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## Explosion claims life of Jackson soldier in Iraq

Luigi Marciante leaves a wife and infant son behind

BY DAVE BENJAMIN Staff Writer

The horrors of war have struck home in Jackson. The U.S. Department of Defense announced this week that U.S. Army Pfc. Luigi Marciante Jr., 25, of Jackson, was killed on Sept. 20 in Muqadadiyah, Iraq, when an improvised explosive device (IED) detonated near his vehicle. Marciante died of injuries he sustained in the explosion.



Luigi Marciante holds his newborn son, Lorenzo, this summer. Pfc. Marciante returned to duty in Iraq and was killed on Sept. 20.

Marciante is survived by his wife, Stephanie, and infant son, Lorenzo.

Marciante was assigned to the Stryker Brigade Combat Team out of Fort Lewis, Wash., and in April 2007 the 4th Brigade, of which he was a member, was deployed to Iraq.

"Pfc. Marciante enlisted in September 2004 at Philadelphia," Army spokesman Joseph Hitt said. "Two weeks later he reported to Fort Benning, Ga., where he received initial entry training as an infantryman."

In March 2005, Marciante reported to Fort Lewis, Wash., and was assigned to the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, which was later redesignated the 4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, also know as the Stryker Brigade Combat Team.

"He has served with the brigade's 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment since Jan. 8," said Hitt.

Marciante's civilian and military education included a high school diploma in 1999 and the Infantryman Qualification Course in 2005. He

was later awarded the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and the Army Service Ribbon.

"SPC Luigi Marciante, or as we all knew him, Louie, was my everything," said Marciante's wife, Stephanie, in a statement provided by the Army. "My best friend, my husband. A devoted father to his newborn son, Lorenzo. He was a son and a brother [of whom you could be] proud."

Marciante said her husband loved life and always made the best out of the worst. She said his presence would brighten up any room, and he was always there when she needed him most.

"Louie did everything he could to keep a smile on my face," she said. "In the last e-mail he sent me, on Sept. 15, he said he would be coming home soon and that we would soon be a happy family. He told me how much he loved me and how he spent his days thinking about me and our son and how much he enjoyed looking at our photos together as a family."

"Louie's last words to me were, 'I love you, Steph, always and forever. Give Lorenzo a hug and kiss and tell him that his daddy loves him,'" she said. "Lorenzo will know that his daddy was a true hero who sacrificed his life for us and his country. He will live on forever in our hearts and memories."

She said she believes they will be reunited one day.

"Louie is gone, but never forgotten," his wife said. "[He's] a true American hero. We are so proud of him and one day we will be able to embrace him in our arms again. We miss you and love you, Louie."

Since the United States launched the war in Iraq in March 2003, more than 3,790 members of the U.S. military have died, according to The Associated Press.