



# A Continuation of Public Service

## *Gabriel Acosta*



*Gabriel Acosta, Early Childhood Teacher  
Victor Fields Elementary School*



*Gabriel Acosta in Iraq with his team on  
Multiple Launch Rocket Vehicle*



*Gabriel's Regiment Field Artillery Patch  
Their motto: "Steel Rain"*

McAllen AFT is proud to count Gabriel Acosta as one of our members. He is a special education teacher at Fields Elementary School working with three to five year-olds in a self-contained unit. "What I love most about my job is working with the children. Every day is a new day and a challenge requiring flexibility and patience, but in the end the smiles on their faces make it all worth while." Gabriel has worked eight years as a teacher in McAllen ISD, but he wasn't always a teacher.

You wouldn't know while talking to this mild-mannered man that before he became a teacher, he served our country in Iraq. He doesn't talk much about it, but the memory is still there.

In 2000, Gabriel Acosta enlisted in the Army and completed his basic training at Fort Sill in Oklahoma. Shortly after, he was transferred to Fort Hood after training as a

specialist in multiple launch rockets. Eventually Gabriel received his sergeant E-5 rank after completing PLDC (Professional Leadership Development Course). He was then deployed in 2003 with Bravo Unit 220, Field Artillery Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, to a small base in Taji, Iraq, located between Tikrit and Baghdad. He commanded a three man missile battery team. When asked if he ever launched any missiles, Gabriel answered, "I fired missiles at an insurgent training camp along the Iraqi-Syrian border. Our motto for the unit was 'Steel Rain'."

Gabriel's team was also attached to a Quick Reaction Force. "Early one morning," he said, "We were called to assist a team that had come under fire. We boarded the personnel carrier and arrived at the scene. When we exited the rear, AKA gun fire zipped over our heads. That was the first time I was shot at and felt real danger. It was also

the first time I fired my M-16."

His team was also tasked with conducting house-to-house searches for weapons and enemy combatants. "It was pretty intense. You never knew what to expect when you entered a house. Night searches were more difficult. We had to use our night vision goggles (NVGs). We'd break these chemical sticks in half and toss them in the doors. You couldn't see them unless you were wearing your NVGs. They really helped light up the room," recalls Gabriel.

Looking back, Gabriel comments, "I'm proud to have served my country. Even though the heat was more than I could have ever imagined, I'm a better person for it."

It's members like Gabriel Acosta that make McAllen AFT a strong organization. Pay homage to those who have fallen on Memorial Day and thank our veterans for their military service.