wove together, we know that every Soldier that receives these scarves is going to be receiving it with a blessing from God as well” commented Ms. Eli.

Col. Hector M. Moran, Chief of Staff of the 1st MSC, received the scarves with a lot of enthusiasm and appreciation, and he also wanted to demonstrate gratitude to the “Club de Leones” on behalf of the 1st MSC.

“For me, it is an honor and I am happy to be receiving all of these scarves on behalf of our Soldiers,” said Moran. “I know you all put a lot of work and love in them. Believe us, they are going to be received by our Soldiers that are currently in theatre, and when they see these tokens of appreciation, they are going to be truly touched.” He said.

A certificate of appreciation was given to the “Club de Leones” Las Arañitas on behalf of the 1st MSC.

“Once again, I want to say thank you on behalf of Brig. Gen. Jose R. Burgos, commanding general of the

“Our mission is to help the people who might need our help and we do it with a lot of love. We really appreciate that you, the Soldiers that protect us when we are sleeping, are here receiving these scarves that have a lot of meaning to us,” - Angel Zorrilla, President of District 51 of “Club de Leones de Puerto Rico”.

1st MSC, for this amazing gift and for dedicating all that time working for our Soldiers,” concluded Moran.

These scarves will be mailed to Soldiers that are currently deployed as part of the 1st MSC. Mr. Ortiz mentioned that each Soldier should receive two scarves, one for them and one for a fellow Soldier that is not part of the U.S. Army Reserve Puerto Rico. Their intent is for Soldiers outside of the command to also feel appreciated for their sacrifices from a small group of volunteers in Puerto Rico.



From left to right- Luis A. Serra, Executive Chairman of the Board of Directors of the “Cooperativa la Sagrada Familia”, Efrain Ortiz, President of the “Club de Leones de Bayamón”, Angel Zorrilla, President of District 51 of “Club de Leones de Bayamón”, Ms. Eli, Leader of the “Arañitas”, receiving a Certificate of Appreciation from Col. Hector M. Moran, Chief of Staff of the 1st MSC. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Carlene Vera/ Release)

CELEBRATING HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH



Soldiers and personnel of the 1st MSC celebrated National Hispanic American Heritage Month at the 1st MSC Headquarters on September 17. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Carlene Vera/ Release)

FORT BUCHANAN, Puerto Rico - The National Hispanic American Heritage Month is celebrated annually from Sept. 15, 2015, to Oct. 15, 2015, by recognizing the history, culture and contributions of Hispanic and Latino Americans to the United States. This year’s the national theme is “Hispanic Americans: Energizing our Nation’s Diversity.”

The 1st Mission Support Command, U.S. Army Reserve-Puerto Rico and the U.S. Army Garrison Fort Buchanan recognized Hispanic Heritage Month today, Thursday, Sept. 17, 2015, at the 1st MSC Headquarters. This year, the Guest Speaker was Major General Felix A. Santoni, Retired.

Major General Felix A. Santoni thanked the command for allowing him to be the guest speaker on what

he describes to be a celebration that is very important.

“Hispanic Americans have a long history of service that complements Army values. As far back as the Revolutionary War, brave Hispanic men and women first began their contributions to every major conflict in our Army’s history,” said Santoni.

“Indeed, Hispanic Americans have been, and continue to be, a critical



LEFT- Guest Speaker, Major General Felix A. Santoni, Retired, addresses Soldiers and personnel of the 1st MSC and Fort Buchanan at the National Hispanic American Heritage Month celebration at the 1st MSC Headquarters on September 17. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Carlene Vera/ Release)

part of the diverse social fabric that allows our Army to recruit and enlist the best of America’s sons and daughters,” added Santoni.

The observation started in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon Johnson and was expanded by President Ronald Reagan in 1988 to cover a 30-day period starting on Sept. 15 and ending on Oct. 15. It was enacted into law on Aug. 17, 1988, on the approval of Public Law 100-402.

The day of Sept. 15 is significant because it is the anniversary of independence for Latin American countries Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on Sept. 16 and Sept. 18, respectively. Also, Columbus Day or Día de la Raza, which is Oct. 12, falls within this 30-day period.

WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY

For 72 years, women had been fighting, picketing and rallying to become equals and have the right to vote as part of a huge civil rights movement for women. Women's Equality Day commemorates August 26, 1920 and marks the day as a turning point in history of the struggle for equal treatment of women and women's rights.

Every year the military commemorates Women's Equality Day. This year, the 1st Mission Support Command (MSC) hosted an event with Col. Irene Zoppi, 1st MSC Deputy Commander, as the guest speaker.

"The significance of today is powerful," said Zoppi. "It brings light to the sacrifices made by both men and women to obtain fairness, equality, and respect for women." Zoppi talked about how Women's Equality Day is a historical pivotal time for equality and diversity, which is often taken for granted or disre-



garded. "Let us never forget that equality was earned by the power of resiliency, honor and selfrespect," continued Zoppi.

We are a part of an organization that has its own boundaries for women and what jobs or schools they can be a part of. Recently, two females graduated from Ranger School and received their Ranger Tabs along the men that attended the course as well. This shows that the military is moving forward, we are always moving forward to offer the same opportunities to all Soldiers. "I want all Soldiers to know, WE ARE ONE FAMILY, ONE TEAM, and ONE ARMY," said Zoppi.

Zoppi had a message for all the females, "for the females serving in the Armed Forces, I applaud your bravery to choose to serve with pa-



Guest Speaker, Col. Irene Zoppi, 1st MSC Deputy Commander, addresses Soldiers and personnel of the 1st MSC at the Women's Equality Day at 1st MSC Headquarters. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Lymari Sanchez)

triotic candor, and rise to the best of your potential, side by side with our male counterparts." She continued, "We are all brothers and sisters in Arms. We inspire and go the extra-mile to make a difference by transforming words into actions towards the good of our America.

Let us continue to serve in gratitude of our past generations, who had a dream to have the opportunity of equality

"I want all Soldiers to know, WE ARE ONE FAMILY, ONE TEAM, and ONE ARMY," - Col. Irene Zoppi

CW5 RETIRES AFTER 38 YEARS OF SERVICE



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Karen Grays departs after her retirement ceremony at the Capitol Building, San Juan, Puerto Rico, on Sept. 25, 2015, culminating a distinguished 38-year military career. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Carlene Vera/ Release)

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Karen Grays retired during a ceremony at the Capitol Building, in Old San Juan, San Juan, Puerto Rico on Sept. 25, 2015, culminating a distinguished 38-year-long military career.

Grays joined the Army in 1977 as an enlisted Soldier and later transitioned to Warrant Officer, specializing as a Property Book Officer (PBO) on June 14, 1991.

"I initially joined the Army because I wanted to get an education," said Grays. "I became motivated to become a chief because I love the Army and I just wanted to do something special."

Grays talked about how her mother didn't want her to join the military when she was younger. It was her father who actually signed the papers. "She got used to it after a while and she would

go with me when I (transferred duty locations)," said Grays of her mother who passed away a few years ago. "She would take the train and then we would drive across the country and she got to really enjoy it and reap a lot of benefits and I really miss her."

Grays' career has taken her to over 15 different locations and, as a result, she was able to retire after being the Command Property Accounting Technician (PAT) and the Command Chief Warrant Officer (CCWO) for the 1st Mission Support Command (MSC) at Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico. She became only the second female African-American Chief Warrant Officer 5 in the U.S. Army Reserve when she was promoted in 2012.

As a PBO and PAT it was her job to make sure all property was accounted for. Reaching the rank of CW5 is something very meaningful for Grays. "It's a lot of hard work and if you really want something, you will work hard to get it and you will not let anything stop you in getting your way, but you have to make sure you get it the correct way, the legal way, and the right way," continued Grays.

To Grays, retiring means ending her career at the top of her game and she explained there is no reason why anyone else can't do the same. "I've enjoyed my career and it is something that everyone needs to enjoy," said Grays. "You have to be accountable for what you do, you have to like what you do and you have to enjoy what you do. And if you don't have all those motivating factors for yourself, then

don't join the military."

To those who wish to join the Warrant Officer ranks, she says, "make sure you are dedicated to what you do and you really have to like what you do. If you don't enjoy what you do, then don't do it."

After retirement, Grays plans on relocating to "Fort Livingroom" for a while and then begin traveling while she figures out what she wants to do long-term. "I am a nurse, I have my real estate license, I'm finishing up my Lima 6 sigma course so I can work for some companies and will have my master's certificate in about 8 weeks," said Grays. "I can do anything I need to do and I will be successful at it."

Grays offered parting words of wisdom as she enters into retirement.

"If you really want something, you have to work for it and you have to go and get it because it is not going to come to you."



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Karen Y. Grays is presented the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious service in positions of increasing responsibility, culminating a 38-year career during a ceremony at the Capitol Building, San Juan, Puerto Rico, on Sept. 25, 2015. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Carlene Vera/ Release)

JUNIOR SOLDIERS TAKE LEAD IN CONVOY OPERATIONS

FORT HUNTER LIGGETT, Calif. - Nearly 70 Puerto Rican Reservists with the 432nd Transportation Company, 1st Mission Support Command, traveled more than 2,700 miles from Fort Riley, Kansas, to Fort Hunter Liggett, California. The two-week mission successfully con-

took turns leading the company and, with the support of their mentors, helped ensure the safe arrival of both cargo and personnel.

"We let everybody lead," said Staff Sgt. Antonio Alvarado, a squad leader and Barranquitas, Puerto Rico,

size safety. This involves giving the younger Soldiers more and more responsibility as they progress.

"We let them do everything from writing manifests to holding briefings," said Alvarado. "They'll need these skills in the future, so we encourage them to lead so they can feel comfortable when it's time for them to take over."

For Pastrana, a Caguas, Puerto Rico, native, serving in the military means leading and adapting. Though he'd driven on similar cross-country missions in years past, Pastrana had never led Soldiers on a major convoy before this year. He led a 12-truck element of the convoy on July 15, and acted as assistant convoy commander the day prior.

Pastrana credits the success of his two-day leadership stint to the bonds he forged with his fellow Soldiers, as well as the mentorship he received in the past.

"It was great leading the group," Pastrana said. "I've had great mentors. Since the first day I joined this unit, I asked questions if I had them. I also watched other Soldiers act as convoy commanders and I always took notes. It also helps that I have the respect of my fellow Soldiers. It was easy, but it was easy because of them."

Abreu, a Toa Alta, Puerto Rico, native and nursing student at the Colegio Universitario de San Juan, was equally enthused to have led her fellow Reservists. She, too, led



Spc. Jonathan Rodriguez, a Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, native, prepares cargo for offload after a two-week, 2,700-mile convoy operation from Fort Riley, Kan., to Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., on July 17. The convoy operation was part of Nationwide Move 15, an annual Army Reserve approved functional training exercise designed to provide Reserve component transportation units with valuable, realistic training by conducting real-world operations in support of continental United States activities. (U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Victor Ayala, 210th MPAD)

cluded July 16, when the Soldiers of the 432nd offloaded crucial medical equipment and support vehicles for a number of medical Reserve units who will be training at Fort Hunter Liggett during the month of July. The mission's success was made possible by a combination of teamwork, discipline, and the budding talents of the 432nd's future leaders. Young Soldiers, like Spc. Jose Pastrana and Spc. Marynelsie Abreu,

native. "So that by the time they are promoted and we retire, they will continue with the knowledge and good habits their seniors had."

Young Soldiers like Pastrana and Abreu are supported and guided by their noncommissioned officers, but this doesn't mean they're coddled, said Alvarado. The goal is to raise confident, capable leaders who prioritize mission success and empha-



Vehicles driven by 432nd Transportation Company Soldiers are staged for offload after a two-week, 2,700-mile convoy operation from Fort Riley, Kan., to Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., on July 17. The convoy operation was part of Nationwide Move 15, an annual Army Reserve approved functional training exercise designed to provide Reserve component transportation units with valuable, realistic training by conducting real-world operations in support of continental United States activities. (U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Victor Ayala, 210th MPAD)



Spc. Jose Pastrana, a Caguas, Puerto Rico, native, prepares cargo for offload after a two-week, 2,700-mile convoy operation from Fort Riley, Kan., to Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., on July 17. The convoy operation was part of Nationwide Move 15, an annual Army Reserve approved functional training exercise designed to provide Reserve component transportation units with valuable, realistic training by conducting real-world operations in support of continental United States activities. (U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Victor Ayala, 210th MPAD)

a 12-truck element of the convoy for one day and acted as assistant convoy commander for another.

"I was nervous at first, but I had to find confidence in the role," Abreu said. "It was challenging thinking it through, but as soon as we started the mission, Soldiers were collaborating and made everything easy."

Pastrana and Abreu were challenged by the experience, but found motivation in the fact that they were helping a medical unit to conduct their training. Abreu, whose passion to help people led her to pursue nursing in college, was especially thrilled at the prospect.

"Taking care of people is my passion," she said. "When I heard that the mission was to help a medical unit, I felt great. It makes me feel good to help battle-buddies I haven't even met."

The up-and-coming leaders of the 432nd will be returning soon to their native Puerto Rico, but Abreu says the experience gained during their long journey across the continental United States will stay with them through their Army careers.

"The NCOs trusting their Soldiers to handle the details and take control of smaller groups really helps us grow," said Abreu. "It's an awesome experience. It really gives me an appreciation for my leaders and the pressures they are under."

LOYALTY

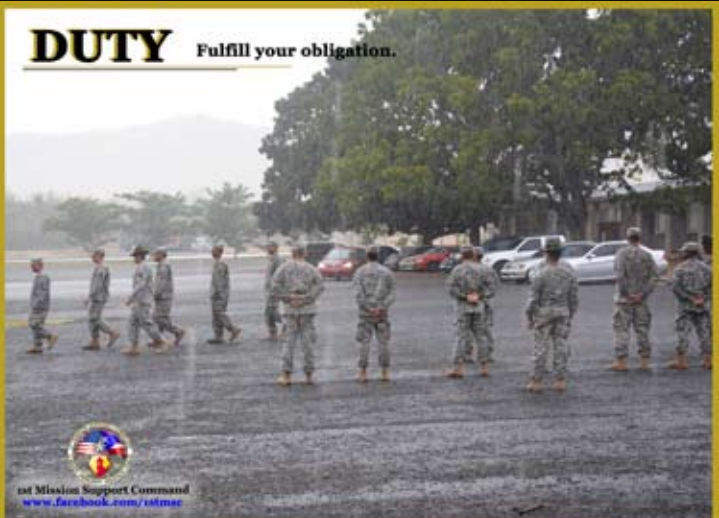
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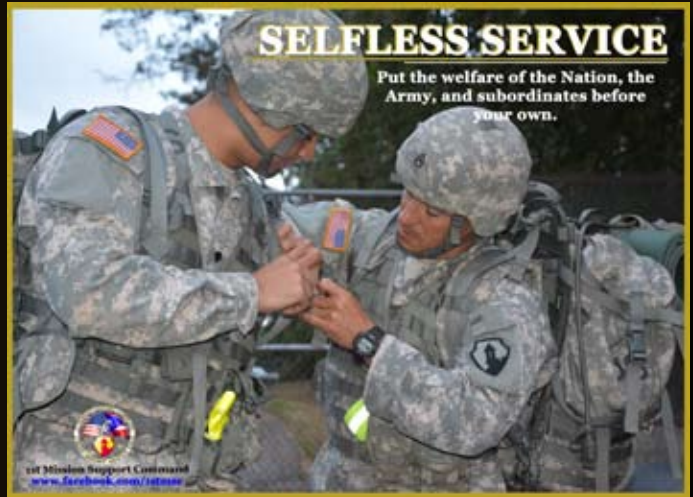
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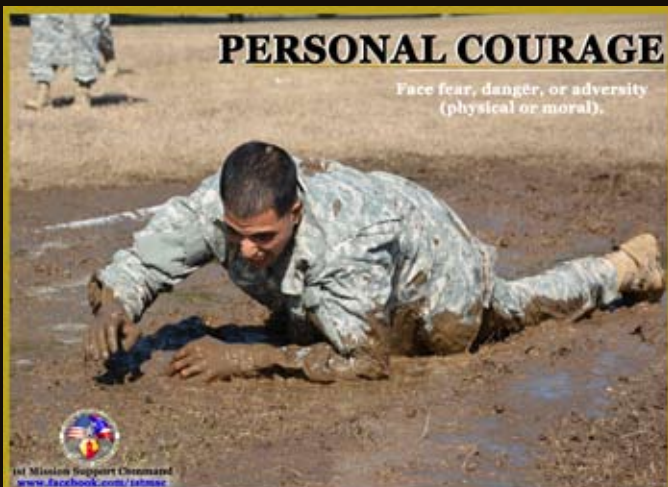
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