



***Staff Sergeant Mario Vega-Velazquez***  
***27 November 1955 - 21 February 1991***

SSG Vega-Velazquez was born 27 November 1955 in Ponce, Puerto Rico. In 1974, he graduated from high school and joined the Army to become an Infantryman. SSG Vega-Velazquez was very proud of his Infantry heritage. He served two tours in Germany and returned in 1984 to become a Blackhawk mechanic. He worked as a mechanic and crew chief, but his love for flying brought him back to working as a crew chief. He came to Charlie Company, 1st Battalion in 1990.

His bearing, maturity, and experience brought him on line from day one. He was a unique individual and lent his personal strengths whenever possible. Truly a team player, he is well remembered for recalling excerpts from movies and his love for sports. He was a gifted man with uncommon wisdom and foresight. He was able to present a new perspective to any given situation and always find the positive side. He made people feel special by wanting to know about them, while he himself, remained in the shadows.

His awards and decorations include the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal (1OLC), the Good Conduct Medal (5<sup>th</sup> Award), the NCO Professional Development Ribbon (2), the Army Service Ribbon and the Overseas Service Ribbon.

On 21 February 1991, SSG Vega-Velazquez was a member of the crew that responded to a request for an urgent medical evacuation deep in enemy territory. His mission was conducted at an extremely low altitude to evade the air defense artillery threat. After the extraction of the injured Soldier, and while returning to the medical facility, his aircraft encountered a sandstorm and the pilots lost visual reference with the ground. His aircraft, #251, crashed and he selflessly gave his life for his country. SSG Vega-Velazquez was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart, the Meritorious Service Medal and the Air Medal with "V" device for valor for his outstanding heroism.

SSG Vega-Velazquez is survived by his mother, Paula and his sisters, Myrna and Marilyn