

Hispanic service members likely to find success in civilian life

By John M. Rosenberg, Warrior Transition Command

Alexandria, Virginia – During national Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15- Oct. 15) the U.S. Army celebrates the more than 236 years of support of the nation and securing of peace around the world by Hispanic Soldiers.

According to Army statistics (August, 2015), there are more than 63,700 Hispanic Soldiers on active duty. Furthermore, Hispanic veterans, as indicated by 2015 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs statistics, have a lower rate of unemployment, poverty, and higher median incomes than Hispanic non-veterans.

Over the next 10 years the population of Hispanic veterans who served in the U.S. military is expected to double. Among them will be Capt. Joe Colón, 36-year-old Army Reserve parachute rigger assigned to the Warrior Transition Unit (WTU), Fort Eustis, Virginia.

Born in California and raised in Puerto Rico, Colon, along with his grandfather and several uncles and cousins have worn the U.S. Army uniform.

After experiencing a fibular fracture only days before his unit at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, was set to deploy to Djibouti, Colón instead found himself assigned to the WTU. Within a WTU, wounded, ill and injured Soldiers work with an interdisciplinary team to recover, rehabilitate, and reintegrate back into the Army or to civilian status.

Unable to join his unit and confronting deep depression as a result of his injuries, Colón was introduced to the sport of archery, an activity that requires people to slow down and follow a meticulous set of processes. It turned out to be exactly what he needed to help him regain a sense of control over his life. According to Colón, "The beautiful thing about these processes is that it actually translates very well to my other transition goals."

Deeply interested in the inner workings of companies, Colón plans to enter the business world. The prospect of serving as a Chief Operations Officer holds special appeal, and he cites the confidence he's gained through adaptive sports as being more helpful than he ever could have imagined in working towards his goals.

Colón will surely carry his military service and WTU transition accomplishments with him when he leaves military service.



U.S. Army Reserve Capt. Joe Colón Jr., assigned to Warrior Transition Unit, Fort Eustis, Va., prepares to shoot during archery training for the 2015 Department Of Defense Warrior Games at Fort Belvoir, Va., June 12.

Speaking of his eventual transition, Colón says that as long as he respects the process-oriented approach to life, instilled within him through archery and at the WTU, "success will come."