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SAN ANTONIO NEWS

San Antonio man who died saving teens from Medina River dam was a decorated Marine Corps vet

By **Madalyn Mendoza**, *San Antonio Express-News*

Updated June 10, 2016 2:49 p.m.





Master Sgt. Rodney Buentello, 42, died on June 8, 2016 as he saved two teens caught in the undertow of the Medina River.

A San Antonio Marine Corps veteran spending Wednesday afternoon with his family on the Medina River made the heroic, fateful decision to sacrifice his own life while rescuing two teens caught in the undertow, according to authorities.



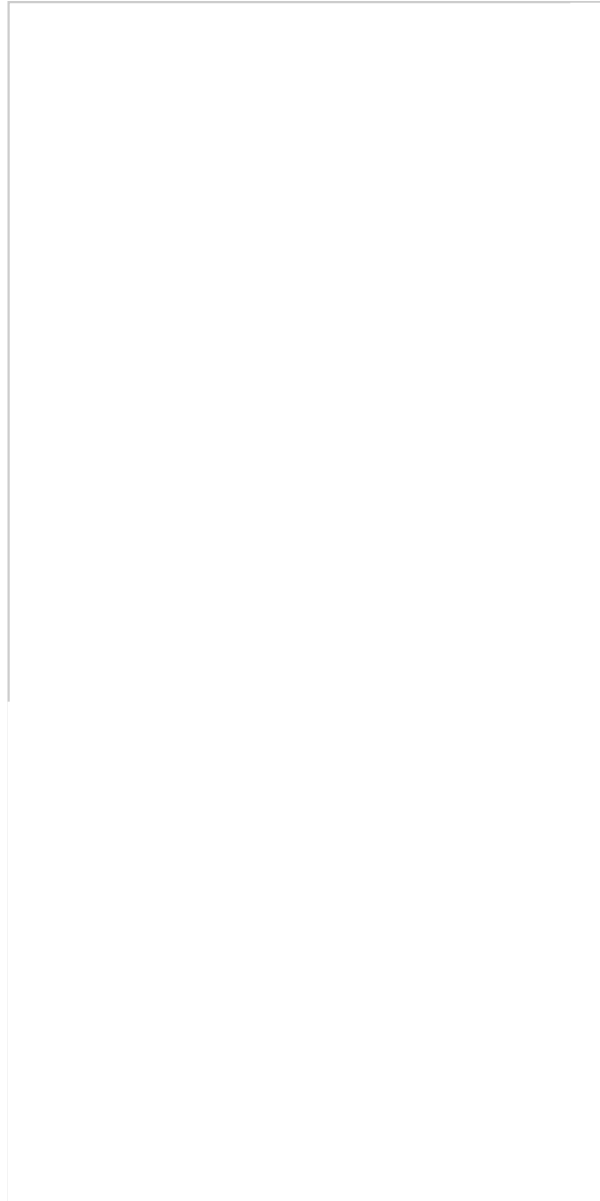
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Master Sgt. Rodney Buentello was visiting Bandera City Park when an unidentified teen girl tried crossing the dam, a [violation of city ordinance](#), the [Bandera Marshal's Office](#) said in a statement. A male teenager followed her in an attempt to save her, but was also swept away, prompting Buentello to jump into action.

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"(He) went into the water and managed to save both of the teenagers, but he was dragged under and drowned before rescuers could reach him," the statement said. "Greater love hath no man, than to lay down his life for another."

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Buentello, a 1992 John Jay High School graduate, served one tour in Afghanistan and three tours in Iraq. He was a recipient of The Purple Heart award on two occasions, according to friends who launched a [GoFundMe account](#) to alleviate costs for his family through the sudden loss.

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The 42-year-old veteran leaves behind a wife and three children, according to the GoFundMe post.

Medina River remains 100 percent full as of Thursday. Bandera explicitly deems the area near the dam "hazardous" in the city ordinance and "closed to all swimming,

wading or boating." Violators in disregard of the ordinance and posted signage in the area are fined \$25 to \$200, according to Sec. 1.09.043.

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The Bandera Marshal's Office said in a statement that the reporting officer has been instructed to charge the teen for her violation.

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A memorial in Buentello's honor at the site of his final display of heroism is being "discussed" by the City of Bandera, according to the Bandera Marshal's Office.

A vigil will be held at John Jay High School on Thursday night at 8 p.m.

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