

U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

contact: paoci@eur.army.mil
phone: 49-6221-57-5815 / DSN 370-5815
fax: 49-6221-57-6376 / DSN 370-6376



RELEASE #2007-10-03-02

Oct. 3, 2007

U.S. ARMY, EUROPE AVIATION SOLDIERS PAY TRIBUTE IN ART TO 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION 'NEIGHBORS' WHO HAVE DIED IN IRAQ

By Sgt. 1st Class Chris Seaton

12th Combat Aviation Brigade Public Affairs Office

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AREA ANACONDA, Balad, Iraq -- Spc. Argenis Lugo said he grew up in the New York's Bronx borough with a passion for graffiti. He specializes in names and figures, but stays away from faces. He says that he wants his art to tell a story without individual expression.



SGT BRANDON LITTLE

Spc. Blake Skinner, a helicopter maintainer with U.S. Army Europe's D Company, 2nd Battalion, 159th Aviation, uses a marker to detail smoke billowing from New York's World Trade Center on a mural inside his company's hangar at Logistical Support Area Anaconda, Iraq.

And Lugo has a story to tell. On September 11th, 2001, he was at school when he heard the tragic news that a plane hit New York's World Trade Center. Like the rest of America, he stopped to look. But while most of the world watched on TV, Lugo stood in the back yard of his own high school, a first-hand witness as America, and his own life, changed forever.

"We heard about it on the radio, and went outside and watched the smoke go up," said Lugo.

Six years later Lugo is a Soldier deployed with D Company, 2nd Battalion, 159th Aviation. The battalion is part of Task Force XII, led by U.S. Army Europe's 12th Combat Aviation Brigade. He still has that passion for graffiti, and people are still suffering and dying in Iraq, Lugo's current back yard.

When the time came for D Company to put a personal touch on their aircraft maintenance hangar, Lugo and his platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Billy Maloney, had an idea.

Maloney, a fellow New Yorker, was stationed in Illesheim, Germany, current home of the 2-159th, when the Towers went down. He watched on television as his friends and neighbors in New York struggled with tragedy.

“I saw the Towers being built as a kid,” he said. “It’s still hard for me to believe they’re gone.”



SGT BRANDON LITTLE

Spcs. Argenis Lugo and Blake Skinner pose by their recently completed wall mural at the D Company, 2nd Battalion, 159th Aviation hangar at Logistical Support Area Anaconda in Balad, Iraq. The two 2-159th Soldiers painted the mural as a tribute to Soldiers from one of their fellow U.S. Army, Europe units -- the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division -- who have died fighting in Iraq.

Maloney says he saw painting the hangar here as an opportunity to do something he considered special.

Thousands of service members have given their lives in the Global War on Terror, and Maloney says too many of those Soldiers are from the 2nd Brigade, 1st Infantry Division. The ‘Dagger Brigade’ is based in the Schweinfurt, Germany, just 45 minutes from Illesheim. Since the beginning of their current deployment to Iraq, 2nd Brigade has endured the deadliest deployment of any Europe-based U.S. military

brigade in Iraq. As of late September, 59 of their members had died in combat.

“I have several friends there,” said Maloney. “I always hold my breath every time I open the (newspaper), because I’m afraid I might see another name of a Soldier from Schweinfurt.”

“There’s a lot of pictures painted on walls here,” he said. “But we wanted to remember 9/11 and the Soldiers in Schweinfurt who have lost so many.”

“I just like to draw,” said Lugo. “I mentioned it to my platoon sergeant because he’s always talking about the 1st Infantry Division and all the guys they’ve lost in the war.”

As a result Lugo and Spc. Blake Skinner, another member of Maloney’s platoon, turned the sergeant’s thoughts into a permanent graphic reminder to their fellow Soldiers of why they serve here.

“I want people to stop and look and think, ‘That’s the reason we’re out here,’” said Skinner. “I want them to remember the people we lost, and the Soldiers that have fallen.”

The pair started the project around the sixth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. Scavenging for paint and supplies as they worked, the hangar wall took about three weeks to complete.

Their mural, inside an old Iraqi hardened aircraft shelter, is a depiction of smoke billowing from the Twin Towers on the left and the image of a 1st Infantry Division Soldier kneeling at a memorial of fallen comrades on the right. The two images are separated by a crack representing a fractured history, and held together by the American flag and an image of the Statue of Liberty that represents freedom.

“One side is the high price of terrorism to our country, and the other shows the Schweinfurt Soldiers and the ongoing price that we are still paying today,” said Maloney.

“People need to remember that there are still Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines laying down their lives every day here,” he said. “This mural reminds us of what was, and what still is.”



www.hqusareur.army.mil