

Binh N. Le

Corporal, United States Marine Corps



**NEWS RELEASE from the United States Department of Defense
No. 1252-04**

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 06, 2004

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(703) 428-0711**

DoD Identifies Marine Casualties

The Department of Defense announced today the death of two Marines who were supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

**Corporal Binh N. Le, 20, of Alexandria, Virginia
Corporal Matthew A. Wyatt, 21, of Millstadt, Illinois**

Both Marines died December 3, 2004, from injuries received as result of enemy action in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. They were assigned to 5th Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

News media with questions about these Marines can contact the 2nd Marine Division Public Affairs Office at (910) 451-9033.

December 7, 2004

WASHINGTON -- A Marine corporal from Fairfax County was killed in Iraq last Friday.



Binh N. Le

Binh Le, 21, was manning a checkpoint when a car bomb exploded.

Le was born in South Vietnam. He came to the United States when he was 6 years old and grew up with an adopted family. However, he still kept in contact



with his parents in Vietnam.

"We're very proud. He served the country. He's a first-generation here. I know he loved his job and he would do what he wanted to do. So our family is very proud of him," Le's adopted father, Luong La, said.

Le's relatives here say they're trying to make sure his biological parents can come to Arlington National Cemetery for his funeral.

**Sadly Fulfilling Marine's Dream
Funeral to Bring Parents to U.S.**
By Rosalind S. Helderman
Courtesy of the Washington Post
Tuesday, December 7, 2004

Binh N. Le had not been back to the land of his birth since he came to the United States with an aunt and uncle at age 4, leaving his parents behind.

So, after he graduated from Edison High School in Fairfax County in 2002 and before he joined the Marine Corps later that year, Le made a joyous pilgrimage to Vietnam to visit his mother and father. Recently, he told one of his aunts in the United States that when he returned from his second tour in Iraq in April, they would make the trip together.

But Le, a 20-year-old Corporal from Alexandria, Virginia, was killed last week in Iraq. The Pentagon said he died of injuries suffered in enemy action in Anbar province; the Associated Press said a car bomb killed him and a fellow Marine, Corporal Matthew A. Wyatt, 21, of Millstadt, Illinois, as they patrolled near the Jordanian border.

Now, instead of awaiting his return visit, Le's parents will be making their way to this country to attend his funeral when it is scheduled at Arlington National Cemetery.

Le was assigned to the 5th Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division of the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force. He was trained as a field artillery cannoneer and belonged to the unit's Sierra battery. He was proud to be a Marine, said an uncle, Luong La of Dale City, Virginia.

La said the military was a natural choice for his nephew, a member of his high school's Junior ROTC program. His father had served in the Vietnamese army, and Le had "that kind of blood."

Le was proud, too, of his adopted country, his uncle said. He became a U.S. citizen while serving his first tour in Iraq, and he hoped to sponsor his parents to join him in this country. "That was his dream," La said.

told relatives that he would be returning to Iraq, La remembers saying he was a "little bit scared for him." But Le responded that he had a duty.

"He said if he don't do it, no one do it. He do whatever his job," La said. "That was his attitude in being a Marine."

Le was small and slender, quick and energetic, recalled Lynn Hall, his pastor at Lorton's Gunston Bible Church. Le and Hall's son Joe had been close friends since Le joined the church as a boy, Hall said. He said Le was the kind of kid who never stopped moving and always liked to be at the center of things, the kind who would declare that he planned to throw a birthday party -- for himself.

When he visited on leave, Le sometimes stayed at Hall's house. The pastor fondly recalled waking up in the morning to find the young man asleep on the sofa after staying out until 3 a.m. to cram in visits with friends.

Hall said Le told him he joined the Marine Corps because it was the "best fighting force in the world."

"I would sometimes use the term 'soldier' with him, and he hated to be called 'soldier' because he was a Marine, not a soldier," Hall said.

Le told church members that he helped secure a bridge south of Baghdad during the initial invasion of the country in 2003 and was greeted kindly by the people there. "He said the Iraqi people were so glad they were there it just about put him in tears," Hall recalled.

Le was known as a talented musician. He played drums, and in junior high school he formed a band with a cousin and Joe Hall. After the band broke up, he picked up keyboards and played both instruments for the church, Lynn Hall said.

"He was an excellent drummer, but his music teachers would always get mad at him 'cause he'd play them loud," he said. "He'd really bang them."

Le called home often to speak with his American family -- Thanh Le and Hau Luu, the aunt and uncle who brought him to this country and legally adopted him, and La and his wife, Tuc-cuc Thi Tran, with whom he often stayed while on leave.

In one recent conversation, he told La that he was tiring of military food and wanted to try to make Vietnamese-style meatballs. La promised to ship the seasonings overseas soon.

The last time they spoke, just two weeks ago, La said he advised his nephew to "keep his head down."

"Yeah," the young man responded. "We'll do that."



**For an Immigrant Marine, Burial Close to Home
Virginia Vietnamese Family Mourns at Arlington
By Rosalind S. Helderman
Courtesy of the Washington Post
Thursday, December 23, 2004**

In life, Binh N. Le adopted this country as his own. In death, his country returned the honor.

Le, 20, a Marine corporal who was born in Vietnam, grew up in Fairfax County and died in Iraq, was buried yesterday under an unseasonably warm sun at Arlington National Cemetery. Over his coffin stood two Marines in dress uniform, one holding a U.S. flag steady in the breeze, the other the flag of the fallen South Vietnam.



Luong La, left, holds a portrait of his nephew, Binh H. Le, at Arlington. With him are Marine Sgt. Suong Nguyen, an interpreter; Le's parents, Lien Van Tran and Kim Hoan Phi Nguyen; and an aunt, Tuc-cuc Thi Tran.

Le was killed December 3, 2004, in Al Anbar province -- by a car bomb set off near a checkpoint he was manning, his family was told. Corporal Matthew A. Wyatt, 21, of Millstadt, Illinois, also died in the attack. Le, a member of the 5th Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment, was serving his second tour in Iraq and was scheduled to come home in April.

As a boy in Vietnam, Le was adopted by Hau Luu and Thanh Le, an aunt and uncle who soon immigrated to America. He was raised in the Alexandria section

Luong La of Dale City.

He visited his birth parents just once, a pilgrimage made after he graduated from Fairfax's Edison High School in 2002. U.S. officials intervened to ensure that they could come to the funeral, helping them secure visas and passports.

A Marine Staff Sergeant handed one folded U.S. flag to Le's father, Lien Van Tran. With La translating, Tran, who once served in the South Vietnamese army, told National Public Radio recently that he had not wanted his son to join the Marines but was proud of his service.

"He did the right job for the family, for the country, for himself," Tran said.

La received a second U.S. flag. Nearby stood Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Representative James P. Moran Jr. (D-Virginia).

Friends said Le embraced the life of an American teenager long before joining the Marine Corps in 2000. He surrounded himself with devoted friends, many of whom he met through Junior ROTC or Lorton's Gunston Bible Church.

They described him as energetic and engaging. In high school and afterward, he played in a series of bands with young members of his church. One, a Christian group called Eyeris, built a small, loyal following at churches and coffeehouses. Drums were his passion, but he also had a talent for the keyboards and trumpet, friends said.

"He played everything by ear," said Jamey Payne, a member of Eyeris. "As long as he knew what it took to make a note come out of it, he could play it."

A Web site set up by his friend Paul Stadig features testimonials from dozens of people. Le had so many friends, Stadig said, that many of them didn't know each other. "All of his friends saw him as one of their best friends," he said. Next summer, Le was to have served as a groomsman at Stadig's wedding.

Le was a groomsman at Payne's wedding in May 2003, arriving to the surprised delight of the bride and groom, who thought he was still on his way home from Iraq.

Le returned from his first tour brimming with stories of the gratitude of ordinary Iraqis, friends said. Stadig recalled Le describing an Iraqi family that invited the Marines for tea. When they were finished, the Marines handed their cups back, only to find them quickly refilled. Many cups later, they learned that according to local custom, if a guest drains his cup all the way, it should always be refilled.

Payne said Le saw the conflict in Iraq through the prism of his own life story.

"He understood what it was like in a fairly oppressed society, and he really

experience that. . . It was a true American story."



Photo Courtesy of Holly, August 2005

LE, BINH
CPL US MARINE CORPS
VETERAN SERVICE DATES: 10/06/2004 - 12/03/2004
DATE OF BIRTH: 10/06/1984
DATE OF DEATH: 12/03/2004
DATE OF INTERMENT: 12/22/2004
BURIED AT: SECTION 60 SITE 8088
ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Posted on Thu, January 27, 2005
Posthumous Citizenship Granted to Marine
BRETT ZONGKER

ARLINGTON, Virginia - He was born in Vietnam and came to America at age 6. After growing up in northern Virginia, he joined the Marines even though he was not a U.S. citizen.

the citizenship ceremony held in the shadow of the Pentagon. Last month, he was buried nearby in Arlington National Cemetery, the victim of a truck bomb in Iraq during a voluntary second tour of duty there.

Le, 20, grabbed his rifle when the truck packed with explosives attacked his military post December 3, 2004. He had run to a position to fire on the driver and hold back the vehicle when it exploded. His commanding officer recommended him for a Silver Star.

"His final act of bravery saved the lives of others," Captain Christopher J. Curtain wrote in a letter read at the ceremony. "I will be forever grateful for his heroism."

An estimated 37,000 citizens of other countries serve in the U.S. armed forces. Since the Iraq war began, 54 have been awarded posthumous citizenship.

Le was raised by his aunt and uncle in Alexandria, Virginia. His parents, Lien Van Tran and Kim Hoan Thi Nguyen, traveled from Vietnam for his funeral. They are divorced but would like to remain in the United States to be close to their son's grave, Nguyen said.

"There's no way to describe the pain," she said.

Rep. James P. Moran, D-Va., said he is working to offer citizenship to Le's parents, which could require congressional action.

"I think this is a compelling enough case that we can get a single bill for citizenship for his parents," Moran said. "They certainly deserve it."

Tran said they didn't have a problem with their son enlisting in the Marine Corps, but they wanted him to have time to attend college.

"His main concern was to join the military so that he could help protect the country he loved so much," Tran said.

Posted: 8 December 2004 Updated: 28 December 2004 Updated: 6 January 2005 Updated: 28 January 2005 Updated: 21 August 2005

Courtesy National Arlington Cemetery.

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