



**Point of Contact:**

Warrior Games Joint Task Force [DoDWGPublicAffairs@mail.mil](mailto:DoDWGPublicAffairs@mail.mil)

**For Immediate Release: June 21, 2016**

**West Point cadets glad to be part of the 2016 Warrior Games**

WEST POINT, N.Y. – The United States Military Academy presents many opportunities to enhance the development of cadets into becoming leaders of character, ready for commission service as officers in the U.S. Army. At the 2016 Department of Defense (DoD) Warrior Games two cadets learned first-hand what kind of soldiers they may lead in the future after witnessing the courage and determination displayed by wounded warriors.

For Cadets Gabrielle Lovell and Leticia Perez, who are entering their “yearling” or sophomore year at West Point, supporting the wounded warriors was something they both gladly volunteered for as part of their summer military program.

“It’s extremely empowering to watch these athletes overcome everything that they do,” Lovell said. “We’ve gotten a chance to work hand-in-hand with most of the athletes and it’s been a great opportunity for use to learn a lot from them.”

The 2016 DoD Warrior Games is an adaptive sports competition for wounded, ill and injured service members and veterans at West Point, June 15-21. Approximately 250 athletes are participating in eight sporting events, representing teams from the Army, Marine Corps, Navy/Coast Guard, Air Force, U.S. Special Operations Command and the United Kingdom (U.K.) Armed Forces.

“It’s been an amazing experience seeing these wounded warriors pushing themselves through an inability,” Perez added. “They’re just a great group of people.”

Lovell, 19, a native of Shepherdstown, West Virginia, is studying systems engineering at West Point while Perez, 18, a native of Van Nuys, California, is an information technology major. Both are assigned to the Joint Operations Center (JOC) at the Warrior Games, helping troubleshoot problems and coordinate the venues for each event.



According to Kate McKenzie, J5 Deputy in the JOC, the cadets have been a proven asset in making these games successful.

“It’s been wonderful to get to know them and to learn more about West Point, knowing our future is in very good hands,” McKenzie said. “The military teaches good leadership skills and work ethic, so if I have a task that needs to be done, I can always rely on them to complete it.”

As these young cadets are just beginning their military careers, working with the wounded warriors and seeing what combat has done to them hasn’t dissuaded them from their career path.

“Even though something could happen to you, we’re doing this for our country and it’s the right thing to do,” Lovell said. “They [the wounded warriors] showed us that their disabilities didn’t end their life, or your career even. To me, it’s more inspiring and puts all those fears away.”

What makes these Warrior Games even more special for the cadets is hosting them at their school. Though it gives “Team Army” home-field advantage, the military history of this institution and its great facilities make it ideal to host the competition.

“It a great opportunity for the service members and their families to see West Point, but it’s also a chance for the veterans to interact with the future leaders and offer them a lot of insight,” Powell exclaimed.

“The campus is amazing and it’s great that the different events are moving around to different venues so everyone has a chance to see all we have to offer,” Perez added. “It’s great exposure for the cadets to see our fellow service members, and veterans. They’re always telling us to take care of our fellow soldiers like they take care of us, and now, we get to do that here.”

The one thing they both recognize with an event like the Warrior Games is the fierce, yet friendly, competition and how necessary it is for these wounded warriors in their recovery.

“In the military, we’re driven by competition, and it allows the wounded warriors to overcome these challenges through athleticism and competition,” Lovell observed.

“It helps their self-esteem,” Perez interjected. “It demonstrates that they’re capable of doing some things they never imagined they were capable of doing.”



For both cadets, their time with the Warrior Games has made a lasting impression on them, and would definitely make themselves available to assist in future games, no matter where they are.

“Helping out with the Warrior Games has been an amazing experience and I would love to continue to volunteer or show my support in some way,” Perez said.