



Cpl. Cesar A. Granados

September 9, 1985 – September 15, 2006

U.S. Army

January 29, 2004 – September 15, 2006

Served in:

Iraq

Cpl. Cesar A. Granados



Age: 21
Hometown: Le Grand, CA
Date of Death: 09/15/2006
Incident Location: Baghdad, Iraq

Branch of Military: Army
Rank: Cpl.
Unit: 2nd Battalion,
8th Infantry Regiment,
3rd Brigade,
4th Infantry Division
Unit's Base: Fort Hood, Texas

When Cesar Granados played football at Le Grand High School in Merced County, everyone called the defensive tackle "Big C," because he stood 6 feet 5 and packed a muscled 270 pounds from long hours in the weight room. People in the farming community of about 1,700 knew Granados as an affable, polite and gentle giant who spent part of his boyhood in Mexicali, Mexico, loved rap music in Spanish and English and lived in a modest apartment with his mother and two younger sisters, who looked up to him as a role model and father figure.

When Army recruiters came to campus and told him that he could play some football in the military and that the training could help prepare him for a career in law enforcement, he turned to his football coach for advice. "He asked if [joining] was a good idea," said coach Rick Martinez. "I said, 'It's wartime ... but if you really want to go, I support you.' "

Granados enlisted in 2004 before graduating and was assigned to an infantry division at Ft. Hood, Texas. In Iraq, the young soldier combated loneliness through e-mail exchanges with his family, friends and former coach. He craved letters, rather than material things. So the coach's wife had her second grade class write him. In his last e-mail, Martinez said, Granados told him, "It's just crazy here, coach, with bodies everywhere, and it's really sad." After less than a year in the war zone, Cpl. Cesar Granados was killed Sept. 15 when a roadside bomb exploded near the Humvee he was driving in Baghdad. He had just turned 21.

Granados was the first former Le Grand High School student to die in Iraq, Martinez said, and people at the school were devastated. During a recent football game, Granados was honored with a color guard salute, and taps was played in a final farewell to "Big C."