



BRITTANY POZZI TONOZZI IS RUNNING FOR MARINE LANCE CPL. HOLLY A. CHARETTE

21, of Cranston, R.I.; assigned to Headquarters Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, N.C.; killed June 23 when a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated near her convoy vehicle in Fallujah, Iraq.

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — A female Marine from Cranston who died in a suicide bombing attack in Iraq was remembered Saturday as a popular high school cheerleader who was “always ready to help anyone out.”

Lance Cpl. Holly A. Charette, 21, died Thursday after a vehicle carrying explosives struck her vehicle in Fallujah, the Defense Department said. She was the first female Marine killed in Iraq.

“She wanted to become a Marine after 9-11,” Charlene Wheetman, Charette’s aunt, said Saturday in a statement on behalf of the family. “She wanted to do something for her country. She was a very proud Marine.”

Jaime Caniglia said she didn’t know her former teammate on the Cranston High School East hockey cheerleading squad was serving in Iraq until she saw Charette’s photo in a newspaper Saturday.

“She was an awesome, awesome girl,” said Caniglia, who also worked with Charette at a CVS store. “I can definitely see her (joining the Marines). She was always ready to help anyone out.”

Gov. Don Carcieri on Saturday ordered state flags lowered in honor of Charette.

A suicide bomber struck Charette’s convoy as she and a group of Marines returned to their base Thursday. At least four Marines, including Charette, were killed, and 11 of the 13 injured troops were women, the Pentagon said Saturday.

Al-Qaida in Iraq said it carried out the fatal ambush.





“Holly was a happy girl and loved by all of us and everyone that she knew,” Wheetman said. “Holly always looked at the positive side of everything. We are all missing a part of our hearts without her here.”

State flags will fly at half-staff until Charette’s internment, Carcieri said in a statement.

“Her sacrifice represents the best Rhode Island has to offer,” Carcieri said.

U.S. Rep. James Langevin, D-R.I., expressed “profound sorrow... As a soldier in Iraq and a Rhode Island citizen she served with dignity and honor.”

Charette, a 2001 graduate of Cranston High School East, was based at Camp Lejeune, N.C., and was assigned to Headquarters Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force.



Charette recently deployed to Iraq’s Anbar province from Camp Lejeune, where she worked delivering mail, according to a story from early last month posted on the Marine Corps official Website.

Charette is at least the seventh Rhode Island resident to die in Iraq and was the second military woman with ties to the state to be killed.

Pentagon policy prohibits women from serving in front-line combat roles — in the infantry, armor or artillery, for example. But the nature of the war in Iraq, with no real front lines, has seen female service members take part in close-quarters combat more than in any previous conflict.

Thirty-six female troops, including Charette, have died since the war began, most of them from hostile fire. All but two were members of the Army.

