



Sgt. Alexei Hayat



May 14, 2004 - Sgt. Alexei Hayat, 20, of Be'er Sheva, was one of two IDF soldiers killed by Palestinian snipers while guarding comrades collecting the remains of five soldiers killed two days before, when their APC was hit by an anti-tank rocket in the southern Gaza Strip.

Hayat had arrived in an APC to extricate a comrade who had been mortally wounded by a sniper at the entrance to a building in the Rafah refugee camp, when he himself was killed by sniper fire. Two other soldiers were moderately wounded in the rescue attempt.

Alexei Hayat made aliya three years ago, following his sister, Marina, 24, who lives in Be'er Sheva. He enrolled in the Hebrew language ulpan at Kibbutz Mishmar Hanegev.

"He was a sweet guy," said program coordinator Rivka Aloch.

Two months after completing the ulpan, Alexei was drafted into the Givati Brigade. "He kept saying how happy he was in the army," Marina recalled, adding that Alexei was planning on a military career as an officer. "That's what he chose and all I could do was ask him to be careful."

Hayat's family lives in the town of Yoshkar-Ola, a 13-hour train ride from Moscow, and is part of a small Jewish community. His mother died three years ago, but his father, Leonid, kept in close touch. Leonid Hayat visited Israel about a month ago, thanks to the Jewish Agency's Rainbow project, which sponsors visits by overseas parents of soldiers. "Of the 30 soldiers in the group, he stands out in my recollection," said the group's leader, Eva Gershgal. "He had a terrific sense of humor and immediately began making everyone laugh. He was a very strong guy... He felt at home here."

Sgt. Alexei Hayat is survived by his father, sister, grandmother, and grandfather. His father and grandparents came to Israel to attend his funeral. "I want him to be buried here," his sister said, "I want him to be with me, so I won't feel alone."

