

Soldier serves his country, prepares for a new addition to his family

Written by Story by U.S. Army Spc. B. Todd Willis Combined Joint Task Force 82, Public Affairs
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BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - It's early morning in the Combined Joint Task Force-82's command center in eastern Afghanistan and the service members are about half way through their 12-hour shift. A few are looking noticeably tired.

A slapping sound can be heard in the back of the room as a short, powerfully built man walks down the row and greets each person with a friendly blow to the shoulder.

The Soldiers noticeably perk up as he walks by and smiles at each of them.

"What's up Sergeant?" he says to one Soldier, "How's it going?" he says to another.

The person giving out the enthusiastic greetings is none other than U.S. Army Sgt. Raul Mancera.

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Mancera is a five-year Army veteran, paratrooper, and a senior rated jumpmaster who does not hide his passion for his duty in Afghanistan.

“I know I make a difference on the battlefield, this fact gets me going and makes the job fun,” Mancera said.

“Another great thing about being here is that I get to work behind the scenes and do things for people without them knowing. It’s a great feeling,” Mancera added.

Many Soldiers assigned to the CJTF-82 have jobs that require knowledge of secret material and sensitive information.

“Let’s just say I work in ‘operations’,” says Mancera.

Most every service member has a memorable deployment story.

“This is my first deployment, and I recently found out my wife is pregnant,” Mancera said. “My only hope is that we have a healthy baby.”

Being at war for a year in a foreign country has its challenges too.

“The hardest part about this deployment now is that I have to talk to my pregnant wife on the phone, who is now thousands of miles away, and pretend to be so strong so that she does not hear the sadness in my voice. I would like to be with her throughout her pregnancy,” Mancera said.

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Despite missing his wife and unborn child, he still has the drive to keep his focus on the mission.

“Sgt. Mancera is squared-away and has an eye for detail, he makes a major contribution to our success,” said U.S. Army Sgt. 1st. Class Frederick Shinlever, a senior leader in the joint-operations command center.

Mancera has set a variety of goals in his life and things are coming together as planned.

“Right now I am a junior at Fayetteville State University, and I will use my degree in accounting to earn a commission and become an officer in the Army,” he said.

Mancera stays positive and keeps his energy level high by having a variety of interests and hobbies.

“I am Catholic and go to church every Sunday. I also love to lift weights and play golf,” says Mancera.

When asked about what is important to Mancera, the answer comes quick.

“God, wife, family and success in life and the Army, that is what I'm about!”

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