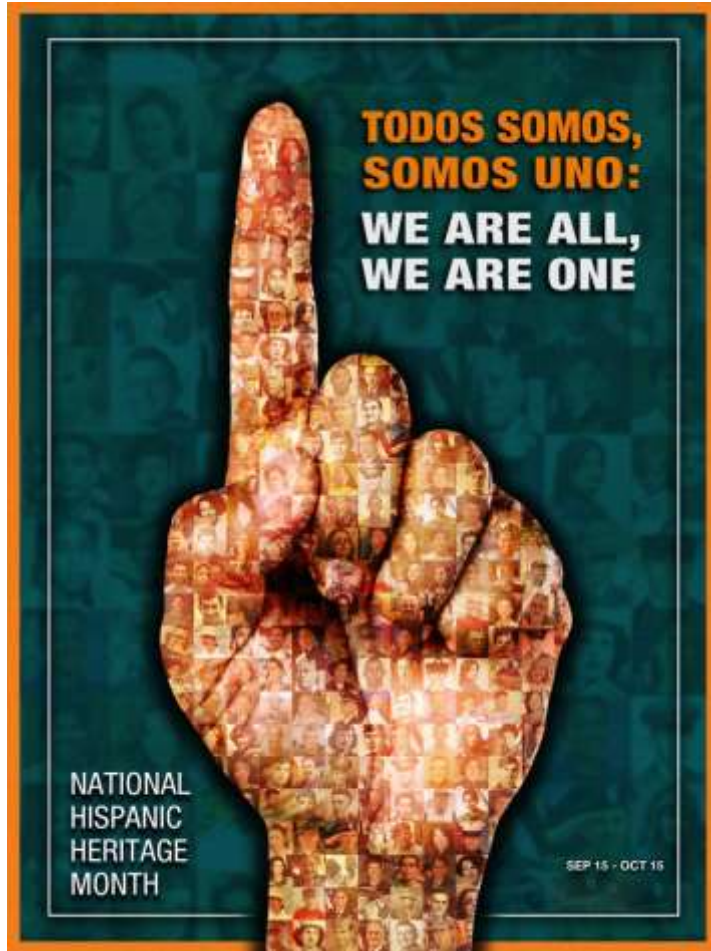


The strength of Hispanic Americans in the Army

By Maya GreenSeptember 25, 2023



National Hispanic Heritage Month

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND Md. — Hispanic Americans have an admirable record of military service, dating all the way back to the Revolutionary War, boasting significant contributions to both the Army and a grateful nation.

Army diversity is knowing who our people are, what value each person brings, and optimizing those talents to build high performing and cohesive teams. Hispanic Heritage Month stands as a reminder of the strength the Army has and will gain through a high-quality and diverse all-volunteer force. This year's theme, "Todos Somos, Somos Uno: We Are All, We Are One," reflects the inherent diversity within the Hispanic community, and the strength that comes with unity.

That strength can come in many forms, such as courage and bravery. The Medal of Honor, our country's highest military decoration, is traditionally reserved for military members who have exemplified that courage and bravery in support of the nation. Forty-four Hispanic American Soldiers have earned the Medal of Honor. The first was Cpl. Joseph DeCastro from Company I, 19th Massachusetts Infantry, for his actions at the battle of Gettysburg in 1863. Staff Sgt. Leroy Petry was the most recent honoree for his service in Afghanistan in 2008.

The Anniversary of International Independence

Hispanic Heritage Month is unique to other month-long commemorations because it begins in the middle of one month (September 15) and closes in the middle of another (October 15).

This is because September 15 is the day Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua celebrate their Independence Days. Mexico celebrates its independence shortly afterwards on September 16, and Chile on September 18. October 12 is significant, too, celebrated across Spain and Latin America as the Day of Hispanic Heritage. The U.S. Army values the contributions of American Soldiers with ancestry from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, Central, and South America.

The Borinqueneers

Puerto Rican Soldiers who fought with the 65th Infantry Regiment were nicknamed the “Borinqueneers” during the Korean War. The unit is named after the original Taino settlers’ word for Puerto Rico, Borinquen. Similar to the famous Tuskegee Airmen and other segregated U.S. military units, the Borinqueneers were the only active duty segregated Hispanic military unit in U.S. history. The unit was active from 1899 to 1956, and in 1959 reconstituted as part of the Puerto Rico Army National Guard.

The Borinqueneers fired the first defensive shots of World War I when an armed German supply ship attempted to leave San Juan Bay in Puerto Rico to resupply German submarines. The unit defended the strategic Panama Canal Zone during World War I and during World War II and saw action in North Africa and Central Europe. During the Korean War, the regiment earned more than 2,700 Purple Hearts, 600 Bronze Stars, 250 Silver Stars, nine Distinguished Service Crosses and one Medal of Honor.

The Redesignating of Fort Hood

Gen. Richard Cavazos, a Borinqueneer and the first Hispanic 4-star Army general, was commemorated for his service through the DoD's redesignation of the military installation formerly known as Fort Hood to Fort Cavazos in May 2023.

Cavazos was from Kingsville, Texas, and raised in a bilingual household by two Mexican American parents. After graduating from Texas Technical University, he was commissioned into the Army to fight in the Korean War.

Cavazos was awarded a Silver Star for capturing a wounded enemy soldier, and several months later, his actions led to the Army awarding him the Distinguished Service Cross. While under heavy enemy artillery fire, he refused to leave fallen and wounded American Soldiers behind during a three-hour battle. He repeatedly went back to rescue the wounded, despite being wounded himself.

Cavazos rotated back to the United States, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel, and went to Vietnam in 1967. He was awarded a second Distinguished Service Cross for his actions during a counterattack near Loc Ninh, Vietnam.

In 1976, Cavazos was appointed as the first Hispanic brigadier general and then four-star general in 1982.

With his passing in 2017, Cavazos will always be remembered for his courageousness and the strides he made for Hispanic Soldiers in the Army.

The U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Command is proud to be a part of this history, with Central Technical Support Facility being located at Fort Cavazos, Texas. CTSF replicates current and emerging Army network baselines to ensure Army interoperability certification of software.

Hispanic Heritage Month at APG

The U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command is hosting a Hispanic Heritage Month Observance Sept. 26, 2023, 1-2:30 p.m., in APG's Myer Auditorium. The celebration will include cultural trivia, coffee tastings, and a mini Spanish language lesson.

If you are not able to attend, watch the special event live via MS Teams:
<https://dod.teams.microsoft.us/l/meetup->

join/19%3adod%3ameeting_8a018ad7fb6643df82fcf9bcbafadc2c%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22fae6d70f-954b-4811-92b6-0530d6f84c43%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%222f7f08a9-8303-44a8-a1f3-29ae83c8aabd%22%2c%22IsBroadcastMeeting%22%3atrue%7d.

RELATED STORIES