

## First Cape soldier killed in Iraq

By **ROBIN LORD and JASON KOLNOS**  
**STAFF WRITERS**

EASTHAM - Cynthia DesLauriers and her daughter, Lori Vecchione, were sitting on their deck in the evening breeze Tuesday when a government car pulled up to the house.

At first, DesLauriers, who is a front desk clerk at the Eastham Post Office, thought it was someone from the U.S. Postal Service.



■ Army Sgt. Mark Vecchione is pictured earlier this month on the Cape with sister Lori and her son, Sebastian, and his mom, Cynthia DesLauriers. Vecchione, who had a deep love for his family, was killed Tuesday when the tank he was riding in was struck by an "improvised explosive device," or IED.

But, when men in military uniforms stepped out, DesLauriers knew her worst fears had been realized.

"They didn't even have to say anything. I just said, 'No, no, no, it's not happening,' " she said yesterday, a little more than 12 hours after she learned her only son and youngest child, Mark Vecchione, 25, had been killed in Iraq.

The Army sergeant, who had written on his personal [myspace.com](http://myspace.com) Web page that "getting home alive" was his

No. 1 goal this year, died Tuesday somewhere in Iraq.

He was killed when the tank he was riding in ran over an "improvised explosive device" or IED. As the head gunner in the tank, he may have been riding halfway out of the vehicle when it was hit, according to what an Army official told his mother.

The Army official did not reveal the exact location of his death or his body to DesLauriers, or any other details surrounding his death, pending an investigation and report, she said.

Vecchione died exactly two weeks after he had returned to Iraq from a short leave with his family in Eastham.

He was on his second tour of duty in Iraq, which was due to end in six months.

Although Vecchione moved to Tucson, Ariz., when he was a junior in high school to live with his now deceased father, Guy Vecchione, he is the first person who was born and raised on Cape Cod to die in the war that began more than three years ago.

"If you were going to go to war, you'd want to go with him," said Al Cestaro, a retired sergeant in the Army's 501st Airborne Division, who has known Vecchione since kindergarten in Eastham.

Cestaro called his friend "selfless and kind." As an Army sergeant, he said Vecchione had "an undying dedication to his soldiers."

Vecchione was honored to be serving his country, Cestaro said.

"We all knew as soldiers the price of freedom is you have to see your friends die, or you die. But he didn't want to die any other way than knowing he was protecting his family."

When Vecchione re-enlisted after his first tour of duty, Cestaro said he asked him why he wanted to go back to the dangers and the horrors of war. He said Vecchione told him he didn't want to let his comrades down.

There are about 132,000 U.S. troops serving in Iraq. As of 10 a.m. yesterday, 2,554 soldiers have been killed and about 19,000 injured.

**"Very brave**