

Wisconsin National Guard: Officer continues to build partnership with Nicaragua

Posted on Tuesday, Oct 5, 2021

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

by Sgt. Amber Peck

Wisconsin Army National Guard 2nd Lt. Michelle Tadych had a very important mission to conduct when she was assigned to Nicaragua for three months this summer through the National Guard's State Partnership Program.

Tadych facilitated a personnel transition for the Bilateral Affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy in Nicaragua - a key position that coordinates State Partnership Program activities while integrating fully with the Combatant Command and Embassy Office of Defense Coordinator in the country.

During the transition between bilateral affairs officers, she provided continuity of operations while one in-processed and the other out-processed.

Her efforts there only helped strengthen the partnership between Wisconsin and Nicaragua - a partnership that began in 2003 and includes programs like the Wisconsin/Nicaragua Partners of the America's Inc.

That non-profit group takes items donated from Wisconsin and redistributes them across Nicaragua to learning centers, where they do community outreach and teach skills to help the locals in creating a stable streams of income for themselves.

"Partnering in these humanitarian aid programs was rewarding, and seeing the difference it makes in communities was astronomical," Tadych said. "For example, many sewing machines were donated and the women were taught how to sew with them. With these simple donations, the women can support themselves and their

families. The same goes for beauty supplies and hair cutting.”

Political tensions between the U.S. and Nicaragua resulted in the suspension of direct military-to-military exchanges between U.S. and Nicaraguan troops in 2018 – limiting the Wisconsin National Guard’s ability to interact directly, however, the Denton Program continues to function

The Denton Program is a long-standing program run by the U.S. State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development program allowing donated humanitarian aid to fly on U.S. Air Force assets on a space available basis. The relief missions use flight training hours to provide humanitarian relief to countries in need, while simultaneously providing mandated training for aircrews.

Tadych was able to participate in the arrival of a Denton flight, where a firetruck was donated along with thousands of humanitarian aid packages.

“I think it’s an incredible opportunity for us Guardsmen here in Wisconsin to have a hands-on impact on security cooperation and international relations,” she said.

“It continuously amazes me that just by showing up and becoming proficient in our jobs we have the impact to transfer this knowledge to an international setting. Even something that we may see on a day-to-day basis and consider a waste of time may turn out to be incredibly important when this knowledge is transferred to someone else.”

The Wisconsin National Guard maintains two partnerships with foreign nations through the Guard’s State Partnership Program. In addition to its longstanding partnership with Nicaragua, the Wisconsin National Guard became partners with Papua New Guinea in 2020.

Senior Airman Anya Hanson also contributed to this report