

Army platoon leader remembered at ceremony

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Brig. Gen. Steven Salazar pays his last respects at Rose Barracks Cavalry Chapel on Wednesday to 1st Lt. Daren Hidalgo, who died Feb. 20 from wounds sustained in combat in Afghanistan.



03/02/2011 - From left: Brig. Gen. Allen W. Batschelet and Command Sgt. Maj. William Johnson pay their last respects at Rose Barracks Cavalry Chapel on Wednesday to 1st Lt. Daren Hidalgo, who died Feb. 20 from wounds sustained in combat in Afghanistan.

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VILSECK, Germany -- 1st Lt. Daren M. Hidalgo didn't let a recent injury caused by an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan hold him back from his mission as a platoon leader with 3rd Squadron, 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment.

With shrapnel in his leg, Hidalgo led his platoon in combat for two weeks until he was struck by another IED and died Feb. 20.

In remarks from Combat Outpost Terminator, Afghanistan, read at a memorial ceremony at Rose Barracks Cavalry Chapel on Wednesday, 3rd Squadron commander Lt. Col. Bryan Denny recalled Hidalgo's reaction to being wounded the first time.

"When he got that little piece of shrapnel in his leg ... he thought he would just drive on and not say anything because he was afraid he would lose his platoon," Denny said in his statement.

Hidalgo, an accomplished athlete and a wrestler in high school, was not a tall man but he had shoulders wide enough to carry the responsibility entrusted to him as a platoon leader, he said.

“He had a smile that let you know: ‘I got this. It’s going to be OK. I have got a trick or two up my sleeve.’”

Denny listed other 3rd Squadron soldiers killed in action during the deployment -- Pfc. Conrado Javier Jr., Sgt. James A. Ayube II, Spc. Kelly J. Mixon, Spc. Steven L. Dupont, Spc. Joseph T. Prentler, Pfc. Paul O. Cuzzupe and Pfc. John E. Andrade.

In other remarks read at the memorial, Hidalgo’s company commander, Capt. Austin Maples, recalled a young soldier who arrived in Germany fired up to serve his country and go to Oktoberfest.

“On patrol we shared the same pile of dirt during an ambush,” he said, adding that Hidalgo took firm control to repel the enemy attack.

Another of his comrades, Spc. Justin Taylor, said in remarks read at the ceremony that Hidalgo worked into the wee hours but often shared a joke with his soldiers.

“Even in his last hours he was making everybody smile,” he said.

2nd SCR soldier Pfc. Jake Haney, whose remarks were also read, described Hidalgo as “cool, calm and collected,” and said he told troops preparing for a dangerous mission: “If anything happens, we all know our jobs.”

Hidalgo is survived by his father, Jorge; mother, Andrea; brothers Miles and Jared; and sister, Carmen.

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