

## **PREFACE**

**February 17, 2012**

**Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity house, University of Oregon**

**Eugene, Oregon**

**Interview duration: 1 hours, 16 minutes**

**Interviewee: Jose Angel Landin**

**Interviewer(s): Chase Waterman and Amy Enbysk:**

## TRANSCRIPT

**Chase Waterman:**

This is the University of Oregon vets oral history project. It's noon on Friday the 17<sup>th</sup> 2012. My name is Chase Waterman, I'll be one of the interviewers.

**Amy Enbysk:**

My name is Amy Enbysk and I'll be the other interviewer.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

And we'll be interviewing Jose Angel Landin.

**Jose Landin:**

My name is Jose Landin. Junior at U of O. Served in the army for six years on active duty.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

So why did you decide to serve in the military?

**Jose Landin:**

Well, right out of high school I started school, that was back in 2000, early 2000. I just didn't really think the military was a fit for me. My dad served, a lot of people in my family served. We moved around a lot. I didn't think I was mature enough. But after about a year or so of college I couldn't financially afford it. And then 9/11 happened and all that stuff. I had a lot of friends that went in right out of high school. I just felt it was my duty, my obligation. I mean my friends had did it, my dad had served. Living here is a privilege and I just thought I should do my part.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

When did you join?

**Jose Landin:**

I left for basic training October 19 2004. I was in the debt program before that so I just hung out all summer and they got my ship date and then I left for basic training in Missouri, Fort Leonard Wood. And then I started that, got to the reception, Battalion there like on the 20, 21 of October and went from there.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Where were you before you joined?

**Jose Landin:**

Where was I? I was here at U of O.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Okay

**Jose Landin:**

I went to U of O and Lane [Community College], like I did half and half. And I was working full time and I just couldn't make ends meet. My parents made enough money I guess. They made enough money for us to live but they didn't make enough for us, to pay for me to go to college. But that, you know how financial aid works, your parents make so much I didn't get any help and I couldn't get any of their loans because I didn't have enough credits. I was kind of screwed. Working forty hours a week and a course load I felt I was just wasting money and my dad one night said, "Hey you might want to look into this too," because all of his student loans had been paid for you know, free school and stuff. I thought, "Wow this looks pretty good," so that's when I talked to a couple friends obviously who were doing ROTC here and stuff and they talked to a recruiter and they were like, "Do you want to do ROTC here or do you want to leave?" And at that point I was just kind of like, "Well, I just want to get out of here." I was doing a little too much partying and stuff and wasting, I think, money so I was like, "I just want to get away." So that's how that came about.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Okay, so you went to basic training at Fort Leonard Wood?

**Jose Landin:**

Yeah.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

How was that?

**Jose Landin:**

I mean it was different. It was probably the worst time to go because October, I'd never been to Missouri before so it was freezing. Being a little older obviously I think helped me. Getting in there, and I knew kind of what to expect. My dad was a Marine, a sergeant. I had some friends that were in the Army already so I knew, they told me, what to expect a little bit. And being twenty or twenty one at the time I wasn't a little seventeen or eighteen year-old kid, so that I mean, had a good head on my shoulders I guess at the time. I had a little bit of pre-warning so I got there, went through all that stuff. Just the pre-stuff, you sit in reception for about a week and then I did OSUT [One Station Unit] training, so I was in basic training for nineteen weeks for my schooling. Which I liked, I thought it was pretty good just because the same guys, same drill sergeants, same everything for the whole time so I didn't have to move around. Met a lot of cool people, obviously learned a lot. I enjoyed my time in basic training, a lot of people don't. It's your first introduction to something new. I mean, they definitely try and brainwash you. The younger kids, I think, struggled a little more than myself obviously. But it's just like anything, they tear you down and then build you back up to how they want you to be so I thought it was a pretty good experience and obviously it works because we're the strongest military in the world.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Yeah, what did you go to school for there?

**Jose Landin:**

I was a common engineer, which is a 21 Bravo, pretty much the gist of it is we do regular basic training for the first eight weeks of the nineteen. Then after the initial eight weeks of just the regular soldiering, then they start doing the, I guess, AIT [Advanced Individual Training] part of it. It's a lot of infantry tactics, breaching stuff like that and then the last four to five weeks is just strictly explosives and breaching or like landmines and stuff like that. And then pretty much that's it. I mean, excuse me, there was talk of combining infantry and 11 Bravo and 21 Bravo as the same job because pretty much it is the same job, we just play with explosives more than they do. So, I finished that in about, yeah, like nineteen weeks so February, I think. And then after that, I was like a holdover, before I went to airborne school in Fort Benning, Georgia. And I got there I think, February 25<sup>th</sup> of 2005 I want to say.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Okay, so you did airborne training after that?

**Jose Landin:**

Yeah, I got it in my contract, they ... I don't know, I don't even know why I did it, I'm petrified of heights actually but they offered me like an extra five grand at signing bonus and they were like, "Hey, wanna go to airborne school?" And I was like, "Why not?" [*laughs*]. So I graduated from basic training and all that stuff and then we were on a holdover for a week, which wasn't bad. They moved us into these other barracks and we just hung out with the drill sergeants. Then they loaded all the airborne kid onto a bus down to Georgia from Missouri, which kind of sucked. But, we got to Georgia and Fort Benning was alright. I mean it was cool because it was a school where we had our nights off, it was just Monday through Friday, weekends off. I mean...

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Yeah, that's good.

**Jose Landin:**

**Jose Landin:**

It's pretty just, yeah, show up, they drill you all day long, you're running everywhere, you're doing stuff. And they have three weeks, so the first week is ground week, then there's tower week, there's jump week. And ground week, you're just pretty much learning how to fall so you don't break your neck or back, or legs or anything like that. So you're just in a gravel pit, jumping off different levels of stuff into gravel. It's not too bad, but I probably went through more mineral ice and Bengay [a topical cream for aches and pains] than I ever had in my life. It was the sorest I've ever been I think. Just because you're literally falling all day I mean, they were just teaching you how to fall and it sucked. And then the next week was cool though because it was tower week and you're jumping out of like, you start with a twelve foot tower and you go up to a forty foot, then to a two-hundred fifty foot. So it's pretty cool, it's not too bad. And then it's jump week, and you do is jump. The only thing shitty about, excuse me, was that we have to run from the barracks to the chute house, which is like five miles. And you're in full gear, your full BDU's [Battle Dress Uniform]. You don't get to run in your PT's, which kind of sucked every morning. So you run down there and then they check the weather and are like, "Alright, you're jumping today," so then you sit around the chute house and watch movies until your plane shows up and then you jump and go home for the day. My class was a little unique, just because we jumped twice on Monday and twice on Tuesday because it was, we had a weather front coming in for Wednesday and Thursday so we didn't get to jump Wednesday, Thursday and they were concerned that we weren't going get to graduate on time on Friday. So what they did is, we held graduation at the drop zone on Friday and we got to jump into graduation, which was pretty cool. So we jumped in....

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Yeah, that's pretty cool...

**Jose Landin:**

We rolled up our chutes and like your parents and everyone are just waiting there and then they do a little ceremony for everyone and you get on the bus. So, it was pretty

cool and then after that you get your orders and I came home for leave so, I got like a week off before I had to report to my first duty station.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Okay...

**Jose Landin:**

And that was in March, I think when I got done with all that stuff. So... '05.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

So where did you go after that?

**Jose Landin:**

Well, I was actually lucky enough to meet a couple guys from my unit at jump school, so they knew, I knew I had my orders before you know, while I was at jump school I knew I was going to Fort Benning, or Fort Bragg. So I met a couple guys in my unit that I was going to and ended up out in North Carolina, and worked out. Flew out there and a couple guys from my Airborne class picked me up and brought me to the barracks and then we got situated and I got assigned to my unit, which was the 27<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, 20<sup>th</sup> Engineer Brigade. It was kind of weird because I got there and you get there and they try to scare you. I don't know how it was for you or others kids. But my time you get there and they're like in combat arms. You get there and its like, they try to put you in your place and you're pretty much show you you're the bottom of the food chain, and you don't deserve... You have to earn your spot. But, since I had college, a couple years of college they saw, and I was a little older they put me at an S shop to start out with. Which is like, I was in S3 which is like, logistics and planning and stuff like that and I drove for our XO [Executive officer] so yeah, I got like a cush job right out of the gate, so I was like "Oh this is pretty chill, pretty easy..." And it was nice. And then, did that for a little while and one of my roommates, the roommate I got when I went to Fort Bragg was actually a guy I went to Airborne School with, it was pretty, pretty nice. And he was in my basic training so I knew the guy. Pat, it was funny because

he was from Oregon, but he had moved to Germany because his dad was in the Army so, we had that, I guess bond. We liked the Ducks [University of Oregon mascot] and stuff so it worked out.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Did you go through hazing when you got to your first unit?

**Jose Landin:**

Not so much, I mean, like I said, I think, I felt kind of bad for my friend Pat because he, he got put in one of the line companies right off the bat and, yeah, he got kind of... He got hazed pretty good. It was still the time in the Army where, I mean, not so much to say it was encouraged but it was definitely, just in our field. It happened, I mean people did get hazed. It went on, pretty badly I guess. He got it, he got it pretty bad, let's just say that. But that's just how the Army goes, and I just, the way we looked at it, it was just a right of passage that everything you're getting has been done before you and stuff like that. And it's nothing horrible, you're getting smoked, which is like doing push-ups all the time or running or just like, physically training stuff. So it's not like they are demoralizing you or anything that's going to hurt you, it's just making you stronger is what they call it so, stuff like that. But that never really happened to me, I got put in the S shop just so I was around a lot of brass, a lot of higher-ups so they don't really play that game up when you're like up by the commander and stuff like that, it's just pretty much you're appearance, you have to have a pressed uniform, shine your boots. That was back when we still had spit-shine boots, and all that stuff. So it was like every Sunday I always had my heat gun out, was polishing my boots, making sure they're like glass because if your uniform is messed up at all come Monday morning, you're in trouble. So stuff like that but that was pretty much the only way we would get in trouble, my little section, the S3 shop.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

What's a heat gun?



**Jose Landin:**

Oh it's just like, something you use to melt like glue or something like that? I would put polish on my boot and you would use a heat gun after you put it on there and it melts it kind of, and then you get a little brush and it makes it like a spit-shine but without, it's like cheating, it's the fast man's version. My dad used a spit-shine to make it like that but they invented, we got heat guns to make it like that. So I just used that instead for my jungle boots because I didn't want to spend an hour, hour and a half doing a spit shine so, it just saved a lot of time. The sergeants liked it so I did it every week, and I always got my uniforms pressed and haircut every week and so. If you make it through Monday looking good, Monday morning we had an all battalion formation in the morning so if you looked good there, the rest of the week was cake. If you messed up on Monday, well then, the rest of the week was kind of shitty.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Okay so, you went to Fort Irwin?

**Jose Landin:**

No, actually I have never been to NTC [National Training Center, Fort Irwin] and I have been on two deployments. It's kind of weird, probably one of the only guys who can say that. We were originally supposed to go to Iraq and then I don't know why our orders changed or what happened but our orders got changed to Afghanistan and not only did they get changed but they got pushed up ninety days so all the pre-training, NTC stuff and everything like that was just, washed out the window and they were like, "Well these guys had just gotten back from Afghanistan and they knew what they were doing," so we didn't have to go to NTC. It's pretty common at a lot of the bigger bases like Fort Hood, Fort Benning, Fort Bragg, Fort Lewis where NTC, especially combat arms units, isn't as an integral part I guess for other units just because we really run a one year off, one year on rotation so you're in this shit for a year then you're home for a year, then you're back. Our rotations are quick. Its like, why spend the money to send them to California when they can just train at home. I never had to go, which is nice, because I heard it sucks

[laughs]. For everyone I have talked to that has been, they say it's a waste of time. That they learned more at their unit level than they did out in California.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

So when you were working at the S3 shop, what kind of jobs did you do? Pretty much I was a, well I worked for the S3, which is a major, and I was like his assistant or I was his driver so ... just basic office work, I felt like I was his bitch and I guess you could say I drove him anywhere he needed to go, make sure his Humvee was always clean, and I cleaned his office, got him coffee. Cleaned his weapon for him, got his weapon for him, I would get to for him, he would take care of logistics and I would just be there, which it did suck in a way because I got to the unit and I was expecting ... You know when you get out of basic training, especially Airborne School you're just so gung-ho Army and I wanted to get to the line, I wanted to do all this cool stuff that I was doing in basic training, then I got sent to the S shop because of college, they thought, "Oh this guy can type, and talk, he's not an idiot. Not just a grunt." It was kind of disappointing but at the same time I met a lot of great people and influential people in the battalion brigade levels that could help me out later on and get me a references to go to different schools, which was nice, I mean, it had its perks but for the main job I was a glorified driver/assistant. That's pretty much what I did, and then until you deploy, and you know when you deploy you do different things.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

When you found out that you're going to go to Afghanistan, how did you prepare for that?

**Jose Landin:**

Well, we really didn't do much. We ran field ops and stuff like that. For my particular job, I ran a radio a lot and obviously, I didn't know convoy logistics and stuff like that just because I'd be driving in a convoy with, you know with one of the higher-ups so we just learn how to drive overseas and what the crazy things was since Afghanistan is such a behind the curtain thing, no one really ever really talked about it

and everyone always joked about, oh well you guys are going to Afghanistan, that's vacation time, you're just going to go over there and collect a paycheck. It's not like anything dangerous out there, it's not like Iraq. And it's funny now because it's the complete opposite way, now like you go to Iraq for vacation and Afghanistan is where everything is happening. We just didn't do much, like I said went to field, learned how to use a radio a lot. I'm pretty good with columns and that kind of stuff. No one had to do paper work and I mean little stuff like that. Obviously we learned clearing stuff but all of our training was pretty much based off of Iraq stuff which, if you know anything about Iraq and Afghanistan, they are two completely different, I mean one is mountains and tunnels and the other is cities and streets like, it's just not anything. What they prepared us for and what we went into were two completely different things, which is kind of funny. I mean, the people in the unit who had been to Afghanistan already were like, "This is pretty pointless, like you guys need to get stuff from Afghanistan and not from Iraq because it's not helping us. It's like a waste of time."

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Yeah, there is a big difference.

**Jose Landin:**

Yeah, and we noticed, I mean you take your cues from your leadership, but when your leadership is kind of saying this is pointless training then you well, obviously your motivation level goes down and you're just like, "Whoa," you just go through the motions. That's pretty much it, we learned most our stuff from the unit though, the unit sent, the unit we were replacing sent people back to Fort Bragg, like they usually do and they talked to us and that's where we learned most of the stuff, air operations and stuff like that.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

So when did you go to Afghanistan?

**Jose Landin:**

**Jose Landin:**

Well our battalion, we had two battalions that were going, the 37<sup>th</sup> and the 27<sup>th</sup> and the 37<sup>th</sup> needed some seat fillers, so we, me and one of my best friends, Kyle, decided to deploy early and we left with the 37<sup>th</sup> battalion, about two months before our battalion left to get there. We just wanted the money and they were like you're going to go there, you're going to sit in Bagram [Air Base] which is like the main cush area where there are video games and Burger Kings and like nothing bad ever happens there. So we decided well, shit we can go there and get two extra months of combat pay and get this thing started, so we volunteered. He was the colonel's driver and I was the major's driver, so we always hung out, so we were like let's just get over there, get this thing started and it was kind of nice because we just got over there and reported to the unit, there was a National Guard unit that was there, so we just kind of go attached to that unit for like a couple of months. We just showed up, we did maps, and I had to brief the major and report to the colonel once a week and we got on the secure lines and talked to them about stuff, went out on a couple missions with them and saw some stuff. But it didn't really matter because the AO (Area of Operations) we were in wasn't the same as we were going to be operating in so it wasn't like we could give them too much intel. But, for the first two months we were there, we really didn't do much and that was March '06 I want to say, yeah March '06 we got to the Bagram and waited for the rest of our unit, they showed up end of April, May-ish, that kind of time was when the 27<sup>th</sup> actually got there.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

What were your first impressions when you got to Afghanistan?

**Jose Landin:**

I know don't... [*laughs*] It's tough to say, I didn't really have many preconceived notions of what I was going to get into, it was just kind of, "Oh I heard they live in mud huts," and that kind of stuff. I mean they don't have electricity, they have generators everywhere you know what I mean, they just ... cleanliness isn't at the top of their priority list. I mean, obviously I don't want to say anything to the extent of that they are dirty people, they just don't have the means to do that. It's just surprising, education isn't

high among the people. Very friendly, obviously they try to talk to you, they want you to buy all their stuff at the little markets they have there. It was I guess eye-opening just to see what we have here in America and what we take for granted and what they have over there. I mean, people would just say, wow, we don't have it that bad in America because these guys don't have anything and they're not complaining, they are just living.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

So would you say you were well prepared for what you saw over there?

**Jose Landin:**

I guess I was as well prepared as anyone could be. I mean, I knew I wasn't going to go somewhere nice, they told us it would be dirty, it was going to be shacks and wooden huts that they would be living in, we live in little tents or wooden shacks, it wasn't like there were any big cities where I was at. So I guess I was prepared to the extent where I knew it was not going to be very industrialized or modern or that stuff. I wasn't going to be able to go down the street to the supermarket and something, I mean I knew that kind of stuff, I was prepared for all that. I guess I just wasn't prepared for the actual poverty that they lived in. We were like, "Oh, if you go over the fence right there, there are mines and stuff, it's no big deal." I didn't expect that kind of stuff so I guess I wasn't prepared for that stuff. Everything else was good to go, culture-wise I knew, they trained us up on that kind of stuff.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

What was your job like in Afghanistan?

**Jose Landin:**

The first time we got there, I worked out of a base called Salerno for the first couple of months and we started out doing just QA's and QC's which is quality assurance-quality care on roads/RCP which is just we drive up and down, down the roads looking for IED's [Improved Explosive Device] or stuff like that. If we weren't doing that on a certain day we would be doing QA, QC which was driving up and down the roads,

making sure the roads were getting built because our contracting guys or offices, they were paying locals to build roads because there are no roads really anywhere in Afghanistan, except the mains ones that Russia put in, or we were putting in so we just did that stuff, we were paying these guys, these contractors millions of dollars to build roads over there and we would go out, clear the roads to make sure there weren't any bombs in them and the other guys would come in and make sure, I don't know they pulled out their little machines and their tests to make sure the grade was ... I don't know, I'm not really up to date on that stuff, all I know is I just pulled security, I was either behind the wheel or up in the gun, one of the two. And that was my first go round. And I did that for probably about four months at Salerno, then we got send to do another thing at Jalalabad for a couple months and we got sent there to Orgun-E which is in the Paktika Province and when we got there is when we started doing strictly RCP and stuff like that and that was the last four or five months so that's all we did was drive out, pull security for clips or clear the road for convoy logistics packages.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

What is RCP?

**Jose Landin:**

Route Clearance Package, so we have these little tractor looking things that go in front, and have two panels that drop down and they determine if there has been anything implanted in the ground. I guess I probably shouldn't be going into that stuff, it's classified ... [*laughs*] Sorry, but pretty much you go up and down the road looking for bad stuff. They tell us if there is stuff in the ground and then if there we blow it up or dig it out and stuff like that.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

So what were the living conditions like when you were in Afghanistan?

**Jose Landin:**

I lived in a tent, I guess a GP medium, which is like, I don't know but...not very big. We probably had about six to eight bunks, or I guess cots on each side and then we would curtain ourselves off with sheets and stuff like that and I just had like a little corner. So, in here it would be maybe, just enough for my cot then I had a shelf, then I had my bags and that was it. Everyone had a cot, we didn't have anything else. Eventually they got us mattresses but that took awhile. And then I had my sleeping bag and my pillow and that was it, I mean it wasn't that bad I guess. I was sleeping on a cot, at least I wasn't sleeping on the floor.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Did you have much private space?

**Jose Landin:**

No, I mean a lot of people put up curtains around our little corner in our little area but not really, I mean the area is pretty open. You didn't have too much privacy and that kind of stuff. That's just how it was, not too many people, unless you were a high-ranking enlisted person or an officer, you didn't really have your own digs I guess you could say.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Did you have an MWR [Morale, Welfare and Recreation], were you able to talk to your family?

**Jose Landin:**

At the first place I was at, Salerno, which is one of the bigger bases in Afghanistan, yeah we had an MWR, which was nice. You go there, make phone calls, use the Internet every now and again, the DeFac [Dining Facility] was decent. They even had a decent gym and a basketball court, I think they put in a basketball court eventually. As the bases get runways, obviously more and more stuff come with it and that was a base that had just gotten a runway so it was C130 capable and a lot more supplies came in, so

a lot more cool stuff. Basically we spent a lot more money there. So the MWR got more stuff. But it wasn't bad.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Okay, so what was an average day like when you were over there?

**Jose Landin:**

If we had a mission, wake up at about ... Because we had to be the first ones on the road so wake up at about 4 or 5. I'd go out in my sweatpants or whatever, go out to the truck, turn it on, let it run then I'd come back and get in uniform and brush my teeth and stuff. Then I'd go out and do all my checks to make sure the tires were good, PMCS's, which is like preventative checks and stuff like that. Make sure the truck was going to be good to go that day, if it was low on fluids or oils or anything like that I'd fill it up. While I was doing that, my gunner was mounting his units and stuff like that. Then I would do radio checks with the base and with our own TOCs [Tactical operations center] to make sure our COMMs [communications] were good. After that, then I would go grab some breakfast, come back and then we had a mission brief. Go out on patrol, some days they were a couple hours, some days they were all day, some a couple days, just depending on the mission at hand. It wasn't bad, you get back, you repeat that process, I go through all my checks again to make sure I didn't break anything while I was out there. Make sure I didn't need to take it to the mechanics and if everything was good, I would get out of my gear and go to the gym, go eat and then wait to do it again all over the next day. If there were days I didn't have missions then I would obviously try to sleep as much as I could because you're pretty sleep-deprived over there. Or I would go to the gym and make phone calls and stuff, that was pretty much it. And then mail, since we were at a base with an air field it was kind of nice at the beginning of the first four or five months of my deployment, it was nice because mail didn't take that long to get to us. We were spoiled. That was nice, and that's pretty much it.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Okay, did you get a leave time while you were out there?



**Jose Landin:**

Yeah, the first time I tried to pick it in the middle of my deployment. I came home, I don't even remember exactly when it was, I want to say it was around football season because I came home for a football game. I think I did, I think it was around Veterans Day '06. So I came home and I got to see one game, I think it was the Washington vs. Oregon game or something like that, I remember. You know you're home for two weeks, and getting home takes about a week or whatever, it takes awhile because you got to travel to Kuwait and then from Kuwait to home and then flew into Dallas and from Dallas you go your own way. They flew me into Eugene, which was nice.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

What did you think of your first deployment overall, if you had to summarize it, what would you say?

**Jose Landin:**

It was actually pretty easy, I mean I don't want to say that, the area we were in and the time we were there, it was when everything was happening in Iraq. Everything was heated up really big, so Afghanistan wasn't too bad as far as firefights and that kind of stuff. We didn't really encounter too much of that on my first deployment, just because of the time it was I guess most of the bad guys were in Iraq. We did have a couple instances where we got into some stuff, we had one, I remember the date just because it was June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006 so 666 and we were just driving our regular patrol and we got hit by an IED, which was kind of odd, we just hadn't seen anything and it was kind of at the beginning of our deployment, we had just been there, I'd only been there since March/April-ish so ... Yeah we got hit, and then a couple of my buddies got tore up pretty good, we had to fly them out and stuff. Kind of opened my eyes, it was just, "Wow." Before that, I was just thinking, "Wow this is going to be an easy year, I'm just going to sit here," and then after that you start thinking, "Well, not so much." That was really the only trouble we ran into, we had a couple of other instances where just pop shots here and there but nothing like, full engagements where we were getting ambushed.

I think that was just because of the area we were in, the more populated areas weren't as bad in my opinion. We were in Khost, or "host" is what they call it on TV, and it's a very big town for suicide bombers, so we got hit by a suicide bomber, a car was parked and backed into one of cars and just blew up. And that was really big in the area, but they didn't hit us with an IED or complicate an ambush, like a lot of other places. It was mainly these guys would drive up and blow themselves up and I guess, try and take out the truck or whatever but they never really could because we were all up on our Humvees and things like that. It's pretty pointless I thought but it was a pretty easy, standard deployment in my eyes. We didn't lose anybody, I mean people got hurt but stuff like that, we had one silver star, but no one died so that's always good.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

After Afghanistan where did you go?

**Jose Landin:**

After Afghanistan I came back to Fort Bragg, while I was over there, in Afghanistan I had talked to some EOD [Explosive Ordnance Disposal] guys, I wanted to check that out and that's Explosive Ordnances Disposal, I was tired of just driving up and down the road, I wanted to be doing stuff, I wanted to go out there and actually be able to defuse a bomb and stop bad stuff from happening. More so after I saw my buddies get hit, it was well, ya know, if I can't do anything else, I might as well just try to stop it before it happens. I applied to the school, got a couple letters of recommendation from some of the guys and passed the test they make you do, the physical tests and the mental tests they make you do. Then, I got a ship date, which is pretty good, and they sent me to Eglin Air Force base on the first week of August, '07. And then went there, which was heaven because it was an Air Force base, it's a Navy training school run on an Air Force base and it's in Destin, Florida which is like, well I guess it's Fort Walden Beach, Florida is what they call it, but Panama City is like 40 miles to my right, 40 miles near Pensacola. The condo we rented was like five minutes from the beach, it was pretty much heaven to come back to after a deployment. Everyone was like, "How the hell did you get Fort Walden Beach orders?" And I would say, "Well I'm going to EOD," and they were like,

“Oh, that’s how you got it.” It’s not the most sought-after job. But, ya know it was good. Before that, sorry I forgot to mention, we did a quick pit stop, ten weeks in Huntsville, Alabama for like train-up before you go to the actual school. We got there, went through ten weeks of class, and if you pass that then they send you down to ... I was like TDY [Temporary Duty Assignment] en-route so you go to that school in Alabama then you go to school in Florida. Alabama was quick, got it out of the way, did it in ten weeks, it was pretty easy. Surprisingly a lot of people didn’t make it out. We started with eighteen in Alabama and we graduated six. I don’t know why but I guess that’s just how it is. And then we got to Florida and we had twenty-two in my class, all branches, which is kind of cool and we had all ranks so you’re in class with officers and stuff like that. Officers, NCO’s, enlisted guys were all in the same class, there is no separation, which I thought it really neat about the school. It doesn’t matter what branch you’re in, you were all doing the same thing. I liked that.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

What was their graduation rate?

**Jose Landin:**

Oh wow, it’s like the third or second hardest school in the Army, I think the original class was twenty-two, and with roll-ins we graduated maybe eight or nine. And that’s with roll-ins and all that stuff. I mean, with most Army schools I think you have a seventy percent test score that you have to pass but at EOD school its eighty-five percent. You had to score an eighty-five or higher on every test to pass a test and the thing about that was it didn’t seem like it would be too bad, but one mistake is a sixteen point hit, so if you make one mistake then you lose sixteen points and automatically fail the test. If you fail a test, then you get a retry the next day and if you fail it again, if you’re far enough along in school they let you go to an academic review board with a bunch of EOD techs and they say, why did you fuck up? Can you fix it? If not, get the hell out of here. We don’t need you pretty much. They’re not very student friendly, just because the job you have to do. Yeah, it was good, it was about a year that I spent there so it wasn’t bad.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Did you have to go to any of those boards?

**Jose Landin:**

No, I didn't, I didn't do any of that stuff. Didn't have to go to any boards. I failed one test, then passed it the next time. I just made a stupid mistake but it happens. I had one brain fart, and that's the main thing they teach you is initial success or total failure. If you mess up, people die, they ingrained it into our head. Dealing with explosives you can't have a moment, a lapse and I did for one instance and I was like shit, I knew it right after I did it too. The guy was like, yeah you failed but you got to finish, they make you finish. They tell you that you fail right when you make your mistake, but you still have to finish the exercise. Then they're like you know what you did, don't do it again tomorrow, and that's pretty much what they say. And the next day I didn't do it, so I passed. But I liked it, it was probably some of the best training I had ever had, it was good.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Where did you go after you graduated?

**Jose Landin:**

After I graduated I went to Fort Hood, Texas, got attached 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. I got there, and literally they were leaving, shit, a month after I got there. I got there and as we were going through reception. There were listing off our names when we were at the reception place and they were like, "So and so, you're going here. Landin, you're going to Afghanistan." And then they're telling us you're already leaving. I just thought, "Oh great, I just got back." And they are like, "Oh well, you're going, you've been home long enough." They gave me the option of staying a little longer but I decided, no, if I'm going to go I might as well get it over with. So I went again, and I really didn't have any train up this time. They made us go through this individual readiness training (IRT), which is like a two-week-long program they have at Fort Hood. It was pretty much just rag tag, run you through all the basic stuff, first aid, weapon systems and then they were like,

“Okay, well now you’re going to go to the doctor and get medically clear, then we’re going to get your gear and then you’ll be gone within the month,” and that’s pretty much how Fort Hood was. I didn’t spend more than 30 to 40 days there at the beginning.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

How did you feel about being deployed with a unit you hardly knew?

**Jose Landin:**

It was kind of scary, I’m not going to lie. Just because of the reports I’d been hearing, and I had been keeping in contact with friends over there and that things had been heating up a lot in Afghanistan. Obviously not knowing anybody, on a deployment where you know people, you have that bond and you know that people will help you, you know what people are thinking, that kind of stuff. And then going to a new unit and being like, oh well shit the area we were going to, the area of operation was a lot more, Korengal Valley is just place that when you hear that ... It’s not very fun to say the least. And we were going to be there for four or five days a week so it definitely sucked. I remember being there and we sent the guys on ADVON [Advanced Echelon – group that deploys in advance of main unit] went into that stuff and I remember being in IRT [Innovative Readiness] training and a big huge commotion went on one of the days and they were like, “Hey something happened,” and we were like, “What do you mean?” And they said, “Well the unit got hit already,” and we had only been in the country for like two weeks and they asked, “Who’s in Alpha Company?” And I was in Alpha, I was an engineer in the STB [Special Troops] battalion, they started this new thing where they try to have a unit of engineers, infantry and others altogether. So anyway, we were all mixed together. It wasn’t like I was just with engineers, so they wanted to know who was in Alpha Company, they wanted to talk to us. Pulls us aside and says, “Hey your company got hit.” And Sergeant Douglas J. Bull, he was one of the first guys I met when I got there and he was my squad leader, he died.<sup>1</sup> They just got hit and he didn’t make it. Then after that they pretty much had a funeral and that was pretty tough. I’d only known him a couple weeks but he seemed like a pretty good guy. I remember the last thing I said to

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<sup>1</sup> On July 8, 2008, of wounds sustained in Chow Kay Valley, Afghanistan.

him, he was pretty excited I was coming to the unit and that's just pretty much how I remember him just because I had experience in AO, I knew what I was doing. He was like, "Wow, let's do this dude." I remember the last thing I said to him, it was "Hey, take care of the guys, I'll be there in a couple of weeks," and then a week later... I was like, "Wow."

So that was tough, it definitely heightened the holy-shit level, this is no joke. And then not even a month later, I was actually in theatre and we got hit again. We lost five guys in that incident. It was tough, about seven guys in a month and a half. And that was just our unit, the other units had lost some guys too so we were pretty much getting our ass kicked which is pretty scary. Shut down operations for a little bit and refused to actually go out in Humvees anymore, just because they were just blowing our Humvees to just shreds, knowing if you got hit you wouldn't make it. It wasn't like when we got hit before, like we got hit with IED's it was like, oh, they were taking two anti-tank mines and stacking them on each other, and then using a pressure plate, and it was just pretty much splitting them in half. So it was a pretty scary time. I preferred to be dismounted, we had options like sometimes you could be in the truck or on the ground and I always wanted to be on the ground or on high ground because I felt safer. Even if I got ambushed I could get behind a rock. If it's on a truck, I'm not going to see it and I'm not going to live. So in that last one we lost our lieutenant, sergeant and a couple of other enlisted guys and then our interpreter. So we got new, that was another scary thing too, we got a new lieutenant and whenever you get new leadership, especially in a hostile area like that. We got a brand new guy coming in, doesn't know anything and we were like shit. Seeing your senior leadership just break down, that was pretty tough.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

How far along into the deployment was that?

**Jose Landin:**

That was within the first couple weeks, I'd say we lost Sergeant Bull within a couple weeks, and he died July 8 and the rest of the guys died on August 1. It was just tough seeing your leadership, I guess some die, the guys that were behind couldn't even

form sentences after, it was just tough. We got these new guys, and actually they turned out to be a blessing, I think. Our lieutenant, he was from UC Davis and he was a Lambda Chi, which was cool I thought. Just because I was in the middle of Afghanistan and a fraternity brother was there and he had a lot in common. We just talked all the time and I'm actually going to his wedding this year, his bachelor party in May. So we still keep in contact but it was nice to have him there. He didn't come in and try to take over, he kind of just listened and eased his way in, unlike a lot of lieutenants who come in and say they are in charge and tell us to do this and this. He came in and had our backs and when we said we wouldn't go out in Humvees on missions they acted pretty quick and got us MRAPs [Mine Resistant Ambush Protected], which are like big SUV things that had this V-shaped hole, designed more to take blasts and things like that so we didn't lose anymore guys, which was nice.

Our platoon didn't, our battalion we lost a lot of guys but the area was just horrible. As many people who watch that movie can see. Pretty much the unit from the movie, *Restrepo*, it's like being a kid and throwing a lot of rocks at a bee hive and then leaving and letting your friends walk into it after its been broken up, that's pretty much what happened. In my opinion, those guys went in there and Restrepo died and they wanted to build all these FOBs and stuff in areas we had no business being in. For some reason our leadership didn't want to lose those places so they didn't care what we lost to maintain them. So we fought to keep them, a lot of days we would go out and our sole mission was to clear the road but also draw fire so they could pin point where they were and bomb this shit out of them. So those days were always fun ... [sarcasm] Just driving around trying to get shot at, we went a lot of days where we weren't too happy with out leadership and obviously our lieutenant wasn't happy either. They generals that sit in the cushy Bagram room air force base, in the JOC, in safe zone, green zone, they are the ones making decisions. We just do what we're told. I think in my unit in particular, we didn't really care about politics or any of that stuff. I didn't get to vote in the election, we couldn't even get ballots, we couldn't do anything because it was too far out on the front lines, too dangerous for them to fly their helicopters out so we could cast our votes. Yet we were fighting for our country so I thought it was blatant disrespect. A *New York Times* guy, I think, got involved with us for a little bit of time. He would ask us questions like

that and we just kind of told him you could ask us about anything, but not politics. You're not going to hear our answers and we don't want those quotes getting out to the general circulation, that's just not what people need to be reading about.

It was just a tough time, every day sucked I thought. Every day we just like wow, we got to go out but there are certain areas we'd go to...there weren't very many good days, to say the least. There are a lot more bad days than good, which isn't very fun. That year was pretty tough I'd say.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

How did you and the other guys in your unit deal with that?

**Jose Landin:**

We had better living conditions, being at the place we were at was it was us and an artillery unit was there. We were the only Army people there other than some Special [Forces] guys we had there. People that we embedded in our particular area so as far as uniforms standards and bullshit that people yell at you for when you're on deployment. I could walk around in civilian clothes. I was sterile the whole time, I never had to wear my nametag or nametapes, just that little stuff. It's a huge morale boost for people when you walk into the DeFac and you don't have some idiot sergeant major come up to you and say, "Why aren't you wearing your name tag?" People just left us alone because they knew what our job was and it was nice, we had a decent gym, they flew out nice equipment for us, which was nice. We had a little basketball court with this little crappy hoop, but it worked and we had tournaments every now and again so it was fun. The good thing about being on a small base is that MRW lines aren't very long. We had a lot of computers so I could keep in pretty decent contact, and at that time that's when Facebook I guess was really hitting the scene big, I don't know I was still doing the MySpace [a social networking site] thing on my first deployment, I didn't really know about it. I did Facebook [another social networking site], which was easy for me because I could make one post saying I was safe, and then I would call my parents. I would call my dad every now and again. Tougher days I talked to my dad, easier days I talked to my mom.



**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Did you get to take leave during that deployment?

**Jose Landin:**

Yeah, I did it was in February, I don't even remember really it all kind of blends together. It was nice, obviously. Just coming home was different, I was different and I was told I was different. I guess I was a little more on edge. I slept for like three days I think. It was nice.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

How did that leave compare to your first?

**Jose Landin:**

I'd say it was a lot better. Good and bad I guess. Good in the sense that I was relieved to be away. Bad in the sense of what I was coming back to, I lied a lot. I lied to my parents about stuff. *[Pauses]* It was tough...*[interviewee tears up a little]*

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

You can take your time.

**Jose Landin:**

It was good just to be home and see my family. But, I was scared to go back I guess. *[pauses]* I gotta do it, it was a job. When I went back they gave me another week off just to chill. Then we got back into it, which is nice, I was gone about a month so it's not too bad. Two weeks of being at home and two weeks getting back, but it was nice to get back into it, get back into my routine, tough saying goodbye obviously, but it was good to know I just have to make it through the next couple of months then it will be over and I wouldn't have to worry about it anymore.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Do you remember when they told you when you were going home and your unit was packing up to leave?

**Jose Landin:**

We knew we were coming back around June, middle of June, so it was nice by the time I got back, because I took one of the later leave dates, it's how it worked out. They told us we were leaving on this day, that we could pack our shit up and stop doing missions on this day. We had a countdown obviously so it was nice to think that patrols ended on this day, at least for us. It was a good feeling. I was definitely ready, we all were. It's a lot of stress, a lot of cigarettes were smoked. That's how it goes, the end of deployments are always tricky. People get complacent. We were pretty good by that time. I had already been a sergeant for a while and I had my own squad, so we knew: don't let complacency set in, we only have a few more months, don't do something stupid. We just drilled that into our guy's heads, saying we're almost there. You see the light at the end of the tunnel. Then we got to the Bagram and started heading home, it was nice.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

What did you think of some of the officers on your squad and the people you worked with?

**Jose Landin:**

Most of the soldiers were great. It's amazing, these are eighteen or nineteen year-old kids that get thrown into a war. They see a lot, and there are a lot of good guys...*[Pauses and tears up a little again]* I'm sorry ... I'm just so proud...*[Pauses]* I'm just really proud because I had a really young squad and we lost so many guys, and they just took it in stride ... They did a lot of good things. I think that gets lost a lot, people don't understand that it's not grown men and adults fighting *[pause]*. I was proud of my soldiers. I still talk to them all the time, keep in contact, and Facebook them, I miss them. Higher ups for the most part were pretty good. We had guys at like the really high levels

and it just feels like we were chess pieces to them. They really didn't give a shit but the lower people did. We were like a family, so I liked it. That was good.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

After Afghanistan, did you leave to go back to Fort Hood?

**Jose Landin:**

Yeah...

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

And how long did you spend there?

**Jose Landin:**

I got back in '09 so I spent almost a year when I came back from Afghanistan. It wasn't bad. It was good to be home obviously. The unit was getting ready to move back to Kentucky so since I was ETSing, I stayed and got transferred to a different unit, not 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry anymore. I really didn't do so much, especially as a sergeant, I just got bounced around a lot. I did a lot of CQ [Charge of Quarters], there was a leftover platoon of guys that were ETSing or getting medically discharged so we just kind of hung out, drank a lot [laughs]. I was fortunate enough to have a friend in Austin, a fraternity brother, who graduated and was there and I lived with him. I had to make the 45-minute drive back to the fort every day but it was nice. Spent as little time at the post as possible. Fort Hood isn't bad, there are worse places you could be. Austin is right there, San Antonio is close, Dallas isn't that far. We just enjoyed our time, waited to get out and apply to school. I got re-admitted and all that stuff so I was just waiting for the final date of my terminal leave so I could just drive home.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Before I get to the final, there are some concluding questions. Is there anything else that you want to add or any other stories you want to share?

**Jose Landin:**

Not really, I guess. I was at Fort Hood when that whole shooting happened, which was kind of scary too. We had just gotten home and it was right across the street from our unit. It was just a regular day and we were just cleaning the weapons and stuff, just hanging out and we had some private come up to us and tell us sergeants that some guy got some guns that he is shooting. We were like whatever, shut up and we run outside because we hear some gunshots and that dude, that major started shooting. SRC, which is Solder Readiness Center, and it was right across the street from my unit and yeah, he was just shooting people. We ran back inside and locked down the battalion, drew weapons and all that stuff and just held that. We escorted our medics across the street to help people that were shot. The cops were right there. They were all over it. They were really good, I'll say that. I mean they were right there. It was weird, I don't know it was kind of surreal. I don't if that's the right word but we had just gotten home and we're like in America and I just thought it was funny because people were shocked this happened on a military base, why wasn't it stopped sooner but we don't walk around with weapons, it's like our home, it's your neighborhood you don't walk around with your M4's like you wouldn't at any other neighborhood. It was just weird. And if you see someone walking around with a weapon it's not out of the ordinary, you remember you are on a military base, he's got a weapon. I think that's why he was so successful just because it wasn't out of the ordinary. And he was an officer, he was a high-ranking officer so I wasn't going to go yell at him. I'm only an E-5, he's a major. It was a shitty day. We couldn't go home until we got full accountability from everyone so we were there until like 11 or 12 at night. We were missing a couple people and we finally got word at 11:30 they let us go home, we knew something was wrong because a lot of people were upset and leadership ... You could tell we weren't getting told everything. They told us to report back in the morning, yadda yadda yadda, and we find out a girl from our battalion had been killed. She was one of the victims so we had to deal with that. So it sucked, someone goes overseas for a whole year and comes home and gets shot by her own person. It was a weird time. It was cool that Obama came out, got to hear a speech, and that was cool. The base was locked down though, it was pretty weird. You couldn't leave, you couldn't do anything until they figured it out because I don't know how information traveled the way

it did during this whole incident. There was talk of shooters at all these different locations and I was getting texts saying not to go one building or not to go to another building, there's a gunman. There was only one guy shooting and he was dead, so I don't see why all the news saying all this other stuff was going on. It was crazy, it was weird, something you don't expect to happen but it did, it was just, wow, welcome home guys. I was so ready to be out of the Army; it was just like let me go home. Everything else was just hanging out, waiting to get my medical stuff. Then getting my final stamps, my dad flew out and for the drive home. Got back in about two days, it was from Fort Hood, Texas so it wasn't too bad.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Okay so I am going to go through some of these questions: Why did you decide to leave the army?

**Jose Landin:**

Well, I actually wanted to go to Italy. They didn't have any job opportunities at the time, it was first come and first serve. Vicenza, Italy is really tough to get, even with my qualifications and I had a lot, there were just no jobs. You always have to wait or I would have had to become an MP [Military Police] or infantryman and I didn't want to go backwards. It's like taking a pay cut, you don't want to do that. I told the guy in retention, "Look if you can't get me Italy then don't even talk to me it's the only place I want to go." And I couldn't get Italy so they stopped harassing me. I talked to my lieutenant and my friend Joe, the guy I told you about, and he just suggested why don't I go back to school and finish up and become an officer, which sounds like an alright idea, he was always like you're always talking about change and how things should be done and the only way is to put your in charge and change policies and make change. That was the initial plan to come back and do ROTC. I was initially in ROTC but I've always had back problems and attributing it to a couple instances: getting hit with IED's or jumping out of a plane, that's just how it's always been. I finally got an MRI because they pain was too bad, I found out I had a hernia in my lower back that they operated on last month. The VA paid for that which is great, I didn't have to pay a dime. Well I did have to

pay for medication but that's it. But once ROTC found out about that I was no longer able to do ROTC so that was my initial plan to get out of the army and then become an officer and go back but now its I'm going to get this degree and see where it takes me. Hopefully someone will hire me, I'm not too worried.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Was there anything about your service that surprised you, anything that you weren't expecting?

**Jose Landin:**

I kind of knew what to expect for the discipline side and how I would change and I'm pretty much a neat freak now. My room is really clean, my shoes are lined up, I hate mess. I pretty much knew that would happen. Before I would just throw my clothes wherever. I was pretty dependent on my parents I guess, but I grew up a lot. I knew that was going to happen and I become a better person and I appreciate it in some regards. War does stuff to people, it changes people. Anyone who says otherwise is lying out of their ass. It might be the smallest thing but it does and that was what I wasn't ready for. Everyone plays these video games and they think it's so cool playing Call of Duty and that stuff and then you do it for real, its eye-opening, it really changes a person for the good. I appreciate everything I have; I appreciate my family. I don't complain nearly as much. Before I'd bitch about every little thing like, "Oh my god, there is nothing to do," and that kind of stuff. Now its like wow, I'm alive, I got a car, I go to school, I watch football games, life is great. I got friends, not much to complain about. I was surprised by how much I grew. Just an eye-opening experience, I wasn't expecting to grow as much as I did.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Was there anything about your service that would surprise someone who hasn't served?

**Jose Landin:**

**Jose Landin:**

I don't know about surprised. There is a lot of really educated people in the military, there is a general misconception that they're all farm boys, hicks, idiot, minority, black or Mexican people that can't get a job, they're just illiterate. Which isn't the case. I had a lot of guys in my platoon that weren't officers that had a degree and they need a job, they needed to provide for their family or they wanted the experience for something else down the road. Some wanted to get into politics and military experience always looks good. There are a lot of educated, smart people and the other thing that would surprise people is that our younger generations are more well equipped to deal with things, eighteen or nineteen-year olds can handle a lot more then we give them credit for. That's another thing, they think he's just a teenager and that's another misconception. For me it was just like these kids can actually handle themselves.

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Is there anything you think would surprise people 50 or 60 years, after were all gone?

**Jose Landin:**

I don't know to be honest with you ... No, I don't think anything would be too surprising. I think it would be interesting, and our experiences would be interesting but when you look at the facts, in my personal and politic opinion is that we got into both situations that were unnecessary. We put our country in a situation we don't need to be in and to be honest, I think anything I do, it's frustrating for a lot of us vets who serve on the front line. I don't think anything I did over there, or any of the blood I spilled for my country really made a difference to any individual in Afghanistan. Like, I'm going to make the best of a bad situation and I'm going to bring all my buddies home is how what it came to be about. It wasn't about what Obama wants, or what Bush wants but, okay, let's get out of this shithole and bring everybody home. That's just my opinion on it. The politics are just so jacked up, in my opinion and that might surprise people. They think the wars we fight are just wars but the people don't want us there. I don't know how many times we went to village meetings and they told us they would be better off if we

weren't here. And that was the truth and we don't blame them. The second they leave, Al-Qaeda or the Taliban comes and threatens to take their children and kill them. We won't be there to protect their losses, we should just cut our losses and come home. Wasting too many lives, too much money. So that might surprise people. Vietnam wasn't bad, spent as much money. Not as many lives ... This war has gone on for 10 years now? Iraq was like eight or nine years. It started in March, 2003?

**Chase Waterman/Amy Enbysk:**

Before we finish, is there anything else you want to add?

**Jose Landin:**

No, everything is good. Tough, tougher than I thought it would be. I tried to prepare myself but I have my good days and my bad days, just like everybody else. I try not to talk about this stuff too much, but I hope people look back and it helps someone down the road. Helps make better decisions, maybe help somebody.



## **TRANSCRIPTION NOTE**

I tried not to change too much from the interview with Jose Angel Landin, I wanted to stay true to what he said. I took out a lot of “ums” and “likes” and other filler words so that it would flow more easily. I also corrected a lot of grammar mistakes in this interview. He used some slang words and I included these because he was using them to describe the bases and such. Since I have never served, it was also hard to understand a lot of the army terminology and abbreviations in this interview. My interview partner, who was in the army, made sure all the abbreviations and such were correct.

I also ran into difficulty when transcribing close to the end of the interview, when the interviewee began to cry a little bit. It's an important part of the story and really shows the interviewee's character and dedication, so I hope the transcriptions reflect that.