

Iowa National Guard soldier dies in separate bomb attack

By WILLIAM PETROSKI and ABBY SIMONS REGISTER STAFF WRITERS

Richard Gienau was 'good-hearted man'

Second Lt. Richard "Brian" Gienau, an Iowa native remembered for his strong but gentle spirit, was killed Sunday in Iraq when his armored Humvee was struck by a roadside bomb that injured four other soldiers, military officials said Monday.

All five soldiers were members of an Iowa Army National Guard unit based in Burlington.

Sunday's attack occurred as a military convoy traveled in Iraq's Sunni Triangle between Karbala and Ramadi. It was one of the most serious incidents involving Iowa National Guard troops since the United States invaded Iraq in March 2003.

The wounded were Sgt. Timothy Shay, 22, of Muscatine; Spc. Justin Edgington, 23, of West Burlington; Spc. Seth Garceau, 22, of Oelwein; and Spc. Dennis Smutzer, 32, of Moline, Ill. They were serving with Company A of the 224th Engineer Battalion.

The man who was killed, Gienau, 29, grew up in Tripoli in northeast Iowa's Bremer County. He joined the U.S. Navy in 1994, spending four years as an avionics technician. He enlisted in the Iowa Army National Guard in 1999 and graduated from the University of Northern Iowa in 2003. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant last year in UNI's Reserve Officer Training Corps, and he had been working in civilian life at Caterpillar Inc. in Peoria, Ill.

"He was a very good-hearted young man. I remember him as a hard worker, just a very conscientious, goal-driven person," said Randall Stanek of Eagle Grove, who was principal at Tripoli High School when Gienau graduated in 1994.

Among the wounded, Smutzer was flown to the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, and Garceau was expected to be evacuated to Germany for additional medical treatment, said Lt. Col. Gregory Hapgood, the Iowa National Guard's public affairs officer. Shay was being treated Monday at a U.S. military hospital near Baghdad, while Edgington was expected to return to duty late Monday or sometime today.

Gienau is the 22nd Iowan to die in Iraq since March 2003. One Iowa soldier has been killed in Afghanistan.

The roadside bomb exploded as the Iowa Guard soldiers were moving from one duty location to another, Hapgood said. All five soldiers were in the same Humvee, and Gienau was seated in the right front passenger seat. The fact that only one death occurred was a testimony to the strength of the armor that protected the Humvee, he said.

Craig Milius, a science teacher at Tripoli High School, taught Gienau in grades 7, 10, 11 and 12. He remembered him Monday as a quiet, reserved young man, but as very studious.

"I addressed the students today, because just because you leave here doesn't mean you're

forgotten," Milius said. "It's been 10 years since he's been away, but there's been flashbacks of seeing him in class, just a tall, gangly blond-haired boy.

"It was a tough day, it was surreal," Milius said. "You know it's happening everywhere, but as it gets to a personal level it's just very emotional."

Mike Campbell, a Burlington city councilman, learned Monday night of Gienau's death and he said he expects the city will plan a way to honor Gienau and the four wounded soldiers.

"We're proud of our soldiers in the 224th - those who have served and returned home safely and those who haven't. We're thankful to them for protecting our freedoms," Campbell said.

Story reported in DesMoinesRegister.com. To view complete story [click here](#).