

## 2-43 Soldiers and Families gather together for ceremony

Story and photos by CPT. Tamara Gonzales / 11th ADA Bde. Public Affairs / October 2009



Lt. Col. Alan Wiernicki, the 2nd Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery commander, administers the oath of re-enlistment to 23 of the unit's Soldiers at Soldiers Hall, Oct. 16. The event was part of 2-43 ADA's mass re-enlistment, promotion and awards ceremony.

Soldiers and family members of 2nd Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery, gathered together for a ceremony at Soldier's Hall, Oct. 16. The event was held to recognize those who contributed to the unit's success and re-enlist those who would continue to do so.

"This is a great forum to recognize Soldiers for their performance," said Lt. Col. Alan Wiernicki, the 2-43 ADA commander. "We wanted to bring the battalion together and recognize them and their families."

Part of this ceremony included 2nd Lt. Kendra Williams' promotion to first lieutenant by Col. Joseph DeAntona, the 11th ADA Brigade commander, and Williams' uncle, Lt. Col. Derrin Williams. During the promotion Wiernicki led Williams in the officer's oath, an experience typically performed once in an officer's career during a commissioning ceremony.

Following the promotion, an award ceremony was held to recognize officers and Soldiers who had greatly added to the unit's accomplishments.

While the first part of the ceremony was dedicated to 2-43 Soldiers, the second half paid special tribute to both the unit's Soldiers and their families. As the re-enlistments began, the 23 re-enlistees and their families stood on stage where Wiernicki swore the oath of re-enlistment to the Soldiers. Following the oath, Wiernicki presented the families with certificates of appreciation.

Cpl. John Marrero re-enlisted for stabilization so that his wife, Omairis, could enlist into the Army.

"My husband is a role model for me," said Marrero, who is the first female in her family to enlist. "We talked about this as a family and decided this was a great time to enlist."

The re-enlistees received various benefits to go along with their re-enlistments such as stabilization at Fort Bliss, a change of military occupation specialty or monetary benefits.

Whatever the benefit, it was a family decision with the family deciding what was best for them, said DeAntona.

“The Army is listening to you,” said DeAntona as he began addressing 2-43 ADA’s Soldiers and family members about how the Army is focusing on improving their lifestyles.

Some of the items he discussed included child care, the Fort Bliss Post Exchange and commissary, housing and medical benefits such as the projected new Fort Bliss hospital. He also informed them of the new 9-11 G.I. Bill with the option of transferring benefits to family members.

“It’s a great time to be serving in the Army,” said DeAntona.

While this was Wiernicki’s first mass re-enlistment ceremony, both he and CSM Eravisto Torres, the 2-43 ADA command sergeant major, intend to make this a monthly event.

“It is great to give back to the Soldiers in front of their fellow comrades,” said Torres.