



IVY CONRADO IS RUNNING FOR ARMY 2ND LT. EMILY J.T. PEREZ

23, of Texas; assigned to 204th Support Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood, Texas; died Sept. 12 of injuries sustained when an improvised explosive device detonated near her Humvee during combat operations in Kifl, Iraq.

Army officer, 23, leapt high in life cut short by war
By Rona Marech – The Baltimore Sun

Quick and intense. That's how Emily J.T. Perez performed on the track, one coach said - and the same could be said for the rest of her short life. She was a star student and talented athlete. She was a captain of her high school track team and a leader at her alma mater, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. She helped start an AIDS ministry at her church.

A 23-year-old soldier from Fort Washington in Prince George's County, 2nd Lt. Emily J.T. Perez was killed while on duty in Al Kifl, Iraq, on Sept. 12. A Medical Service Corps officer, she died during combat after an improvised explosive device detonated near her Humvee, according to the Department of Defense.

"She was just the kind of kid you want your own children to be like," said Joe Rogers, the assistant track coach at West Point.

"Emily, as far as I'm concerned, was one of the most brilliant people I ever met. She was the consummate intellectual," said the Rev. Michael Bell, executive pastor at Peace Baptist Church in Washington. "But she was not the kind of person who was only book-oriented. ... She always wanted to help someone, to help the community."

When she was in high school, Lieutenant Perez was instrumental in starting the HIV/AIDS ministry at her church. She was also an HIV/AIDS educator with the Red Cross.

Her desire to help led to personal sacrifices: Shortly before shipping out to Iraq, Lieutenant Perez flew from Texas to Maryland to be a bone marrow donor to a stranger who was a match, Pastor Bell said.





Lieutenant Perez, who came from a military family, spent much of her youth in Germany. She returned to the United States in 1998 and graduated from Oxon Hill High School in 2001. She excelled at West Point, where she was a medal-winning athlete and a top-ranked cadet, said Jerry Quiller, the head track coach. She also had one of the highest grade-point averages of all the students on the track team, he said.

"You know the old advertisement - 'Be all you can be,'" Mr. Quiller said. "You probably couldn't do better than that."

In her junior year, when the track team was sorely in need of a triple-jump competitor, Emily Perez - who had never attempted the event - volunteered to give it a try, Mr. Rogers said. She practiced the way she did everything, with intensity, and competed within a few weeks.



After a particularly good jump in an Army-Navy meet, she threw her arms around Mr. Rogers' neck. "It was one of those spontaneous moments of joy for both of us," he said.

That was Lieutenant Perez, friends said - bubbly, dedicated, talented, opinionated, confident.

Another West Point classmate, Tanesha Love, who sometimes sought tutoring help from Lieutenant Perez, said, "You could hear her laugh from probably miles away. There was no doubt in your mind who that was as soon as you heard it."

Lieutenant Perez's family is establishing a scholarship fund for African-American and Hispanic women who share the soldier's passion for medical services and sociology.

