Press Release

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‘Golden Dragon’ Soldiers, veterans honor their history during Dragon Heritage Day at Fort Drum

FORT DRUM, N.Y.  –  Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), kicked off Dragon Heritage Day at Fort Drum on Oct. 8 with a time-honored run to commemorate the 31st anniversary of the Battle of Mogadishu in Somalia.

Before running the Mogadishu Mile, they gathered with 2-14 Infantry veterans and family members for a wreath-laying ceremony in front of the Military Mountaineers Monument in Memorial Park.

Lt. Col. Max Ferguson, 2-14 Infantry commander, said the formation was deliberately staged where Soldiers could see the plaques along Heroes Walk that honor 10th Mountain Division (LI) Soldiers who died while serving in military operations around the world.

“All of those plaques out there represent the service, the battles, and the operations that this division has fought in since it was constituted in 1985,” he said. “And what you see is that 2-14th has been in so many of those battles. So, during this run today, this whole day – Dragon Heritage Day – think about all the service our forefathers, our brothers and sisters, have done up to this point.”

Ferguson asked his Soldiers to take time to think about their unit heritage, what it means to serve as a Golden Dragon, and to prepare themselves for future fights. He recalled their recent deployment to Iraq, Syria, and Kuwait, and how 2-14 Infantry Soldiers had to be ready for the unexpected after the Hamas attacks against Israel in October 2023.

“All of a sudden our deployment went from a very quiet, relatively stable environment to constant attack,” he said. “Just like on Oct. 3 (1993), when Golden Dragons were called upon – without expectation – for the fight of their lives. And they showed what their grit and preservation is made of.

“When we go forward over the next year and we prepare for training, I can’t tell you where we’re going to fight next,” Ferguson continued. “But I can tell you that you come from a long history of Golden Dragon and 10th Mountain Division Soldiers who are willing to fight and defeat our enemies in battle.”

Ferguson said Dragon Heritage Day is an opportunity for Soldiers to reflect and celebrate their history and accomplishments. After the morning’s run, they participated in leader professional development sessions and attended the battalion ball.

“It’s important that they realize just how much our battalion has contributed to the history of the division,” he said. “And the 14th Regiment is such a rich organization with people who have served tenaciously and fought ferociously throughout time. I wanted Soldiers to hear from veterans across different generations who served in the battalion and share their experiences so we can really appreciate what it was like then, but also to see the similarities to what we are facing today.”

One of the veterans in attendance was retired Maj. Michael Flaherty, who served as the battalion physician assistant during Operation Restore Hope.

“It meant a lot to me to have been a part of this regiment that participated in that deployment,” he said. “At a moment’s notice, they had the kind of guts and strength – without preparation – to do as well as they did. And it’s important for us to always remember the folks who didn’t come home.”

A resident of Black River, Flaherty said he often returns to Fort Drum for reunions and the Mogadishu Mile.

“I served in the 10th Mountain Division from 1991 to 2010,” he said. “When I came here for the first time, I knew I was exactly where I wanted to be – in the light infantry, without any of the glamour or stuff. It’s a wonderful outfit. They’ve always been there, and sometimes we’re in the thick of it, like in World War II, Somalia, and Afghanistan. Just the right team at the right place to do the mission.”

Doug Schmidt, 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Museum curator, spoke to Soldiers about his time serving in the 2-14 Infantry with another veteran, retired Command Sgt. Maj. David Martel. Their message about building lifelong friendships, learning their unit lineage, and sharing their Army stories resonated among the younger Soldiers.

Sgt. Mark McFarland, with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, appreciated the opportunity to dig deeper into their heritage.

“To me, Dragon Heritage Day means we get to learn more about where we came from as a unit,” he said. “But more importantly, we get to have conversations with former Golden Dragons who served at the ‘right of the line’ before us.”

McFarland said he previously served with B Company, and he has made friends with Soldiers across the battalion during his three years with 2-14 Infantry Regiment.

“I’ve gotten to meet a lot of people, from first sergeants and commanders, and work with all the guys in the line companies,” he said. “Just making those connections all the way across the battalion, it’s pretty awesome.”

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Photo Captions –

Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team kicked off Dragon Heritage Day at Fort Drum on Oct. 8 with a wreath-laying ceremony and the traditional Mogadishu Mile run to commemorate the 31st anniversary of the Battle of Mogadishu in Somalia. Dragon Heritage Day is an opportunity for Soldiers to learn and celebrate unit history, connect with veterans and build camaraderie. (Photo by Mike Strasser, Fort Drum Garrison Public Affairs)