

# Soldier's mother relieved he's okay

## Tami Siemers also grateful for community's concern

By Lisa Hammer

Mothers are always the first to know.

Tami Siemers said in the early morning hours of Sept. 21 she had a dream her son Luke in Iraq had been hurt, and at 9:30 a.m. that day he called her from a hospital to tell her he'd been injured.

A woman with the National Guard called later that day to give Siemers official notice of her son's injury — caused by a car bomb while checking an



Tami Siemers

abandoned vehicle near the Green Zone in Baghdad.

"She was very good," said Mrs. Siemers. "He was back with his unit within the day or the next day."

But Siemers concedes that if she has another bad dream, it will be even more jarring.

"I'm almost scared to go to sleep," she said.

Luke Siemers and three other members of the Galva National Guard unit were injured, one seriously, when a car bomb exploded on Baghdad's airport road as a U.S.

military convoy was passing by.



Luke Siemers

The soldiers' armored Hun-wee and about 10 civilian vehicles were wrecked in the blast, which occurred on the highway leading to the capital's international airport, according to the Associated Press. There were civilian casualties also, the AP said.

According to the Associated Press, the road is considered one of the most dangerous in Iraq.

On Friday, Mrs. Siemers spoke from McKay's, the Galva restaurant owned by her family. She said Luke had called her again. He reported being still sore from a dislocated or hyperextended elbow, but starting to regain mobility and doing well.

Luke also suffered a loss of hearing — 20 percent in his left ear and 10 percent in his right ear — but is expected to fully recover.

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## Siemers

Siemers said the community rallied around her after news of her son's injuries surfaced.

"I am just overwhelmed by all the well wishers and support from the community and surrounding area," she said. "It's been a help through a somewhat difficult time."

Some supporters have been family members of other local Guardsmen – people she often speaks with.

"I keep in close contact. I see quite a few of them that come into the restaurant," she said.

She said the danger does make the going rougher now, though.

"You're in a different mode, I guess you would say," she said.

She said she didn't know of any friction between servicemen and Americans working for private contractors in Iraq.

"They're in as much danger as our boys are, so I

don't look at the money issue," she said. "I feel very lucky because I'm not talking about Luke in the past tense like Todd Engstrom's parents are."

Engstrom, a Galva native, died when his convoy was bombed in Iraq on Sept. 14. He was working for a Tennessee-based private contractor providing security to U.S. military personnel at the time.

"What I feel about private contractors, I know Todd's parents didn't want him over there any more than I want my son over there," she said.

"I'm not thinking about money," (Luke) could be making \$100,000 a month – I just want him home."

Siemers said Eugene Armstrong, one of two American construction contractors beheaded in Iraq last week, was from Hillsdale, Mich. – her birthplace and the hometown of her father, Dave McClintic of Galva. Mr. McClintic didn't know the Armstrong family, she said.