



EMILY MILLER IS RUNNING FOR ARMY SGT. CARI ANNE GASIEWICZ

28, of Depew, N.Y.; assigned to the 202nd Military Intelligence Battalion, 513th Military Intelligence Brigade, Fort Gordon, Ga.; killed Dec. 4 when two improvised explosive devices detonated near her convoy in Baqubah, Iraq.

A few weeks ago, when Sgt. Cari Anne Gasiewicz called with the news that she would be home from Iraq in January, her parents said they would leave the Christmas tree up and the presents unopened. The celebrating could wait.

Now there will be no celebrating. Sergeant Gasiewicz, a translator who had worked at the Abu Ghraib prison, died on the first leg of the 6,100-mile trip home. Riding in a convoy on Dec. 4 in Baqubah, a town northeast of Baghdad, Sergeant Gasiewicz was killed when an improvised rocket-propelled grenade exploded. She was in the 202nd Military Intelligence Battalion of the 513th Military Intelligence Brigade.

The remains of Sergeant Gasiewicz, 28, are to be placed in a mausoleum in Cheektowaga, N.Y., near Buffalo and her hometown, Depew. She was the second female casualty among the 61 soldiers from New York State who have been killed in Iraq since the war began.



Yesterday, at St. Philip the Apostle Roman Catholic Church in Cheektowaga, an enormous American flag was stretched between the ladders of two fire trucks parked outside the modernistic sanctuary. Inside, more than 1,000 people listened as relatives remembered her and read from letters she had sent home during her 11 months in Iraq.

"Iraq is so pretty, and most of the people are so friendly," she wrote in a letter dated Feb. 4. "People tell me, 'Iraq is so much better since you came.' They want to know what took us so long."

The priest, Rev. Joseph Penkaul, said that while on leave in August, Sergeant Gasiewicz had told her father's co-workers at the State Department of Transportation that children in Iraq needed clothes and school supplies. Soon 12 boxes of items collected by her father, Paul Gasiewicz, and his colleagues were on the way to Iraq for her to distribute.



"No matter where Cari was, she always took the time to help others," Father Penkaul said at the service.

Sergeant Gasiewicz's eight and a half years in the Army had taken her to Korea for two tours before she was sent to Iraq. Finally, four days before she died, she called with the news that every soldier's parent waits for: She was shipping out. Her unit was bound for Kuwait.

"Her active tour of duty in Iraq was over and she was on her way home," Mr. Gasiewicz, a civil engineer with the Transportation Department, said in an interview last week. "She was hoping to get out of the military in July and wanted to settle down some place and get a job with the F.B.I. or C.I.A."

That was not the career path she had set for herself when she enrolled at Canisius College in Buffalo to study education. But she signed for the Reserve Officers Training Corps program, and in 1997, a year short of graduating, she joined the Army. Her first posting, in Arizona, was in military intelligence, her family said.

"My wife was apprehensive about her joining the military, but we talked it over and said, 'It's her life, and we have to support her,'" recalled Mr. Gasiewicz, himself a former National Guardsman. "We talked about the possibility of different stuff happening, but we told her we were 100 percent behind her. We were just hoping this whole year would go by fast."

She left for Iraq in January as a linguist and interpreter, having studied for three years at a language school in California. By the time she reported for duty at Abu Ghraib, the prisoner abuse scandal had made worldwide headlines, but her family said that those who were implicated were no longer there. And, as a translator, she had a more immediate, and more basic, concern.

"When she got to the prison, the dialect was a little different," her father said. "So she made friends with Iraqi contractors, and during her lunch hour they would teach her the dialect and she would help them learn English."

Sometimes, she volunteered to go out on combat expeditions, he said. "That's the way she was," her father said. "She went out on a convoy as a lead gunner. She would call us after the fact, and we would say, 'Cari, why did you do that?'"





She survived the combat expeditions, only to die leaving. Her parents found out that there would be no Christmas-in-January celebration when two military police officers appeared at the Gasiewicz house. "I said, 'This better not be about my daughter,'" Mr. Gasiewicz said, "and they said, 'Sorry, sir.'"

