

Re-enlistment at 9/11 site 'a profound experience' for Space soldier



SGT Raul Sheran, B company, 1st SATCON, is administered the oath of re-enlistment by his company commander, CPT. Thaddeus Underwood, at a place seared in his heart, as it is in the hearts of all Americans. Sheran took the oath to renew his dedication to country and service at Ground Zero, World Trade Center, New York City, with his fellow soldiers as witnesses. U.S. Army photos

By SFC Mathew Frias, Unit Reporter

FORT MEADE, Md. — For a soldier, re-enlisting is a milestone in his or her career. A soldier has the option to ask when and where he or she would like to re-enlist; and if possible, the company will try to coordinate arrangements to make it happen.

SGT Raul Sheran, who hails from Brooklyn, New York, asked if he could re-enlist in New York City at the World Trade Center (WTC) Ground Zero. Since he is from New York City, the events that occurred on Sept. 11, 2001 touched him and his family personally. He wanted to dedicate his re-enlistment to the memories of what happened on that day. He wanted observers to ponder the reasons why those of us who re-enlist do it — “to defend these United States against all enemies foreign or domestic.”

And to protect our loved ones.

On Oct. 18, 2002, Sheran’s wish to re-enlist at Ground Zero in New York City became a reality. After a great deal of coordination and planning, 21 Black Dragon soldiers of B Company, 1st Satellite Control Battalion departed home base, not on a mundane bus, but instead on two Black Hawk helicopters. The helicopter trip was made possible with the assistance of Chief Warrant Officer David Rosser from the Military District of Washington. Chief Rosser had heard about Sheran’s re-enlistment through his stepson, SPC Kenneth Smith, from our unit.

For many soldiers, this was their first time on a Black Hawk helicopter. “I would never have thought to be flying in a Black Hawk in my military career,” said SPC

Taito Taylor. For most soldiers, just riding in a Black Hawk helicopter made the day. But there was more to come.

For the flight, just going over the landscape from a height of a couple thousand feet was amazing. But coming into New York City, the view was extraordinary. Going by the Statue of Liberty and seeing the Manhattan skyline — for many of us something we'd only seen in films — was breathtaking.

We ended up landing at Manhattan Wall Street Southside Helipad. We had to wait until the FBI director Louis Freeh departed before we could land.

“Things happen,” said one of the Black Hawk pilots.

After disembarking, we proceeded to walk to WTC Ground Zero. This only took about 10 minutes. Walking through downtown Manhattan around the Wall Street area, and seeing the people around looking at us, the soldiers of B Company, made us proud to be in the U.S. Army.

People left and right were offering uplifting comments and asking us where we came from. We even had some funny remarks, such as, “Is that a bazooka you’re carrying?”

We then told the questioner that it was the U.S. flag and our unit flag in a carrying case — and we were going to use them for a re-enlistment ceremony at Ground Zero.

After arriving at Ground Zero, we met up with LT Quentin DeMarco of the Port Authority Police of New York and New Jersey, who showed us around and gave us an enlightened briefing about what happened on Sept. 11, 2001. Most of us were awestruck about what had happened, even so many months after the terrible events, especially after seeing the aftermath.

DeMarco lost some of his comrades during the Sept. 11, 2001 events, and he offers these briefs in their memory.

After the briefing, DeMarco showed us the tempo-

rary memorial that was set up while the construction to rebuild was ongoing.

Sheran re-enlisted near the memorial around 11 a.m. It was a solemn ceremony, and rightly so.

“I re-enlisted here for the family and friends directly affected on this day.”

After the re-enlistment, we had to wait for the helicopters to refuel and to return to the heliport. All of us ended up going somewhere for lunch. “Where’s the famous New York City pizza?” asked SSG (P) Richard Gilbert. We tried looking around but most of us went to a Chinese fast food restaurant and some went next door to an Irish restaurant. For the soldiers that went to the Chinese fast food restaurant, “It was pretty cheap and not bad,” said SPC Kevin Feimster, “especially for downtown New York City.”

After eating lunch, we went walking. Some of us saw Battery Park and the Statue of Liberty from the shore and the Wall Street Bull. Feimster said one of the street performers was singing a song, “I’m Gonna tell GOD when I get home,”

which stuck to our group through the rest of the day.

Some of us got to pose on a New York City fire truck. We even tasted the hospitality of New York City showed when one of the street vendors — a proud veteran — gave us a New York City souvenir for free.

We returned to home station, having had both a very moving experience, and a good time afterward. As to my personal feelings about this day...

This is something I will remember all my life. I was devastated, as all Americans were, by this attack on our country. To actually go to one of the sites, and then to be a witness and participant while one of my fellow soldiers re-dedicated his life to the service of our nation — it was a profound and moving experience that will serve as a major highlight of my military career.

