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176th Wing Public Affairs

Midnight Sun Guardian aerospace medicine Airman impacts the mission

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Impact. Defined as yielding an effect, having an impact is the singular goal Senior Airman Loida Torres Román had in mind when she joined the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing.

Impact can also be defined as the striking of one object against another, and that is exactly what happened in a humanitarian sense when Torres Román was out on a drive in Anchorage.

She spotted a man who fell down on the side of the road, and something told the Airman it was more serious than a clumsy slip on the ice. She recalled there was something odd about the way he fell. When she got to the man, she found he was unresponsive and had no pulse.

After calling 911, Torres Román followed her training and performed CPR. With chest compressions, she was keeping him alive by circulating oxygenated blood to the rest of his body, long enough for paramedics to arrive.

She learned later the man had a massive heart attack and required open-heart surgery. Her attentiveness to the situation, her willingness to get out of the car, and her knowledge of what to do saved his life. Impact indeed.

Torres Román, a native of Camuy, Puerto Rico, serves as a 176th Medical Group health-systems technician, and she was recently recognized as the Air National Guard's Aerospace Medicine Airman of the year for 2019 — a national award.

The impact she has on wing operations on a day-to-day basis stems from her work staffing flight physicals, firefighter physicals, pre-training physicals for pararescue (PJ) Airmen, medical waivers, and line-of-duty investigations.

The mission doesn't happen if Guardsmen aren't medically cleared to meet demanding operational requirements. Weekend drilling Guardsmen don't get the medical care they need if there isn't properly staffed LOD investigations following an on-duty accident.

Tech. Sgt. Brooklyn Panfil, noncommissioned-officer-in-charge of Health Systems, said by going the extra mile to "green up" Airmen to be able to do their jobs, Torres Román has a critical role in the wing's mission success. Because of her impact, Panfil said he was confident she would earn Airmen of the year laurels.

"I wasn't surprised," he said. "I would honestly be surprised if she didn't get it because of how much she does in the section. When I told her, she didn't believe me until she saw her name on the [winners'] list."

After moving to Alaska in 2013 from Puerto Rico, Torres Román said she wanted to get a job where she could make the greatest difference — a profession that she said would set the example for her son.

After returning from Basic Military Training and technical school at Joint Base San Antonio, Texas, she took a job as a temporary full-time technician working in human resources at the Alaska National Guard headquarters. A year later after an active tour with the medical group, Torres Román landed her current permanent technician job.

She said her work requires careful bedside manner because retention standards and medical waivers can have far-reaching implications for Airmen and their careers.

"It can be scary for them," Torres Román said. "It's challenging knowing how to present that to the wing members in a way that they don't get scared. We're always trying to help them sort it out, so they can continue to be in the military doing their jobs."

When members return to duty and thank her for her work, she said she finds that the most rewarding part of the job.

"It's also rewarding knowing the mission happens because of what I'm doing here," Torres Román explained. "PJs [and aircrew] can all perform their sorties here in Alaska or deployed overseas in part due to the paperwork I do."

Following the devastation wrought by Hurricane Maria on Puerto Rico, Torres Román had an opportunity to go home on a disaster-relief mission with the wing.

"For me, it was really emotional because that's where I'm from," she said. "I never thought I would be back home helping my own, and the Alaska Air National Guard made that possible."

As far as winning national honors for her work in 2019, Torres Román said she was surprised her quiet work behind the scenes was recognized.

"I like to stay in my corner and do my best, I like to fly under the radar," the Airman explained. "It's good to know our work in the medical group is getting the entire wing recognized."

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PHOTOS, next page

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and a small selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.
2. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/365330/midnight-sun-guardian-aerospace-medicine-airman-impacts-mission>

Alaska Air National Guard Senior Airman Loida Torres Román, a 176th Medical Group health-systems technician, logs lab samples March 13, 2020, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Torres Román earned national top honors as the Air National Guard's Aerospace Medicine Airman of the year for 2019. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Bedard/Released)



Alaska Air National Guard Senior Airman Loida Torres Román is a 176th Medical Group health-systems technician at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. Torres Román earned national top honors as the Air National Guard's Aerospace Medicine Airman of the year for 2019. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Bedard/Released)