

Trip Report

NGAUS Conference, Puerto Rico, August 24-28, 2007

The opportunity to attend the NGAUS Conference in Puerto Rico was one I did not think would be afforded to me. I was anxious at the prospect of attending but didn't really believe I would be one of those chosen. When I received the call I was extremely excited at the opportunity to learn more about NGAUS and what benefits the association offers us.

INGOA made it very easy to register online. It was definitely a plus that I was encouraged to bring my spouse. The conference had a variety of events available for spouses to attend. I would encourage anyone planning on attending a conference to have their significant other accompany them. It was an opportunity for Patrick, my husband, to meet and interact with other spouses as well as meet my peers and superiors.

As far as professional development, I found all of the workshops/breakouts interesting and informative. Those that I found most exciting are described here.

NGAUS Basics, presented by CPT Johnson. This was a great way to start putting together how NGAUS interacts with Congress to get the needs of Guard soldiers met. He was able to verbalize how important NGAUS is to the continued success of the National Guard. He described the election process that takes place on a state level and how that impacts NGAUS. I later sat in on the elections with CPT Pfeiffer and it all started to fall into place. The election itself was a great follow up to the NGAUS Basics professional development.

I was also impressed with the JSRTSS training. Coming from a corrections/law enforcement civilian side this was an incredible program. The ability of this program to resource with a wide variety of agencies (fire, rescue, federal, state, county municipalities, hospitals, etc.) in the event of a disaster was amazing. It was interactive and allowed those involved to communicate via the computer in real time, regardless of location of any of those involved.

I believe the most impactful professional development was actually the company grade lunch where LTG Blum spoke to us. Prior to his speaking to the entire group he stopped by each table, said a few words and thanked all for our service and duty. He then spoke to the group and took questions. He was very approachable with his demeanor in the question/answer portion of the workshop/lunch. If he didn't know an answer or didn't feel he could adequately answer he made note of it and said that he would research it and get an answer. That opportunity to hear someone of that status speaking passionately about the National Guard and NGAUS left everyone motivated to do more and be active. Definitely the highlight of the conference for me.

Now that I've discussed the "business" side of the trip, I'll address the "fun" side of the conference. It wasn't all work, there were a few opportunities to mingle and enjoy the

local fare at the Governor's Reception, the State's Dinner, and Hospitality Night. These were intriguing events that were great fun for all. As mentioned earlier regarding spouses, there are lots of activities for attendees and spouses to enjoy, learn and relax.

I personally would also encourage anyone planning on attending a conference, travel early or stay late. The cities put an incredible amount of effort into hosting these conferences and you should afford yourself the opportunity to explore what the city has to offer. The hosting committee would be more than happy to accommodate your travel questions and needs. Patrick and I are eagerly awaiting the announcement of Iowa's hotel for Baltimore, we'll be first in line to make reservations.

Thanks to INGOA for allowing me to experience this trip and learn how I can become more active in INGOA and NGAUS.