

Two Unsung Hispanic Heroes of 9/11 (The Kamikaze Mission)

By: Tony "The Marine" Santiago

We will never forget the events of September 11, 2001, as long as we live. The horror of terrorists who attacked us and the heroism of our people who forgot their differences and united as one people to help their fellow Americans. Many stories have been told of these heroes, but I am sure that most of us do not know the story of Lieutenant Marc H. Sasseville Frontera, of Puerto Rican heritage, and of Lieutenant Heather Penney Garcia, two Hispanics who were willing to sacrifice their lives in defense of our Capital and our President.

September 11 attacks



**An F-16, the type of aircraft used by Lt. Col. Sasseville
and Lt. Penney Garcia during the September 11 attacks**

On September 11, 2001, United Airlines Flight 93 was hijacked by four members of al-Qaeda terrorists as part of the September 11 attacks. The hijackers breached the aircraft's cockpit and overpowered the flight crew approximately 46 minutes after takeoff. Ziad Jarrah, a trained pilot, then took control of the aircraft and diverted it back toward the east coast of the United States in the direction of Washington, D.C. The hijackers' specific target was the United States Capitol.

That morning Major Daniel Caine, supervisor of flying with the 113th Wing of the DC Air National Guard, received a call that the Secret Service wanted fighter jets launched over Washington, DC. Then - Lieutenant Colonel Marc Sasseville, called Brigadier General David Wherley, the commander of the 113th Wing, to get permission to use their “war-reserve missiles.

The four pilots who were available for the mission and who received authorization to get airborne in their fighter jets, were **Lieutenant Colonel Marc Sasseville, Lieutenant Heather Penney Garcia**, Captain Brandon Rasmussen, and Major Daniel Caine.

The mission was to find United Airlines Flight 93 and destroy it however they could. Since the fighter jets were absent of missiles and packed only with dummy ammunition from a recent training mission, there was only one way to do it and that was by ramming the aircraft. The tactic would be similar to the suicide military tactics known as kamikaze missions used by the military aviators from the Empire of Japan in World War II

Sasseville, flew his aircraft alongside the aircraft of Lt. Penney Garcia. According to Penney Garcia, Sasseville told her: "We don't train to bring down airliners. If you just hit the engine, it could still glide and you could guide it to a target". He also told her that he would take out the cockpit and that she should take the tail.

The fighter jets passed over the ravaged Pentagon building, however it wasn't until hours later that they would find out that United 93 had already gone down in a field outside Shanksville, Pennsylvania, killing all 44 people aboard including the 4 hijackers.

Currently



Bri. Gen. Marc H. Sasseville



Heather Penney Garcia

On August 3, 2012, Frontera was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General named the Commander of the 113th Wing, District of Columbia Air National Guard, Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. In this capacity he is responsible for over 1200 personnel in support of both the F-16 (Air Combat Command) fighter and the C-38 and C-40 VIP airlift (Air Mobility Command) aircraft missions. He is also in charge of the Aerospace Control Alert Detachment which is responsible for the air defense of the Nation's Capital Region.

Penney Garcia is now the director of the F-35 program at Lockheed Martin and part-time National Guard pilot