

International flavor



Photo by Staff Sgt. Vonnv Rohloff

Spc. Luiz Zingra, Company C, 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry, 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, checks civilians for contraband while on guard duty.

By Staff Sgt Vonnv Rohloff
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EAGLE BASE -- Serving on the Stabilization Force, U.S. soldiers work side by side with soldiers from other nations. For many this is their first experience working with someone from another country.

But for soldiers serving with Spc. Luiz Zingra, he brings international flavor to his unit daily. With seven years past experience in the Brazilian army, he is now an infantry soldier in the United States Army. Zingra belongs to Company C, 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry, 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division.

Last July, Zingra informed his family in Mogi Mirim, Brazil, of his plans to join the U.S. Army. They were concerned. "My mother didn't like it," he said. "They know the United States always deploys to other countries, and the U.S. Army is for real and not just for drill and ceremony like the Brazilian army," Zinger said. "I said trust me, I know what I am doing."

Zingra joined the Army at the rank of specialist, not because of past military experience but because of education. "The recruiter said you're going to start as an E-4 because you have a college degree," he said. "For me that was a surprise."

"Here, my position in the squad is rifleman," he said. "We have grenadier, we have a SAW (squad automatic weapon) gunner, and I am a rifleman. I like to be outside and see what is going on."

As a platoon sergeant in the Brazilian army, he went out on patrols, often in wooded areas of Brazil. He worked with maps and provided some reconnaissance in the area. "The Brazilian army works like a police force," Zingra said. "Their presence would say to Brazilians, 'The army is here people, don't do something wrong in the area.'"

"We knew we were not able to deploy any of our army because of the economic situation," Zingra said. "The Brazilian army is well-trained physically but the weapon system is still kind of weak in comparison (to the U.S. Army)."

While working every day as a soldier, Zingra still found time to attend night school at nearby University of Santa Cecilia and earn a degree.

Disillusioned and frustrated with high inflation, the economic situation and political corruption within Brazil, the young man decided to leave. "Instead of being here and doing bad things, let's have an adventure, let's go out and see different stuff," he said to a friend. "Let's try it."

Zingra chose the United States, "the granddad, the big dad to everyone outside the United States," he said.

"One day I was walking down the street in Manhattan and I saw some guy dressed in a uniform," Zingra said. "I got a feeling to be in the military... and I said, 'why not.'" To join the military one does not need to be a U.S. citizen, just a legal resident.

The training for the infantry was very similar in both Brazil and United States. Tactical movement is the same. "Here we say squad, there we called it combat group," Zingra said. Both consist of nine soldiers.

Zingra learned from working in both armies. "It is an exchange of knowledge," he said. Zingra feels he could also share some of his knowledge. "It upsets me sometimes, no one came to me and said, 'Hey Zinger, how did you do that in Brazil.'"

"The weapons system is much better, the uniform is much better and the supply system is generally much better than Brazil," said Zingra. "But sometimes it is much more complicated here, too much paperwork to get something. And that's what makes this the Army."

INFO BRIEFS

Smoke grenade kills soldier

In the early morning of May 4th, five soldiers were injured and one soldier was killed when a smoke grenade accidentally went off in their quarters at the Modrica NORDPOL barracks in Multinational Division-North.

The soldiers suffered smoke inhalation injuries (pulmonary injuries) as a result of the incident.

The soldiers were unable to get out before smoke filled the room, killing one soldier, seriously injuring two soldiers and causing minor injuries to three of the soldiers.

The chemical in the smoke grenades that caused the damage is Phosphene.

Discharge consequences

Negligent discharge of a firearm is an offense punishable under Article 134, UCMJ. The maximum penalty upon conviction is forfeiture of two-thirds pay per month for three months, confinement for three months and reduction to E-1. If the commander elects to dispose of the offense by Article 15, UCMJ, the penalties are more limited, but may still result in an official record which will limit opportunities for retention, promotion and schooling. Even administrative actions for wrongful discharge of a firearm, such as an official letter of reprimand, can result in an end to an otherwise promising career.

The heat is on

The warming weather increases the risk that soldiers will become heat casualties. To help prevent this soldiers should drink twice as much water as they normally do on warmer days. If it becomes too hot outside units should use a work/rest schedule. Soldiers should wear loose clothing.

Keeping in good physical condition helps to climatize and keep heat sickness away. As the temperature soars the heat categories will be implemented. Soldiers should be aware what category the temperature is in and act accordingly.

The use of ample amounts of sunblock will also help prevent heat injury.