

Gardner-Webb University

Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University

Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive

Gardner-Webb Publications

5-16-2018

GWU Alumna is First Female Officer to Serve as Tactical Crew Director at Fort Greely, Alaska

Office of University Communications

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/gardner-webb-newscenter-archive>

Recommended Citation

Office of University Communications, "GWU Alumna is First Female Officer to Serve as Tactical Crew Director at Fort Greely, Alaska" (2018). *Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive*. 398.
<https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/gardner-webb-newscenter-archive/398>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Gardner-Webb Publications at Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@gardner-webb.edu.

GWU Alumna is First Female Officer to Serve as Tactical Crew Director at Fort Greely, Alaska

webpublish.gardner-webb.edu/newscenter/gwu-alumna-is-first-female-officer-to-serve-as-tactical-crew-director-at-fort-greely-alaska/

Office of University
Communications

May 16, 2018

Major Terri Lopez Homestead ('07) Takes Advantage of Life's Opportunities and Adventures

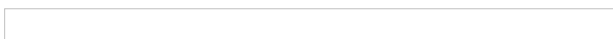


Photo Credit: U.S. Army National Guard

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – GWU Alumna Major Terri Lopez Homestead ('07) has never been one to shy away from adventure. In fact, for most of her life, she has engaged in what can only be described as unusual, exciting, and even hazardous activities. Her philosophy is “to take advantage of every opportunity that is given”—especially when the road ahead seems difficult.

She is currently stationed at Fort Greely, Alaska, and is the first female crew leader for the 49th Missile Defense Battalion of the Alaska National Guard. Her daily mission as a National Guard officer is to defend the United States against intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) attacks.

The work, she says, is very rewarding. “The saying is, ‘We are the 300 defending the 300 million,’” Homestead declares. “Our crews are able to track, intercept, and destroy the nuclear weapon warhead of an incoming ICBM in its mid-course flight, outside the earth’s atmosphere. This is a 24-7, 365-days-a-year mission.”

Adventure has always been a way of life for Homestead. As a child, her family immigrated to the United States from Mexico. After settling in San Diego, Calif., she learned to speak English and excelled in sports—specifically in Track and Field. She started pole vaulting in high school and competed in junior college as well.




From left: Teri Hassell (former GWU Instructor of Health/Physical Education) and Major Terri Homestead at Gardner-Webb in 2007

She was attending Cuyamaca Community College (El Cajon, Calif.) when she was recruited to pole vault at Gardner-Webb University. The thought of moving across the country—far away from most of her family and friends—didn’t faze her. In fact, she credits her current career trajectory as a result of specific experiences she had at Gardner-Webb.

“If it wasn’t for Teri Hassell [former GWU Instructor of Health Education and Physical Education], I don’t think I would be an officer,” Homestead shared. “I was an enlisted soldier in the Army Reserves when I came to Gardner-Webb. Ms. Hassell was a lieutenant colonel in the National Guard, and she motivated me to join the GWU’s ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] program. She mentored me throughout my journey both as a student and as a cadet.”

Other individuals at Gardner-Webb also helped shape her and prepare her for the next steps of her journey. “Dr. [Franki] Burch was a phenomenal instructor,” Homestead recalled. “I learned so much from her classes, and she was always available to answer and explain any questions I had. Captain William Nicholson was an outstanding professor of Military Science and prepared me to be the best soldier I could be. He mentored me on how to be a successful officer.”

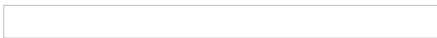
She has always enjoyed helping people and planned to pursue Physician Assistant (PA) studies. While at GWU, she majored in Health and Wellness and minored in Military Science. She earned her bachelor’s degree in 2007 and, instead of going to PA school, became a medical operations officer in the National Guard. She traveled the globe, serving U.S.-led humanitarian efforts in Central America and Europe.



Army Maj. Homestead performs missile defense exercises at the Ft. Greely missile defense complex in Fort Greely, Alaska. Photo Credit: REUTERS/Mark Myer

“I deployed to Iraq in 2009 as an evacuation and treatment platoon leader in the 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team,” explained Homestead. “A few years later, I went to El Salvador as a medical planner for Beyond the Horizons, and upon my return, I was selected for an opportunity in Germany.”

Beyond the Horizons-El Salvador was a U.S. Army South-led humanitarian and civic assistance mission deploying U.S. military engineers and medical professionals to El Salvador for training and to provide humanitarian services. After transitioning to Stuttgart, Germany, to serve at the European Command as an operations officer, Homestead met her husband, who was from Alaska. In 2014, the couple decided to move to Anchorage to be near his daughter.



The Homesteads—along with children Jaxon and Emily—celebrate Jaxon’s first birthday at their home in Anchorage, Alaska, in February 2018.

“I had my first child in February 2017—around the same time I was selected to come to Fort Greely, Alaska, to become the senior tactical director for Echo Crew at the 49th Missile Defense Battalion,” she offered. “I recently learned that I am the first female tactical director at Fort Greely. Our rigorous training is validated on a continuous basis through both scheduled and no-notice evaluations with scenarios that emphasize operational realism.” She hopes to complete another 10 years in the military and then retire from service.

Whether in uniform as “Major” or on the home front as “Mom,” Homestead believes her time at Gardner-Webb helped set the stage for every adventure and opportunity that followed.

“If you want to be part of a community that genuinely cares about you and your success, Gardner-Webb is the place to be,” she encouraged. “The teachers are awesome, the coaches are great, and life on campus is very positive. Definitely put GWU on the top of your list.”



Maj. Homestead (right) stands with Brig. Gen. Timothy Lawson (left), deputy commanding general for operations, U.S. Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command. Photo Credit: U.S. Army National Guard

She hopes the next generation will dig deep, push hard, and reap the rewards that only perseverance and dedication can bring.

“It may be difficult to see the positive in some of the opportunities you may be given,” she shared, “but at the end of the day, those difficult roads may lead you to the best opportunity of your life. Don’t get comfortable. Always push to be a better version of yourself.”

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university that prepares students to become critical thinkers, effective leaders and compassionate servants in the global community. Emphasizing a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics, Gardner-Webb ignites learning and service opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.