

## Media Advisory: NM Army Guard pilot to receive national award

Jan. 13, 2023

By Douglas Mallary, NMNG Public Affairs

SANTA FE, N.M. – Chief Warrant Officer 4 Victor Gallegos was selected as the 2021 Trainer of the Year by the Army Aviation Association of America.

Pandemic restrictions prevented the presentation of the award until now. The presentation is scheduled for Jan. 25 at an awards dinner during the AAAA's 2023 Senior Leaders Conference at Fort Rucker, Ala.

Gallegos is a Standardization Pilot for Golf Company, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation Regiment, in Santa Fe. He was nominated for the award by Golf Company 1st Sgt. Ashley Azzalina.

"I'm humbled by this," Gallegos said. "It's really a group effort. We're a team here."

Gallegos has 24 years of service with the New Mexico Army National Guard. He began his career by serving five years on active duty with the U.S. Marine Corps before transitioning to the Guard.

He retired from the NMARNG in 2014 to spend more time with his son Justin. Justin is now a sophomore at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

Gallegos decided to come out of retirement and rejoin the NMARNG in 2018.

"I missed it," he said. "The biggest thing I missed was the relationships and the people. I felt there was unfinished business."

Coming out of retirement, Gallegos had to work hard to recertify as an Army aviator. After completing refresher training as a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter pilot, he earned successive ratings as a Pilot in Command, Instructor Pilot, and Standardization Pilot.

Gallegos deployed with Golf Company to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility in the Middle East in 2021.

He said that he has no regrets about coming out of retirement or the work in regaining his credentials and then deploying.

"I feel lucky. I've been very fortunate," Gallegos said. "I'm blessed to have that opportunity."

In his civilian career, Gallegos is the Chief Pilot for the New Mexico State Police. He has been with the State Police for 20 years. After graduating from the academy in 2002, he was assigned as a patrol officer in Las Vegas, N.M. He transferred to the Aircraft Section in 2006.

Gallegos contributes his success to his teammates in the National Guard and the State Police.

"My dad always said you don't accomplish anything if you don't have good people around you," Gallegos said. "I've had that."



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