

## 1 of Army's 10 remaining draftees retires

By Alicia A. Caldwell - The Associated Press

FORT BLISS, Texas — Robert Rangel was a college student trying to “fly below the radar” when his draft number came up in 1967.

“I got caught,” he said with a wide smile. Caught, as it turns out, for 40 years.

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Rangel was one of just 10 draftees still in the Army when he retired on March 28, 2007, according to Fort Bliss officials. It was unclear whether the other draftees have served as long as Rangel; the draft ended in 1973.

Rangel, of El Paso, said the prospect of being drafted was terrifying after watching numerous friends “coming home in coffins.”

But he opted to stay well beyond the required two-year hitch because “I started enjoying my job and the people I worked with.”

He's been deployed to nine combat zones, from Vietnam to the Persian Gulf.

Maj. Gen. Robert Lennox, Fort Bliss' commanding general, described Rangel as the “foremost expert” on air defense systems at the West Texas post, the current home of the Air Defense Artillery Center.

Michael Zaborowski, a retired lieutenant colonel who has known Rangel for more than a decade, said he has long been impressed by his dedication.

“I did 20 years and I thought that was a lot,” he said.

Rangel retired a few months before his 62nd birthday, when he would have been forced to do so under Army regulations.

His mother, who attended his retirement ceremony, was relieved the day had finally come.

“That was a long time that I worried,” Adelina Rangel said softly.

Rangel's years in the Army included more than 200 parachute jumps with a special forces unit in Vietnam and Cambodia, time in battle zones, a firsthand view of the crumbling of the Berlin Wall and a tour in the 1991 Persian Gulf War.



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Robert Rangel stands in front of a HAWK surface-to-air missile battery at Fort Bliss, Texas. Rangel was one of just 10 draftees still in the Army when he retired on March 28, 2007 according to Fort Bliss officials. Maj. Gen. Robert Lennox, Fort Bliss' commanding general, described Rangel as the “foremost expert” on air defense systems at the West Texas post.