



CHEYENNE WIMBERLEY IS RUNNING FOR ARMY CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 THALIA RAMIREZ

28, of San Antonio, assigned to 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C.; died Sept. 5 in Logar Province, Afghanistan, of injuries suffered when a OH-58D Kiowa helicopter crashed. Also killed in the incident was Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 Jose L. Montenegro Jr.

A helicopter crash in Afghanistan claimed the lives of two Texans, including the first woman from San Antonio to die in combat operations in that war.

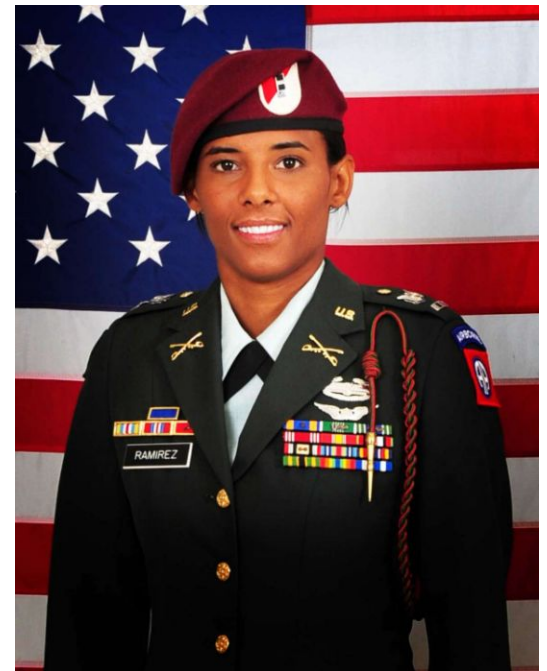
Army Chief Warrant Officers 2 Thalia S. Ramirez, 28, of San Antonio and Jose L. Montenegro Jr., 31, of San Juan, in the Rio Grande Valley, died Wednesday while flying an OH-58D Kiowa Warrior. The aircraft carries a two-person crew, according to a military website.

Ramirez, a native of Kenya who lived in San Antonio shortly before joining the Army in 2003, initially was a water-purification specialist. In 2008, she became a pilot - one of the most dangerous positions available to women in today's U.S. military.

“Thalia never failed to set the perfect example of a confident and competent warrior. She was fearless, and loved her job. She selflessly risked everything, on a regular basis, in defense of her brothers and sisters in arms,” said Lt. Col. Landy Dunham, a task force commander with the 82nd Airborne Division.

The cause of the crash in eastern Afghanistan's Logar province is under investigation. Ramirez and Montenegro were part of the division's 1st Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade, at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Both soldiers had nearly completed a yearlong deployment, according to the Defense Department. Ramirez, the 23rd San Antonian to die in service in the war in Afghanistan, was on her second deployment. She had flown more than 270 missions and 650 hours during her latest tour of duty.





According to military sources and media reports, Ramirez listed San Antonio as her home of record when she enlisted, but had lived here briefly. She grew up in Kenya, attending Braeburn School, and recently resided in Raeford, N.C. In releasing an Aug. 30 photo of Ramirez receiving an Air Medal at Bagram Air Field in Afghanistan, the Army listed her hometown as Nairobi.

Of 3,173 war deaths involving coalition forces in Afghanistan as of Aug. 27, only 42 involved women, according to iCasualties.org. Twenty-eight of those deaths were from “hostile” incidents. Of the six female deaths that involved aircraft crashes, only one was attributed to a hostile act.

Ramirez had escaped an insurgent attack in June, Chief Warrant Officer Joseph Panza said in the Army release.

“Both aircraft took battle damage, but we continued the flight,” he said. “We took out all the insurgents we could, then contained the enemy with our M-4 (rifles) until we could hand over the fight. That’s the kind of warrior Thalia was.”

She is survived by her husband, Jesse Belbeck, and parents, Justin Ramirez and Alexandra Moll, who both live in Kenya.

