

EFFICIENCY AND INNOVATION

ROBERT CERRATO, IAN MCINTOSH, & EMILIO TREVINO

North Carolina National Guard, Department of Public Safety



Robert Cerrato



Ian McIntosh



Emilio Trevino

As Hurricane Helene made landfall, the devastation to our state's inland mountain towns was unexpected. Yet, when the National Guard was called to respond, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robert Cerrato, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Ian McIntosh, and Warrant Officer 1 Emilio Trevino stepped into their roles as geospatial engineering technicians and stepped up. The three men not only coordinated lifesaving efforts in the wake of a disaster but revolutionized the way North Carolina – and the entire country – responds to emergencies.

As geospatial engineering technicians, these three are technical and tactical experts in terrain analysis. In the face of an emergency, it's their responsibility to create and update a common operating picture (COP) – an accurate portrait of what's happening in a geographic region – to ensure that military leaders can make informed decisions.

While numerous emergency responders deployed to western North Carolina, lines of communication were drastically limited. Constantly changing conditions made communication between agencies and organizations difficult. They engineered and deployed a cutting-edge geospatial and analytics ecosystem that revolutionized how information was collected, visualized, and acted upon. The unified COP dashboard combined information from 18 reports and tools from various agencies to provide unmatched clarity in the chaos of this crisis.

They even taught both military and civilian personnel how to use the platform to maximize its impact. This innovation enabled a level of situational awareness previously unseen in a disaster response and informed over 90 percent of the data shared by news agencies, emergency services, and government leadership. In the storm's aftermath, word of the unified COP's impact reached senior U.S. Department of Defense leaders. The COP dashboard is now under consideration by the National Guard Bureau to be used as the standard for domestic state active-duty COP systems nationwide.

The visionary thinking of Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robert Cerrato, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Ian McIntosh, and Warrant Officer 1 Emilio Trevino fundamentally changed the way the State of North Carolina responds to emergencies. For their innovative work, we thank these three extraordinary officers.

