

# 19<sup>th</sup>

NATIONAL  
**LATINA** Symposium

*Distinguished Military Service Awards*

September 29, 2022





**Not all journeys start  
the same way.**

**This one is yours. Find a future.**

Walmart is here to support transitioning military, military spouses, and veterans as you prepare for the next step in your journey. From one-on-one counseling and mentorships to public and private partnerships, our Find a Future program can help you make a difference in an entirely new way – no matter which way you want to go. Walmart is proud to support the 19th National Latina Symposium.

Learn more at [walmartfindafuture.com](https://walmartfindafuture.com)



**Find a Future**

Employment / Education / Entrepreneurship



# 19<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL LATINA *Symposium*

## Who we are, What we do

**L**ATINA *Style*, Inc. broke new ground in 1994 when Anna Maria Arias launched the first national magazine dedicated to the needs and concerns of the Latina professional workingwoman and the Latina business owner in the United States. Since then, LATINA *Style* has become the most influential publication reaching the professional Hispanic working woman in the nation. With a national circulation of 150,000 and a readership of over 600,000, LATINA *Style* Magazine is unique in its ability to reach the seasoned Latina professional, the Latina civic and political leader, and the young Latina entering the workforce for the first time. The culturally sensitive editorial environment of the magazine showcases Latina achievements in all areas of endeavor, including business, corporate America, science, education, civic and political affairs, and the military, to name a few. In addition to the critical information the magazine provides to its readers, LATINA *Style*, Inc. produces four of the most respected programs in the nation: the LATINA *Style* 50 Awards and Diversity Leaders Conference, the LATINA *Style* Business Series, the National LATINA *Symposium*, and the LATINA *Style* Hero Initiative. All programs are designed to highlight and profile Latina achievement and build a bridge with the general market.

## Behind the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual National LATINA *Symposium*

**L**atinas represent a powerful sector of the United States population. Today there are over seven million Hispanic women in the workforce and Latinas represent over 600,000 businesses, making them the fastest growing segment of the small business community. Their unique lifestyle, concerns, and needs clearly differentiate them from the general population. In addition, we can't forget that Latinas are continually excelling in non-traditional roles and industries. Since the inception of the National LATINA *Symposium* in 2004, Latinas from coast to coast have convened for a forum to address the most pressing issues affecting their daily lives. The highlight of the National LATINA *Symposium* is the Distinguished Military Service Awards honoring Latinas serving in the Armed Forces. As of this year we have recognized 209 Hispanic women, four men and 21 academy cadets. We invite you all to join us in our quest to recognize Latinas for their leadership, accomplishments, and commitment to building a strong community. Thank you for joining us in this celebration!

Artwork produced by Maria E. Lopez





# Advancing Opportunities for Hispanics and Latinos

We're dedicated to building a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable future for all communities, including Hispanics and Latinos, women, veterans and beyond. To help create meaningful change, we're:

- Expanding access to business education and coaching for entrepreneurs
- Equipping professionals with career development skills to advance
- Deepening our relationships with local communities and organizations

We proudly support the Annual National LATINA Symposium and Distinguished Military Service Awards.

To learn more, visit [jpmorganchase.com/ahl](https://jpmorganchase.com/ahl)

# 19<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL LATINA *Symposium*

## WELCOME



Robert E. Bard  
President & CEO  
LATINA *Style, Inc.*

Welcome to the 19th Annual National LATINA *Symposium* – a celebration of Latina success and empowerment in our military forces! We are delighted that you have joined us in this celebration honoring a very special segment of our Latina community.

Since 2004, 209 Hispanic women, four men and 21 academy cadets have been recognized for their exemplary record and commitment to serve in our Nation's Armed Services. Their stories of courage and determination have inspired and motivated us all.

After two years of presenting the conference virtually, we are delighted to be able to showcase our award recipients once again in person. We learned from our virtual conferences that we have developed a strong following from all over the country and the world for this unique program. We are proud to bring to you our Latina stories and excited to bring workshops with invaluable insights for everyone. Whether you are in politics, corporate America, business, or an entrepreneur, our lineup of speakers will address topics on leadership, nurturing Latina success, and how to successfully transition from active military service into a civilian career.

Besides the exciting workshops, the highlight of the *Symposium* is our *Distinguished Military Service Awards* ceremony. This year, we are proud to honor 22 outstanding Latinas from the many branches of the Armed Forces – active and civilian-military service. We are also proud to present Admiral Linda L. Fagan, Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, the first woman to lead one of our military services, with our Trailblazer Award. We thank The Honorable Carlos Del Toro, Secretary of the United States Navy for his support and participation as well as the Honorable Congressman Ruben Gallegos for chairing the conference; Under Secretary of Defense, The Honorable Gilbert Cisneros; Under Secretary of the U.S. Army, The Honorable Gabe Camarillo; and Under Secretary of the U.S. Air Force, The Honorable Gina Ortiz Jones. We also recognize U.S. Navy Admiral Retired Robert Bianchi with our President's Award. We thank Major General Linda Urrutia -Varhall (Ret) and The Association of Naval Services Officers (ANSO), and its president, U.S. Navy CPT (Ret) Roy Love for their continued support and leadership. To all our panelists and participants, our warm thank you for helping us make this unique conference possible.

We warmly invite you to attend the different workshops and join us for the *Distinguished Military Service Awards*. Let's make this conference the most memorable yet!

A heartfelt thanks to all our women and men serving our country, especially those serving in distant and dangerous lands. We await your safe return. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert E. Bard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert E. Bard  
President & CEO

# Thank you for your service and bravery

You've dedicated your time and given your heart for your country. Now it's time to focus on what's next.

Nationwide® values the diverse talents and perspectives of military veterans. We consider it an honor when Latinas who have served choose us as an employer, and we're grateful for the opportunity to help them protect their future.

We're delighted to once again be recognized as a Top 50 U.S. Company for Latinas to Work For.

**Learn more:**  
[nationwide.com/diversity](https://nationwide.com/diversity)



**Nationwide®**  
is on your side



# 19<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL LATINA *Symposium*

RUBEN GALLEGO  
7TH DISTRICT, ARIZONA  
COMMITTEES:  
ARMED SERVICES  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
CHAIRMAN, INTELLIGENCE  
AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS  
TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE U.S.,  
NATIONAL PARKS, FORESTS,  
AND PUBLIC LANDS  
VETERANS AFFAIRS  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-0307

DC OFFICE:  
1131 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-4065  
DISTRICT OFFICE:  
1601 N 7TH STREET  
SUITE 310  
PHOENIX, AZ 85006-2481  
(602) 256-0551

September 29, 2022

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual National LATINA Symposium! As the member of Congress for Arizona's 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, it is my honor to welcome you today. This event brings us together to celebrate Latinas' success and recognize their contributions to our armed forces. It is so important for our community to come together to uplift the often-overlooked Latina professionals and servicemembers who reflect the best America has to offer.

This year, I am proud to recognize your 2022 Distinguished Military Service Award recipients: CPT Joana Migdalia Martinez (U.S Army), SFC Madelyne M. Rodriguez (U.S Army), MAJ Lynmarie Rivera Martinez (U.S Army), SSG Reyna Ponce (U.S National Guard), MSG Thelma Barrios (U.S National Guard), Mrs. Neosensys Gottal (U.S National Guard), Cadet First Class Shakira Colon Madera (U.S Air Force), Mrs. Desiree Aguilar (U.S Air Force), SrA Nicole A. Rodriguez Fernandez (U.S Air Force), SrA Alexis Sanchez (U.S Air Force), CPT Kimberly Lynn Monarrez Soltero (U.S Air Force), HM1 Sandra E. Guzman (U.S Navy), LT Hailey Guerra (U.S Navy), MIDN LCDR Amanda Gabriela Morales (U.S Navy), MIDN 2/C Alondra Reyes (U.S Navy), SSgt. Amanda A. Phelps (U.S Marine Corps), MSgt Carmen Christman (U.S Marine Corps), Mrs. Dora M. Rodriguez (U.S Marine Corps), Petty Officer Johanna Polanco (U.S Coast Guard), LT Maria McElhane (U.S Coast Guard), Ms. Sheyla M. Matos (U.S Coast Guard), and ENS/0-1 Olivia Gonzalez (U.S Coast Guard). Congratulations to all recipients and thank you for your exemplary service to our great nation!

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge President Robert Bard and everyone at LATINA Style for their unwavering commitment to Latinas who break barriers and move our country forward – whether that be in politics, business, the military or elsewhere. Thank you again for all you do. And to today's award recipients, I look forward to seeing what you all accomplish next!

Sincerely,



Ruben Gallego  
Member of Congress

# BRINGING EVERYONE INTO TOMORROW.

SAIC proudly supports the Annual National LATINA Symposium and Distinguished Military Service Awards.

[saic.com](http://saic.com)



**SAIC**<sup>®</sup>



# 19<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL LATINA *Symposium*

## National LATINA *Symposium* Committee

### SMSgt Christian Johnson U.S. Air Force

Senior Master Sergeant Christian Johnson serves as the Superintendent to the Chief of Staff of Air Force (CSAF), the Pentagon, Washington, District of Columbia. As the Superintendent, Sergeant Johnson leads a team of 25 members on the CSAF personal staff and serves as the Senior Enlisted Leader for 11 enlisted members across six Air Force Specialty Codes. She plans, directs, organizes and manages all administrative functions for the Office of the CSAF. She articulates Chief of Staff of the Air Force priorities and decisions critical in execution of all Air Force strategic activities supporting Department of Defense (DoD) and allies. Additionally, Sergeant Johnson also serves as engagements liaison; interfaces with senior civilian and military members of the Secretariat, Air Staff, Joint Staff, Major Commands, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Congress, and the White House on all administrative and official engagements items for the Chief of Staff of the Air Force.



SMSgt Christian  
Johnson  
U.S. Air Force

Sergeant Johnson was born in Reynosa, Mexico and grew up in Brownsville, Texas prior to entering the Air Force in 2001. She has worked in multiple facets of her career field at the Squadron, Group, Air Operations Center, Numbered Air Force and Headquarters level. In 2015, she was Development Special Duty vectored to be a Military Training Instructor. She was also selected as the Section Chief of the Basic Military Training Reception Center, where she directed weekly BMT graduation operations and was responsible for receiving, processing and transporting 32,000 AF recruits annually. Throughout her career, she has participated in several exercises as well as deployments in direct support of Operations IRAQI FREEDOM, ENDURING FREEDOM, and Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa. Prior to her current assignment, Sergeant Johnson was the Superintendent of Executive Services for the Office of The Inspector General at the Pentagon.

#### **MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS**

Meritorious Service Medal with oak leaf cluster  
Air Force Commendation Medal with three oak leaf clusters  
Air Force Achievement Medal with oak leaf cluster

#### **EFFECTIVE DATES OF PROMOTION**

Airman First Class 19 September 2001  
Senior Airman 19 January 2004  
Staff Sergeant 1 October 2007  
Technical Sergeant 1 February 2013  
Master Sergeant 1 March 2017  
Senior Master Sergeant 1 October 2021



# A force to be recognized.

General Motors is proud to support the National LATINA Symposium and honors the outstanding achievements of Latinas in uniform.



everybody in.

# 19<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL LATINA *Symposium*

## National LATINA *Symposium* Committee

### Captain Roy Love U.S. Navy (Ret)



**Captain Roy Love**  
U.S. Navy (Ret)

Capt. Roy Love, USN (ret), was born in the Dominican Republic and moved to the U.S. in 1983. In 1993, he graduated from the State University of New York (SUNY) Maritime College with a B.S. in Marine Transportation. He currently serves as President of the Association of Naval Services Officers (ANSO). ANSO conducts recruitment and outreach within America's underserved communities, directly supports Hispanic/Latino(a) members in their decision to remain in their respective services and provides mentoring and professional development.

He attended the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, earning a Master of Arts Degree in National Security and Strategic Studies in 2008. He deployed to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2009 in support of the ARMY 304th Sustainment Brigade, managing and distributing fuel across all of Iraq to support U.S. and allied forces. He Commanded the Fast Frigate USS BOONE in June 2010 and led the ship in winning the Battle Efficiency award. CAPT Love is the first Dominican and Afro Latino to command a U.S. Naval Warship.

He completed his tour on BOONE in December 2011 and assumed Command of Afloat Training Group Mayport in Jacksonville, in charge of training all Naval vessels in Southeast U.S. He Commanded Naval Base San Diego (NBSD), the second-largest Naval Base in the U.S., and is the first Hispanic/Afro Latino to lead the installation. He led the base in winning the Commander in Chief Installation Excellence Award in 2019.

He is a certified Resilience Building Leadership Professional (RBLP) Trainer and an Authorized Training Partner, dedicated to helping organizations create senior leaders that can build resilient teams, facilitate team learning, and support organizational learning. He currently serves on the Board of Directors, and as a role model, and mentor for Hispanics Inspiring Student Performance and Achievement (HISPA). He also serves on the Board of Directors for DoD Reads, and on the Board of Advisors for American Latino Veterans Association (ALVA).

Founder and CEO of The Road Eagle LLC, he is a certified Motorcycle Safety Foundation Rider Coach and Motorcycle Safety Instructor and an Iron Butt Association (The World's Toughest Motorcycle Riders) long-distance and endurance motorcyclist. Founder and partner of Two Eagle's Leadership LLC. A veteran-owned, minority-owned professional development and leadership growth consulting company. A lifelong learner, he is currently a Doctorate student at the University of Southern Mississippi, pursuing a Ph.D. in Human Capital Development.





American Airlines 



Esther M.  
Managing Director  
Central and Southwestern Division Sales

## American Airlines is proud to support the 19<sup>th</sup> National Latina Symposium.

Whether it's getting our planes in the sky or supporting from the ground, American Airlines professionals are pushing the limits of innovation and leading change. Join our global team and unleash your potential.

Feel free to explore greater horizons. Visit [jobs.aa.com](https://jobs.aa.com) today.

# 19<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL LATINA *Symposium*

## National LATINA *Symposium* Committee

### Lieutenant Colonel Jose L. Montalvan U.S. Marine Corps

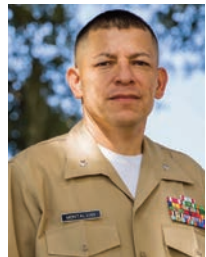
Lieutenant Colonel (LtCol) Jose L. Montalvan, originally from Nicaragua, enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1995 from his adopted home of Hialeah, FL. He graduated from the Broadened Opportunity for Officer Selection and Training Program in 2000. Upon graduation, he was selected to the Marine Enlisted Commissioning Education Program. LtCol Montalvan attended Florida State University, as part of the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps, where he obtained his Bachelor of Science in Criminology. LtCol Montalvan was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 2002.

As a company grade officer, LtCol Montalvan served as the Motor Transport and Assistant Logistics Officer for 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines where he deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He subsequently served as the Executive and Operations Officer for Recruiting Station Albuquerque, NM. His follow-on assignments included Assistant Logistics Officer for the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit where he deployed in support of Western Pacific 11-2 and Support Branch Officer-In-Charge for I Special Operations Training Group; later renamed to I Expeditionary Operations Training Group.

As a field grade officer, LtCol Montalvan served as the Expeditionary Branch Officer-In-Charge at Marine Corps Logistics Operations Group. He then completed his Joint tour at Joint Functional Component Command for Integrated Missile Defense, United States Strategic Command; where he served as an Integrated Missile Defense Watch Commander and later as the Global Ballistic Missile Defense Training, Education, and Exercise Director. Upon completion of his Jointed tour, LtCol Montalvan served as the 6th Marine Corps District Recruiting Operations Officer. Currently, LtCol Montalvan is a student at the National War College.

LtCol Montalvan is a graduate of the Expeditionary Warfare School and the Marine Corps Command and Staff Non-Resident program. His personal decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with a Gold Star in lieu of Second Award, Navy Commendation Medal with Gold Star in lieu of Second Award, Navy and Marine Corps achievement medal with Gold star in lieu of Second Award, the Combat Action Ribbon, the Good Conduct Medal with Bronze Star, and Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal with Bronze Star.

LtCol Montalvan resides in Alexandria, Virginia with his family.



**LtCol Jose L.  
Montalvan**  
U.S. Marine Corps



**U.S.ARMY**

# U.S. ARMY EQUITY AND INCLUSION AGENCY

**DIVERSITY IS THE FORCE.  
EQUITY IS THE GOAL.  
INCLUSION IS THE WAY.**

Enabling 21st Century Leadership Competencies in  
Pursuit of High Performing and Cohesive Teams.



[www.army.mil/armyequityinclusion](http://www.army.mil/armyequityinclusion)



# 19<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL LATINA *Symposium*

## National LATINA *Symposium* Committee

Mr. Jeyben Castro  
Deputy Director for the House Office of  
Diversity and Inclusion  
U.S. House of Representatives



**Major General  
Juan G. Ayala**  
U.S. Marine Corps  
(Ret)

Jeyben Castro serves as Deputy Director for the House Office of Diversity and Inclusion at the U.S. House of Representatives. Created by law during the 116th Congress, the office works to develop and promote best practices for diversity and inclusion in areas such as personnel recruitment, retention, promotion and performance reviews. Mr. Castro leads outreach and engagement strategies to Republican members, committees and other House offices.

Mr. Castro's prior experience on the Hill includes serving as Outreach Director for the United States Senate Republican Task Force on Hispanic Affairs under Senator Orrin Hatch. In this capacity, he worked with Senate Republican offices to forge strategic alliances with community-based organizations and leaders across the country to address, educate and create solutions to issues impacting the Hispanic community.

In the private sector, Mr. Castro's experience includes developing community based initiatives and strengthening Hispanic engagement as a Senior Community Engagement Manager for a public utilities company and promoting corporate citizenship as a Public Affairs Manager for a Fortune 500 company.

A strong believer in public service and civic engagement, Mr. Castro proudly served ten years in the U.S. Navy and in 2012 joined the Republican National Committee as one of six Hispanic Outreach Directors in charge of the Hispanic Vote for the Presidential election. In 2013, Mr. Castro joined the team at Leadership Institute (LI), one of the nation's premier organizations responsible for training activists, students and leaders.

Mr. Castro was born in El Sauce, Nicaragua and migrated to Miami, Florida when he was ten years old. He serves as a board member of the American Latino Veterans Association ALVA, the Latino Student Fund and the Cisneros Hispanic Leadership Institute at George Washington University. He currently lives in Virginia and is a graduate of George Mason University.



# ANSO

ASSOCIATION OF NAVAL SERVICES OFFICERS



**Serving Our Sea Services in Recruiting,  
Developing and Retaining Hispanics Leaders**



**Our Mission:**

- Supporting Personal Growth and Development
- Providing Mentorship and Education
- Engaging Local Communities

**Advancing our Hispanics Today  
to be Tomorrow's Sea Service Leaders**

for the

**United States Marine Corps  
United States Navy  
United States Coast Guard**



\*REVOLUTIONARY WAR 1775-1783 \* FRENCH NAVAL WAR 1798-1801 \* TRIPOLI 1801 \* WAR OF 1812 \* FLORIDA INDIAN WAR 1817-18

**Join ANSO today at [www.ansomil.org](http://www.ansomil.org)**

## PROGRAM AGENDA

- 8:00 – 9:00 am** Welcome Remarks: Robert E. Bard, President & CEO, LATINA *Style*, Inc.  
Mistress of Ceremony: SMSgt Christian Johnson, US Air Force  
Title Sponsor Remarks: Robert Duhart, Vice President and Deputy Chief Security Officer, Walmart  
Sponsor Remarks: Marilyn Espinal, Marketing Communications- Measurement Strategy & Analytics, SAIC  
Sponsor Remarks: Mark Elliott, Managing Director & Global Head of Military & Veterans Affairs, JPMorgan Chase & Co.  
Special Guest Speaker: Secretary of the Navy, Honorable Carlos Del Toro  
Special Guest Speaker: Under Secretary of the Army, Honorable Gabe Camarillo  
Special Guest Speaker: Under Secretary of the Air Force, Honorable Gina Ortiz Jones
- \*Special Recognition to the 2022 Corporate Veteran ERG's*  
*\*Special Recognition to the 2022 Veteran of the Year*
- 9:00– 10:00 am** **Session 1 – Powerful Leadership Lessons: Leading by Example**
- Moderator: MAJ Lidilia Garcia, United States Army  
Panelist: COL Yadira Greeson, United States Air Force  
Panelist: RADM Maria "Lore" Aguayo, United States Navy  
Panelist: COL Maria S. McMillen, United States Marine Corps  
Panelist: LCDR Lauren Gonzales, United States Coast Guard
- 10:00 – 11:00 am** **Session 2 – Nurturing Latina Success**
- Moderator: MAJ General, Ret Linda R. Urrutia-Varhall, United States Air Force  
Panelist: MAJ Lynmarie Rivera, United States Army  
Panelist: MSG Thelma Barrios, United States National Guard  
Panelist: LT Hailey Guerra, United States Navy  
Panelist: MSgt Carmen Christman, United States Marine Corps  
Panelist: LT Maria McElhaney, United States Coast Guard
- 11:00– 12:00 pm** **Session 3 – Successfully Transitioning from Active Military Service to Civilian & Corporate Careers**
- Session Intro: Danny Vargas Founder/President/CEO VARCom Solutions, LLC and Founder, Chairman & CEO American Latino Veterans Association (ALVA)  
Moderator: Jeyben Castro, Deputy Director Office of D & I at U.S. House of Representatives  
Panelist: Ken Barrett, Chief Diversity Officer, General Motors  
Panelist: Kirsten Frey, Regional People Sr. Director, HR (Veteran & Chair of the SERVES ARG) Walmart  
Panelist: Mike Caraballo, SVP, Home Lending Product Strategy & Delivery, Wells Fargo & Company  
Panelist: Tonee Bell, Fleet Service Agent, American Airlines & A Unity System, Inc., CEO
- 12:00– 1:00 pm** **Session 4 – Highlight of Corporate Initiatives for Veterans**
- Moderator: Jennifer Powell, Senior Manager, Walmart  
Panelist: Mariah Webb, People Operations Lead Market 292, Walmart  
Panelist: Vanessa Avelar, Associate of the Military Pathways Development Program, JPMorgan Chase & Co.  
Panelist: Meredith Lozar, Head of Community Development & Government Relations for Military & Veterans Affairs, JPMorgan Chase & Co.  
Panelist: Cristina Nativi, Store Manager, Walmart



## PROGRAM AGENDA

**1:00– 2:00 pm** LATINA *Style* presents a recognition program honoring the accomplishments of women serving in the Armed Forces. The awardees will be honored for their service to our country, leadership, accomplishments, and commitment to building a strong community.

### Keynote Speaker

Gilbert Cisneros

Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

### Intro Remarks

Robert E. Bard

President & CEO

LATINA *Style*, Inc.

### Honorary Chair Remarks

The Honorable Congressman Ruben Gallego  
NLS Honorary Chair

### Opening Remarks

Charmane S. Johnson, M.P.A.

A. Director, EEO, Special Emphasis and Outreach  
Directorate

U.S. Department of Defense/Office of the Under  
Secretary of Defense for  
Personnel and Readiness

### Trailblazer Award Presentation

Commandant Linda L. Fagan  
United States Coast Guard

### President's Award

Robert Bianchi

Rear Admiral, Supply Corps, U.S. Navy (Ret.)  
Chief Executive Officer, NEXCOM

### Mistress of Ceremony

SMSGT Christian Johnson

### Presentation of the Colors & National Anthem

Armed Forces Color Guard

### Salute to Fallen Heroes

### Distinguished Military Service Awards Presentation

#### United States Army

Major Lynmarie Rivera Martinez  
Captain Joana Migadalia Martinez  
SFC Madelyne M. Rodriguez

#### United States Marine Corps

MSgt. Carmen Christman  
SSgt. Amanda A. Phelps  
Mrs. Dora M. Rodriguez

#### United States Navy

Lieutenant Hailey Guerra  
HM1 Sandra E. Guzman  
MIDN LCDR Amanda G. Morales  
MIDN 2/C Alondra Reyes

#### United States Air Force

Captain Kimberly Lynn M. Soltero  
SrA Nicole Rodriguez Fernandez  
SrA Alexis Sanchez  
Cadet First Class Shakira Colon Madera  
Mrs. Desiree Aguilar

#### United States Coast Guard

LT Maria McElhane  
Petty Officer Johanna Polanco  
ENS/0-1 Olivia Gonzalez  
Ms. Sheyla M. Matos

#### United States National Guard

MSG Thelma Barrios  
SSG Reyna Ponce  
Mrs. Neosensys Gottal

### Honorable Mention Recipients

#### Closing Remarks

Mr. Robert Bard  
President & CEO  
LATINA *Style*, Inc.

\*\*\*Program Concludes\*\*\*

# 19<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL LATINA *Symposium*

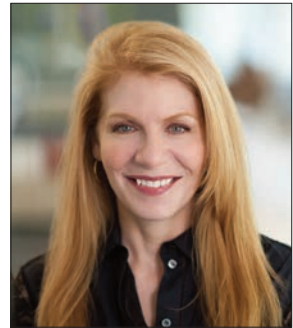
## *2022 Veteran of the Year Award Recipient*

**Brenda Durham**  
**Senior Vice President & Regional General Counsel**  
**Marriott International, Inc.**

Brenda Durham, Senior Vice President & Regional General Counsel for Marriott International, Inc., serves as primary legal counsel for Marriott's hotels and resorts located throughout the Caribbean & Latin America. In this capacity she provides oversight guidance to Marriott's law department group supporting the region. Her team is comprised of attorneys, paralegals and support staff located in offices in Bethesda, Maryland and Plantation, Florida and together, they support development, operations, asset management, compliance and casino oversight.

Ms. Durham has been with Marriott for 24 years and is Marriott's senior ranking Latina. She has a comprehensive practice that includes negotiating financial, equity, and management agreement transactions, hotel owner relationship development and dispute resolution, and global safety and security. During 2012 to 2014, Ms. Durham took on additional responsibilities in Madrid, Spain supporting Marriott's JV partner/founder of the AC Hotel brand in the integration of the AC by Marriott brand.

In January 2016, she was selected as the Caribbean & Latin America business lead for the three-year integration process of Starwood-branded hotels in the region. Ms. Durham is the region's account executive for a large portfolio owner of mixed-brand hotels. Prior to joining Marriott, Ms. Durham was a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney in the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office in Seattle, Washington. She also served in the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General for seven years resigning her commission as Major in 2001.



**Brenda Durham**  
Senior Vice President &  
Regional General Counsel  
Marriott International, Inc.

25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
**LATINA** *Style* 50  
Awards and Diversity Leaders Conference

*Join the most accomplished Latinas in our country at the premiere empowerment conference for Latina corporate, business, civic and political leaders in the Nation.*



The **50** Best Companies for Latinas to Work for in the U.S.

LATINA *Style* 2022



*“A celebration of Corporate Excellence & Latina Achievement”*  
Washington, D.C. - May 2023



**19<sup>th</sup>** NATIONAL  
**LATINA** *Symposium*

**2022 VETERAN EMPLOYEE  
RESOURCE GROUP  
OF THE YEAR**



**Veterans'**  
Connection

Wells Fargo Veteran's Connection  
Employee Resource Network  
(VC-ERN)

*Congratulations!*

## 2022 Distinguished Military Service Award Recipients

**Major Lynmarie Rivera** is the Brigade Judge Advocate, 82d Airborne Division Artillery (DIVARTY). MAJ Rivera is responsible for directing and managing the Brigade Legal Team supporting over 1,000 Paratroopers. She is the primary legal advisor on a wide array of legal areas to include national security law, fiscal and contract law, military justice, and administrative law issues. She has held this role since July 2020.



Major Rivera is from San Juan, Puerto Rico. She is currently stationed at Fort Bragg with her husband, Sergio Rosario, who works as a marketing specialist for Third Path Institute, and is the founder of Soy Super Papa, a non-profit focused on parenthood strategies for fathers. Together they have one child, Stella who is five years old. They are the founders of Proyecto Piquete a non-profit focused on the education of folkloric Afro-Puerto Rican music and using music as a tool to help PTSD. As a Judge Advocate, MAJ Rivera has served as Legal Assistance Attorney, Fort Myer Virginia; Trial Counsel for the Military District of Washington; Regimental Judge Advocate, 3d US Infantry Regiment "The Old Guard"; Trial Defense Counsel, Fort Myer Virginia; Chief of Contract and Fiscal Law, 82d Airborne Division; and is currently serving as the Brigade Judge Advocate, 82d Airborne Division Artillery. She is scheduled to attend the Judge Advocate's Graduate Course at The Judge Advocate Legal Center and School, Charlottesville, Virginia, later this summer.

On February 2022, MAJ Rivera deployed in support of Joint Task Force-82d Airborne Division to Jasionka, Poland, where she provided invaluable legal advice on international, and national security law issues during the deter and assurance mission in support of the effort to manage the consequences of the Ukraine-Russia crisis. Some of MAJ Rivera's awards and recognitions include the Army Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal, and the Judge Advocate Legal Services Award in 2019. MAJ Rivera was recently selected as one of the 40 Top Hispanic Lawyers Under 40 2022 by the Hispanic Bar Association. She is an active member of the Judge Advocate General Hispanic Mentorship Group, Educational Delay Mentorship Group, Diversity and Inclusion Field Board, JAG Corps Women Group, and Hispanic Bar Association.

---

**Captain Joana Migdalia Martinez**, earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in International Relations from St. Mary's University, in San Antonio, TX and is a semester away from obtaining Master's Degree in International Relations and Conflict Resolution from Liberty University. She is a graduate of the Engineer Officer Basic Course, and the Engineer Captain's Career Course. In addition, she has graduated from the Project Engineer course, Unit Movement Officer Deployment Planner, Counter Explosives Hazard Planner Course, Joint Engineer Operations Course, Event Planning Officer Course, and Casualty Notification Officer courses.



After commissioning in the United States Army Reserve in May of 2015, CPT Martinez's first assignments were Platoon Leader and construction officer in the 302nd EVCC at Camp Bullis, TX. She served distinctly as the first female Officer in the unit. In May 2018, she joined the 348th Engineer Company (CLEARANCE) as the Operations Officer at home station and deployment in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel from June 2019 through April 2020. She assumed command of the 348th as the first female Commander upon the Unit's return from deployment. After graduating Engineer Captains Career Course in April 2021, she took over as the Battalion Plans Officer for the 321st EN BN in Boise, Idaho. She is also serving simultaneously as the Company Commander for the 391st Engineer Company (MA).

CPT Martinez's military awards and decorations include the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal with C device, Army Achievement Medal, Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, MOVSM, Overseas Service Ribbon, Army Reserve Components Overseas Training and the Army Forces Reserve Medal with M device.

CPT Martinez resides in Boise, ID with her partner, Dan Hellwig and their dog Liliith.

## 2022 Distinguished Military Service Award Recipients



SFC Madelyne M. Rodriguez was born in Mao Valverde, Dominican Republic. She lived in Moncion, Dominican Republic until the age of nine. She then migrated to Washington Heights in New York City. SFC Rodriguez enlisted in the United States Army in 2003. She attended Basic Combat Training in Fort Jackson, South Carolina and Advance Individual Training for 92A, Automated Logistical Specialist, in Fort Lee, Virginia. She later reclassified to 92Y, Unit Supply Specialist.

Her Duty stations are Fort Drum, New York, A Co, 10th BSB – Automated Logistics Specialist in the Supply Support Activity (SSA); Fort Sill, Oklahoma A Co, 19th Maintenance Battalion – Stock Control NCOIC in the SSA Deployed to Tallil, Iraq (2006); A Co, 100th BSB – Human Resources Sergeant and Supply Sergeant Deployed to Balad, Iraq (2008) and Leatherneck, Afghanistan (2009); Ansbach, Germany HSC, 412th Aviation Support Battalion – Sustainment Automation Support Management Office (SASMO) NCOIC Deployed to Camp Marmal,

Afghanistan (2012); Fort Lee, Virginia HHC, 23rd QM BDE – AIT Platoon Sergeant; HQ, 262nd QM BN – Senior Supply Sergeant – BN S4 NCOIC; Fort Riley, Kansas HHB, 1-7 FA BN – Senior Supply Sergeant – BN S4 NCOIC and Platoon Sergeant; Republic of Korea Rotation (2020); Currently serving as the HHB, 1-7 FA First Sergeant.

Her awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal with three bronze oak leaf clusters (3OLC), Army Achievement Medal with three bronze oak leaf clusters (3OLC), Good Conduct Medal with a silver knot, National Defense Medal, Iraqi Campaign Medal with four bronze stars, Global War on Terrorism Medal, Korea Defense Medal, Armed Forces Medal, Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal, NCO Development Ribbon with bronze numeral 4, Army Service Medal, Overseas Ribbon with bronze numeral 5, NATO ISAF with one bronze star, and the Meritorious Unit Commendation. She has completed Basic Leaders Course, Advance Leaders Course, Senior Leaders Course, Master Leaders Course, Senior Enlisted Joint Professional Military Education I, SHARP Foundation Course, Equal Opportunity Course, Demonstrated Senior Logistician, Certified Logistics Associate, Certified Six Sigma Master Black Belt, Certified Six Sigma Green Belt, and an Associates in Supply Chain Management. SFC Rodriguez has two sons Davion (18) and Javan Lee (16).

---

**MSgt. Carmen Christman** demonstrated exceptional leadership and adept technical competence, resulting in the operational success of Combat Logistics Battalion 5 (CLB-5) and I Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) G-4. From June 2021 – February 2022 during her time in CLB-5, she led and executed (1) Global Force Management (GFM) deployment, (2) Service Level Training Exercises, (4) Marine Corps Combat Readiness Evaluations (MCCRE) in support of Fifth Marines, and (3) battalion-level training exercises. From February 2022 – June 2022 during her time in I MEF G-4, she led the migration of Department of the Navy Taskers (DON-T) to Enterprise Task Management Software System (ETMS), led the Command and Control in the Information Environment Working Group (C2IE WG), led a Pre-Deployment Site Survey (PDSS) Team in support of exercise KAMANDAG, and was the technical inspector support for the USS ESSEX in a short window of less than 120 days.



Master Sergeant Christman distinguished herself at CLB-5 immediately upon her arrival and until her departure in February 2022. Her impact was felt as she managed current operations while preparing the battalion for its upcoming deployments. As the Battalion Logistics Chief, she was directly responsible and instrumental in ensuring multiple exercises were a success, some of those accomplishments were her leading the success of (4) company-level, (3) MAGTF-level exercises, and bilateral training opportunities with Australian Defence Force (ADF)

Master Sergeant Christman continues to show her drive and work ethic that embodies the Marine Corps' excellence in leadership. She is the ultimate team player that draws the right team to the fight in any climb or place and I MEF G4 will continue to be a success because of her drive and commitment to build strong resilient teams fostered in technical acumen.

## 2022 Distinguished Military Service Award Recipients



**SSgt. Amanda A. Phelps** Staff Sergeant Phelps was born in Barberton, Ohio and raised in Canal Fulton, Ohio. She enlisted in the Marine Corps in March of 2010 and attended recruit training in Papa Company, 4th Recruit Training Battalion, Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, South Carolina. In May of 2010, she reported to the School of Infantry-East, Camp Geiger, North Carolina for Marine Corps Combat Training.

In January of 2014, she was promoted to the rank of Sergeant and in May, attended Military Working Dog Handler School and obtained the necessary MOS of 5812. She held the billets of Patrol/Explosive Detector Dog Handler, Squad Leader, and Platoon Sergeant while assigned to Military Working Dog Platoon, Ashley Kennels, Camp Lejeune. In February

of 2015, she attended Special Reaction Team Marksman/Observer Course Phase Two in Fort Leonard Wood, completing qualification at different ranges with the M10. In September of 2015, she provided protection for Pope Francis' historic visit to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania by utilizing her patrol/explosive detector dog, Enzo.

In April of 2016, Staff Sergeant Phelps reported to Drill Instructor School, class 3-16. In June of 2016, Staff Sergeant Phelps was assigned as a Drill Instructor for November Company, 4th Recruit Training Battalion. In April of 2017, she was promoted to the rank of Staff Sergeant. Throughout her time at 4th Recruit Training Battalion, she held the billets of Drill Instructor, Senior Drill Instructor, Chief Drill Instructor, and 4th Battalion Drill Master.

In February 2020, Staff Sergeant Phelps reported for duty at Marine Corps Installations Pacific, Marine Corps Base Camp Butler, Provost Marshal's Office, Okinawa Japan. She held the billets of Precinct Staff Non commissioned Officer-in-Charge and Training Chief.

Staff Sergeant Phelps currently serves Company B Company Gunnery Sergeant for Headquarters and Support Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Butler, Japan.

Staff Sergeant Phelps' personal awards include the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals (x2), and three Good Conduct Medals.



**Mrs. Dora M. Rodriguez** has served as the MCIWEST-MCB CAMPEN Adjutant. Throughout this period, Mrs. Rodriguez distinguished herself by exemplifying an unparalleled work ethic, professionalism and engaged leadership. She facilitated the professional development of ten Marines and one civilian employee. She was the catalyst that drove the MCIWEST-MCB CAMPEN Adjutant branch to continued success throughout the global pandemic period. Her specific accomplishments are as follows:

As the MCIWEST-MCB CAMPEN Adjutant, she supports the Headquarters and operating forces, tenant commands, and regional installations by providing general administrative services that are responsive to the needs of Marines, Sailors, civilian personnel, and their families. Beyond her normal general administrative duties, she manages a multitude of other key programs such as Installation Voting Assistance Office (IVAO), Regional e-Records

Management Program, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Regional Privacy Act Program, Military Funeral Honors and the Commanding General's Award Program.

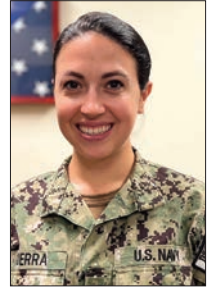
In June of 2021, the lock down protocols for COVID19 were being implemented across the State of California which had a direct impact on the installation. Mrs. Rodriguez reviewed her mission statement, organizational goals and realigned her internal processes to continue the exceptional support to the installation and region. She adjusted her processes immediately upon discovery a process delay or flaw to ensure work products continued to be acted upon. She monitored her administrative staff ensuring their actions supported her new processes and was receptive to recommended improvements by her staff.



## 2022 Distinguished Military Service Award Recipients

**LT Hailey Guerra** Was raised in a large, Cuban-American family in Miami, FL, LT Hailey Guerra, JAGC, USN, attended the University of North Florida in 2012. There, she became actively involved on campus and served as Student Body President and a member of the University's Board of Trustees.

LT Guerra graduated cum laude in 2016 with a bachelor of arts in Political Science and Criminal Justice. During her gap year, she worked as a Domestic Violence Pretrial Officer and served in the county's domestic violence high risk task force. In 2017, she began law school at William & Mary, where she applied for the Navy JAGC's Student Program. While in law school, LT Guerra served in a merit-based fellowship with the Center for Legal and Court Technology and most enjoyed working with on-campus clinics, including the Domestic Violence and Immigration Clinics.



In 2020, LT Guerra earned her juris doctor and became licensed to practice law in North Carolina. Following Officer Development School and Naval Justice School, LT Guerra served at Region Legal Service Office Southwest in San Diego, California as a command services attorney and legal assistance attorney. In December 2021, LT Guerra reported to Defense Service Office West and currently serves as Defense counsel.



**HM1 Sandra E. Guzman** was born in San Jose, California, she spent most of her childhood being raised between Jalisco, Mexico and Garden City, Kansas. She graduated from Garden City High School in 2010. In August 2010 she enlisted in the Navy, attended Recruit Training Command in Great Lakes, Illinois. She then attended and graduated from Hospital Corpsman "A" School in Great Lakes.

Guzman first assignment was to Naval Hospital Pensacola, Florida. Where she served as a Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) Corpsman from 2011-2013. In 2012 she was tasked with an Individual Augmentee (IA) to Joint Task Force (JTF) Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for nine months, where she worked for Joint Medical Group (JMG).

In April 2013, she reported to USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) and served three years aboard as a General Duty Corpsman. During which time she advanced to Petty Officer Third Class and was meritoriously promoted to Second Class Petty Officer.

May 2016 she reported to Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS), San Juan, Puerto Rico, for duty as the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge of the Medical procession section. During her time she was selected as the Military Member of the Year across 65 MEPS. She was meritoriously advanced to Petty Officer First Class. In June 2019, she reported to Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Unit (NMRTU) Memphis where she served as the Clinic Leading Petty Officer (LPO) and the Command Career Counselor (CCC).

Presently HM1 Guzman is currently assigned to Navy Talent Acquisition Group (NTAG) Nashville serving as a Medical Officer Recruiter.

HM1 Guzman holds a Bachelor of Science in Sports and Health Sciences from American Military University. Her personal awards include; Surface Warfare Device, Aviation Warfare Device, Joint Service Commendation Medal (2), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Joint Service Achievement Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, Good Conduct Medal (3), National Defense Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and Armed Forces Service Medal.

## 2022 Distinguished Military Service Award Recipients



**MIDN LCDR Amanda G. Morales** is a role model for young Latinos and Latinas, personifying selfless service to the nation. She was raised by two immigrants who taught her the importance of hard work and family. Seeing the type of model citizen her older brother and his classmates became, she recognized that a service academy is where she wanted to be. She is the finest example of our founding principles, that anything can be achieved through hard work, dedication, motivation, and determination. She embodies the mission of the United States Naval Academy (USNA) as a person of the highest moral character, academic prowess, and physical fitness. Through her actions she shows other young Latin Americans the professional heights that can be achieved. As a minority studying in a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) field, she epitomizes success. She breaks down barriers.

A born leader, MIDN Morales was chosen to be a Squad Leader as a Second Class Midshipman as she entered a new company in her junior year of college. She successfully led and mentored ten other midshipmen, one of whom was graduating a class above her, as the Brigade focused on returning to normal operations after a period marked by lockdowns and reduced events. She took the challenge of creating a cohesive unit amongst a diverse group of midshipmen coming from across the nation head on and performed flawlessly! She led by example and taught her squad members how to be a selfless leader dedicated to personal improvement. Having three freshman squad members that were minorities, she played an especially important role in showing them in their first semester how to be successful midshipmen for their remaining four years.

MIDN Morales' personal integrity and charismatic leadership lead to her selection as the Fall semester Second Battalion Commander for Academic Year 2023. This position is selected by a board of senior officers at the Naval Academy, chaired by the Deputy Commandant of Midshipmen. Dedicated to helping her fellow midshipmen, she overcame a six hour time difference to virtually interview for the position. In this role, she will be responsible for 750 midshipmen, maintaining accountability and developing them as future leaders of our nation's Navy and Marine Corps team.

---

**MIDN 2/C Alonda Reyes** Is a native of Pascagoula, Mississippi, Midshipman 2/C Alondra Reyes is currently a Junior at the United States Naval Academy. She reported for her first year in June 2020.

Midshipman 2/C Reyes is a History major with a Spanish minor. She has studied and completed summer training abroad in the Middle East, visiting Israel, in addition to domestic locations aboard ships and alongside Marines.

Midshipman 2/C Reyes has held various leadership positions while at the Academy. She has served as the Public Affairs Officer for the Latin American Studies Club (LASC), an organization of more than 200 members. She has also served as the Executive Officer for the Diversity Peer Educator Program. Most recently, Midshipman 2/C Reyes has served as a Detailer for the USNA class of 2026, leading incoming freshmen in the transition from civilian to military life.



## 2022 Distinguished Military Service Award Recipients

**Captain Kimerly L. Soltero** is the acting chief of scheduling, 93rd Air Refueling Squadron, Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington. She leads a team of schedulers executing a flying hour program of over 2,100 flying hours valued at \$15M annually. Captain Soltero is also a Language Enabled Airmen Program (LEAP) member and is a Spanish translator for the Department of Defense.

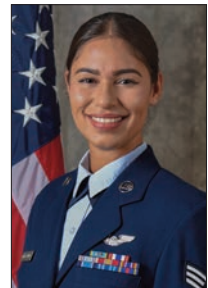


Capt Soltero's career began with her admittance into The United States Air Force Academy, United States Military Academy, and the Coast Guard Academy. She attended the U.S. Air Force Academy from 2014-2018; graduated with a Bachelor in Science, studied Philosophy and minored in Spanish. Capt Soltero commissioned into the Active Air Force on 23 May 2018. In October 2018, she began the rigorous Undergraduate Pilot Training program at Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio, Texas. She earned her wings in November of 2019 and was awarded a KC-135 pilot position. Capt Soltero trained to fly the KC-135 at Altus, AFB in Oklahoma until May 2020. Prior to her current position, Capt Soltero was the Standardization and Evaluation Liaison Officer at the 93rd Air Refueling Squadron, Fairchild AFB, Washington.

Captain Soltero deployed to Qatar and Turkey from June to October 2021. She flew twenty-seven missions acquiring 134.5 combat hours and sixteen combat support hours. She supported the following Operations: Inherent Resolve, Resolute Support, Freedom Sentinel, and Allies Refuge. Additionally, as a Lieutenant on her first deployment, Captain Soltero worked as the 93 Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron Mission Planner for two months. During this time she was awarded the Company Grade Officer of the month and received her first air medal and commendation medal.

---

**SrA Nicole A. Rodriguez Fernandez** is a Sensor Operator Flight Examiner for the 91st Attack Squadron (ATKS) at Creech Air Force Base, Nevada. The 91st ATKS is a United States Air Force Reserve Squadron under the 926th Wing, Air Reserve Component that operates the MQ-9 Reaper. The 91st ATKS works as a Total Force Integrated (TFI) team attached to the 17th ATKS providing Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and kinetic effectiveness to overseas contingency operations. She grew up in Bayamon, Puerto Rico and enlisted in the United States Air Force on June 26, 2018. She completed Basic Military Training (BMT) at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas in August 2018. After completing BMT, she began her yearlong training journey to become a Sensor Operator.



Upon completion of IQT in June 2019, SrA Rodriguez Fernandez received her first orders which took her to the 42nd ATKS at Creech Air Force Base in Nevada where she completed her Mission Qualification Training (MQT), allowing her to operate in combat zones. SrA Rodriguez Fernandez provided overwatch and Close Air Support (CAS) to American troops on the ground from June 2019 to June 2020 as part of Operation FREEDOM'S SENTINEL. After her time providing CAS, she received orders to the 17th ATKS where the priority is to Find, Fix, Track and Engage against High Value Targets posing a threat to the United States of America. SrA Rodriguez Fernandez separated Active Duty in June 2022, but continues serving the United States Air Force as a full-time reservist with the 91st ATKS while she makes plans to advance her civilian professional career. As a part of the Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) Community, SrA Rodriguez Fernandez has accumulated nearly one thousand MQ-9 flight hours throughout her four years in the U.S. Air Force. She has provided critical Air Support to American troops on the battlefield and targeted America's enemies through the collection of Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance while also being part of the squadron's Training Shop, Unit Fitness Program, and Squadron Booster Club.

## 2022 Distinguished Military Service Award Recipients



SrA Alexis Sanchez is a C-17A Loadmaster assigned to the 517th Airlift Squadron at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Anchorage, Alaska.

Airman Sanchez was born in Miami, Florida, on 3 April 1996. She attended the University of South Carolina, graduating Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science in 2018. Airman Sanchez subsequently enlisted in the United States Air Force in January 2020. Upon graduation, she received a direct-duty assignment to the 517th Airlift Squadron, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson AFB, Alaska, arriving in November 2020. SrA Sanchez has excelled at her assignment as a C-17A Loadmaster and Airman. SrA Sanchez achieved the position of primary loadmaster in under ten months and completed a deployment supporting the retrograde of Afghanistan and Iraq. SrA Sanchez has operated on the C-17A as a critical crew member for aeromedical evacuation, humanitarian, and Presidential support missions around the globe. Additionally, SrA has served in various positions, including squadron booster

club rep, FTAC facilitator, CSS troop, and scheduler. She is currently working towards a Master's Degree in Supply Chain Management at American Military University and obtaining her Private Pilot License.

SrA Sanchez has accrued over 624 flying hours, including more than 152 combat hours and over 50 combat sorties in support of Operations: INHERENT RESOLVE, ALLIES REFUGE, and FREEDOM SENTINEL.

### MAJOR AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Gallant Unit Citation

Global War On Terrorism Expeditionary Medal with 1 Service Star

Air Force Expeditionary Service Ribbon with Gold Border

### OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

2020 Airman of 1st Quarter, 517th Airlift Squadron

2021 Airman of the 3rd Quarter, 3rd Wing

2021 Airman of the Year, 3rd Wing

2022 Dutch Huyser, PACAF

---

Cadet First Class **Shakira Colon Madera** is a Diversity and Inclusion officer for Squadron 22 at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and the Senior representative for USAF Academy's Hispanic Heritage Club.

She conducts critical conversations within her squadron regarding issues with diversity and its importance for the Air Force. The mission of the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) officer is to serve as the U.S. Air Force Academy's strategic leader in structuring a shared vision of diversity and inclusion. Her job aids with the transformation of future Air and Space Force leaders in creating a culture and climate where diversity strengthens all personnel.

Cadet First Class Colon Madera was born and raised in Yauco, Puerto Rico. She came to the United States on 2015 and began her career in the Air Force as an enlisted member as a Pharmacy Technician in December 2016. After two years and a half, she decided to become an Officer and was elected to be a cadet at the Air Force Academy on 2019.





## 2022 Distinguished Military Service Award Recipients



Mrs. Desiree Aguilar has been assigned to Brooke Army Medical Center, 5T Inpatient Bone Marrow Transplant Unit for almost 10 full years. She is a San Antonio native, born into an underserved community on the south side, where she was raised by a single mother who had her at 16 years of age.

Although young, Desiree remembers her mother as a very resilient Hispanic matriarch that had many surrounding examples of strong-willed, determined, Hispanic women. Mrs. Aguilar graduated from Judson High School in July of 2001, crossing the stage 8 months pregnant with her first child. Then in December of 2001, she married her high school sweetheart. She pursued attending college early in 2002 at St. Phillips College as a part-time student studying nursing, part-time retail manager at Old Navy, and full-time mother and wife back home. With two children under the age of 5, Mrs. Aguilar worked tirelessly to maintain excellent standing through all her college pre-requisite courses, and was accepted on her first try to San Antonio College Associate School of Nursing in the fall of 2006.

Mrs. Desiree Aguilar worked in two different San Antonio hospitals prior to Brooke Army Medical Center where a special opportunity presented itself for her to become an oncology nurse on 5T. Although many roadblocks and setbacks presented themselves for Mrs. Aguilar, she recalls every step of her journey as a young mother and Latina woman involving her unwavering spiritual faith at the center of all she does. She has raised all her children to be active youth members at her church parish and is a team member herself for two different Women's and Married Couples organizations.

Mrs. Aguilar has always had a keen understanding of motivation from within, and is a real-life example of how far consistent determination and a great attitude will take you. She outshines herself as an outstanding role-model mother and Latina woman pursuing her lifelong goals to everyone in her family, parish, local community, and workplace. Mrs. Aguilar is now working on completing a Master's degree in Nursing Leadership and pursuing a national certification in Bone Marrow Transplant nursing.



LT Maria McElhaney assumed the role of Executive Officer, Marine Safety Unit (MSU) Cleveland in June 2021. She is responsible for executing the Coast Guard's Port Safety and Security, Marine Environmental Protection, and Commercial Vessel Safety missions from the Ohio/Pennsylvania border to Vermillion, OH. Prior to MSU Cleveland, LT McElhaney was assigned to the Coast Guard Sector Puget Sound Investigations Division in Seattle, WA. As an Investigating Officer, she conducted marine casualty and personnel action investigations in one of the most politically complex and environmentally sensitive ports in the nation. She also completed a tour as an Apprentice Marine Inspector at Sector Mobile, AL where she conducted vessel, facility, and container inspections across five deep draft ports to ensure compliance with international conventions and U.S. laws and regulations.

She has staunchly supported diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives throughout her career, to include Chair positions at SFLC, Sector Mobile, and Sector Puget Sound Leadership and Diversity Advisory Councils. She was a member of the Mobile and Seattle ANSO Chapters, and supported WLI in Seattle and Cleveland. LT McElhaney received an honorable mention for the 2021 "Captain Edward R. Williams in Diversity" award.

A native of Barcelona, she graduated from the Universidad of Alcalá in Alcalá de Henares, Madrid in 2003 with a degree in Tourism and Hospitality Management. LT McElhaney holds Master degrees in Labor Relations from Universidad de Alcalá (2006) and Business Administration from Liberty University (2019). She is fluent in 5 languages and has leveraged her foreign language skills to support Hurricane Maria recovery operations in Puerto Rico, host foreign delegations from Uruguay, Kenya, and Haiti during International Port Security visits, and facilitate the Coast Guard's participation in four U. S. Navy International Anti-Terrorism and Piracy courses attended by military officers from across the globe.

## 2022 Distinguished Military Service Award Recipients

**Petty Officer Johanna Polanco** Born and raised in the Dominican Republic until the age of 11, and a native of New Jersey Petty Officer Johanna Polanco Garcia enlisted in the Coast Guard in May 2007. Shortly after completing basic training Petty Officer Polanco Garcia was assigned to Station Woods Hole, MA. During her tour at station Woods Hole, she received voluntary orders to assist with the British Petroleum oil spill that affected the gulf in 2009.

She was also selected for Emergency Medical Technician "C" School course. Upon Her four year tour at Station Woods Hole, Petty Officer Polanco Garcia lateral over to the reserves and was assigned to Sector Philadelphia. She attended Storekeeper "A" School in 2012 and made E5 in 2013. In 2014 she received tittle 10 orders for Surface Forces Logistics Center as an independent duty storekeeper. From 2015-2021 Petty Officer Polanco Garcia had two other tittle 10 assignments in El Paso, TX alongside BP agents and custom workers as a Chief Financial Officer during the migrant operations and Sector Alameda as the COVID Supply Director. Finally she integrated back into active duty and is now attached to the Coast Guard Cutter Escanaba.



Petty Officer Johanna Polanco Garcia received her Bachelor's Degree from Long Island University in 2013, with an associates in Fine Arts. Then in 2016 she received her Master's in Human Resource Management.

Some of Petty Officer Polanco Garcia's accomplishments include Letter of Commendation (2), Unit Commendation (2), Good Conduct Award (4), and Meritorious Team Commendation, and Sea Service Ribbon and others.

Petty Officer Polanco Garcia has four beautiful daughters Adrianna Howard (11), Jaida Howard (9), Liana Howard (5) and Faith Howard (2).



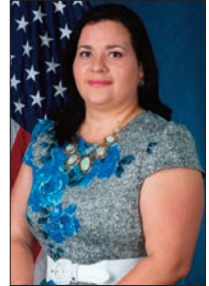
**ENS/0-1 Olivia Gonzalez** ENS Olivia Gonzalez, hailing from Waterford, Connecticut is a 2022 USCGA graduate. She was a Government Major and served as the Spring Regimental Workplace Climate Officer for the Corps of Cadets.

During this time, she worked closely with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to help foster respect among the corps and a respect for all cultures, culminating with the Academy's Eclipse Weekend. Gonzalez asked insightful questions to Dr. Dickson, Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence, during Eclipse to demonstrate and educate the Corps on women and minorities in the intelligence field. She was also a member of Diversity Peer Educators, Genesis Council, Asian Pacific American Council, Compañeros, Spectrum Club, Cadets Against Sexual Assault and Harrasment, Creative Writing Club, and Yoga Club.

She was also honored for being among the top cadets at the Academy to volunteer to work with New London's Latinx community. Additionally, she earned the equivalent of the Academy's Dean's List Honors. Starting this summer, she will be reporting to CGC DAUNTLESS in Pensacola, Florida to serve as a Deck Watch Officer.

## 2022 Distinguished Military Service Award Recipients

Ms. **Sheyla M. Matos** is a former military member and the resident naval architect at the United States Coast Guard (USCG) Offshore Patrol Cutter, Project Resident Office (OPC PRO), Panama City, Fl. She was a former mechanical engineer at the NAVSEA Naval Surface Warfare Center, Panama City, Florida. She has over 10 years of experience in mechanical and systems engineering, with 3 years at the USCG OPC PRO. She has worked in the fields of propulsion and power engineering, civil engineering, mining engineering, design of thermal systems, cement and aggregate industry, naval architecture, systems engineering and project management of diversified portfolio of projects.

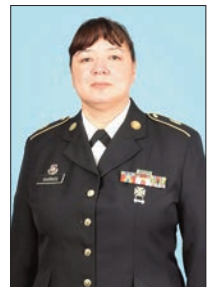


She currently serves as the subject matter expert in Naval Architecture and as the OPC Weight Control Program Coordinator overseeing all weight control efforts for the OPC program. In a former role, she has served as Principal for Safety (PFS) for the Unmanned Influence Sweep System (UISS), Mine Hunting Vehicle (MHU) and safety lead for the integration of the Clandestine Mine (CDM). Prior to serving as PFS, Ms. Matos served as a mechanical engineer and subject matter expert at the Naval Sea Logistic Center (NSLC) providing support to the Level I SubSafe and Deep Submergence System platforms. Previous experiences from private industry include serving as a Proposal Engineer for Loesche America, Inc.; Design Engineer for Kolberg Pioneer, Inc. and Plant Design Engineer for FLSmidth.

She has been the recipient of several awards during her career including the 2016 Great Minds in STEM (GMis) STEM Military and Civilian Hero Award, Army Achievement Medal (2nd Award), Good Conduct Medal (3rd Award), Honorable Discharge (2002), Naval Sea Logistics Center (NSLC) Multiple Service Awards, NAVSEA Meritorious Unit Commendation (MUC), and a Letter of Appreciation from PMS 399 Ms. Matos holds a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering with a minor in Structural Engineering from The Pennsylvania State University; a Bachelor's of Science in Mathematics with highest distinction (SUMMA CUM LAUDE) from the Interamerican University of Puerto Rico and a Master's of Science in Systems Engineering from the Colorado Technical University. She has three children, Elannah, Isaac and Christian.

---

MSG **Thelma Barrios** was born in Laredo, TX and raised in the Chicago land area. She enlisted in the Illinois Army National Guard in January of 1999. She attended Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Jackson, SC, where she was awarded the MOS 71L, Administrative Specialist. She was promoted to the Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) Corp 2007 as a 42A20, Human Resources NCO. MSG Barrios attended Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas and was awarded the MOS of 68J, Medical Logistics in 2008.



MSG Barrios is currently assigned as the Senior Human Resources NCO for the 108th Sustainment Brigade, Chicago, IL. MSG Barrios' enlisted assignments include Specialty Action Branch NCOIC for JFHQ-IL, State Personnel Security Manager for JFHQ-IL, Senior Human Resources NCO the 404th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, Senior Human Resources NCO for the 108th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, Personnel Service Direct Redesign NCO for the 108th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, Medical Logistics NCO for the 108th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, Acting Readiness NCO for HHD 108th Multifunctional Medical Battalion, and Human Resources NCO for the 108th Multifunctional Medical Battalion.

Her awards and decorations include the Army Commendation Medal (5th Award), Army Achievement Medal (3rd Award), Army Good Conduct Medal (4th Award), Army Components Achievement Medal (3rd Award), National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with Silver Hour Glass device, NCO Professional Development Ribbon (3rd Award), Army Service Ribbon, Illinois Military Long and Honorable Service Medal (4th Award), Illinois Military Attendance Ribbon (11th Award), and the Illinois State Active Duty Ribbon. MSG Barrios currently resides in Manhattan, IL and is married to Jake Poor; she has five adult Children, Martha, Miguel, Ricardo, Cecilia, and Mario, and 4 grandchildren Ari, Jade, Mariah, and Jaylin.

## 2022 Distinguished Military Service Award Recipients



SSG Reyna Ponce was raised in an underprivileged home in Meriden, CT with limited opportunities to excel. At a young age she quickly learned to take care of herself. She got to see firsthand of the paths she could take when older. She noticed one adult in her life partying, not working, and not really caring if she got to school on time, if at all. Meanwhile, another adult was up at early hours working out before they left on their twelve-to-fifteen-hour workdays. It was there she learned the importance of working hard for what you want.

As Staff Sergeant Reyna Ponce put her wants on hold to provide for her two boys, she saw herself working two jobs and was able to buy her first home at the age of 21. Wanting more for not only her life but her children's life, she saw the potential for a greater achievement by serving her country in the military at the age of 23 and now shares that same life lesson with her children.

SSG Ponce has not let anything get in her way in the 8 and a half years she has served. She showed her work ethic, commitment, and selfishness on ADOS in order to learn everything she possibly could in preparation of the future she wanted. She was able to reclass to a 42A, complete NCOES and secure an AGR Position all in the same year. A couple years later, she would see herself deploying with the 1st Battalion, 102nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain), one of the largest Battalions, to the Horn of Africa.

She is the finest example of our founding principles, that anything can be achieved through hard work, dedication, motivation, and determination. SSG Reyna Ponce is a role model for young Latinos and Latinas, personifying selfless service to the nation.



Mrs. Neosensys Gottal was born in the Dominican Republic, Mrs. Neosensys Gottal is a lifelong learner, mother, wife, veteran, and civilian member of the Defense Acquisition Workforce. Neo is currently the California National Guard's Purchasing and Contracting, Chief of Compliance, e-Business, and Integration. She is responsible for leading eight geographically separated units in providing professional contracting support that enables the California National Guard to warfight abroad, secure our homeland across all domains, and build partnerships.

As a contracting professional, Neo brings the California National Guard almost two decades of broad and deep experiences. This includes uniformed military service, private sector, and joint service experience as a Department of Defense General Schedule employee. While in the Navy, Neo set the example for enlisted sailors by obtaining her Bachelor's Degree in Management.

True to form, she embodied the spirit of learning and growing by obtaining her Master Degree in Leadership a few years later. Neo remains connected to her passion by training, nurturing, and developing the future workforce of contracting professionals. She regularly leads and facilitates training, which includes creating new and exciting ways to disseminate information. Her goal is to empower others to grow and become autonomous.

A strong believer in the power of learning, Neo believes we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of government contracting. Instead, Mrs. Gottal equips contracting professionals with knowledge, skills, and abilities to act decisively.



# 19<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL LATINA *Symposium*

## *2022 Trailblazer Award Recipient*

### **Admiral Linda L. Fagan Commandant of the United States Coast Guard**

Admiral Linda L. Fagan assumed the duties as the 27th Commandant of the United States Coast Guard on June 1st, 2022. As Commandant, she oversees all global Coast Guard operations and 42,000 active-duty, 7,000 reserve, and 8,700 civilian personnel, as well as the support of 21,000 Coast Guard Auxiliary volunteers.

She previously served as the 32nd Vice Commandant. Prior flag assignments include Commander, Pacific Area, and Commander, Coast Guard Defense Force West; Deputy Commandant for Operations, Policy, and Capability; Commander, First Coast Guard District; and a joint assignment as Deputy Director of Operations for Headquarters, United States Northern Command.

Admiral Fagan has served on all seven continents, from the snows of Ross

Island, Antarctica to the heart of Africa, from Tokyo to Geneva, and in many ports along the way. Operational tours include Commander, Sector New York, more than 15 years as a Marine Inspector, and sea duty in USCGC POLAR STAR, a 399 ft heavy polar icebreaker. Staff assignments include Executive Assistant to the Commandant and Vice Commandant, and Division Chief of the Foreign and Offshore Compliance Office.

Possessing extensive interagency as well as intergovernmental experience, Admiral Fagan has worked with both the International Maritime Organization and International Labor Organization on flag state and port state issues. This work includes the development of the International Ship and Port Security Code (ISPS), and the Consolidated Maritime Labor Convention.

Admiral Fagan holds a Bachelor of Science in Marine Science degree from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, a Master of Science in Marine Affairs degree from the University of Washington, and a Master in National Resource Strategy degree from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. She has earned numerous personal and team awards during her 37 years of Coast Guard service. Admiral Fagan is the longest serving active duty Marine Safety Officer and holds the distinction of being the Coast Guard's first-ever Gold Ancient Trident.



**Admiral Linda L. Fagan**  
Commandant, U.S. Coast  
Guard

# 19<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL LATINA *Symposium*

## *2022 President's Award Recipient*

**Robert J. Bianchi, Rear Admiral, Supply Corps, U.S. Navy (Ret)  
Chief Executive Officer, NEXCOM**

Robert J. Bianchi, Rear Admiral, Supply Corps, U.S. Navy (Ret.) is the Chief Executive Officer for the Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM). In this position, he provides leadership and management oversight for the \$3 billion annual worldwide operations of Navy Exchanges, Navy Lodges, Navy Gateway Inns & Suites, Ship Stores Program, Navy Uniform Program Management Office, Navy Clothing and Textile Research Facility and Telecommunication Program Office. In addition, Bianchi also currently serves as Special Assistant to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower & Reserve Affairs) for Military Resale Transformation.



**Robert J. Bianchi**  
Rear Admiral, Supply Corps.  
U.S. Navy (Ret)  
CEO, NEXCOM

From November 2017 to September 2020, while still retaining his position as NEXCOM CEO, Bianchi concurrently served as the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) Interim Director/Special Assistant for Commissary Operations to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower & Reserve Affairs). In this role, he exercised oversight authority and responsibility for the day-to-day management and control of 15,000 people employed at DeCA headquarters, and at 239 commissaries in 13 countries, and managed an annual budget of \$7 billion, with annual sales of nearly \$5 billion.

Bianchi is NEXCOM's first civilian Chief Executive Officer. He joined the command after retiring from the U.S. Navy with more than 29 years of service as a Navy Supply Corps Officer. While in the Navy, he served in various senior leadership positions including Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Fleet Readiness and Fleet Supply Officer, U.S. Fleet Forces Command; Commander, Navy Exchange Service Command; Deputy Commander for Aviation, Naval Inventory Control Point; Military Advisor to the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Logistics & Aerial Readiness); and Supply Officer, USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75).

A native of Vineland, N.J., Bianchi attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on a Navy ROTC scholarship, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mathematics. Upon graduation in 1982, he was commissioned an ensign in the U.S. Navy Supply Corps. He earned a Master's degree in Business Administration with distinction from Harvard University in 1992, and completed the Wharton School of Business Executive Development Program in 2003.

Bianchi was awarded the DoD Distinguished Civilian Service Award in November 2019 and the American Logistics Association Distinguished Service Award in October 2021. His military awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit (three awards), the Meritorious Service Medal (six awards), the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (two awards), and the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (two awards).

# 19<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL LATINA *Symposium*

**THANK YOU SPONSORS!**

**TITLE SPONSOR**

**Walmart** 

**PLATINUM SPONSOR**

**JPMORGAN  
CHASE & CO.**

**GOLD SPONSORS**



**Nationwide**<sup>®</sup>



**SAIC**<sup>®</sup>

**American Airlines** 

**SUPPORTING SPONSORS**





A photograph of the United States Capitol building in Washington, D.C., featuring its iconic dome and neoclassical architecture under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The building's facade is composed of white marble, and a wide set of steps leads up to the entrance.

**20<sup>th</sup>** NATIONAL  
**LATINA** Symposium  
*Distinguished Military Service Awards*

*Save  
the date*

**SEPTEMBER 2023**

[www.nls.latinastyle.com](http://www.nls.latinastyle.com)