

Bahamian soldier was U.S. resident

By Raymond Kongwa, Guardian Staff Reporter

Private First Class Norman Darling, the first Bahamian to die in the Iraq War, was a resident of Quincy, Massachusetts, before he joined the military in January 2003.

Martina McCarey, a former girlfriend, told Quincy's *Patriot Ledger* newspaper that the two were still friends when he was deployed to Iraq, and that Norman kept in contact while he fought in the war. She told the *Ledger* that Norman lived in Quincy, MA, for a few years, and in Brockton, MA, for a time before that. She said she and Darling were former co-workers at Boston Financial in Quincy.

McCarey said his main goal for going into the military was to better himself, and to provide a better life for his daughter, 3, who lives in Florida with her mother. The Army mistakenly listed Middleboro, MA, as Darling's hometown because his mail was being sent to her parents' home there, she said.

PFC Darling was amongst eight soldiers killed on Thursday, after a suicide bomber drove a vehicle alongside his patrol and detonated a bomb, a U.S. Embassy press statement confirmed on Monday. The statement said Darling and the men in his unit were searching for explosives when the bombing occurred.

Darling was assigned to the U.S. Armed Forces 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Division Regiment, 1st Armored Division, Baumholder, Germany, and had been in Iraq for just over three months in what the U.S. has dubbed "Operation Iraqi Freedom."

Prime Minister Perry Christie extended the nation's condolences to Darling's family on Sunday. Foreign Minister Fred Mitchell also told *The Guardian* Sunday that he, too, was saddened by the loss of life and extended his sympathy to Darling's wife and family. On Monday, the U.S. Embassy extended courtesies to Darling's parents, and promised to assist Sidney and Madeline Darling in the issuance of visas for their travel to the U.S. Charge d'Affairs Robert Witajewski commended the bravery of PFC Darling and that of his fallen colleagues.

Norman Darling was a graduate of H. O. Nash Secondary School. He was continuing a family tradition of military service; his older brother serves on the Royal Bahamas Defense Force. Sidney Darling told *The Guardian* on Friday that he was proud when he saw his sons in uniform. Up to press time on Tuesday, the Darlings were still awaiting word from the U.S. Army Casualty Division, so they could make travel arrangements to attend his funeral.